



# Project SEARCH

Milwaukee County Zoo  
MKE-Mitchell International Airport



# What is Project SEARCH?

- The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business led, nine month school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace.
- Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations.
- Currently operates 539 sites in 48 states and 10 countries with 29,322 people served



# How did it start?

- Started in 1996 at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center by Erin Riehle, Director of Cincinnati Children's Emergency Dept.
- Since hospital served individuals with developmental disabilities it made sense to commit to hiring them.
- Fill high turnover, entry-level positions
- Partnered with Susie Rutkowski, Special Education Director at Great Oaks Career Campuses
- Together they launched Project SEARCH





# Program Overview

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- Program group of 10 – 12 young adults with a variety of disabilities
- Based on collaboration between partners which can include the host business(es), schools, DVR, service providers, Long Term Care, families, etc.
- Total workplace immersion
- Internship rotations for career exploration and job skill development
- Customized job search assistance
- Goal of competitive employment
- Runs for the traditional school year and from 8am-2:30 pm, Monday-Friday





# Eligibility Requirements

- Milwaukee County Zoo (Adult)

- Be between 18 to 24 years of age
- Completed high school credits necessary for graduation by September program start date
- Must have an active plan and funding support from Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) at time of program application
- Must have or be eligible for long-term support (Family Care/IRIS) or have other available funding sources, such as private pay
- Ability to manage personal hygiene, grooming, and daily living skills
- Maintain appropriate behavior and social skills in the workplace
- Be able to communicate wants and needs effectively and take direction from others
- Ability to work independently; understand and follow safety guidelines (13:3 intern to staff ratio)
- Must have reliable transportation



## Internship Rotations



## Milwaukee County Zoo

- Zoological Society
- Special Events
- Welcome Center & Guest Services
- Food Service
- Environmental Services
- Grounds & Maintenance
- Animal Commissary
- Animal Health
- Small Mammals
- Aquatics and Reptile Center
- Visitor Services
- Horticulture
- Warehouse
- Aviary
- Gift Shop
- Education Department



# Eligibility Requirements

## Mitchell International Airport (Youth)

- MPS students, still in high school and between the ages of 18-21
- In their final year of high school and will be accepting their diploma after completion of Project SEARCH
- Desire to work in the community at the end of the Project SEARCH program.
- Active plan and funding support from Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).
- Have or be eligible for long-term support.
- Ability to manage personal hygiene, grooming, and daily living skills
- Will benefit from participation in a variety of internships.
- Access to transportation to/from the Project SEARCH program site.
- Ability to work independently; understand and follow safety and security guidelines (10:3 intern to staff ratio)



## Internship Rotations



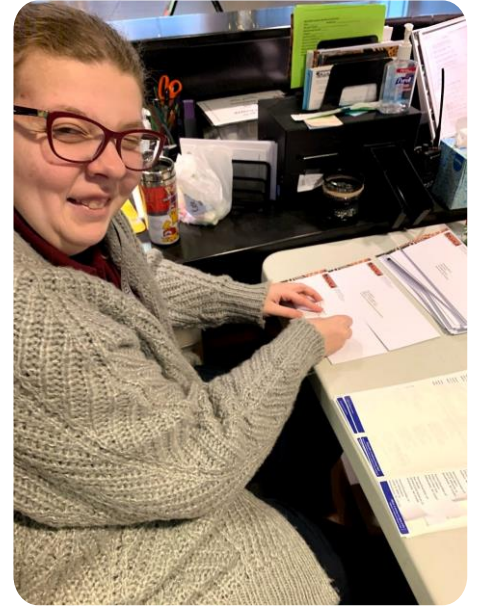
## Mitchell International Airport

- HMS Host
  - Cousins
  - Starbucks
  - Usingers
  - Chili's
  - Great American Bagel
- Paradies Lagarde're
  - Warehouse
  - Summerfest (gift shop)
  - Trip Advisor (gift shop)
  - Bay View Gift Exchange (gift shop)
  - Miller Valley (gift shop)
  - Bronzeville Crossing (gift shop-opened May 2020)



## Project SEARCH Employment Criteria

- Employment in an integrated setting (that is, working alongside coworkers with and without disabilities).
- Year-round work (not seasonal employment)
- 16 hours/week or more
- Paid the prevailing wage





# Outcomes

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- Zoo 61.54 in jobs, 30.77% met criteria
- Airport 60% in jobs, 40% met criteria
- Average for both sites 60.87% in jobs, 34.78% met criteria

(2019-2020)

- These numbers still include interns that chose not to work due to COVID-19  
Adjusted numbers w/o those interns is zoo: 77.8%, airport and 100% airport in jobs
- National Project SEARCH outcome data still not available for 2019-2020



# Success Story

## Erika

Project SEARCH intern at the airport for 2019-2020 school year

Struggled with building relationships, managing stress and regulating her emotions

Completed Project SEARCH and wanted her job to incorporate her passion for baking

Completed a Temporary Work Experience at Grebe's Bakery packaging baked goods

Built great natural supports, friendships and loved coming to work each day

Hired on after her TWE and set a new goal of becoming a cake decorator







## Success Story Gabrielle



Project SEARCH intern at the zoo for the 2018-2019 school year

Responsible, hard-working and professional intern that wanted to help people or animals upon graduating from Project SEARCH

Obtained her job right after graduation at the ACL Lab at Aurora West Allis Medical Center as a Microbiology Lab Assistant II

Tasks include receiving specimens for laboratory analysis, performing testing and/or result entry, specimen processing and computer data entry as needed





## Success Story King

Project SEARCH intern at the zoo for the 2015-2016 school year

Outstanding smile and personality

Learned through Project SEARCH he was amazing at customer service

Landed a job at Home Depot right after graduation as a greeter where he gets to welcome each customer, answer phones, check receipts and provide customer service

Employee of the Month

Has become a very familiar face in advocating for disability rights and self-advocacy



Questions?



# Contacts

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