



## HUMAN INTEREST

Monday, February 22, 2010

### Support pours in for legally blind street musician



CHICAGO - By the time Juan Hernandez, a blind street musician, set up at his spot on the Blue Line to perform last Wednesday, people all over the city had read of his plight in that morning's Tribune — his guitar had recently been stolen for the second time. Their reaction that day and over the past week stunned and gratified him. Strangers hugged him and wished him well. Others expressed concern for his

well-being. Some leaned in close to press dollar bills into his hand. At home, phone calls from friends and family came in "like raindrops," he said. And people from all over Chicago reached out to Hernandez with offers of new guitars and cash. By Friday, a downtown pawnshop owner — put in contact with Hernandez after police made a routine check to see if he'd seen the stolen guitar — had given Hernandez a blue guitar. What mattered to Hernandez, whose eyesight has dimmed since childhood, is that it sounded clear and clean. Then on Monday, Hernandez got word that a national guitar retailer from which he has purchased before also was offering him a new guitar for free — even after Hernandez made it clear he already had gotten a used guitar. All of it stunned Hernandez, who spoke about his stolen guitar in the first place because he hoped it might help police find it. He figured he'd use a guitar borrowed from a friend until he could replace the stolen one. "I didn't think people would open their arms to me," said Hernandez, who regularly performs on the Blue Line subway platform at Dearborn and Washington streets. "There are more wonderful people than bad people. I have to believe it." Chicago police recovered Hernandez's guitar the first time it was taken in November 2008, after investigators tracked it to a local pawnshop. This time, detectives had only a vague description of the thief and little else to go on. [FULL STORY AND VIDEO](#)

## Brooklyn Shop Caters to Lady Laborers



BROOKLYN - Where's a woman supposed to go for a hardhat and a pair of work boots? Women in the construction industry and other labor fields no longer have to hunt for clothing and gear that fit - because Deidre Douglas has opened Woman Up, a Prospect Heights store catering to blue-collar ladies. "I couldn't walk into a regular store and get anything that was comfortable or fit. Dealing with oversized gear is dangerous, so I had a vision," said Douglas, a laborer who opened the Washington Ave. shop a year ago. Woman Up sells boots, gloves, safety goggles, harnesses, work pants, undergarments and accessories:

Think of it as a Sears for women with physically demanding careers. Most of the merchandise she carries is in small men's sizes, however, because Douglas has not found workwear brands that make a separate woman's product line. But her customers are pleased with the selection. "There's no other store like this," said Liz McKeller, 48, a concrete laborer from Fort Greene. "I've done construction for 15 years, and I've always had a hard time finding my boot size." Two of the most feminine items in the store are matching pink hard hats and tool kits. "Some women love pink and don't care if they're on the construction site. They want pink," said Douglas. Despite being one of a kind, the store remains a bit of a secret, and Douglas concedes that business has been slow. But its popularity has been spreading by word of mouth at job sites across the city. "I send women there and they're surprised to hear about it," said McKeller, who once worked in the same male-dominated local union as Douglas. Besides construction, Douglas' customer base includes women drawn from the ranks of the MTA, FDNY, NYPD and "basically anyone else working outside," she said. She said the demand for these products is greater than even she expected. "I get people who come in that I'd never thought of," said Douglas. "I get people who do sets for television shows, people who build cages for zoo animals and exhibits for museums.

## Hurler signs late - 'Kid' gets autograph after 15 yrs.



BROOKLYN - Bar mitzvah boy Mark Roth was thrilled to get responses to his mailed autograph requests from his favorite ballplayers. He just didn't think he'd have to wait until he was 27 for one of them to arrive. More than 15 years ago, the adolescent carefully tucked Kevin Appier's 1992 Kansas City Royals baseball card inside a clear plastic protector and wrote an earnest note asking the righthanded hurler to sign the card and return it to him. Last week, Roth's dad, still living at Mark's childhood address in Brooklyn, phoned his grown son with a strange question. "He asked if I'd been sending out the baseball cards again," Roth recalled. He replied that he hadn't done so for 15 years. The Appier baseball

card, freshly autographed, had finally arrived. Roth was thrilled to receive the belated response, but continues to wonder, why now? Appier, now retired to his cattle ranch in Paola, Kan., did not return The Post's calls for comment. "He's a very private person," his sister, Jeri, told The Post. After a little investigation of her own, she explained that her brother never forgot about the fan mail. "There was some stuff that the Royals had sent to his house that had been sitting around," she said.

### **On 81st birthday, Oregon man gives company to employees**



MILWAUKIE, Ore. — Scores of employees gathered to help Bob Moore celebrate his 81st birthday this week at the company that bears his name, Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods. Moore, whose mutual love of healthful eating and old-world technologies spawned an internationally distributed line of products, responded with a gift of his own — the whole company. The Employee Stock Ownership Plan that Moore unveiled means that his 209 employees now own the place and its 400 offerings of stone-ground flours, cereals and bread mixes. "This is Bob taking care of us," said

Lori Sobelson, who helps run the business' retail operation. "He expects a lot out of us, but really gives us the world in return." Moore declined to say how much he thinks the company is worth. In 2004, however, one business publication estimated that year's revenue at more than \$24 million. A company news release issued this week stated that Bob's Red Mill has chalked up an annual growth rate of between 20 percent and 30 percent every year since. "In some ways I had a choice," Moore said of what he could have done with the company he founded with his wife, Charlee, in 1978. "But in my heart, I didn't. These people are far too good at their jobs for me to just sell it. "It's not that the offers aren't there. Hardly a day goes by that Nancy Garner, Moore's executive assistant, doesn't field a call or letter from someone wanting to buy the privately held company or take it public. "I had four messages waiting when I returned from a recent vacation," she said. "Three of them were buyout offers." Garner said she and other employees are floored by Moore's plan, under which any worker with at least three years tenure is now fully vested. "We're still learning all of the details," Garner said, "but it's very humbling to be part of a company that cares this much about its employees."

### **Astronauts Hold Winter Olympics in Space**

SPACE - They don't have snow or ice, but an international team of astronauts held their own weightless Winter Olympics this week. Their venue: a \$100 billion space station. The 11 astronauts aboard the linked shuttle Endeavour and International Space Station (ISS) tried their hand at several space Winter Olympics events this week during breaks from adding a new room and observation deck to the outpost.

Their events? Space skiing, the zero-G luge and a graceful weightless figure skating. The crew beamed some space sports video of their antics to Mission Control. Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi, a space station resident, even donned a pair of short space skis for his slalom and jump



events. "I did send out my ski jump on ISS," Noguchi told reporters in Japan late Thursday. Endeavour shuttle pilot Terry Virts took a shot at the luge, floating down a space station module feet first. His crewmate Kathryn "Kay" Hire twirled endlessly in what the spaceflyers called the ultimate "figure skating triple-lindys." Virts said he and his crewmates have enjoyed looking down at Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada, where

the 2010 Winter Olympic Games are in full swing. "We've been having some really nice night passes over the Olympics," Virts radioed Mission Control early Friday. They also squeezed in some zero gravity diving — basically somersaulting while floating in place — though admittedly they should probably save that for the Summer Olympics, the astronauts said. And like the Olympics, the shuttle and station astronauts even have a special emblem. But instead of five interlocked rings, they have mission patches emblazoned on their space clothes and equipment. Playing sports in space is nothing new. Astronaut Alan Shepard — one of the first seven NASA astronauts — played golf on the moon in 1971 during the Apollo 14 mission. His first swing was a bust, but he hit home on the second try — his ball going for "miles and miles," he radioed Mission Control at the time. [FULL STORY](#)

**Central Talent Booking**