

WNY Project SEARCH™ Collaboration Update

Project SEARCH™ is a national program, and the collaborative is the first in WNY. Hosted at Beechwood Continuing Care, other partners include Aspire of WNY, Erie 1BOCES, Summit Educational Services, and ACCES-VR. The program is funded through a Tower Foundation grant and ACCES-VR with additional supports from the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

The project, now in its second year, has another group of students immersed in a real-world work environment at Beechwood Continuing Care. One of those students is Stephen Galbraith, from the Amherst Central School District, who will complete three work rotations in all at Beechwood. His first rotation had him paired with Loretta Newell, a Beechwood employee who acts as his mentor for this rotation in the Environmental Services Department.

In the beginning, Stephen worked side by side with Loretta, preparing rooms in the Hospice and Rehab units, and now he can complete most tasks independently.

“I am so proud of how independent Stephen is with his tasks,” Loretta said recently. “He is very responsible and hard-working.”

Stephen enjoys the work. “My favorite thing about Project SEARCH is working. I like washing and changing the linens, and polishing and keeping things clean for the residents.”

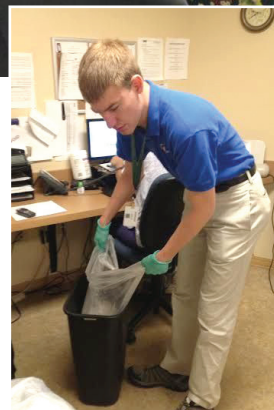
The success that Stephen is having is just another example of how effective the Project SEARCH™ collaborative can be for students. Last year’s class

had an 80% placement in paid employment and are now supported through Aspire and Summit Supported Employment services.

Good Luck to Stephen and the rest of this year’s Project SEARCH™ class for continued success.



Stephen with his mentor and friend Loretta Newell, Beechwood Environmental Services Department.



WHAT IS FRONT DOOR?

Front Door is the name given to the process that individuals undertake when seeking services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The key to Front Door is the initial step to determine if an individual is eligible for OPWDD services. During this process, an individual’s needs are identified, and a plan is developed based on the services and options that are available to them.

Front Door intake representatives can be reached by calling 1-800-487-6310, where basic referral information will be collected as well as scheduling a time for attending an informational Front Door session.

Aspire of WNY can assist interested individuals in navigating the Front Door process by calling the Intake Department at 716-505-5280, or additional information can be found at the OPWDD website at: www.opwdd.ny.gov.

Aspire

One-of-a-kind services
for one-of-a-kind people.

Aspire’s Mission:

Aspire’s mission is to support children and adults with developmental and similar disabilities, helping them to live their lives to the fullest by providing individualized assistance based on personal choices.

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Save the Date

DDAWNY Family Committee Meeting
7 Community Drive
Cheektowaga, NY
Third Tuesday of the Month
7:00 pm

For more event information, please contact Britney Buscaglia at 716-505-5514 or via email at Britney.Buscaglia@aspirewny.org

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Getzville, NY 14068

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Web: www.aspirewny.org

Transition Times

Winter 2015

Aspire of WNY’s Success Through Transition™

WOW Program: Building Pathways to Employment

Since 2011, the World Of Work (WOW) job skills enrichment program, has been combining both classroom skills training and on-the-job experience at participating local businesses for groups of school-age students with disabilities. From its modest beginning as a pilot program for one student, WOW has flourished as more parents and students learn about the possibilities that exist when doors to the world of work are opened for students who face the challenge of mental or physical disabilities.



Gina, Gabe, and Shane are all smiles at Orchard Fresh.

The program has grown to 19 students this year and now includes a WOW Phase II component for students who have graduated from Phase I, but still have school-age eligibility remaining. This expansion allows students to build on the skills and experiences they learned from Phase I while developing a natural transition towards Adult Supportive Employment.

The impact WOW has on participating students is invaluable. “I have grown in many ways while working in the WOW Program,” explains Matt Garrison, a 2013 - 2014 WOW participant. “Mostly, I feel more confident, and I am not afraid to try new things and tackle big jobs.”

In addition to benefitting the students, WOW has also created positive relationships with local employers who host the program in their place of business. Creating these long-term partnerships with participating employers ensures that WOW will continue to have real-life workplaces for students to develop and grow their confidence and employable skills.

The participating school districts in both the North and Southtowns are all in agreement about the success of WOW and the positive effect it is having on their students.



“I can’t tell you how happy we are with the experiences our students are getting with the WOW program,” explains Erin Cogan, Amherst Central School District Transition Coordinator. “You are building meaningful relationships with the students and we can see how the WOW program will benefit future students in similar situations.”

As the future marches toward Adult Supportive Employment and away from tradition Day Habilitation settings, it is safe to say that WOW will continue growing and helping students prepare for success.

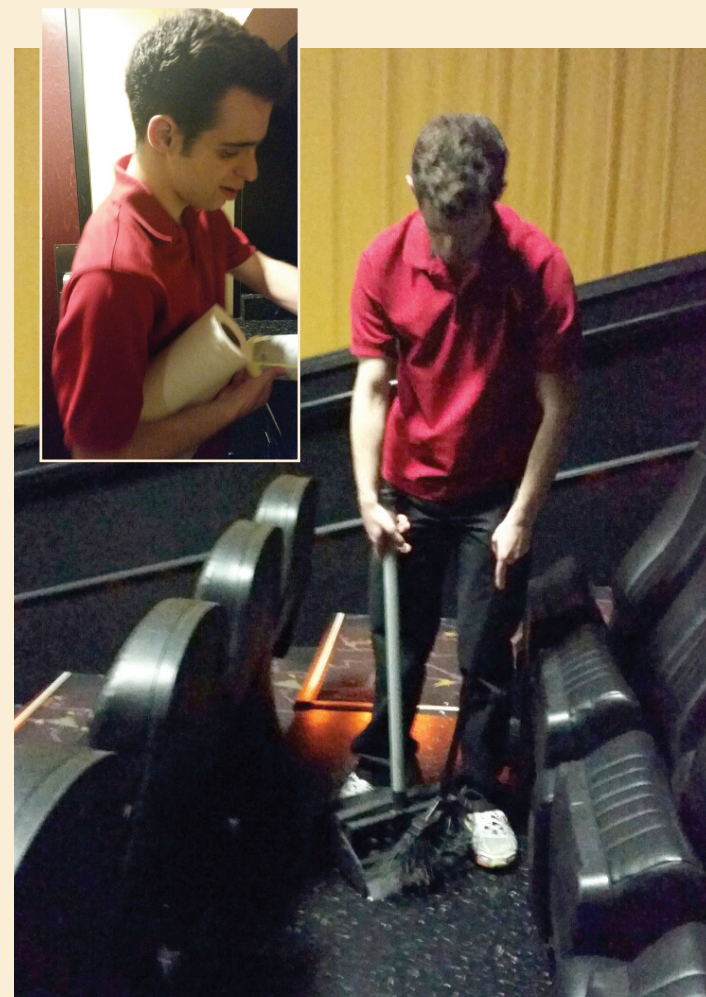
Individual Internship Spotlight:

DAVID GORCZYNSKI

As a student attending Iroquois High School, David Gorczynski began an internship at Flix Theater in September 2013. He was very active as a student and even ran with the cross country team. His hard work and friendly attitude led to his receiving the Erie County Association of Educational Office Professionals Students with Disabilities Incentive Award.

David made the most of his student internship at Flix. He was tasked with inspecting the theaters for cleanliness and order, stocking concessions, cleaning the lobby, performing computer work registering gift cards, and also working on promotional projects for management.

His hard work paid off as David was offered a paid, part-time position by Flix Theater at the conclusion of his high school internship. He has continued working there beyond high school under Aspire's Adult Program. Congratulations to David Gorczynski for being such a positive role model for other student interns!



David working hard to keep theaters clean for Flix moviegoers.

Aspire Offering New Adult Programs

Aspire of WNY is pleased to announce the launch of two new programs focusing on Pre-Vocational and Pathways to Employment Services. The first, ADAPT (Adult Development and Professional Training) is a Pre-Vocational service for adults that includes the development of an individualized learning plan to develop the skills needed to be successful in their desired field of employment. ADAPT includes internships, community involvement, volunteer opportunities and individualized classroom learning designed to develop employable skills.

MOVE (Making Opportunities via Vocational Experiences) is a program specifically designed to create a Pathway to Employment. Individuals, working with staff and their circle of support, create a transition plan aimed at future employment. Similar to ADAPT, MOVE has individuals participating in personalized community internships and classroom learning while preparing for the world of work.

Participants in these new programs are supported while developing employable skills, learning communication and interpersonal skills, mobility training, and more. The created vocational profiles and plans are updated continually to reflect new goals and individual needs. For more information on ADAPT and MOVE, contact Toni Sullivan, Aspire's Facilitator of Pre-Employment Services at 716-430-5114 or by email at: tsullivan@aspirewny.org.

Comments, Suggestions or Ideas?

If you have any comments, suggestions or a subject you would like to see in an upcoming newsletter, please contact Paula Kerber at 716.836.7235, or email paula.kerber@aspirewny.org.

Want an electronic copy of Transition Times?

Send your email to: paula.kerber@aspirewny.org and we'll send you an electronic version of Transition Times. Thanks for your interest!

A LOOK BACK AT THE 2014 Summer Work Skills Program



Pictured here are previous Aspire Summer Work Skills program employees working hard at Chili's.



This summer the Aspire Center for Learning (CFL) once again offered its extended school year program, known as Summer Work Skills. This year the program included 22 students, between the ages of 15 and 21, from throughout Western New York. The goal of the Work Skills program is to help prepare students for life after school. Throughout the six weeks, students had the opportunity to maintain academic skills in addition to building work skills at a job site.

Each morning of the Work Skills program is dedicated to working on academic and career skills. Students then intern for approximately two hours at one of seven job locations. At the work sites, the Special Education teachers and Direct Support Professionals provide job training and coaching while integrating IEP goals and objectives into the work environment. The afternoon is spent directly focusing on Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives, related services, jobs around the school, life skills, social skills, and career exploration.

This summer's job sites included: Chili's Restaurant, Anderson's (Union Road and Main Street), Fitness First, the Millennium Hotel, the Aspire daycare, Novatech Machining Corporation, and TGI Friday's. While at work students gained practice in following multi-step directions, hand/eye coordination, fine and gross motor skills, using cleaning supplies, sorting, counting, supervising children, communicating with peers and supervisors, and job etiquette.

To qualify, a student must be summer school eligible. The School district must send a letter of intent to the Aspire CFL, along with IEP and any Therapy Reports. Another item of note is that each student must re-enroll each summer. A student's participation in the program does not automatically qualify them for the following year.

For more information or to submit your district letter of intent, contact Sarah Maciejewski, Education Supervisor at Aspire Center for Learning at 716-505-5700 ext. 53044 or by email: smaciejewski@aspirewny.org.