

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

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From MOVE to Man Cave



David in his "man cave" showing off his cooking skills!

In 2015 David came to Pre-Employment Services looking for a Path to Employment through Aspire of WNY's MOVE (Making Opportunities Vocational Experiences) Services. MOVE combines part-time classroom work with internships or community opportunities to learn and develop desired work skills.

When Toni Sullivan, Aspire Facilitator of Pre-Employment Services, met with David, he asked her how MOVE would be different than other Employment related services he has received in the past. In response, Ms. Sullivan explained that with MOVE, David would have more input and control into the direction his services would take. She explained to David that as long as he kept an open mind, communicated his interests, and focused on his strengths, anything was possible for the future.

David explained that his long-term goal would be to develop his own business and sell his barbeque pulled pork, with his own bottled sauce. He refers to his sauce as "his secret weapon". He also explained that he wanted to use local products and potentially employ others with disabilities. He wants to create an environment where they too could learn and work.

David and his Employment Specialist Rose Prinzi met with local Health Department Officials and explored ways that David could create a place to

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WOW Program Celebrates Another Successful Year at Illo's



Nick Loos, a student at Iroquois High School receives his Certificate of Completion for his 1st year of the WOW program.

In June, over 90 people, including proud parents, local school administrators, and excited participants of Aspire's WOW program, joined with participating employers to celebrate another successful school year. WOW, or World of Work, is now in its sixth year and provides students with varying disabilities to intern at local business partners and also receive structured classroom work skills training. The program has blossomed as more parents and students are aware of the possibilities that exist when doors to the world of work are opened for students who face the challenges of mental or physical disabilities. WOW now includes a Phase II for students who graduated from Phase I, but still have school-age eligibility. This expansion allowed the students to build upon the skills and experiences learned in their first year of WOW.

This past school year nineteen students from school districts all over Western New York participated in WOW and learned valuable, marketable job skills through classroom work and internships at participating local employers. During the celebration at Illo DiPaolo's Restaurant in Blasdell, the program benefits were echoed by school administrators and employers alike.

One of the guest speakers, Fred Torrell, Wegmans Executive Chef of Prepared Foods spoke about the relationship between WOW and Wegmans. "We were honored to host these students," claims Torrell. "You cannot place a monetary value on the impact these kids have made on all of us, both personally and professionally."

Jill Snuszka, a Special Education Teacher at Depew Central Schools, spoke about the impact WOW has had on one of her students, Haley Prior, and her sentiments are relatable to all of the students who participate in WOW. "I think the WOW program has given Haley the self-confidence to try new things and experiences that she did not feel she was capable of. Since being in the WOW program, she has an eagerness to learn new skills and takes great pride in doing quality work. I'm so proud of Haley!"

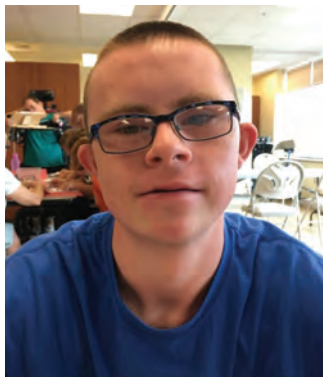
WOW has continued with tremendous growth for the 2016 - 2017 school year as 28 students are now participating in the program. New employers have signed up to host students and additional staff have been hired. The growth and success of the WOW program has been inspiring, and it is all capped off at the year-end celebration.

"What a wonderfully, enjoyable ceremony," exclaimed Tom Shriver, Special Ed teacher at West Seneca Central. "I was at times laughing, and at other times crying! It is so rewarding and encouraging to see others put so much effort and enthusiasm into all of these kids that I love so much. Thank you to WOW for doing this!"



Fred Torrell, Executive Chef Prepared Foods from Wegmans discussing his teams' experience after hosting WOW students for the first time.

Another Summer Work Skills Success Story



Caleb Sendziak has been participating in the Center For Learning's Summer Work Skills Program for the past three years. Those that have known Caleb throughout his time participating in Summer Work Skills are impressed with his steady growth and excellent work ethic.

This past summer, Caleb had an internship at the Goodwill retail outlet. While there, he worked on his organizational skills while being tasked with sorting the toys and shoe displays. Another task that Caleb performed was color coordinating the various items of clothing and sorting the different types of hangers. He also took great pride in helping to keep the entire store looking clean and presentable for the customers.

Throughout the six-week Summer Work Skills Program, Caleb worked very hard and made notable improvements in developing his independence and follow through. Congratulations to Caleb for his hard work and dedication, not only this past summer, but all of his three years at Aspire's Summer Work Skills! Great Job Caleb!

From MOVE to Man Cave

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produce his products to sell; he described it as his "man cave". He learned the Health Department standards and received certification for safe handling of food products. David also participated in several internships with a local farmer, cafe, barbeque restaurant and a local Grocer who has now hired him while he works on his entrepreneurial goals.

David's struggles after finishing high school highlight the importance of creating strong transition plans during the student's high school years and even earlier when possible. Fortunately, his year spent receiving MOVE services allowed him to define realistic goals, create a plan for long-term success, and land a paying job at The Light House Point Grocery in Mayville, NY. Aspire's MOVE services are based on OPWDD's Pathways to Employment and have quickly become a great way to identify employment goals and the types of supports needed to become more employable.

SAVE THE DATE

November 5, 2016
WNY Transportation Summit

*Sponsored by the DDAWNY
Transportation Committee*

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Genesee Community College
Batavia, NY
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Registration at 8:30am
(Lunch Provided)

The Summit entails area non-profits, public and private transit providers, state representatives, families, advocates and legislators coming together to learn, generate ideas, and network in problem solving transportation issues to meet the needs of people with and without disabilities in Western New York and Finger Lakes regions.

*For more information, contact Laura Gawel,
Event Chairperson at Laura.Gawel@aspirewny.org.*



David received a certificate for graduating MOVE Services. Shown left to right are Christine Lalka-Coordinator of Employment Services, David, Norm-owner/operator at the Lighthouse Point Grocery and Toni Sullivan- Facilitator of Pre-Employment Services.

Creating Opportunities through Assistive Technology

For the Technology Today team at Aspire of WNY, designing solutions utilizing Assistive Technology (AT) provides them with a sense of pride and exposes them to unique challenges every day. Recently, Technology Today's Brendan Stapley has been involved in helping a local student, named Alex. During his last year of middle school, Alex sustained an injury to his C1, C2, and C3 vertebrae, leaving him paralyzed from the neck down. Through extremely hard work and therapy through the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Alex has made gradual improvements and is on a promising road towards partial recovery. The Technology Today team was brought in to help design several AT supports to help Alex as he transitions into high school.

Alex's school district contracted with Tech Today to provide support and help him use a variety of adaptive equipment. One impressive component of his equipment is Alex's Windows 10 laptop and Android tablet. He can access the laptop using voice control via Nuances Dragon Dictation software, and also using sip n' puff controls to manipulate the mouse.

Another interface that Alex is using has been critical towards allowing Alex to interface with his computer, tablet, and Android phone. This controller, called GlassOuse, developed in China, is not yet available for purchase in the United States. Alex received this technology through his relationship with the Shepherd Center. The GlassOuse controller is a pair of eyeglass frames retrofitted with accelerometers, a Bluetooth transmitter, a battery in the top bar of the frames, and an attached actuator that is controlled through biting.

This highly technical interface utilizes the Bluetooth technology to send information from the eye frame accelerometers to control the mouse movement on the paired device. Alex can bite down on the actuator to control the mouse "click." The interface is extremely precise and is very easy to use.

With his GlassOuse device, a new world of possibilities has opened up for tasks that were once extremely cumbersome, or even impossible. For example, Alex can send texts via his Android phone in as little as 30 seconds, where traditional adaptive controllers might take three to four minutes. This technology is allowing Alex to navigate and control apps and documents on his laptop quickly and easily making his new transition to high school smoother and providing him with a new way of approaching his life and relationships with those around him.

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 716-505-5262, 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!

ATTENTION: PARENTS, STUDENTS, and PROVIDERS of young adults with disabilities

The Parent Network of WNY is holding a one-day learning opportunity for anyone who is involved with students or young adults with disabilities. The conference, ***Reaching for the Future: A Transition Conference*** will focus on the following areas:

- Transportation Issues
- Behavioral/Mental Health
- Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
- The reality of accessing adult services

DATE AND LOCATION:

Friday, October 21, 2016 from 8:00am to 3:00 pm
Acqua Restaurant
2192 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14207

CONFERENCE FEE:

\$25 includes light breakfast and lunch

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

visit www.parentnetworkwny.org