

# TOGETHER

February/March 2020

## Celebrating a decade of Project SEARCH and BELL at BOCES 2

Every young adult deserves the opportunity to learn independence, find friendship, challenge themselves academically and start a career. Ten years ago, Monroe 2–Orleans BOCES and the Department for Exceptional Children began offering two programs that give our post-high school students (ages 18–21) pathways to those goals, with the individualized supports they need to be successful: Project SEARCH and Bridge to Earning, Learning, & Living (BELL).

### Project SEARCH

Launched with grants through the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) and the Golisano Foundation, Monroe 2–Orleans BOCES Project SEARCH was the first to be established in the Rochester area. A one-year program, Project SEARCH fosters independence and helps participants learn skills needed for employment. BOCES 2 students alternate classroom instruction with a variety of hands-on internships at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC). Program partners include The Arc of Monroe, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services–Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES–VR) and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). More than 110 students have used our Project SEARCH to jumpstart their lives since 2010.

Three of those first-year Project SEARCH interns continue to be valued URMC employees. “Project SEARCH taught me the importance of

“Project SEARCH helped me find a career in Patient Accounts at the University of Rochester Medical Center. I learned how to do the job correctly and keep employment.”

– Spencerport graduate John Dasfaias

having a job, what I needed to be successful,” said Joseph Donato, who is a Churchville–Chili alumnus and works in Environmental Services. “I learned how to deal with different situations and how to relate to my co-workers and supervisors. I’m glad that I went through Project SEARCH! It’s amazing how the program gave me the skills to be able to keep my job for the past nine years!”

Donato’s URMC coworker Travis Lewis, also from Churchville–Chili, said, “Project SEARCH helped me get a job! I learned the importance of good attendance and how to take the RTS, not only to get to work but to travel around town.”

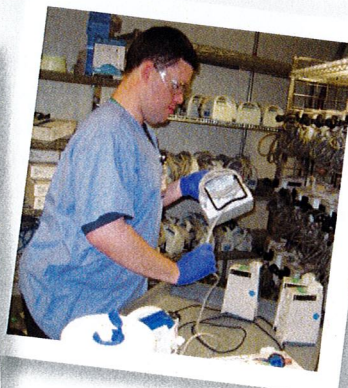
Spencerport graduate John Dasfaias said, “Project SEARCH helped me find a career in Patient Accounts at the University of Rochester Medical Center. I learned how to do the job correctly and keep employment.”



Bridge to Earning, Learning, & Living (BELL)

Our BELL program is a partnership between Monroe 2–Orleans BOCES, CP Rochester and Roberts Wesleyan College. It is for students who crave a college-based experience, complete with an active campus life, academic enrichment and the acquisition of social and vocational skills necessary for employment and independence.

Also started with a grant in 2010, BELL began small, with employment as its main goal. Over time, the two-year program has become more experiential and life-changing. Now, BELL students take about 12 hours of coursework each semester, which includes learning independent living skills as well as their choice of general college-level classes. Each has an academic coach and student peer mentors to help them adjust to college life. BELL students are now an integral part of the Roberts Wesleyan College campus, welcomed by fellow students and included in campus life, events and graduation ceremonies. *(continued on p. 4)*





*(continued from cover)*

## Celebrating a decade of Project SEARCH and BELL at BOCES 2

“Every student has their own path,” said Monroe 2–Orleans BOCES Transition Supervisor Nicole Littlewood. “One might choose BELL right out of high school, and then participate in Project SEARCH as an adult. Another may begin with Project SEARCH and then go straight to employment. There’s not just one way. It’s very flexible. We support students in their decisions with a person-centered planning approach. We tell them, ‘You CAN.’”

Ten years of BELL and Project SEARCH at Monroe 2–Orleans BOCES have helped scores of young adults find independence and confidence. Based on continued student interest, the programs will continue to grow. “Our many partnerships just get stronger,” said Littlewood. “There are so many great people involved, every step of the way, from program coordinators, counselors, teachers and trainers to parents, guardians and families. We’re particularly grateful to those families and to our districts for sharing their students with us.”

*(The Department for Exceptional Children is featuring inspiring stories of Project SEARCH on their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/BOCES2EC](http://www.facebook.com/BOCES2EC). Come celebrate with us!)*



## Cosmetology students win annual competition

This year’s annual cosmetology competition was held Jan. 9 at WEMOCO. The competition judges hairstyles created by both the junior and senior students in the CTE cosmetology program. Students had an hour to create a style, using the time to do a roller set on the hair and then styling an updo. Judges critiqued the looks, using a rubric for creativity, the level of difficulty of the style and technical factors.

Students say the competition was stressful and that the room was quiet with everybody focused on their work.

“Figuring out what you want to do and then actually doing it [is stressful],” says junior Nyaja Williams (Gates Chili). “You can have an image in your head and it can come out completely different.”

Three former cosmetology students served as judges for the competition. Danielle DiLorenzo and DrewAnn Godfrey are graduates of the 2013 class and Hannah Miller graduated from the program in 2015. All three graduates are now certified beauticians.

The competition is held once a year, with two winners – one junior and one senior – selected from the group. Winners this year were senior Kaitlynne Robbins (Greece) and junior Nia Greer (Brockport).

Both students said adjusting the style throughout the competition was the most challenging part.

“There were so many people involved and I didn’t really think I stood a chance,” said Greer, all smiles. “I had something in mind and had to switch it up... I was freaking out because of the timing.”

Robbins says the competition last year moved her to work harder and Greer looks forward to competing again next year.

