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## Wine bags newest endeavor for ROOC, Inc., employees



**AT WORK** Jenny McCullough (foreground) and Stacey Tackett work on securing double-sided tape to the absorbent liners that are inserted into the Wine Bags. They were working hard, McCullough commented. ROOC Executive Director Cherie Johnson said their customer gets "cost effective service" and the workers are "earning paychecks." (CHP)

By Cheryl Holladay

The workers at ROOC, Inc., of Roscommon, recently teamed up with a new customer and are now providing a new product that is shipped nationwide and abroad.

The new product is called the Wine Diaper, a travel bag for wine bottles with an absorbent liner inside. On the outer plastic bag is the motto, "pamper your wine." It is a product of Idea Mia, partly owned by Marco Cucco, who lives in the Detroit area.

Cherie Johnson, executive director of ROOC, Inc., said the new contract was a result of connections with a customer in Grayling.

Adults with disabilities – called consumers – who work at ROOC, Inc., are employed in a variety of capacities. They shred confidential documents, bundle gloves for

employees at Lear, Roscommon, sew safety vests and produce "ski bones" that Bob Frye sells at Cross Country Ski Headquarters, Higgins Lake. Since ROOC, Inc., purchased the Spencer Candy Company of Roscommon in March, 2010, the consumers have been packaging and distributing candy as well. They also perform janitorial services.

Johnson said the man who owns a building in Grayling, with whom ROOC, Inc., has a janitorial relationship, "connected us with Marco." ROOC's Director of Operations Steve Crist, then "followed up with Marco," she said, and Cucco has been a ROOC customer for about six months.

"He's been tremendously supportive," Johnson said of Cucco. "He's very happy with the work."

She said Cucco is receiving a "costeffective service" and the consumers are "earning paychecks."

ROOC consumers are currently working toward fulfilling a contract with a vineyard in Italy for one million bags. There is also a pending order from France. The product is available at Bed, Bath and Beyond, Dillards, the Container Store and Amazon.com, Johnson said.

"Everything that he sells we produce," she said, adding the employees produce about 600 bags per day. "He provides the stuff, we provide the labor," she said.

Each consumer is given a quota based on his or her skill level, Johnson said. Previously, when there was not enough work for the consumers, they spent more of their time receiving training, learning things like cooking skills and social skills.

"Our ultimate goal is to build the skills they need to work in the community," she said.



**FILLING THE ORDER** ROOC, Inc., worker Jeff Dombrowski inserts an absorbent liner into a Wine Diaper, a product that keeps wine bottles from making a mess if they break while traveling. ROOC, Inc., produces the bags for Idea Mia and is in the process of fulfilling a contract with a vineyard in Italy for one million bags. (CHP)

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