

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 Amanda Rosenberg at 716-505-5514 or via email at Amanda.Rosenberg@aspirewny.org

Aspire of Western New York

Address: 2356 N. Forest Road
Getzville, NY 14068

Phone: 716.505.5500

Email: info@aspirewny.org

Web: www.aspirewny.org

Aspire of WNY's Success Through Transition™

Aspire Pre-Employment Services Creating Options for Students

As Supported Employment grows in prominence as an option for school-age students nearing graduation, Aspire of WNY continues to realize success in helping supported individuals prepare for the future. Two programs in particular, Adult Development and Professional Training (ADAPT) and Making Opportunities Via Vocational Experience (M.O.V.E.), are providing options after graduation for students throughout Western New York. One key to success is for the students to receive program referrals before graduation. Planning ahead ensures a smoother transition towards Pre-Employment.

ADAPT is a community-based pre-vocational service that is designed to collaboratively develop an individualized learning plan to help the student develop the skills needed to be successful in their chosen field of employment. The profile is person-centered and is updated every six months providing personalized options for the development of work skills. ADAPT also explores technology and computer-based learning opportunities, internship and community activities, and also volunteering.

M.O.V.E. is a pathway to employment program combining a part-time classroom learning environment with internships and community opportunities to facilitate the development of work skills. The internships are developed based on an individual's desired goals for the future. M.O.V.E. is designed to emulate a real-world work environment that includes one year of enrollment eligibility for each individual. While at work or in the community, the participants are accompanied by Aspire Employment Specialists providing hands-on assistance and coaching.



Cody works on his computer skills with assistance from Rose.

A key component of Aspire's Pre-Employment Services are the relationships that are developed with community partners and employers. Another relationship that shows great promise is a new Education Pilot Program between ADAPT and the University at Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center. Pilot program participants receive ADAPT services alongside an Employment Specialist while acquiring certifications in digital literacy skills, Microsoft Office, Customer Service, Child Care, and more.

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Individual Spotlight:

LIVING THE LIFE OF REILLY

Reilly Sullivan, a student at Amherst High School, dreams of one day exploring the possibility of becoming a radio host. For now, she keeps busy by attending the Aspire Co-Op and Tech Tonawanda Program. The Co-Op is a group day program that was developed and is managed by its participants. While there, Reilly enjoys working on her health and wellness in the gym and is focused on building up her arm strength and endurance. She is also hoping to expand her culinary skills while participating in the cooking activities. Another benefit of the Co-Op that Reilly is taking advantage of is exploring more community-based opportunities.

“I feel like there are a lot of different benefits from attending the Co-Op,” she explains. “It is giving me an opportunity to grow as a person, and I’m glad I can attend the program. I think others would like it as well.”

To help lay the foundation for the future, Amherst Central Schools has recently purchased a tuition-based contract for Reilly to utilize Aspire Transition and other services. This collaboration will help identify her strengths and assist in the development of her independence skills. She is excited to pursue her interests and explore a new world of



Reilly works out at the Co-Op with the support of her aide Elizabeth Licata.

opportunities. She has even kept the possibility of someday attending college on the table. For now, she is busy making new friends and is thrilled that her social network keeps expanding.

Elizabeth Licata, a Teacher Assistant, who has worked with Reilly for more than a year, had this to say about her progress, “I can see a real positive change in Reilly’s overall confidence when it comes to making new friends. She is growing and becoming comfortable in new situations.”

With her continued growth and drive to prepare for her future, it is pretty clear that Reilly can achieve just about anything that she sets out in her heart and mind. Who knows, maybe that will include her own radio show? I know I would listen, how about you?

Pre-Employment Services

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Another factor influencing the success of these programs is the work of Aspire’s Employment Specialists fostering the community connections and seeking out new opportunities. An example of this dedication was on display in Jamestown recently when Pre-Employment Specialist (PES) Rose Prinzi helped her supported individual, Cody Allshouse, earn MS-Excel certification. Cody was referred to Aspire’s Supported Employment through ACCES-VR. After completing his evaluation, it was determined that Cody needed to improve his work-related skills and build up his technology skills. When Cody reached out to Pre-Employment Services, he was looking for new community experiences and was hoping to find ways to improve his computer skills. His PES Rose Prinzi went into action and began seeking out ways to help Cody achieve his goals. She supported Cody while he attended a Community Education class on Basic Excel at Prendergast Library in Jamestown. He has already

achieved his certification in Basic Excel and is looking forward to the next level class.

Stories like Cody’s are reminders of the amazing work that is being done preparing students and adults for future employment and community activities. Through person-centered planning, providing the right supports, and collaborations in the community, the opportunities for success are growing every day.

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!

Andrew Glickman

Andrew Glickman came to Aspire of WNY after graduating from Sweet Home High School. His parents were searching for a community-based day program for Andy that would allow him to stay busy and enjoy some of the things he liked to do. After researching and touring site-based programs, Andy's parents determined that Supported Volunteering and Lifestyle Enrichment (SVLE) would be the best fit for Andy.

"After we had ruled out having Andy in a sheltered workshop, Aspire's SVLE was an obvious choice," explained Ronna Glickman, Andy's mom. "Our input was always valued, whether it was a suggestion for where Andy could spend part of his day or how to keep him really busy to burn off his energy."

At first, Andy needed many supports. Not being used to working with others in a team situation, he was not always respectful of others' personal space. He also needed many reminders to stay on task throughout the day. Due to Andy's busy personality, the staff took turns supporting him throughout the week.

The SVLE program is person-centered, meaning that each person has input on their schedule. Staff applied for multiple volunteering sites for Andy, each lasting an hour or so, to address his need to move quickly from activity to activity. In the early months of his time with SVLE, Andy was volunteering at three or more sites per day. As time progressed, The Jewish Community Center was introduced as an option to help Andy release some energy and participate in exercise at the beginning of his day. The goal was to provide him an opportunity to release energy in a positive way; that would lead to a better focus on his volunteering activities. With this in place, Andy began to calm more quickly and was able to focus for longer periods of time. Volunteer sites started to get to know him and rely on him coming in to help out. One site, The Weinburg Campus, even bought Andy his own vacuum cleaner to use while he was there doing his job.

Andy has now been in the SVLE program for almost two years. He has grown into a successful member of the team, cooperating with other group members and staff, and has learned to adjust to change rather quickly. He is valued everywhere that he volunteers, even having made a special friend by the name of Mimi at the Wedgewood Nursing Facility. He is making a positive impact in his community and even helps deliver food for Meals on Wheels. Andy's ability to



Andy enjoys helping others by delivering for the Meals on Wheels program.

focus and participate in all of his tasks have made his quality of life better in every way.

"The people who work at Aspire do not consider my child 'just another' participant," Ronna says appreciatively. "Andy is someone they truly care about succeeding in life. He absolutely loves what he is doing, and even though there was a period of adjustment for him, Aspire NEVER gave up on him. I highly recommend Aspire of WNY and am so thankful Andy is part of the Aspire family."

Accessing Your iTunes Library on a Kindle Fire

The Amazon Kindle Fire has become one of the hottest tablets on the market today. Many people we know at Technology Today are adopting the Kindle Fire as their entertainment device due to its affordability, design and easy access to Amazon. If you are someone who is considering replacing an old iPod or iPad with a new device, the Kindle Fire is a device worth considering. It is very easy to transfer your iTunes items, such as movies and music, to the Kindle. One very simple method for transferring an iTunes music library to the Kindle Fire involves uploading your files to Amazon's Cloud service. All you need is an existing Amazon.com login (or register for one).

To accomplish this, simply log on to the computer where your music library is located. Now using your

browser, visit **Amazon Music** (Note: You can access it by logging in to Amazon.com > At the Home Page> Select Digital and Prime Music> then Your Music Library). Next, click on the **"Upload Your Music"** link located on the lower-left pane of the page. You will be asked to install and then open the **Amazon Music for PC** application on your computer. When finished, open the application and select the **"Your Library"** option at the top of the screen. Select the icon to **"View Your Music on your Computer"** (found in the upper-left corner). Now, right-click on any album or song and then select **"Upload"**. Once your music uploads to the Amazon Cloud, tap the **Music Button** on the Kindle Fire home screen, select a song and then tap it to play. Listen and enjoy, it's really that simple!

WOW Success Stories: HALEY PRIOR

Haley Prior from the Depew Central School District began the World of Work (WOW) program this school year and has already shown tremendous growth. Self-described as a very shy person, Haley has been developing very strong self-advocacy skills. Her first internship was at the local Bob Evans Restaurant learning kitchen prep. While doing this, she discovered a love and interest in learning more culinary skills. She advocated with her job coach to learn the grill line. Sonya Krentz, a Bob Evans grill crew member, became her mentor and soon began teaching Haley the grill line duties.

"Haley was such a pleasure to work with," Sonya recounted. "She literally jumped for joy when she learned that she was being allowed to start on the grill line. I was amazed at how well and how quickly she picked up on things. It really was an honor to be a part of helping prepare her for the "adult world" and I am so proud of what she is accomplishing."

Haley is now interning at her session II employer and has transferred her kitchen prep and grill talents while learning new culinary skills at Brompton Heights Assisted-Living Community. To this day, Haley remains in touch with her original mentor, Sonya from Bob Evans, who continues providing support and encouragement.

Kimberly Stone, A School Counselor in the Depew Schools, spoke of Haley's experience. "The WOW program has been a perfect fit for Haley from the start. It gives her a



Haley is all smiles anytime she is working in the kitchen.

sense of belonging and knowing that she is appreciated. WOW is a place where she is learning how to believe in herself, giving her a sense of value, while building her confidence and self-esteem. We are so thankful she has been given this experience so she can grow and become better equipped to step out into the world!"

As the future marches toward Adult Supportive Employment and away from tradition Day Habilitation settings, WOW can be that bridge for the transition. With the right community and employer partners and the right supports, combined with the incredible attitudes and efforts of the students, success is sure to follow WOW long into the future. If you are a parent, school district administrator, or willing local business owner that wants more information about WOW, contact Paula Kerber, Aspire Coordinator of Student Services at (716) 836-7235 or via email at paula.kerber@aspirewny.org.