



STUDENT SUCCESS STORY:

Preparing Students with Disabilities for School-to-Work Transition

On graduation day from high school, most students have a career plan in place and are now leaving for their first year of college. Students with disabilities have the same right to be fully prepared for their future but often are without direction.

Joe Murphy is a 19 year old student attending Belvidere high school and is living with his family. Joe has a disability. Recognizing the importance of planning for Joe's future after graduation, his school support team and family contacted Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. Abilities' Student Transition Services prepares students with disabilities for the future and provides paid community integration activities.

The program, provided by Abilities' Employment Pathways Division, has been supporting Joe for the past three years. Joe has been job sampling and exploring career options in several different types of work environments. Not only is Joe receiving one to one individualized services, he is also receiving a paycheck for his completed work. Joe's transition services are provided during the school year for 3.5 hours a day. He attends school in the morning and explores career options and the world of work in the afternoon. During the summer Joe continues to develop his work skills and has been working at Quick-Chek in Washington for 25 hours a week.

"Working with students with disabilities prior to graduation is extremely important," said Sue Burns, Abilities Transition Coordinator. "The overall goal of our program is to mentor and educate students with disabilities and their families in developing knowledge of the resources available to ensure a smooth transition from school to post school adult life".

"Joey has been very fortunate and has had a wonderful experience with Abilities job coaches. There is a high level of expectation and a belief that if the bar is set high enough, that Joey will gain confidence, work harder and achieve success with dignity and perseverance", stated his mother, Laura Murphy. "He is a young man with a job and that says it all. His work experience this summer and during the school year has allowed him to blossom socially, to be a responsible adult with a paycheck, to participate in conversations with his peers, to shake hands and say thanks, to look a customer in the eye and say, "can I help you?"

Joe is planning to continue to work with Abilities while attending school during the day. He is prepared to transition to the world of work and his family now knows what his capabilities are, his interests, and the supports that he will need to be successful.

For more information about Abilities' School-to-Work Transition services contact Sue Burns at Employment Pathways at (908) 689-7460 or email transition@abilitiesnw.com.