

From April 7<sup>th</sup> through June 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, NW Works workers participated in a “snack bag” project that benefited the Head Start Food Program. The local food bank delivered snack bag supplies to NW Works where the workers used those supplies to make the snack bags. The NW Works team worked together to make 648 snack bags each week! The finished snack bags were picked up weekly and distributed by the Head Start program.

Each snack bag that was put together contained a juice drink and a snack, such as a pack of sandwich crackers or a granola bar. Working in teams of 3, each worker performed a different task. One worker opened the brown paper bag, the next worker would insert the snack, and the third worker checked the juice for leaks and then placed the juice in the bag. The filled bags were placed in a tray where a fourth worker, the “runner”, gathered the filled trays and transported the tray to a table where Shawnee, one of NW Works Activities Coordinators and the staff supervisor for the snack bag project, packed the bags into plastic totes for pick up. There were usually 4 teams of 3 workers, plus 2 runners. The runners also opened the snack and juice cartons, refilled supplies, and emptied trash.

The snack bag project allowed the workers a fresh opportunity to learn new skills, work on their teamwork & social skills, and feel the sense of pride that helping someone else brings. They were all aware that the snack bag project was about giving back to the community. Shawnee enjoyed the opportunities that this project presented to her, too. She enjoyed being able to train the workers on an assembly line-type setting and being able to work with smaller groups. Shawnee was able to assist and guide workers when there were difficulties and was able to provide verbal praise and encouragement throughout the project sessions. The workers were also encouraging and supportive of each other, whether they were discussing the project, different things going on at home, or things happening at the WorkCenter.

It was noted in a recent email that, thanks to the efforts of the NW Works workers, 162 at-risk children at 4 different schools benefited each school day from the receipt of their afternoon snack bag. We’re sure the children enjoyed their afternoon snacks and we’re sure that the NW Works team enjoyed their role in making that happen. When asked if they had enjoyed working on the Head Start project, the workers responded with an overwhelming “YES!” When asked why they liked working on this project, the workers replied with several different answers. Donald said, “It was fun.” Joma and C.J. both said, “It gave us something new to do.” Jenny and Crystal agreed that they liked it “Because it helps out the children who need snacks.”

Unfortunately, June 1<sup>st</sup> was the last day to work on the Head Start snack bag project as the school year ends and summer break begins. The workers are looking forward to the start of the new school year when the snack bag project will resume.

