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Equipping Students for a Smooth Transition to College

Aspire's Educational Coaching program prepares students for a smooth, successful transition from high school to college life. Offered by Aspire's Individualized Career & Transition Services Department (ICTS), this innovative service is tailored to meet each student's individual needs.



Danielle Lawson participated in Aspire's Educational Coaching program.

Aspire's educational coaches support students who are preparing to enter college in Western New York. The coach assists each student on campus, and provides a level of support that is typically unavailable through the college.

The comprehensive supports include:

- 👉 *How to effectively navigate the campus*
- 👉 *Assistance with class registration*
- 👉 *Strengthening time management and study skills through developing a study schedule and organizing assignments*
- 👉 *Researching majors/interests*
- 👉 *Linkage to The Office for Students with Disabilities*
- 👉 *Self-advocacy*
- 👉 *Importance of self-disclosure process*
- 👉 *Exploring social opportunities on campus, including club membership*
- 👉 *Accessing community resources, such as banking and grocery shopping (including menu planning)*

"Aspire's educational coach worked one-on-one with Danielle to familiarize her with the college campus," said Valerie Lawson, mother. "This helped to relieve the uncertainty and anxiety she was feeling about attending college."

Continued on next page.

Aspire of Western New York

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Aspire's Mission:

Aspire's mission is to help children and adults with developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, and conditions with similar personal and family effects live their lives to the fullest in keeping with their informed choices.

Aspire
OF WNY

Turning Disabilities
Into Capabilities

Continued from front cover.

This service is geared specifically to students with disabilities who will graduate with a Local or Regents diploma. In addition, the students should be interested in learning about or already planning on pursuing post-secondary education.

“We recommend educational coaching during the student’s senior year to build a strong foundation prior to entering college,” said Paula Kerber, coordinator of student services & assessment for ICTS.

Students who benefit from this service have included, but are not limited to, those who have a:

- learning disability
- anxiety disorder
- central auditory processing disorder
- cerebral palsy
- autism spectrum disorders

Student Benefits

- Promotes a smooth transition from high school to college life
- Provides additional academic, social and emotional supports not typically available at the post-secondary level
- Increases independence, confidence and self-advocacy skills

School District Benefits

- Better equips districts to meet State Performance Plan Indicators, specifically the Transition Performance Indicators 13 and 14
- Increases positive outcomes for Indicator 14
- Provides comprehensive transition plan for students pursuing post-secondary education

To learn more about Aspire’s Educational Coaching program or additional post-secondary services, call Aspire at 836.7235. ●

Melissa Woods: Transition Services at Work

Melissa Woods began receiving transition services from Aspire in fall 2005, during her sophomore year at Cheektowaga Central. Aspire’s Technology Today program was contracted by Cheektowaga Central to provide technology services to students at Cheektowaga High School. Melissa learned how to use the basics of the Windows XP operating system and Microsoft Office ‘03 (Word, Excel and PowerPoint).

Today, Melissa is finishing up her senior year at Cheektowaga while continuing to receive transition services from Aspire. She attends Technology Today at Aspire’s Tri-Main Center site twice a week.

“This year, Melissa has moved beyond the basics of operating a computer and has become quite proficient with the newest version of MS Office,” said Rebecca Smith, coordinator of technology services

at Aspire. “She has also learned how to organize herself and has become a self-directed, motivated young woman.”

In addition, Melissa has improved her ability to use the computer keyboard. Her typing speed and accuracy have increased from 27 words per minute with 83 percent accuracy, to 35 words per minute with 95 percent accuracy.

Melissa will continue to receive services from Aspire after she graduates. She will participate in Technology Today’s day habilitation program and further improve her ability to independently use a computer.

Melissa said she loves attending Technology Today and has made a



Melissa Woods is gaining technology skills that she hopes to put to work on the job.

lot of new friends there. She hopes to get a job someday where she will use a computer.

For more information about Aspire’s Technology Services, call Technology Today at 836-7232 (Buffalo) or 743-8372 (Tonawanda).

Working to Enhance Transition in Chautauqua County

In the Southern Tier, the Consolidation of Services Work Group is meeting to address some important tasks in the area of transition. Comprised of members of the Erie 2-Chautauqua Transition Committee and others, the group has three objectives.

First, the group is working on a referral flow chart to equip school personnel to better assist students with disabilities and their families. Set up according to NYS Education classification categories, the flow chart will point school staff in the right direction when looking for services related to the student's disability. All areas of disability will be addressed, including learning disabilities, autism, mental health, sensory and speech-related impairments.


Secondly, the group will compose a school district survey to help determine what transition services are needed


for their students. This information will help all people involved in transition services to address areas of need across the entire county.

Lastly, it is hoped that a system will be put in place among agencies to provide a consolidated approach to service provision. "Due to the current fiscal environment across the state, it has become apparent that a collaborative effort among providers may be the only way to provide the services needed by individuals with disabilities -- especially in the more rural counties," said Betsy E. Dixon-Lang, senior service coordinator at Aspire. "The work group is very focused and excited to be working on these key issues regarding transition."

The work group's goal is to accomplish these tasks in a short period of time so that Chautauqua County students can be even more successful as they transition from school to the adult world. ●

SAVE THE DATE!

 **May 27 - 22nd annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day. Buffalo Convention Center. People with disabilities and their families, experts from provider agencies, and local officials will convene to explore the latest issues in the field. Speakers, exhibits, parents room, workshops, awards and live entertainment.**

 **September 10 - The 7th annual Aspiring Artists Art & Wine Celebration. 5 to 9 pm at Aspire, 2356 North Forest Road, Getzville. Join us to help bring self-expression opportunities to children and adults with developmental disabilities! View the extraordinary art of Aspire's talented artists in our gallery, taste culinary samplings paired with a wide variety of wines, listen to live music, and bid on original pieces in our live auction. You'll also enjoy a silent auction and basket auction, as well as shopping in the iXpress store. Sponsorships are available. Call 716.505.5510 for more information or visit www.aspirewny.org.**

Free Workshops, Trainings for Your Staff, Parents

Aspire's specialists regularly visit schools and other sites to provide workshops and trainings on a variety of topics related to students with disabilities. Aspire can provide a valuable presentation for your next staff development day or parent night.

Workshops and trainings can be tailored to meet your needs and address the topics most relevant to your staff or parents. Just some of our topics include:

- Entitlement versus funding eligibility
- Why secure service coordination for your child?
- Summer program at Aspire Center for Learning
- Transition services for students
- Person-centered vocational profile & benefit of Level III Assessment

In addition, tours are also available at each of Aspire's program locations, such as Technology Today computer training, residential, health center, CO-OP and day program sites.

For more information or to share your ideas for a future workshop, please contact Paula Kerber at paula.kerber@aspirewny.org or 836-7235.

Transitioning to Adult Health Care



By Jane Blake, NP

Tremendous advances over the past 20 years have made it possible for an increasing number of children with chronic illnesses and disabilities to lead full and satisfying adult lives. For the older adolescent and family, this often poses a dilemma in terms of where to turn for comprehensive adult care. They may be leaving behind a long-term, secure, supportive relationship

with their pediatrician and the idea of change can be unsettling. It often presents a challenge to find adult health care providers who can deliver quality primary care to this growing population, who are knowledgeable about specialized health care and community-based services, and have facilities designed to support a variety of disabilities.

At Aspire Health Center, our team of providers aims for a competent and caring transfer of adolescents and young adults (18 and older) from pediatrics to adult care. In addition to their special needs, we recognize that their passage into adulthood also parallels that of the general population of teenagers.

This stage of life often revolves around issues such as socialization and sexuality, the importance of friends and peers, feelings of acceptance and belonging. Young adults are often moving towards more personal responsibility as they mature and gain more independence. As health care providers, it is important to promote autonomy and include the young adult in decision-making when possible, helping them become involved in their own well-being in regards to health, medication and diet.

Aspire provides complete annual physical exams and immunization updates with a focus on preventative care. At Aspire, we are fortunate to have a highly experienced team of service providers, including a full PT/OT department, speech therapy, nutritional services, and day program in addition to primary care, podiatry, neurology, psychiatry, and counseling services.

Ultimately, our goal is to provide smooth transitions based on trust, respect and understanding of each individual's clinical picture and treatment goals in order to maximize their potential, function and independence as an adult.



The new Aspire Health Center features an enlarged capacity to enable our providers to serve more patients per day.

Located at 7 Community Drive in Cheektowaga, the Aspire Health Center recently underwent a major renovation and expansion. By year's end, the Health Center will have implemented a comprehensive Electronic Health Record (HER), assisting us in ensuring safety and improving efficiency. We assure continuity of care through our 24 hour on-call service. Comprehensive coordination with outside leading physicians and specialists is available when needed.

For more information on Aspire's Health Care Services, please visit www.aspirewny.org or call (716) 505-5630.

Jane Blake is a nurse practitioner who has been meeting the health needs of people with disabilities for nearly 12 years at Aspire's Health Center. ●

Calling All Comments, Suggestions & Ideas!



If you have any comments, suggestions or a subject you would like to see in an upcoming newsletter, please contact Paula Kerber at 716.505.6792, or email paula.kerber@aspirewny.org.

Go Green

Want an electronic copy of *Transition Times*? Share your e-mail address with us and we'll add you to our database! Simply e-mail paula.kerber@aspirewny.org.