



# Spotlight on the Future

## Manatee ESE Transition Programs

Spring 2004

### Spotlighting the Future of Student Employment

This edition of Spotlight on the Future will focus on the ultimate student outcome, successful transition to gainful employment. In this edition you will read about students who have overcome various adversities. However in the process, they have learned how to capitalize on their individual strengths. To quote John Wooden, "Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." Read on to find out what our students CAN do.

*Diane Roberts*  
FDLRS/ESE Transition Specialist



## Michael Denton

### Southeast High School



How many students can start a job training opportunity at school to learn a skill and end up with a car? Well, that's exactly what happened to Michael Denton when he went to work for Jake's Automotive this year. Mike's genuine interest in learning the trade, coupled with his natural aptitude and his ability to get along with his co-workers have made him a stand-out student trainee in the program. His supervisors feel that his ability to take constructive criticism as such, has allowed him to adapt to the job he is being trained to do in a much more efficient manner. Owner Gary Bogart says that the car was an opportunity that presented itself right before Christmas break. They had been given the title to a car that the owner felt was beyond his need to repair. Bogart felt Mike was capable of doing the work required to get the car running again (with a little help) and offered the car to him, if he wanted to take on the challenge. Mike not only took on the challenge (the car is now in working condition), but he also took the class necessary to get his permit, something he had been putting off doing, and he's driving! Bogart feels that this is job training in its purest form: adult figures, other than teachers, parents or family members, that are giving advice and offering direction . . . and the student is listening! Says Bogart, "How cool is that?"

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## Clayton Rhodes

### Southeast High School



When Clayton Rhodes began working in the Radiology department at Manatee Memorial Hospital, he knew that he wanted to continue in the medical field in some capacity. That capacity presented itself last month when Clayton was offered a job working third shift in Radiology. Clayton pulls x-rays and gets films ready for the doctors to read. He enjoys working there and plans to continue at MTI after graduation in one of their medical fields.





## Robert & William Buechner

Southeast High School

Success has come in twos for the Buechner family. Twins Robert and William have both accepted jobs that were offered to them due to their participation in the Manatee Memorial Hospital job training partnership. Robert was hired by Aramark, the company that runs the food services for the hospital, in December of 2003. Though he was hired in the sanitation department, his training as a prep cook through OJT has given him the opportunity to sub in that area on a regular



basis. Being able to perform a variety of job tasks often allows him to work a greater number of shifts per week than what the sanitation position would have

afforded him. His brother William was hired in Central Stores last month. Because there is very little turnover in this department, William is the first job training student hired there in our thirteen year history! William's outgoing manner and his willingness to work hard and help others were the reasons he was considered for the job. We are very proud of the Buechner brothers and know that they will continue to provide quality work at their job-sites.

## Calvin Dawes and Tasha Kit

Bayshore High School



**Good things happen to those that wait.** Calvin Dawes and Tasha Kit waited until they had proved themselves to management at Westminster Communities and then asked for part-time employment. Both students worked hard and stayed focused in the non-comp program and they were rewarded with part-time employment.

Calvin and Tasha both continually get good marks from their supervisors for their work ethic. Calvin echoes both of their feelings when he talks about how school and work can go hand in hand. He talks about how it allows them to feel success and head them towards a rewarding career path.

Mr. John Kitchen, Food Service Director for Westminster Communities saw both student's potential and gave them the opportunity to prove themselves. Bayshore High is very fortunate to have the support of everyone in management at Westminster Communities (The Towers and The Shores).



# Jeremy Braden

Palmetto High School



Little did Palmetto High tenth grader, Jeremy Braden, know that his chance meeting with Palmetto High graduate Bob Ferencze at De Soto Speedway would lead to a potential fast track career in the high performance marine industry. Today, eleven months later, Jeremy's OJT job brings him face-to-face with world famous powerboat racers.



Jeremy is employed by Innovation Marine, Inc., a family owned company located at 8011 15<sup>th</sup> Street East near the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport. Innovation Marine rebuilds, maintains and installs high performance engines used by marine enthusiasts and boat racers, as well as the United States Navy.

Jeremy is learning the marine

industry from the ground up. From teardown to cleanup his supervisor Dennis Mathe, lets Jeremy do it all. Dennis and Jeremy are both looking forward to next November when Jeremy turns 18, the date when many new opportunities will become available to him.

When asked what a high-tech company like Innovation Marine is looking for in a student, Dennis Mathe said "A student with good basic academic skills, a willingness to work and a good attitude...we will supply the rest (training and opportunity)."

Other evidence that Jeremy has found the right career home came in the form of an automobile accident. In February, Jeremy was "rear-ended" twice in the same week. One accident totaled his truck and left him with neck and back pain. Jeremy was concerned that his recovery time might lead to the loss of his job. But to his great surprise and joy, Innovation Marine is not like many other companies in this highly competitive industry. They allowed Jeremy the time to recover and find a new form of transportation. Dennis Mathe, jokes "Jeremy seems to have a propensity for backing into people. We've decided to take the reverse gear out of his truck so that it won't happen again!"

Hats off to Jeremy Braden and his employer, Innovation Marine!!!

# Joseph Frederick

Manatee High School



Joseph Frederick has overcome the adversity of being homeless at the young age of 15. There were times when he walked from Manatee High to Palmetto to go to his job. Now, at the age of 18, he will be receiving his diploma from Manatee High School. Joseph works at CBI, USA, Inc. where he has been taught how to operate all of the machinery needed to construct ceiling structures. He works full time, and on the weekends he likes to fish for snook. Joseph recently bought a canoe. Rusty

Marks, Supervisor at CBI, stated that Joseph has great attendance, a good attitude, and takes direction well.

Joseph has met three of his life's goals: He has gotten a good job, he has obtained and pays rent for his own apartment, and he will be receiving his high school diploma in May. His future goals include buying a car and continuing his education at MTI.

Stu Bergmann, Diploma Option 2 Job Coach, sums it all up by saying, "Despite all the obstacles he has gone

through, he always has a smile on his face." Congratulations Joseph!





## Michele Edwards

Lakewood Ranch High School

Michele Edwards has been in The LRHS Career Experience Program since it began in 2000. She has become the top worker in our program. She is the first and only student in the OJT program to have worked in every department at Wal-Mart. Michele is well known throughout the entire store. Her mother was amazed when she took her shopping there not long ago. "Everyone knows Michele," she exclaimed. To know Michele

is to like her. She is a genuine, caring person who works hard to get the job done well and on time. She will look for something to do if she runs out of work. That is a real plus for the employer. It's not just the associates who notice her warm ways and conscientious manner. Michele has also received "good job associate" letters from customers. The best news is that Michele has applied to Wal-Mart and hopes to work in the bakery. She is



being seriously considered by the head of bakery after she graduates from Lakewood Ranch High School this spring. We wish her the best. Good Luck, Michele!

## David O'Connor

Manatee High School



David O'Connor first realized he had the music bug when he was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Orange Ridge Elementary School. He would tap incessantly on his desk which was understandably very annoying to the teacher. Hoping to curb the tapping urge in school, his dad bought him a drum set, and he has been "tapping" ever since. Since David loves music and plays in a band, the OJT teacher at Manatee High, George Corombos, found the perfect OJT placement for David. He placed David with the music teacher, Mr. Charles Willis, at Ballard Elementary.



Mr. Willis says David helps him by starting up the keyboard lab in the mornings, making copies, running errands, and working with students to help them prepare for their school musical. David

recently helped the school by uppacking and setting up about 20 high-tech keyboards.

David hopes to continue in the OJT program until he graduates. He thinks it is cool to receive great grades for a job he enjoys. Because of this program, David has expressed an interest in becoming a music teacher. Mr. Willis, has encouraged him to keep up his studies in all classes and to keep playing in his band and writing songs. The OJT program has given him a chance to explore the school setting for possible employment in his field. He hopes to become a successful musician. We wish him the best of luck.



## Vernon Gordon

Palmetto High School

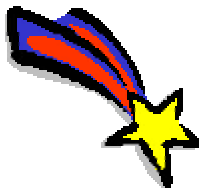
Vernon Gordon is a hard working senior at Palmetto High School. However, a year ago he was a young man who didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. Through the years at Palmetto High, he has experienced some success mixed with a lot of difficulty. Vernon hung out with the wrong crowd at times, and made poor choices. Fortunately, he persevered with his education and tried different jobs until he found one that interested him. Through the ESE OJT



program, he has found his niche at Riverpark Senior Residence where he works in the dietary department.

Nathan Bowes, Vernon's supervisor, at Riverpark, remembers the day the elevator suddenly broke minutes before the residents were to eat lunch. Vernon was the first to grab an arm full of trays, taking them up the stairs to make sure the residents would have their lunch on time. Vernon shows compassion and a caring concern for the residents at Riverpark.

Vernon is now looking into MTI, and continuing his culinary training. Congratulations to Vernon Gordon, and the fine job he is doing at Riverside Park.



## Myrlene Mettelus

Southeast High School



The best OJT student ever," that is the way, Nancy Taylor, Manager of the Grapevine Café, at the School Support Center describes Southeast High senior, Myrlene Mettelus. Mrs. Taylor also commented on how well Myrlene follows directions and has a great attitude. Myrlene says that since she was placed in the on the job training program it has definitely helped with her attendance. Steve Jensen, Myrlene's job coach, says that she has received very high recommendations from the staff at the Grapevine. Mr. Jensen also says that her attendance is excellent, and that she is an asset to the district OJT program. Mr. Jensen remarked that because of Myrlene's excellent work habits he would gladly recommend her for other positions."

## Alex Borja

Southeast High School

Alex Borja began his job training experience because he needed an alternative to the traditional school setting. He initially started at Headliner Express because he liked buying and fixing up old cars and he thought he might be able to use some of what he would learn there on his own cars. Not only did Alex become proficient at putting in headliners, he also showed a talent for sewing upholstery, which meant he could also redo seat covers, another aspect of the business. Alex's supervisor and the owner of both Headliner Express and Boats-R-Russ, recognized his talent and recently offered him a full time job when he graduated, which happened in March of this year. The hope is that Alex's talent for sewing can be used in making boat covers as well, which is part of a mobile business that is also done by this company.



## Community Experience on the High Seas



Thirty-three students from Mrs. Sayre's, Ms. Pinder's, Mrs. Woodson's and Mr. C's class took a 3 hour sail on the DANIEL WEBSTER CLEMENTS. It is a 72-ft. topsail schooner that serves as a floating classroom.

We started with a history of the schooner and how it was important to the development of Bradenton. After motoring out into the Manatee River, the students sang a sea chantey while hoisting the sails. Students then participated in four learning stations : Plank-

ton, Fish, Water Quality, and Navigation. A bag lunch was enjoyed followed by a ringing of the ship's bell for a five-minute moment of silence to listen to the sounds of the water and the groaning of the ship under sail. The trip was concluded with a sing-a-long and all present taking an oath to be good stewards of our water.

Students received many compliments on their fine behavior and good knowledge base. Thanks to all who made this trip such a big success.

*Editors Note: Jim Comkowycz (Mr.C) teaches EMH students at King Middle School. Jim was recognized by the Division on Career Development and Transition as Educator of the year in 2003. Jim is always looking for ways to help his students transition into the real world of work and community experiences.*



## Another Successful End-of-Year Banquet for Southeast High



Many thanks to Manatee Memorial Hospital for hosting the annual awards banquet for the Southeast High School On-the-Job Training Program held on April 27<sup>th</sup>. Family, friends, and educators were treated to a very special recognition program and a great dinner.

# Project TIP

## (Transition to Independence Process System)

Southeast High School and Rowlett Elementary teamed up this year to make mouse trap cars. The races and celebration were held at Southeast High on April 27. Project TIP was created to assist young people with emotional/behavioral difficulties in making a successful transition across all domains of employment, education, living situation, and community life. Congratulations to Mr. Shane Hall from Southeast High and Mrs. Sandy Riley Hawkins from Rowlett for their collaborative efforts in making Project TIP a success for their students.



## Mr. "C" and Class Celebrate a Successful Year!!!

Mr. C. and Mrs. Playdon, of King Middle School, celebrate with their students at their end-of-year awards banquet on May 5 held at the China Buffet. Awards were given for reading, math, cooking, attendance, and the "grand quantum" award for citizenship. The classroom business, "Balloons and More," helps fund the annual awards banquet.



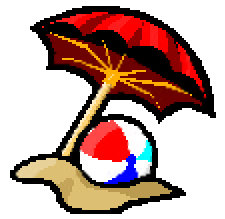
## VISIONS 2004

The VISIONS 2004 Conference was held in Jacksonville on February 11-13. Many wonderful staff development sessions on transition issues were presented.





# SUMMER WORKSHOPS



**Mark your calendars for the following Summer Course Offerings:**

**What:** Standing Up for Me: Strategies for Teaching Self-Determination Skills  
**Who:** ESE teachers: All levels  
**When:** June 14, 2004 (9:00-12:00)  
**Where:** Johnson House (upstairs)  
**RSVP:** Call or email Diane Roberts, 708-8770 ext. 2186 by May 26, 2004

**What:** Turn Key Transition: The latest information regarding Transition issues plus an overview of Manatee Counties Transition Programs.  
**Who:** ESE teachers: Secondary  
**When:** June 15, 2004 (9:00 – 12:00)  
**Where:** Johnson House (upstairs)  
**RSVP:** Call or email Diane Roberts at 708-8770 ext. 2186 by May 26, 2004

**What:** Great Ideas for Great Schools: Participants will receive a CD with a myriad of information on accommodations, software, talking computers, and internet links.  
**Who:** ESE teachers, all levels  
**When:** June 8, 2004 (9:00 12:00)  
**Where:** My Learning Lab  
**RSVP:** Call or email Diane Roberts, 708-8770 ext. 2186 by May 26, 2004

**What:** Premier Assistive Technology (hands-on training) integrating assistive technology into a classroom environment to help students develop life skills that will take them beyond school.  
**Who:** ESE teachers, all levels  
**When:** June 7, 2004 (9:00 – 3:30)  
**Where:** My Learning Lab  
**RSVP:** Call or email Diane Roberts, 708-8770 ext. 2186 by May 26, 2004

**What:** Alternate Assessment Update  
**Who:** ESE teachers, all levels  
**When:** June 16, 2004 (9:00 – 12:00)  
**Where:** Johnson House (up stairs)  
**RSVP:** Call or email Diane Roberts, 708-8770 ext. 2186 by May 26, 2004

**Note:** Class size is limited to 30 participants. Teachers will receive a stipend.

