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Sandy Ham

PROGRESS INDUSTRIES

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CHANGING CAREERS TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE



THE MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS BY WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS



The faces of our mission

By Cynthia Fodor

After a long career of crunching numbers for a big corporation, Sandy Ham decided it was time to do something different with her life. Something more personally meaningful.

“I felt there was something more I wanted to do than corporate functions and chasing the dollar. The corporate world is tough. I was looking for more personal reward in my second career,” Ham said.

Ham had built a career with Maytag and continued on with Whirlpool as a finance executive, working most recently to try to keep the Amana manufacturing plant viable. After 31 years, she retired but was not ready to put her feet up just yet. Ham was still eager to use her talents to make a difference in a whole new way. She stepped into a new role running a non-profit.

For eight years, Ham has been the CEO of Progress Industries, focused on helping people with intellectual disabilities in Jasper, Polk and Poweshiek Counties. She left the appliance industry for one that helps people realize their potential.

“Because the “Industries” in our agency name can be a bit deceptive, someone once asked, ‘What do you make?’ We make people’s lives better. That’s what we make,” she explains.

It was not as if she left a tough corporate job for an easy one. Now Ham oversees layers of people, including a staff of 200, along with 300 clients they support. Add on 20 residential group homes, a fleet of 53 vehicles and all the logistics of 24/7 staffing. Progress Industries also supports people with disabilities in their jobs and helps them navigate the community.

“WE ENVISION PEOPLE ABLE TO LIVE BY THEIR OWN CHOICES WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT.”

-PROGRESS INDUSTRIES

CHANGING CAREERS TO MAKE A *Difference*

“We help them get to their Dr’s appointments and the grocery store so they can do their own cooking. We help them manage their money.”

Progress Industries focuses on three primary areas with the goal of providing people with disabilities new opportunities for growth.

RESIDENTIAL LIVING SERVICES

- Provide affordable accessible housing.
- Services offer 24-hour support in four-to-five-person homes.
- Services in 3, 8-person, Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF’s)

DAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

- Community programs develop life skills to enhance intellectual, physical and emotional health.

EMPLOYMENT

- Job coaching to obtain and maintain a meaningful place in the workforce.

“The goal is helping them be successful in helping themselves,” she says. “We do WITH them, not FOR them. Everyone deserves happiness, joy and pride in their lives,” Ham said.

One notable success story, as Ham shares, involves an individual with various challenges upon coming to P.I. Now in his late twenties, he holds a position at Hy-Vee. He is a different person today because of P.I., the programs we

Core Values:

Integrity

Passion for people

Teamwork

Excellence



Progress Industries Leadership Team

provide and the staff who dedicate themselves to helping others realize their greatest potential. He walks around with pride,” Ham said. A number of companies like Culver’s, McDonald’s and Hy-vee have opened their hearts to train workers along with the support staff at P.I.

While families can sometimes be overwhelmed when caring for a loved one with disabilities, P.I. is a valuable resource, and our staff/team becomes an extension of their family. The direct support professionals, like home health care aides, daily go in and address the individual needs of each person they support. Ham says there can be a high risk of burn-out but a high reward as well. She realizes the toll it takes on her staff and values each employee. “I try when I see our employees to let them know how much I appreciate them,” Ham says.

Melissa Butler had worked under four different CEO’s in her public relations role at P.I. Ham is her first female CEO. Butler says Ham has a way of seeing things in people and taking a chance on them. “Immediately she invested in me. She has given me every opportunity to elevate. She truly values me and my role within the agency.”

“I’m pretty Type A. I’m pretty organized. My folks are empowered to do their jobs. I’m there to support them. We problem solve together. We brainstorm. I’m not a hands-on micromanager. I’m very thankful for the team I have and for the confidence our Board of Directors has in me.”

Ham proves it’s never too late to take on a new challenge. She is much more than a numbers cruncher. In her second career as a CEO, she is a true leader on a mission supporting people to achieve a fulfilling life in our communities with dignity and respect. Sandy Ham is making progress helping Progress Industries make a difference.

“Everyday we are thinking out of the box. How do we support individuals in our services and how do we train our staff better? I rely on my team to bring all the solutions for providing services. We kick ideas around. We can all agree to disagree on some things but in the end, we’re all headed in the same direction.” *



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CENTRAL IOWANS WITH DISABILITIES SINCE
1979, CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF PROGRESS!
www.progressindustries.org