

# The Community Page

## A Quiet Revolution

**C**arol Ann was a beautiful baby and deeply loved, but it became apparent that her development was delayed, that she was “different.” Her family gradually learned about the unending demands of a child with disabilities—not only 24-hour attention but also tolerance of emotional instability. Incidental to this was the nagging worry of institutionalization when her parents were gone.

Until recent decades, a family with a disabled child had few choices. State-run institutions were nightmarish in quality with little to recommend them. The only other option was to watch a father and mother grow prematurely old under the grindingly difficult stress created by such care.

Changes began slowly in Bonneville County. In a desire to allow growth and learning for disabled children, and to give relief to families, the Sage Creek School for Retarded Children was formed by a group of parents in 1950. Later renamed the St. Leon Opportunity School, the responsibility fell largely on parents and friends to manage the facility and teach the children.

Into this limited environment came a devoted family who had, themselves, suffered with the stresses of a severely disabled child who had recently died. John and Bobbe Griffith, remembering well the pressure of those years, felt a strong desire to provide respite for other families similarly struggling.

Fundraising became their number one job, with lobbying the State Legislature at the front. When the money was finally raised from many sources, the Child Development Center was built in 1969. Shortly after, school-age children were welcomed into the public school system, so the CDC now cares mainly for preschool children. Two years after opening the CDC, the founders moved forward with a vocational development center for disabled adults and The Development Workshop was born.

DWI is a complex institution

that is part private industry and part non-profit. In addition to the Corporate Board of Directors that oversees the day-to-day working of the entity and gives direction to the Chief Executive Officer, there is also a Foundation Board that seeks and raises funds to assist in the running of the facility.

Within all this variety lies an organization that is a model for fiscal management and investment. President and CEO Dwight Whittaker takes understandable pride in the efficiency and productivity of the organization, its board, and its clients.

Susan Barnes, Chair of the Corporate Board, mirrors Whittaker’s love of this unique organization that, while creating a healthy business environment, creates an op-



*Above: Well-trained employees work on the assembly line. Left: One of the many entries in the Festival of Trees.*



portunity to learn life skills and vocational opportunities for hitherto “hidden” children and adults. These clients are paid on a sliding scale—a fair market wage adjusted for their productivity—and they have the satisfaction of being able to provide many of their own needs and even to stand on their own feet. They then graduate from the program and make place for someone else. As the unofficial motto declares: “We’re in business to go out of business.”

As proof of the effectiveness of this business plan that now operates in many counties, 95 percent of its total operating budget comes from products and services that DWI either manufactures or provides. Another huge benefit is that the cost of placing a disabled family member in the Development Workshop program is one-tenth of that at a state-funded facility.

These economic successes pale in comparison, however, to the life changing abilities learned by clients, and the genuine relief supplied to their beleaguered families. It is a quiet revolution, changing attitudes that needed to be changed, and defending the rights and needs of people who can’t defend themselves.



*Another Fun Run kick-off showing community support for the clients of Development Workshop.*

## The Face of Development Workshop

**D**wight Whittaker, an integral part of Development Workshop Incorporated since its foundation, has become synonymous in this community with words such as caring, building, lifting, and easing burdens—all done with amazing efficiency. Dwight’s love of his clients and his respect for his staff are clearly obvious when he speaks of them. He has set a benchmark for any who may follow.

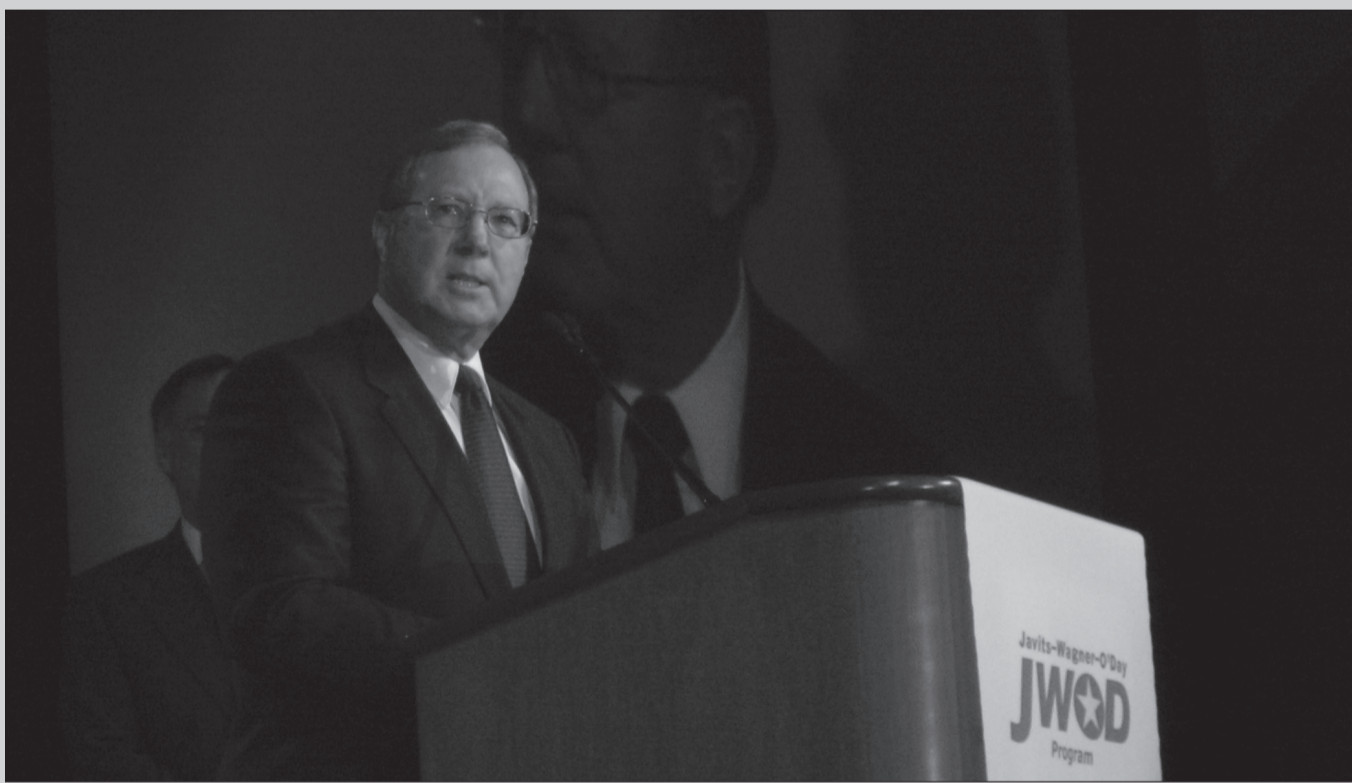
Dwight Whittaker was a farm boy who grew up in Rupert, Idaho, learning early how to work and how to wrestle—good training for his future at DWI. He was the state wrestling champion in his senior year of high school and went to Ricks College on a football and wrestling scholarship.

Dwight graduated from the University of Idaho with a bachelor’s and then a master’s degree in special education, and began earning his livelihood as a vocational rehabilitation counselor in Moscow and then at the State Youth Training Center in St. Anthony. It was there that he heard about and applied

for the opening at the soon-to-be Development Workshop. He was hired on July 1, 1971.

Prospects weren’t too bright all those years ago—with only 12 clients—but the Workshop has now grown to serve hundreds every year.

This growth came, associates will tell you,



*Dwight Whittaker testifies for fair wages for disabled employees before the Javits-Wagner O’Day Program.*

solely because of Dwight Whittaker. Not only has his personality won friends and supporters (“He is the consummate professional and gentleman,” according to Ida Hardcastle, former chair of the DWI Board of Directors), but his clear thinking and plain speaking have contributed to common sense solutions to problems that have arisen over the years. He has fought for legislation and funding on many fronts—locally, in the State House of Representatives and at national hearings for the disabled.

Because of Whittaker’s groundwork, DWI will

continue to thrive after his retirement in April, 2008, but fellow workers are convinced that DWI wouldn’t be here today without his dedicated and competent handling of the many crises that were part of the growing process.

This gentle man, who trusts and loves all who come into his sphere of influence, who never speaks a derogatory word, but has a smile for all, is held in high esteem by all who know him. His only regret: “That I couldn’t have done more.”