

Careers Industries' specialty food store benefits community

JOE GREENE
Executive director, Careers Industries

Our mission at Careers Industries' specialty food store, Greater Grain Gluten-Free Goods, is multifaceted in bringing health, nutritional, educational and economic benefits to our community. When you shop with us you are indeed doing "good" for the soul and for the body. Proceeds from Greater Grain benefit nonprofit Careers Industries, which provides work, care and community for persons with disabilities.

Greater Grain was Racine's first and remains the only area grocery to offer primarily gluten-free foods. Gluten is a protein found in all foods and products containing wheat, barley and rye. For the estimated 3 million people in the U.S. who have been diagnosed with Celiac disease and cannot tolerate gluten, a gluten-free diet is a must.

But a growing number of people eat gluten-free by choice as evidence emerges that the diet may treat other medical conditions and generally makes one feel better. Thirty percent of adults are interested in avoiding or reducing gluten in their diets, according to consumer research firm NPD Group.

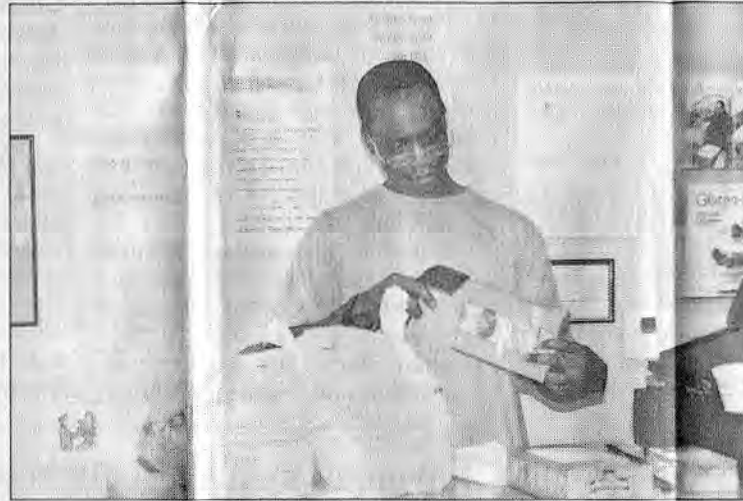
"A generation ago, health was



about avoiding fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium in our diet. While those desires still exist for many, they no longer are growing concerns," said Harry Balzer, chief industry analyst for NDP. "Increasingly more of us want to avoid gluten in our diet and right now it is nearly 30 percent of the adult population ... and it's growing. This is the health issue of the day."

Greater Grain has become the local go-to source for a growing number of Racine-area gluten-free shoppers. We carry hundreds of products, many at the request of customers, and we even carry gluten-free personal care items including toothpaste. Our loyal shoppers are effusive in their praise.

"Stopped into your store today after my mom told me about it.



Patrick is among the 10 participants who have gone through Greater Grain's paid S.H.a.R.E (Service, Handling and Retail Experience) training program.

What a great place. Wonderful, helpful and knowledgeable staff ... bonus that your profits help support others in your community. Will definitely be back," Lori Larson posted on our Facebook page.

Besides gluten-free, we also offer other healthy food choices including organic beef and chicken and Wild Alaskan Salmon. All of our beef products including ground chuck, steaks, bacon, summer sausage, wieners, brats and roasts are 100 percent grass-fed and free of any antibiotics. We also carry organic bison. Our whole

chickens and boneless chicken breasts are pasture raised and free of all antibiotics.

In addition to serving the growing local demand for more gluten-free and natural food offerings, Greater Grain provides employment training for persons with disabilities. The store exemplifies Careers Industries' mission to contribute to the well-being of our broader community and economy.

S.H.a.R.E. program

Ten participants have already completed our S.H.a.R.E

(Service, Handling and Retail Experience) training program (or internship). The four-week internship is a paid program funded by the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

"DVR purchases occupational skills training from a variety of partners and business to help job candidates gain necessary work experience and skills training in a real-world work environment," explains Patricia Johnson, director of DVR for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties. "Programs like S.H.a.R.E. prepare candidates to compete for jobs in this sector in the community."

During their two-hour shift, five days a week, participants get hands-on experience interacting with customers in person and on the phone, stocking products, conducting inventory, using the cash register and other tasks. Two more participants recently started the program and we have five more on a waiting list through November.

You'll find Greater Grain just to the west of Careers Industries in the Westgate Mall at 4811 Washington Ave. Visit our website for a 10 percent off coupon. Support your health and our community with your purchases.