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Program keeps campus clean, employs disabled

BY EDEN GUDONIS '07
FOR THE WIRE

Recycling — it's such a simple concept. You throw your papers and plastics into a special bin and they magically get whisked away to be broken down and reused as something new. But have you really ever wondered what happens to your recycling? Four days a week, for the past 12 years, individuals from the COVE Center have been dutifully removing our recycling, and most of us never even knew they were there.

According to Project Manager Rick Spencer, the COVE Center, located in Providence, RI, "provides a day program, employment and residential services for adults who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, behavioral disorders, and other disabilities."

Beginning in 1995, Director of Business Services John Sullivan and Psychology Professor Grace Baron, who were affiliated with both the Groden Center (for children with autism), and the COVE Center, recognized the need for a campus-wide recycling program. They set out to effectively combine Wheaton's need for a recycling program with employment opportunities for adults with disabilities.

Currently, the recycling program at Wheaton provides community employment opportunities for 20 individuals. They service the majority of the buildings on cam-



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One of the 20 COVE volunteers helps out with recycling on campus.

pus, including dorms, classrooms and administrative buildings.

For adults with disabilities, the opportunity of employment is extremely valuable. Learning responsibility, taking pride in one's work, interacting with the community, and having a sense of purpose are all aspects of employment that we take for granted. The concept of recycling itself generates great pride for those individuals who come to work here. Not only do they provide Wheaton with a valuable service, but they are helping the environment as well.

All of the individuals who come to campus to work are genuinely excited to do their jobs and to be a part of this community. However, this is only one piece of

the puzzle. We can all do our part as well. By continuing to recycle, we are all providing job opportunities for these wonderful individuals — not to mention sustaining the planet for future generations.

Also keep in mind all the hard work that goes into collecting our trash and recycling, and try to make an effort to make their job a little easier by being tidy and respectful. And should you ever come across one of the recycling troops on your way to class, maybe say hello and thank them for all their hard work!

If you would like to get involved with the Wheaton/COVE recycling program, or are interested in autism or other developmental disorders, please contact: Rick Spencer at rspencer@covecenter.org.