



Student Transition to Employment Project



STEP



**Success Stories
2012**

Introduction

The Student Transition to Employment (STEP) Project is designed to train special education teachers and aides to become vendors with the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS). Working in close partnership with the WVDRS School Counselor, this unique project allows for individuals with disabilities who are graduating from high school to receive job placement and training from the teacher or aide who worked with them throughout their high school careers. The purpose of STEP is to provide a more seamless transition from school to work for students with disabilities. Unlike traditional adult service models, where many students do not obtain services or are just a name and a number, STEP methodology allows students to build on previous success with someone they know and trust.

STEP was made possible thanks to funding received from the WV Developmental Disabilities Council and WVDRS. To date, seventy-five (75) school system staff have been registered as WVDRS vendors, and seventy-three (73) transitioning high school students have become employed as a result of this project.

In this booklet six students in West Virginia share their stories and how they have succeeded through the STEP program.





STEP

Aaron Johnson

St. Albans, West Virginia

Aaron Johnson is a young man who graduated from St. Albans High School in 2011. Aaron lives with his mother, and his hobbies include going to the gym and working out with his dad. After going through Kanawha County Schools' Work Exploration Program, Aaron chose to participate in STEP and was successfully employed at Kmart. His manager reports that Aaron has a great attitude, offers to help other employees with their jobs, and was recently named Employee of the Month. The manager also said, "We need more employees like Aaron."

"We need more employees like Aaron."

– Kmart manager





AARON

Jonathan Farrell

Cross Lanes, West Virginia

Jonathon Farrell has remained successfully employed at the Cracker Barrel in Cross Lanes since he graduated from Nitro High School in 2009. His manager reports that he is punctual, often reports to work early, and always displays a great attitude. While he was originally hired to work in the dish room, his job duties have expanded to assisting the line cooks with food preparation, and he has also helped train new employees. Jonathan's interests include Facebook and hanging out with his friends. He lives in Cross Lanes with his parents and two brothers.

His manager reports that he is punctual...and always displays a great attitude.





JONATHAN

Tanner Hannaghan

Blue Creek, West Virginia

Tanner Hannaghan graduated from Herbert Hoover High School in 2011. He lives in Blue Creek, WV with his parents, sister, and twin brother. While attending Kanawha County Schools, he participated in the Work Exploration Program. After graduation, with the assistance of his STEP Job Coach, he went to work as a Courtesy Clerk at Smith's Food Fair in Big Chimney. His job coach reports that Tanner works three shifts per week and enjoys talking with staff and customers while he performs his job duties. In his spare time, Tanner enjoys going to the movies with his family.

Tanner works three shifts a week and enjoys his job.





TANNER

Alisa Ash

Parkersburg, West Virginia

Alisa Ash participated in the in-house version of Wood County's Community Integrated Work Program, and in her senior year she had job placements at Coldwater Creek and Pifers. She also volunteered at Noah's Ark, a non-profit thrift store. Alisa was referred to STEP by her teacher and by her DRS Counselor. Her job coach assisted her with all phases of the employment process and worked with her on the job to learn specific tasks and to develop better people skills. She has been successfully employed at Kmart since June 2010.

K-Mart is very happy with Alisa and Alisa is happy with her job.





ALISA

Tyler Hahn

Elkview, West Virginia

Tyler Hahn graduated from Herbert Hoover High School in 2011 and was assisted in finding the job of his choice at Smith's Grocery in Elkview, West Virginia. His job coach reports that Tyler was initially shy and unwilling to interact with staff and customers. After training from STEP and assistance from his job coach, he now routinely talks to customers and staff as he performs his stocking and courtesy clerk duties. In his spare time, Tyler enjoys spending time with his girlfriend.

Tyler talks to customers and staff as he performs his stocking and courtesy clerk duties.





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TYLER

Elizabeth Field

Morgantown, West Virginia

Elizabeth Field graduated from University High School in 2010. While attending University High School, Elizabeth earned a certificate in the General Foods program at Monongalia County Technical Education Center (MTEC). At this time, Elizabeth expressed an interest in working with children. She was able to complete work experience through the School to Work Action Program (SWAP) at Pleasant Day Child Care and the Morgantown Early Learning Facility. Upon graduation, Elizabeth attended MTEC as an adult where she completed the Care and Guidance of Children class. She obtained a state-level Apprenticeship Child Development Specialist certification, as well as becoming an elementary school aide. Elizabeth currently works at Morgantown Early Learning Facility in Morgantown, West Virginia as a teacher assistant. Her job duties include teaching a lesson, supervision of children, and getting the children ready for their naps. Elizabeth's hobbies include volunteering in her church's nursery and singing.

These are but a few of the many successes that students have enjoyed through their association with this project.

Elizabeth obtained a state-level Apprenticeship Child Development Specialist certification, as well as becoming an elementary school aide.



EARLY LEARNING FACILITY



ELIZABETH



STEP

Promising Practice

In 2010, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies in each state were asked to submit their nomination for best practices in Vocational Rehabilitation/Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) partnerships to a research panel at the University of Massachusetts Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC).

STEP was one of two VR/CRP transition projects selected nationally by the RRTC panel for case study research. The results of this research will be disseminated to all fifty states later this year in the hope that this practice can be replicated nationally.



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For more information visit
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