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The new addition to Activities for Learning, Inc., which recently expanded to more than double its original size, is on the left.



The new warehouse has made it possible to purchase items in bulk. Pallets of boxes are waiting for the busy season when schools and parents are preparing for the next school year.

Activities for Learning expands Hazelton building

By Verda Seeklander

It was “bursting at the seams,” so to speak, with no place to store anything. Activities for Learning, Inc. (AFL), founded in 1982 and incorporated in 2007, is home of RightStart Mathematics™. The building, located at 321 Hill Street on the north side of Hazelton, was recently expanded to more than double its original size.

The new addition, just shy of 8,000 square feet, is used solely as a warehouse, releasing much-needed space in the original 6,000-square-foot building for printing, warehousing and assembling everything involved in the RightStart Math program.

Work on the addition began in early 2019.

“We desperately needed this,” said Vice President Kathleen Cotter Lawler, asserting that they had literally “run out of space.”

She added, “We should have started this two or three years ago.”

Both of the buildings use geothermal for heating and cooling. Although more costly at the outset, geothermal will pay for itself in the not-too-distant future, Lawler said.

Lawler commended BEK Telecommunications Cooperative for “going above and beyond” to help with determining the location of the addition so as not to disturb the underground BEK lines.

As a child, Lawler could not possibly have even



Kathleen Cotter Lawler is Vice President of Activities for Learning, Inc.

guessed that one day her own career would revolve around what would be considered the newest and most comprehensive type of math program available. She was one of the first children to grow up under Activities for Learning principles.

Lawler’s mother, Dr. Joan

A. Cotter, taught her three children at home, before and after school and during summer vacations. To help them learn their arithmetic, she devised card games that were published in her first book, “Math Card Games: 300 Games for Learning and Enjoying Math.”

Dr. Cotter holds a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, an AMI Montessori diploma for ages 3-6, a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction from the College of St. Thomas, Minnesota, (now University of St. Thomas) and a Ph.D. in mathematics education from the University of Minnesota. She is the author and creator of the RightStart Math™ program and founded AFL.

Activities for Learning, Inc. writes, prints and publishes RightStart Mathemat-

ics curriculum, a comprehensive elementary and middle-school math program that incorporates visualization of quantities, the AL Abacus which de-emphasizes counting and provides strategies and games for learning the facts.

“People seem to get confused with our business name and our curriculum. Our business name is Activities for Learning, Inc. That’s who we are. That’s where checks are written. Our curriculum name is RightStart Mathematics. We tend to go by both names, but the reason we have the Activities for Learning name is because it leaves us open if we wanted to do anything else but math.”

Lawler is vice president of the company. She has a degree in Home Economics and a minor in business from the University of Minnesota and two master’s degrees from the University of Mary, Bismarck. Three of her children graduated from North Dakota State University, and one graduated from the University of Minnesota.

Lawler is responsible for program development support, marketing, sales and general management. She travels all across the U.S. and Canada, sharing the RightStart mission of helping children understand, apply and enjoy mathematics.

Four years ago, RightStart Math started online classes

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Warehouse Supervisor Sharon Sauvage of Linton shows Home School and School curriculum.



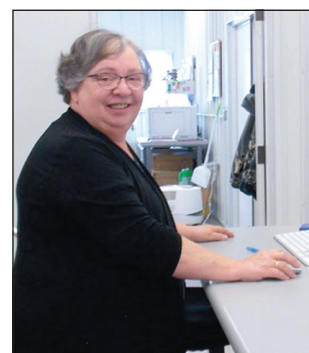
Maren Ehley of Linton is office manager.



Marcie Lammert of Moffit is labeling and preparing packages for shipping. Mondays are the biggest days for shipping this time of year while Wednesdays and Fridays are busiest in the summer months.



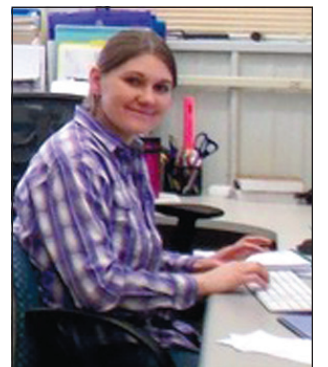
Kelsie Burza of Linton, is responsible for marketing.



Judy Kalberer of Hazelton is labeling packages.



Laurie Bailey of Moffit is assembling book bundles for an order that will be shipped soon.



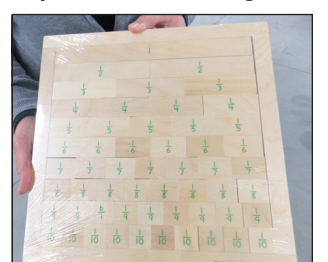
Jennifer Rebenitsch of Hazelton is the warehouse supervisor in training.



Pins located on a map near the front desk show where Activities for Learning clients are located. Markers do not show locations within the U.S., simply because there would not be enough space for them all.



Shown are Canadian money decks. This allows Canadian children to learn about their own coins, rather than about the US coins, which are surprisingly difficult for Canadians to find in their own country.



A fraction puzzle board made in the USA.

AFL
(Continued from Page 1)

for middle school students. Most of the students taking online classes are from Canada and the United States. Lawler noted that one of last year's students was from Alaska which is on Alaska Standard Time or three hours earlier.

This year, RightStart Math is conducting three classes, making the timing more convenient, depending on the student's location. Lawler and Maren Ehley teach one class of 11 seventh graders while another class of 12 sixth graders is taught from Atlanta, Ga., and the third class of nine sixth graders is conducted from Dallas, Texas.

The students are assigned a lesson and homework which they complete on their own using the RightStart curriculum.

"We meet online twice a week and review the lesson," Lawler said. For instance, what did they learn: the area of a circle, trigonometry functions or the definition of an oblique prism. Then we review the homework and

assign the next lesson."

She continued, "So basically they are teaching themselves, and we are checking to make sure they have actually read, understand and can apply the new information they have learned."

This past year, unbeknownst to Dr. Cotter or Lawler, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Cambridge, Mass., chose RightStart's program to be part of one of their studies in their neuroscience brain development lab.

Lawler said when she received a call from Dr. John Gabrieli and his team "it was a little mind-blowing." Gabrieli asked her to come to MIT in June to train their teachers who would then use the math program to work with second and third grade students.

Their objective was to analyze differences in brain structure and function in order to help distinguish mechanisms contributing to reading, math and attention difficulties. Gabrieli's Lab mapped the brains of the students (MR imaging) before and after the study to see how their brains changed

during the learning process. To date, data is still being compiled and analyzed.

RightStart™ Mathematics has received many special awards over the years. For the last six years they have been honored to receive the prestigious FIRST PLACE Award from Mary Pride's Practical Homeschooling Readers Awards in the Elementary Math category.

Other awards include the Best Homeschool Curriculum & Resources Award (2018, 2020), Homeschooling Parents 2019 seal of approval for homeschool friendly, a Homeschool.com award for being homeschool friendly (2018), The Old Schoolhouse "Excellence in Education Award—first place in "GAMES-Elementary School" category, second place in "Best Homeschool Secret" category and first place in "MATH-Elementary School" category, Outstanding Learning Success Resource Award from the Learning Success Institute.

The RightStart curriculum development team has just finished its second edition series of RightStart Math which includes Kindergarten

to grade seven. Work on the project began in 2013, and Lawler said she is drawing a sigh of relief now that it is complete. Producing a new series includes endless reading, re-reading, correcting, constant deadlines, etc.

"This summer will be the first summer we will not be pushing for a book deadline. Let me tell you, I am one excited girl. This is the first summer I can kick back and have a summer since 2013," Lawler said.

Orders are shipped throughout the world. Pins located on a map near the front desk show where the items are shipped. Markers do not show locations within the U.S., simply because there would not be enough space for them all.

This time of year, RightStart ships approximately 20 to 25 orders a week outside the U.S. Lawler mentioned that on the day of this interview, they received a "BIG" order which will include about nine or 10 pallets of RightStart materials.

"During the busy season, summer and early fall, we ship about 100 orders a week outside the U.S. I don't think

most people know that we are this big," she said.

Activities for Learning also distributes materials for other companies such as Money Munchkids in California which teaches kids between Kindergarten and third grades about money management. All of their product comes to the AFL warehouse. In turn, their product is shipped through the Hazelton Post Office and UPS, benefitting the community locally. AFL also does some curriculum for Memoria Press in Louisville, Ky., which has developed a K-12 curriculum for Latin, logic and classical study courses.

Lawler said the University of Helsinki (Finland) has translated one of the RightStart books to use in a study. Norway has done the same and uses the materials to teach deaf children. RightStart has also donated materials for use by missionaries, most of whom are in Africa.

In 2011, Activities for Learning reached its \$1,000,000 milestone in annual sales. Approximately 32 tons of paper are used each year to assemble all the products.

Lawler expressed appreciation for the company's 16 part- and full-time employees in Hazelton (listed with the positions they fill), commending their hard work and dedication: Maren Ehley, Linton, office manager; Eileen Giese, Linton, and Kristy Kertzman, Hazelton, data processing; Kelsie Burza, Linton, marketing; Sharon Sauvage, Linton, warehouse supervisor; Jennifer Rebenitsch, Hazelton, warehouse supervisor-in-training; Laurie Bailey and Marcie Lammert, both of Moffit, warehouse and shipping; Toni Weis, Hazelton, assembly and shipping, and Tammy Mills, Moffit, and Jeff Schaefer, Temvik, printing.

Working part-time in assembly are Bernice Weiser, Judy Kalberer and Kaitlyn Malard, all of Hazelton, and Sandi Lawler, Linton. Carrie Heidrich, Strasburg, does graphic design.

In her spare time, Lawler designs and sews quilts.

For more information, check out their website: RightStartMath.com, email Kathleen@RightStartMath.com or call 888-272-3291 or 701-782-2000.



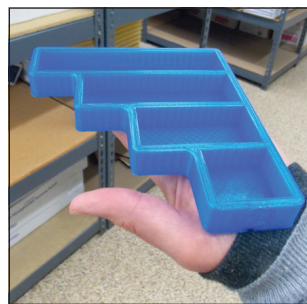
Kristy Kertzman (left) of Hazelton and Eileen Giese of Linton work in Data Processing, but during the slow season they often help assemble products at the front desk.



Tammy Mills of Moffit and Jeff Schaefer of Temvik work in the printing department.



Pictured is Activities for Learning founder and author of the RightStart Mathematics program, Dr. Joan A. Cotter. To the right is her AMI Montessori diploma personally signed by Mario Montessori, the son of Dr. Maria Montessori. The RightStart Math mission: "To help children understand, apply, and enjoy mathematics" is displayed in the frame on top.



A former RightStart Math student, who is now 16 years old, designed and printed this card holder.



Students work with these U.S. coins made of plastic.



Toni Weis (left) and Bernice Weiser, both of Hazelton, are assembling card decks numbered from 0 - 10.



These are some of the first products made by the company when it began in the 1980s.



The many boxes of card decks that will be shipped