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## Statue thought to spur sales

[published on Wed, Jul 27, 2005]



By JESSICA PERSONETTE  
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McHENRY – Dozens of small white statues lay on the table next to green boxes, waiting to be packaged Tuesday by Pioneer Center workers such as Gwen Haynes.

Soon these images of St. Joseph, patron saint of carpenters and earthly father of Jesus, will travel from McHenry to 38 states to help perform miracles.

Real-estate agents and home sellers believe that burying a St. Joseph statue and praying to the saint will make their homes sell quickly, said Lorraine Kopczynski, Pioneer Center president and CEO.

"I've sold four homes [with St. Joseph]," Kopczynski said.

Donna Kassens, vice president of funding for Pioneer Center, said St. Joseph had worked for her a couple of times as well.

Since the early 1990s, Pioneer Center has packaged and shipped the statues for TWOS Sales Inc. of St. Charles. Pioneer Center is a nonprofit organization that serves children and adults with physical, emotional developmental and cognitive disabilities.

Currently TWOS sells 80,000 to 90,000 St. Joseph

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statues each year in 38 states, said Ann DeMartino, who runs TWOS, which stands for The Way of Saints.

DeMartino's father, Jerry Micklewright, started the business in 1992 as he was beginning to sell real estate, DeMartino said. He died in 1999 and DeMartino took over.

Micklewright and other real estate agents used St. Joseph to sell homes, but Micklewright felt the practice was getting away from its roots in prayer, DeMartino said. The company's theme on the box is "Faith Can Move Mountains ... and Homes."

"The whole idea of why my dad put this together was to bring it in the direction of faith," she said.

In addition to the figure, the box contains a prayer and introduction to the St. Joseph home sale practice.

The business started in Micklewright's home, but after a year or so he needed to expand.

"He looked at several different options and price-wise, facility-wise, Pioneer Center was great for their clients that do the work and for the small businesses that they service," DeMartino said.

About 250 Pioneer Center clients work in the McHenry vocational rehabilitation center. They are paid to work 7.5 hours a day, and they sort, collate, assemble and perform tasks for contractors such as TWOS and Abbott Laboratories, Kopczynski said.

Pioneer Center is always looking for subcontracting work, Kopczynski said. People should contact Craig Adams at (815) 759-7148 for information.

Haynes, 51, of Woodstock, helped assemble St. Joseph's boxes Tuesday morning and checked for quality. With her eye for detail, she fixed boxes that were made incorrectly, said Celia Read, vocational manager.

She has worked at Pioneer Center since 1980. The workshop serves people with developmental disabilities.

"St. Joseph's is fun to do," Haynes said.

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