

The Challenge connection

PUTTING ABILITY TO WORK



A NEW SOCIAL ENTERPRISE VENTURE FOR CHALLENGE: FAMILY PHOTO ARCHIVING

November 1st marked the exciting launch of Challenge's most recent Social Enterprise endeavor; a Premium Family Photo Archiving Service, offered by our Challenge Imaging business operation.



Our Two Family Photo Archiving Packages

Personal Collection — up to 500 photos, slides or documents preserved on two DVDS — \$195

Family Collection — up to 1,500 photos, slides or documents preserved on two DVDS — \$295

This venture draws upon our years of scanning experience to offer a superior white glove service that our initial customers have been thrilled with. The feedback we have received so far has been entirely positive, with comments like,

“Wow - this is terrific!”

“This was a fantastic, easy, and successful experience all around.”

“I am thrilled with this service.”

Challenge's Social Enterprise Director Charles Hamilton says of the new service, “We're excited about the new product launch for Challenge Imaging. It'll reach new customers for us and is designed to be profitable from day one. The team in Challenge Imaging has tons of experience scanning ancient documents so we have the expertise to offer this new product as a premium service.” He continued, “Customers know that we'll be carefully scanning their documents, photos or slides right here in Ithaca with the same care we've been using to preserve records for over 20 years.”

The photo packages we have scanned to date have included thousands of precious family photos, a



How Our Service Works:

To order the size box you want, contact us online at www.challengeimaging.com or call 607-882-9952.

We ship you the box via UPS, complete with everything you need to pack up your photos and slides.

Fill up the box and send it back to us, using the pre-paid UPS label we have provided.

We scan your images at hi-resolution (600 – 1,200 dots per inch) and return your photos, slides and documents along with 2 DVD copies of your images, within three weeks.



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FAMILY PHOTO ARCHIVING *continued from page 1*

family crest, family historical documents and a collection of fragile letters handwritten on stationery from Yenching University in Peping China, dating back to the Japanese Occupation of China in 1941. It is evident as we scan each of these items how much history they capture, and how quickly photos, slides and papers begin to deteriorate, risking the permanent loss of priceless family archives. Digital scanning offers a great solution.



Challenge Imaging Manager Alan Thomas stands in front of hundreds of boxes of archival records to be scanned by his staff.

Challenge
Imaging Manager Alan Thomas considers this service offering a very logical and positive move in the expansion of this Challenge business. “We’ve been providing Imaging Services to businesses and institutions for a very long time. This Photo Archiving project allows us to offer

that same level of exceptional, personalized service to individuals and families. People who have been holding on to generations of family photographs and slides – mediums that really deteriorate over time – can send them to us to have them carefully preserved for many more generations to come. We can produce as many DVDs as you’d like, so the images can be shared with everyone in your family. It really makes a great gift to parents, siblings, children and grandchildren.”



Jeremy Gardner scans a box of family photos for a customer



The Family Photo Archiving business promises to support Challenge’s mission on multiple levels. It offers us the opportunity to build even closer connections with the people of our community by providing a meaningful, personalized family service. If successful, the project will increase income to our agency as a whole, allowing us to provide more of our own financial resources to support our programs and services, while enabling us to offer additional job opportunities to individuals with disabilities and employment barriers. This is certainly a reason to be optimistic about our direction for the future.



For more information, or to order a Family Photo Archiving Package, visit our website at www.challengeimaging.com

A MESSAGE FROM PATRICK



Patrick McKee
Challenge President

At a recent meeting of our professional association, the executive director described what is happening in our field, not as a time of re-organization, but rather as a period of transformation. We are beginning to see much more clearly these days about the current and pending changes in human services and I believe that he is right on target. The way that services are delivered and financially supported in New York State is being radically changed. The service delivery system that developed over the past

40 years will no longer be recognizable. Unfortunately, while this is clear, the end result is not. A period of transformation is accompanied by a period of uncertainty. This is, of course, unsettling because we know that the need for services is surely not going away.

Fortunately, we continue experiencing periods of clarity and certainty. One of these came recently at the annual Challenge Awards Dinner. The recipients of recognition - in ways often quite moving - reminded us of why we continue to do this work, of why we deal with the daily frustrations. Some of these frustrations can begin to seem minor, almost insignificant when weighed against the life story of an individual who has worked so hard to obtain and maintain employment - when they describe what it means to be able to support their children, to regain their self-respect. It reminds me, in fact, that doing this work is an honor and a privilege.

I also had the recent good fortune to spend some significant time in our Work Center. My ineptness with a tape gun was not only tolerated by the crew but, more importantly for our customer, quickly resolved. What I experienced was the community of support that the Work Center crew has developed. There are all the normal frustrations that develop in any working situation but there is also mutual support and effort to get the job done. There wasn't any discussion about state budget cuts or new compliance issues. There was the steady flow of work along with the easy camaraderie that can accompany work. Again, I was reminded of why we do this, of why we put so much effort into our mission.

I hope this edition of our newsletter will serve as a reminder of this as you read about a few of those recognized at our annual Awards Dinner. It will also show you more about where we are headed by announcing one of our new social enterprise ventures, Challenge Family Photo Archiving. We aren't just sitting still and waiting for everything to become clear in this transformative era. We are building on our strengths and moving forward.

Patrick J. McKee
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick J. McKee', written in a cursive style.

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2011 ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER GETTING TO WORK

For most people, having a job represents much more than the paycheck they bring home; it's the self-respect and sense of purpose as a contributing member of their community that carries a huge intangible value. We can see it all around us in the stories of those who have lost their jobs in our struggling economy. They have lost more than income; they have lost part of their identities. In the words of Thomas Moore, "Finding the right work is like discovering your own soul in the world." This is as true for the people we support at Challenge as it is for anyone else.

We are fortunate to have the annual opportunity to celebrate the successes of our clients, and the role we all play in those successes. Our Awards Dinner never fails to serve as an inspiring reminder of the value of our mission. Every day at Challenge guidance is given, new hope is found and lives are changed for the better through the opportunity to do productive work.



Employment Advisor Carrie Pierce-Buchanan with Emily Sosna at Cornell Companion Animal Hospital

This year, several awards were given to our clients who had persevered in achieving their personal and professional goals. Among these clients was Emily Sosna, a Veterinary Technician at Cornell's Companion Animal Hospital. Battling some significant health issues, Emily would not relinquish her dream to work as a Vet Tech. With assistance

from Challenge Employment Advisor Carrie Pierce-Buchanan and Job Developer Maureen Curtis, Emily was hired on a temporary basis at the Companion Animal Hospital. With the help of the excellent hospital staff, Emily grew beautifully into her responsibilities, and was given a permanent position at the hospital. Her determination and hard work – as well as the faith that the hospital staff had in her – were well rewarded. It's easy to hear in Emily's voice the enthusiasm and confidence that have come with the rewarding work she does. "I could never have imagined I'd get a job working in a place like this, or how happy I could be. I'm so grateful to the people who believed in me and helped me. I would encourage anyone who's struggling to just keep going - even when it seems impossible. Great things really can happen!"



Dan Page accepts a 2011 'Progress Award'

to three supervisory positions over a four year period. Dan was given an opportunity and he turned that opportunity into a resounding success – for him and for his employer. "Dan is a hard worker and gives his best to everything he does," says his Employment Advisor Greg Gizewski. "He's very deserving of the success he's had."

Dan Page's was another inspiring story of focused, conscientious effort that built a successful and satisfying career. Dan's career at Walmart began seven years ago in an entry level position. Since that time his value to the organization has increased tremendously, and he has worked in nearly every department in the store. His reliability and performance have earned him promotions

Ioanna Vlahos was presented with one of this year's *Employee of the Year* Awards. Ioanna began her affiliation with Challenge three years ago as a service recipient; a single mother of three. Her intelligence and determination earned her a position as an administrative assistant at Challenge. She was later promoted to Executive Assistant. Ioanna's primary motivation for pushing forward, even in the face of adversity, is her children. As their role model, she will not accept failure as an option. "Supporting my family and setting a good example for my children is invaluable to me. It means everything. I'm in a much better place now – a place I never thought I would be. Challenge has offered so much support and encouragement. They have so many services and resources that any goals that you set for yourself they will help you achieve."



Ioanna Vlahos is honored as 'Employee of the Year'

Our mission at Challenge is to our community; to insure that all of our citizens have the opportunity to be fully included in productive, meaningful community life. Without the engagement and support of so many community partners, our success would not be possible. This year's Awards Dinner gave us the opportunity to express our thanks to many of these collaborators for the roles they have played in offering opportunities to our clients in ways that support not only our individual clients, but a healthier, more diverse community as a whole.



Andy Sciarabba addresses the audience after receiving Challenge's 'Partner of the Year' Award

South Hill Business Campus Managing Partner Andy Sciarabba, and Property Manager Linda Luciano, shared the *Partner of the Year* Award. The role they play in Challenge's success in our new home on South Hill is enormous. Andy and Linda have been helpful and cooperative at every turn in facilitating access to the space and resources we need to optimize the efficiency of our businesses, and the quality of services we provide for our clients.

They and their staff have been very supportive, not only of us as a tenant, but of our human service mission as well. Our partnership with Andy and Linda has been truly exceptional.

Our *Business Partner of the Year* Award went to the Raymond-Hadley Corporation. They have been partnering with Challenge for more than a year to help them meet their food packaging needs, and enable Challenge to boost income and work opportunities for the people employed in our Work Center. The partnership has flourished, and the volume of work has steadily increased, as Challenge has grown in our capacity to meet the high standards of food safety and packaging



Challenge's Production Manager Russ Maracle presents the 'Business Partner of the Year' Award to Elliot Dutra of the Raymond-Hadley Corporation

required by Raymond-Hadley. Production Manager Russ Maracle presented the award. "Our partnership with Raymond-Hadley has grown into an integrated working relationship," Russ says. "The valuable work we do for them creates meaningful tasks that our workers have not only mastered but thoroughly enjoy."

A *Collaborative Partner of the Year* Award was presented to Julia Barrett-Mattick and Mark Coldren from Tompkins County Workforce Investment Board. The work they do in developing and coordinating employment resources plays a very significant role in our work at Challenge. "Julia is a true collaborator, always looking to create a win/win for everyone involved – particularly for the service recipients," says Challenge's Director of Services, Jan Lynch. It is a pleasure to recognize their efforts with this award.

Another community partner award winner was Tonya Curran, Volunteer Coordinator for the Tompkins County Public Library. Her enthusiastic support in providing volunteer opportunities for our clients has been wonderful. The variety of experiences that our clients have gained through their association with the library has been very educational to them - both vocationally and socially. Tonya was the very deserving recipient of our *Volunteering Partner of the Year* Award.



Tompkins County Public Library's Volunteer Coordinator Tonya Curran poses with volunteer Ann Hathaway.

Jolane Ricardo of TJ Maxx received the *Employer of the Year* honors at the dinner, and was presented her award by Job Developer Michael Christopher, who had wonderful things to say about their collaboration. "TJ Maxx has been a welcoming and supportive partner. The management and staff are creative and innovative thinkers who are way ahead of the industry in supporting their people above and beyond the norm."

The awards presented at the dinner and the stories they help to tell are illustrative of the kind of collaborations that take place among our clients, our staff, our business partners, and our donors. This is our essential formula for success. Our congratulations and thanks to all of our 2011 Annual Award Winners.

For a complete list of our 2011 Award Winners, visit our website at www.aboutchallenge.org

GRANT FUNDING FOR NEW PROJECTS



Local Support for Finger Lakes Fresh Expansion

During the past several years, a main focus at Challenge has been to develop new business enterprises as a way of supporting our mission to provide integrated community employment opportunities for all individuals with barriers to employment. Today, these businesses employ more than 200 workers with disabilities and other barriers to employment, providing individuals an opportunity to be productive and contribute to their own self-sufficiency. With social service funding in jeopardy, investing in social enterprise businesses now is our best strategy for meeting the demand for increasing services and achieving more financial independence from public funding. This fall, two foundations, the Legacy Foundation and the Tompkins Charitable Gift Fund, agreed to make a \$12,500 investment in Challenge's future to help fund the construction of the new Finger Lakes Fresh greenhouse in Groton. These funds will help support Challenge to move forward with finalizing the design and purchase of the land in preparation for breaking ground on the project in early spring 2012.

The Legacy Foundation made a \$7,500 investment and Tompkins Charitable Gift Fund made a \$5,000 investment in the greenhouse expansion



Finger Lakes Fresh Expansion Receives New York State Community Block Grant

The planned expansion of Finger Lakes Fresh has taken a significant step forward in receiving support through the Town of Groton to obtain a New York State Community



Development Block Grant. Challenge, the parent non-profit of Finger Lakes Fresh, was prepared to invest \$1.05 million in cash and long term debt in building a second greenhouse but was seeking the remaining funding required to move forward on the project. Working with Challenge, the Town of Groton applied for a \$375,000 grant that would bring economic development and new jobs to the Groton community. In October, Groton received notification that the Community Development Grant was approved. With this last piece of funding in place, Challenge will begin construction of a 50,000 square foot greenhouse facility in the Groton Industrial Park in the spring of 2012. By investing in increased production space to meet strong existing customer demand, Finger Lakes Fresh will more than double its overall sales, retain its current workforce and add 14 or more jobs to the Village of Groton in the first two years of the project. As with the current Finger Lakes Fresh workforce, a majority of the new jobs will be targeted to low income job seekers with barriers to employment. With social service funding in jeopardy across the non-profit sector, Challenge is making a significant investment in its future through



growing Finger Lakes Fresh and other business units that are financially self-sustaining and contribute to the social mission and long-term financial solvency of Challenge.

Food Stamps, Employment and Training Venture II Grant

Challenge, in collaboration with Women's Opportunity Center and Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES has been awarded a five year grant through the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance that will offer food stamp recipients in Tompkins County new and expanded opportunities for education, skills training, work experience, job placement and support services. This project will focus its efforts on segments of the population that face significant and multiple barriers to employment and have been either ineligible or lack the skills to be successful in post-secondary education and job training programs. The priority populations will include long-term public assistance recipients, individuals with high incidences of learning and mental health disabilities, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, and a growing immigrant population.

Participants will choose from a range of workshops, Job Club, work experience and subsidized employment that will provide work readiness, life skills and job preparation training. Participants will be encouraged and

supported to enroll in Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to gain academic skills, language proficiency and/or a degree, and in short-term non-credential training that will open opportunities for more immediate jobs and improved employment outcomes over time. The project will offer assistance with the job search, connecting participants with businesses that have longstanding commitments to work with the partner agencies. Post-placement supports will include on and off the job supports, employer advocacy, and assisting participants to access community services and supports. Each participant will work closely with an Advisor/Case Manager from assessment to post-employment services, providing consistency and support with work, home, family and personal matters. This program will help fill a gap in services for a growing population of Food Stamp recipients in Tompkins County and provide comprehensive services that will assist participants to obtain employment, greater earnings, career advancement, and increased self-sufficiency.

WHO THE PROGRAM WILL SUPPORT

- Long-term public assistance recipients
- Individuals with learning and mental disabilities
- Ex-offenders
- Victims of Domestic Violence
- Immigrants

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PROGRAM

- Job Club
- Workshops
- Work Experience
- Subsidized Employment
- Educational Opportunities
- Job search, Placement and Post-Placement Support



For more information contact Jan Lynch, Challenge Director of Services at 607-272-8990, Extension 144 or janl@aboutchallenge.org.

Challenge

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Building on our Strengths with a Community of Support

