

As published in the Daily Herald – March 5, 2012

## Addison CEO hires homeless to give them second chance

By Anna Marie Kukec

CEO Justin Norman needed to hire workers at his Addison-based manufacturing firm, JD Norman Industries. Instead of turning to a temp agency or a headhunter, he turned to Carol Simler, executive director of DuPage PADS. Since last fall, he's hired four formerly homeless people and is considering a fifth person.



Justin Norman, JD Norman Industries

"They're attitude is better than some others," Norman said. "They're more motivated by getting a second chance and they work hard, like no one is going to take it away from them."

Norman values that passion and positive attitude.

"Once some people become homeless, they have all kinds of obstacles in their way that prevent them from getting back on their feet," Norman said. "So when they have another chance, they take it. They have a high level of motivation."

About six years ago, Norman moved from the city to the suburbs and got involved with DuPage PADS, also known as Public Action to Deliver Shelter. The Wheaton-based nonprofit helps the homeless live better lives and has helped many prepare to get work. Norman sent a donation check to Simler, and later she arranged to have lunch with him to talk about PADS.

He wanted to help develop more housing and he later joined our board of directors, Simler said.

Soon Simler and her team were acting like a human resources team for Norman, sifting through possible job candidates and sending him good matches to open positions.

"He said he was looking for someone with a good math aptitude, who really wanted to work and had a positive attitude," she said. "You can't teach people about a positive attitude," he said.

Norman founded the company in 2004 and then acquired about a half-dozen companies, building his workforce to about 350, including about 150 in Addison. Operations also are in Ohio, Michigan and Mexico. They make engineered metal parts for the auto, defense and aerospace industries.

"He came to realize that he can make an impact on someone," Simler said.