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Sent: Friday, October 30, 2020 3:49 PM
To: Parr, Paige M - DWD <Paige.Parr@dwd.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: Great Article in the Mayo Clinic News center about Project SEARCH (Even made the top 4 highlighted articles)

Project Search graduates share how the program has given them purpose, independence

Oct. 29, 2020



Sean Healy, who is a lab assistant in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester.

Mayo Clinic is celebrating the graduates of the Project Search program — a 30-week unpaid internship for high school students who have developmental or intellectual disabilities.

In recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Mayo Clinic is celebrating the graduates of the [Project Search](#) program — a 30-week unpaid internship for high school students who have developmental or intellectual disabilities.

The program helps Mayo Clinic gain access to new and diverse talent pools by providing skills that meet Mayo's labor needs. And it helps students gain skills, job experience and independence.

Since its inception, the program has graduated 110 students. Ninety-four percent of program graduates have secured jobs at Mayo Clinic and elsewhere.

Here, some of those graduates share how the program has positively affected their lives, and their employers tell of the contributions the graduates are making to their work areas.

Jakob

"Project Search has given me a future and changed my life for the better in ways my younger self never thought possible," says Jakob who is an environmental services technician at Current Good Manufacturing Practice in Rochester.



Jakob's job has provided him with skills to be able to work alone, and to work harder than before. [Mike Deeds](#), Jakob's supervisor, vouches for Jakob's hard work.

"Jakob has been an outstanding member of our team," Deeds says. "He is hardworking and has great attention to detail, something that is very important for maintaining our cleanroom facility. His meticulous work helps to ensure the drugs we manufacture meet the quality standards of the Food and Drug Administration."

Sean

[Sean](#), who is a lab assistant in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, has two goals he's working toward: getting his driver's license and saving for his future.

Sean says Project Search has helped him become more confident.

Before he enrolled in the program, Sean would ask questions even if he knew the answer. With the tools he has learned in the program, Sean learned he gets work done on time if he spends less time asking about things he can do on his own.

"Project Search helped me realize I am the type of person that doesn't wait for work to come to me," he says. "I like to be proactive and ask others if they need help."

He also has realized he doesn't like to be late and has not been late since starting his job in August.

Jonah

"First things first, Project Search helped me get the job at Mayo Clinic by helping me meet people in departments and allowed them to get to know me," says Jonah, who is in Environmental Services at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. "The experience helped me with skills and with the interview bringing up things that I needed to know in Environmental Services. Also, the staff got to know me as an intern and knew the person I was when I interviewed."



As a Project Search intern, Jonah learned skills such as money management to help him be successful in life. He attended a class called Financial Fridays, where interns learn about paychecks, budgeting, credit cards, loans and managing checking accounts.

Now, Jonah is managing his money by making better choices to help him pay his bills on time and is saving for the future by putting money in a special retirement account.

"I need to be able to have these skills so if I have a family someday, I am able to pay my bills and take care of them," he says.

Before Project Search, Jonah says he was a bit shy. He now feels more comfortable talking to patients and staff, and says he feels more like an adult than he did before.

"We are very happy to have Jonah as part of our team," says [Wanda McVinnie](#), Environmental Services. "He comes in each day with a smile and has a great attitude. He's always willing to do what he needs to do to keep the patients safe and areas clean."

Jonah says his work makes him happy and gives him a sense of independence.

"Even though my days are 10 hours, I am tired, but I feel happy to have my job," he says. "I like it, and it makes me feel important. In the morning, I get myself up and make sure I am looking nice for work and make my own breakfast. My parents used to help with that, but now I am doing that by myself."

Tanner

[Tanner](#), who is a lab assistant in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, says his work gives him a sense of purpose and responsibility.



"I'm glad and proud to work at my job," says Tanner, who graduated from the program in 2018. "The experience I had with my team also has given me a sense of eternal commonality in a shared experience. The 2018 cohort's motto was '13 interns & Project Search staff, equals 1 team (13=1).' Since the start of the pandemic, the job I do makes me feel I'm a part of something bigger than me and helping humanity as a whole."

Tanner's job has increased his independence ten-fold by allowing him to participate in driver's education and living on his own. In June, Tanner had planned a trip to St. Louis but had to cancel it due to COVID-19.

"I'm hopeful for travel endeavors once the restrictions can be lifted," Petersen says.

Amanda

As a Project Search intern, one of the skills Amanda learned was to operate cash registers. Now, White is a cashier with Morrison Food Service, working at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire.



"Being a Project Search intern led me to a job that is good for me," Amanda says. "I like to be a cashier because it challenges me and it is fun as well."

She says one of the favorite parts of her job is when it is busy in the cafeteria.

"I like my job very much because everybody likes me and wants to come through my line when I'm working," White says.

Her job also allows her to be independent.

"Now that I am an employee, I use the city bus for rides to and from work," she says. "In the winter when it is snowy and icy, I use and pay for Uber or Lyft rides with income from my job. I still am living with my parents, but I do a lot of things on my own."

"Amanda has been a wonderful addition to our cashier team," says [Teresa Wagner](#), Morrison Food Service. "She embraces any and all changes that occurred during our COVID challenges, and she is very aware of the proper procedures for safety and sanitation. Amanda seems to draw customers to her, as she makes their day. Thank you, Amanda, for all your dedication and hard work."

Amanda is saving the money from her hard work to purchase a power wheelchair, which will cost about \$8,000 and give her the freedom to participate in a favorite sport: Power wheelchair soccer.

"I have been able to have more participation in my hobbies, which are bowling league, Special Olympics and power wheelchair soccer for the Chippewa Valley Hooligans," she says. "Now that I have a job, I am also able to go and hang out with friends more and spend money doing things that I enjoy."

More information

Direct questions about Project Search to [Dawn Kirchner](#), Human Resources, at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, or [Jennifer Steffes](#), Human Resources, at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire.

Sincerely,

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