

# BAWAC expansion needs support



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FLORENCE – On a Wednesday afternoon Greg Austing works hard at his job at BAWAC Inc.

BAWAC is a production facility located at 7970 Kentucky Drive, Florence, that provides employment, training, vocational and life skills to people who have disabilities.

Austing is busy. He likes that. The Park Hills resident also likes having a job, he said.

According to BAWAC President Ken Smith, for Austing and others working at or employed through the organization, having a job provides a sense of belonging.

"You know what having a job does for any other person – the sense of responsibility and independence – it's the same thing for the people we're helping. Having a job means even more to someone who's never had a job before. They finally feel there is a place for them."

BAWAC is about to undergo a major expansion to the building, staff and services. The goal, according to Schmidt, is to get those who are on the waiting list to be helped off and into the program.

The \$830,000 building expansion will increase production and service delivery. The increased production capacity will allow BAWAC to handle larger jobs, increase the

variety of its operations and partner with industries on manufacturing projects. The service expansion will allow BAWAC to better serve those with more severe disabilities to learn life skills, participate in community activities and maintain their highest level of functioning.

"The expansion is the result of a growing need in our area to provide community-based services for those with disabilities who need life skills and/or work skills," Schmidt said. "BAWAC not only provides employment but training and services for those whose needs are changing to consider semi-retirement services."

BAWAC provides case management services, a transportation program and other services, serving a total of about 450 people annually. BAWAC has operated for four decades as a nonprofit, supported in part by United Way.

Paul Hemmer Co. is in charge of the construction of the 10,000-square-foot building expansion which is expected to begin in early October and be completed by February 2015.

"The (BAWAC) board of directors chose Paul Hemmer Co. for this expansion because of their history with BAWAC – Paul Hemmer Sr. built the first BAWAC building in 1975 and the second addition – and the strength of their proposal, including pricing," Schmidt said.

Schmidt said that BAWAC is seeking donors to help fund the project and furnish its Life Transition program area. The board of directors will be making a decision soon to launch a fundraising campaign.

"People must be wondering how we are moving forward with the construction," Schmidt said. "Well, it's our generous friends at the Bank of Kentucky who believe in us. Also, this building is something we must do now. It's a need for the community. So we're going to do it and ask for donations as we go."

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