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A newsletter about Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities programs, supports and staff

Project SEARCH: real-life job experiences

This school year, Michael Lester, 21, is working at Miami University in Oxford. He's a part of the Project SEARCH



program which guides young adults through work experiences with the goal of obtaining a community job upon graduation. Michael is one of 11 student interns working at Miami this year.

The unpaid internships provide students with valuable real-life working experiences. Each intern works a 12-week rotation in a variety of jobs, all at the Miami campus: learning food service jobs in housing and dining halls, learning how to operate a cash register at the student grocery store, learning office tasks in the Parking and Transportation Services Office, gaining customer service skills in the Rec Sports Center, learning maintenance skills at the Corwin M. Nixon Aquatic Center and the Goggin Ice Center, and converting text books to audio files with the I.T. Department.

By having three rotations throughout the year, the students will have the chance to stretch and grow their skills, said Reena Fish, Project Search Coordinator.

"The interns are young adults and they are treated as young adults," Ms. Fish said. "They work on job skills but also social and communication skills. Work is our primary focus, but we're also focusing on developing well-rounded young adults."

Michael came into the Project SEARCH program with a myriad of work experiences that he gained from participation in Project Life two years prior. He has worked in a cafeteria, in a grocery store, at a pizza shop and in a clothing store. His favorite job so far was working at a grocery store gathering carts from the parking lot. This year he plans to learn more skills and find something that he knows he'll want to do when he graduates in the spring.

Michael's mother, Linda, said he has always been willing to work, even if he's just volunteering. However, his goal is to find a part-time job once he graduates from the Project SEARCH program.

"He wants to work at least 20 hours a week

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Project SEARCH is a partnership between Butler County Board of DD, local businesses, school districts and vocational rehabilitation programs. The goal is to provide authentic work experiences for young adults with developmental disabilities that will provide them with skills needed to gain and retain future community employment. Students participating in the program have completed their high school academic requirements but have not officially graduated.

and lead up to work full time. We're being realistic with his goals and we know that part time is a good start. Whatever the economy has available for Michael next spring, he'll take it. He's always wanted to work."

Editor's note: Michael's progress through the Project SEARCH program will be followed with a series of stories featured in future newsletters.

How the state budget affects the Board's budget

The Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities works hard to anticipate changes made to the budget due to outside influences. By planning ahead, planning conservatively, and by constantly re-evaluating how to provide services, the Board has avoided cutting services or creating more waiting lists, up to this point.

This work required much patience, trust, support and input from staff, families and providers. Expenditures have been adjusted over time to deal with the anticipated revenue losses. Although the state budget was a little different than originally thought, the overall projections were close to the actual outcome. In fact, the state budget came out a little better than was anticipated, though not significantly.

The Board's revenues are currently below funding levels from 2005, yet the Board is providing services for a growing number of individuals. The Board has tightened operations, worked on efficiency, and made "do more with less" a motto.

To read more about the state's budget and its effect on the board, visit www.butlerdd.org/news and click on "Budget Update."

Did you know?

The Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities partners with local school districts to provide services to children. School districts are responsible for providing services to children of school age (ages 3-22). The educational services that are provided to children with a disability are outlined in the Individual Education Plan or IEP. The Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Classroom Consultants work with the IEP Team to develop behavior intervention strategies based on a student's individual needs.

Last school year, the Classroom Consultants worked with 125 children. It is projected they will work with 130 students this year. School districts must request the service through a referral process, and the school districts are responsible for the cost of the service. Classroom Consultant services are part of the Behavior Support Services division, which also includes in-home support to students and their family through the Family Focus Program.

Also, school-age children may receive services from a Support Coordinator. They are frequently involved with school programs as part of the IEP Team to plan for transition services. They can help problem solve in special team meetings or educate families about other kinds of resources that can help them, for example, social security and transportation.

Currently, eight Support Coordinators provide services to 260 children in school.