

Project 10 STING RAY presents

The STING RAY Current



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Connections Are Key

www.project10.info

by Michael Shaffer

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As one can tell from reading the student-authored articles in this student-designed newsletter, life has been busy at Project STING RAY.

As program coordinator for Project STING RAY, I have been excited to assist the students in making connections with individuals on the campus of USF St. Petersburg and in the local community. The task was easier than expected, due in large part to the enthusiasm of the students and the warm and receptive environment and attitudes of the students, staff, and administration of USF St. Petersburg. After identifying their interests and skills through classroom activities completed with the curriculum coordinator, Ruth Dobkin, I scheduled an interview with each student so that we could discuss possible work and volunteer opportunities on and off campus. During these interviews, it was very apparent that the students who had been accepted into Project STING RAY were an ambitious and motivated group of individuals. Although each student was readily able to identify his or her



5 of the 6 first STING RAY students on the USF St. Petersburg Campus

likes and dislikes, he or she also expressed a willingness to broaden horizons and try new things.

With an attitude like this - how could we fail? The students and I decided that the most logical way to start looking for work experiences was to venture out into the community to speak with people. By exploring relationships that already existed through the Project 10 office on campus we were able to make initial contact with individuals and explore opportunities that might be available for the students' work experiences. Once these doors were open, the students sealed the deal by demonstrating their conscientious work ethic and shining personalities. The students and I are looking forward to their return to campus in the Fall of 2010 and the many opportunities that surely await them.



STING RAY students at a Ray's game



Great Opportunity: A Word from the STING RAY Curriculum Coordinator

by Ruth Dobkin

When I was first told about Project STING RAY and the opportunity that would be afforded to a group of students with disabilities, I was amazed and hoped that I could be a part of it. After I was offered the teaching position and shown the curriculum, I understood that the possibilities were endless: college classes, mentors, campus activities, jobs, campus or community living.

On March 1st, I was part of the interview team. The thirty eight applicants had been narrowed down to twelve students to be interviewed. They were truly the cream of the crop and made choosing six very difficult. Each of the students brought something different to the program. The students came from Extended Transition programs and most had Community Based Vocational Education experience.

Since the students would not be auditing a college class until August, the first few months would be to get to know each other and the campus, explore and begin job shadowing opportunities, obtain a list of possible classes for fall, meet people on campus, take part in campus activities, get to know the surrounding community and what it had to offer.

We spent a lot of time learning how to read the bus schedules to plan our trips. We have taken advantage of this time and have travelled by city bus to the Gateway Mall, Pet Pal Animal Shelter (to see Jose at work), and Ten Pin Lanes. We also went to the Morean Arts Center, Pier Aquarium, Suntrust Bank, and Publix.

I have seen such growth in the students. One student received travel training to learn how to ride the city bus and mastered changing buses two times. Another student volunteers in the community three mornings a week, and learned how to take two trolleys and a bus to and from school. One young man volunteered in the mailroom, helping to deliver mail all over campus. His supervisor encouraged him to converse with each person he delivered mail to, and this helped increase his communication skills. They have all learned to navigate the campus, and even lead tours when we have visitors. They have become more comfortable taking advantage of the campus facilities, like the game room, gym and fitness center, and pool. The students are becoming more responsible, keeping cell phones on so we can reach each other, and getting to appointments on time on their own.

I have had the pleasure of having a wonderful ESE Associate, Mrs. Donna Slone, to work along side me. She has bonded with the students and works as hard as I do to make this a positive and caring environment. She understands the objective of increasing their independent functioning skills and will encourage each student to do as much for him/herself as possible.



Although I always look forward to summer vacation, this is the first time in many years that I feel I could have kept going. I will spend time this summer relaxing and traveling, but also thinking of new ideas for the coming school year.

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"I have seen such growth in the students."



Campus Life

by Evan L.



Evan playing pool in Davis Lounge. Pool games can get very competitive!

When I first came to project STING RAY on the USF Campus I looked forward to meeting new friends.

I found that Davis Hall is a nice place to hang out. Room 107 is the student center. It has a pool table, ping pong, air hockey and foosball games. In another area there are snack and drink machines. They also have an area to sit and watch TV. A lot of students study there, especially on their laptops.

I go to Davis 107 to play pool with other students. I have made some friends there and I feel really good when they see me on campus and say hi. There are other places you can go around campus to meet people like the welcome center, Library, pool, Barnes and Nobel and Chick Fil A.

The Gym & Basketball Court

by Trent T.

I was happy to know there was a fitness center on campus when I was selected as a student for the STING RAY program. I'm able to go to the fitness center 3 or 4 times a week. They have workout equipment that I use: the ab machine to tighten up my ab muscles, weights to do arm curls and leg lifts. Upstairs there are a lot of cardio machines: treadmills, bikes, and elliptical trainers. These ma-



Trent working out his abs, back, & arms at the USFSP

chines are real good for your heart and burn a lot of calories.

It's good to have a fitness center on campus, because it gives the students and faculty a chance to work out when they don't have classes. There is no cost to the students because it is covered under the student activity fee. In the same building, I can play basketball. Instead of a hardwood floor it has carpet. It feels different to play on this floor. Sometimes other students come in and play with us.



Trent & Evan playing basketball

The Pool

by Amanda H.

Christina and I go to the pool and eat lunch at 12:00. Then after lunch I and other STING RAY students go to the pool to 12:45 to 2 o'clock. When we get there we go get a lock for the dressing room and we go either play volleyball or swim, or some of us go lay-out in the lounge chairs.

On May 11th I and the STING RAY students took a kayaking class. Our teacher's name was Brent the lifeguard that was teaching us how to move to the left, right, backward, forward, and also how to flip the boat over and get back in. It was a great experience!

Monday through Friday there is always a different lifeguard out watching everybody at the pool.

These are a couple of lifeguards names I know Carson, Mallory, Adam, Brent, Jon.

The shallow part of the pool is 3 feet and the deepest part is 10 feet. And its 11 feet tall.

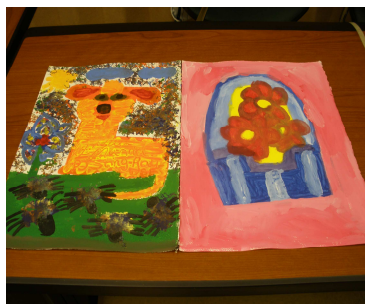
The pool is heated up to 75 degrees.



Amanda about to spike the volleyball!

Experiences: Morean Art Museum

by Christina M.



Some samples of art created by Christina and Amanda at Morean Arts Center.

On April 3, 2010, my class and I went to The Morean Arts Center located at 719 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg. Barbara Arevalo took us on a tour and we learned about different artists and their paintings. I liked the way the Artist used the same shapes and colors. There was a painting I really liked named New Baby. I liked this painting because it's beautiful and reminds me of a newborn baby. We also saw art

work that was done by seniors in a college art class and middle school art students. After our tour we had the chance to create our own art work. I used the paint, sponges that were cut into different shapes, paint brushes and a cotton swab. I made a picture of a basket of flowers. I would like to go back to the Morean Arts Center for more lessons on painting. I had a really good time.

Experiences: Kayak Lesson

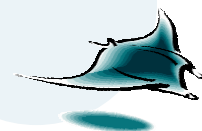
by Jose C.

At USF, students can check kayaks out for free at the Waterfront. The STING RAY students wanted to use the kayaks but first we had to know about kayak safety. We learned safety in the water so that if something should happen we know what to do. For example, if we tip over we know how to get back in the kayak. The safety instructor was Brent. He showed us how to go forward, back, turn, and stop. We learned that because we can go in the harbor later with the kayaks. I enjoy being around the water and using the kayaks.



Lifeguard Brent helping Jose kayak in the Waterfront pool.





Experiences: The Ray's Game

by Evan L.

The Tampa Bay Rays were playing great so my class wanted to go to a game. We got complementary tickets and it was really nice of the Rays to get the tickets for us. They were really good seats. Raymond came by our seats and he gave high fives to all of us. He also threw Jose's hat on the ground because it was a New York Yankees hat. He gave a big kiss to Christina. Jordan gave all of us 10 dollars to

buy food at the game. I got nachos, cracker jacks and a drink. It was really nice of him to do that for all of us.

I was cheering for Evan Longoria because he has the same name as me. He had a great game, scoring a triple for the Rays. He has the most RBIs of all the Rays.

The Rays played an awesome game and beat the Indians 6-2. When we come back from

summer vacation we would like all of us to go to another game. The Rays are going to the World Series this year and the Yankees are **NOT**.



Having fun at the Ray's game!



Volunteer Experience: Jose at Pet Pal

by Jose C.



Jose with his favorite dog Kaylie at Pet Pal.

During my first week in the STING RAY program I filled out a P.A.T.H. form stating my dream and how to get there. I wrote I would like to be a dog trainer, so Michael Shaffer contacted Pet Pal to see if I could volunteer there. I was interviewed by Scott Daly of Pet Pal and started my job on April 22nd, 2010. I work three mornings a week from 9:00 to 11:30 cleaning the cages. I also feed and walk the dogs. It is real fun to work there because the people and the animals are fun to be around. I like hearing the different stories from the workers at Pet Pal. I had a favorite dog named Kaylie, because she was the first dog to greet me. I was happy to hear she got adopted because she is a

very good dog. Pet Pal is an animal shelter where you can adopt dogs, cats, and birds. Pet Pal is located at 405 22nd St. South, St. Petersburg, FL 33712, phone number 727-328-7738. They are a non-profit-no kill shelter, if you would like to donate something you can visit their website at www.PetPalanimalshelter.com. There they have a wish list of things they need.

Job Shadowing: Trent in the Mailroom

by Trent T.

In April I started working with Jeremy Thompson in the mail room. Jeremy and I would go around in the golf cart delivering mail all over campus. I delivered envelopes and boxes. Sometime I would have to run up stairs to deliver heavy boxes. But I didn't mind doing that.

I work Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9:45 - 11:45 am. My favorite place to deliver mail is Project 10 office, because they're nice people and they usually give me candy. The best part of my job is meeting new people.



Trent and Jeremy delivering mail to the Project 10 office

Volunteer Experience: Evan at the Waterfront

by Evan L.



Zac and Evan sailing at the Waterfront at the beautiful USFSP campus

I have an interest in sail boats and wanting to learn to sail. When I came to USF and found out they had a waterfront with sailboats and kayaks, I thought about volunteering.

I am volunteering at the waterfront on Mondays from 1 – 3. I have been working with Zac Oppenheim and I have learned a lot from him. Zac explained to me what my job would be when I showed up the first day. Every other

Monday my job is to wash the sail boats with soap and water to make sure they are nice and clean. On the other Mondays I get the hose out and spray the canoes and kayaks to clean them for the next day. I really enjoy working with Zac and Adam on Mondays and I wish I could work more with them.

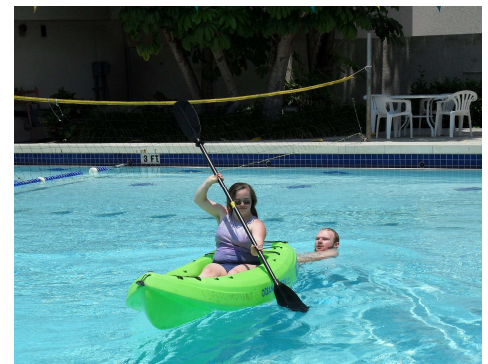
Meals on Wheels

Contributed by Irene P.

When I volunteer at Meals on Wheels at eleven o' clock, I deliver cold meals to homebound elderly people. I work with Barry McDowell.

Mr. Barry delivers the hot meals. At Meals on Wheels, I met Eddie. My favorite part of this is that I like to deliver meals and meet new people out in the community.

Volunteer Experience: Irene at



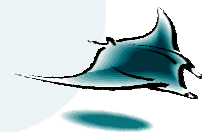
Irene practicing her kayak skills at the waterfront pool



Transportation to the University

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by Christina M.



There's several different ways my classmates get to school. I drive myself to school and home in my new car. I enjoy driving because its quiet and less stress for me. I have a green parking permit and I'm only allowed to park in certain areas. I like parking in the parking garage because it's shady and a lot of students park there. I park there when I don't have work that day.

Another student gets dropped off and picked up by his parents. He hopes to get his license this summer maybe get a car.

One student uses the DART program. DART stands for Dial A Ride Transit. Yellow cab is the provider

for that student. He pays \$3.50 each way.

There are two students that ride the city bus. One student rides the city bus from his home to work, from work to school, and back home at the end of the day. The other student changes 3 different buses to get from home to school and does the same thing to get back home. A job coach provided travel training for the one student that had not ridden the bus before.

I have seen people on campus using other means of transportation like skate boards, bicycles and the Trolley. I have used the trolley to explore different places downtown.



Christina parking her car in the USFSP parking garage.

Travel Training

by Amanda H.

When I started project STING RAY my dad took me to school and picked me up after school and sometimes my sister would bring me to school. Then it started to be a problem as my sister's schedule changed and she couldn't bring me anymore. And my dad sometimes couldn't bring me to school because he had to work. So my teacher set me up with a job coach Donna Homer and she came and taught me how to take 3 buses going from school to home.

First day April 29, Donna and I took bus 4 south to Williams

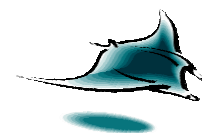
Park. Then we changed to bus 18 Clearwater and then we got off that bus at Grand Central Station and changed to bus 11.

Second day April 30, Donna didn't ride on the bus 4 or 18. She waited at Grand Central Station. So it was all up to me to get on the right buses. I took bus 4 south to William Park and changed buses to bus 18 Clearwater. The bus 18 took me to Grand Central Station then I got off there and Donna was waiting for me. We both waited for bus 11 and we took that bus to the end of my street.

Third day May 3rd, Donna waited at the bus stop where I live. So I had to take buses 4, 18 and 11 by myself. When I got off by myself Donna Homer was waiting for me. Now I take 3 buses home on my own. And I have to thank my job coach Donna Homer for giving up her time to help me learn how to take 3 buses home. I couldn't have done it without her.



Amanda swiping her bus pass on PSTA city bus



Changing Tides with the Director

My many thanks go out to the Administration of USF St. Petersburg and Pinellas County Schools, and Bambi Lockman and Bryan Vaughan of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities for their enthusiasm, guidance, and willingness to partner in this exciting collaborative effort. Working with my staff on building this program has been one of the greatest highlights of my professional career in education, spanning over 25 years. Whenever the details of administering a statewide project become just a bit too much, I only need to walk over the short distance on campus to find some of the STING RAY students eating lunch. Immediately, a new perspective awakens in me and it makes all of the details worthwhile.

I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am of my staff in making the concept of STING RAY, less than a year old, the reality it is today. Even though it represents only a very small portion of the work we do within Project 10, all of the staff have been committed to making it a success right out of the gate. They have worked tirelessly on building a program framework and curriculum, recruiting employer mentors, and scouring the campus looking for learning opportunities outside of the classroom. Ruth Dobkin, the Pinellas County teacher/coordinator with STING RAY, has done an excellent job in creating a climate where the students enjoy coming to school and are motivated to learn. The campus and community have indeed become the STING RAY "classroom" under her leadership.

And lastly, I am most proud of the STING RAY students themselves. In such a short time, they have all demonstrated increased independence, maturity, and self-determination. During a recent focus group, the family members of the STING RAY students reported that their children enjoy coming to school, appear more socially engaged, are more assertive in their choice-making, and overall, provide more input into personal and family decision making. Two parents reported that their children have taken on more responsibility around the house and now talk about living independently one day.

We made it through our first semester on a college campus without "incident" and we look forward to the 2010-2011 academic year at USF St. Petersburg!

Jordan Knab, Director

Project 10 STING RAY is the direct result of recommendations proposed by the Education Subcommittee of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities in the 2008 report to Governor Charlie Crist. The intent of the project is to develop a pilot site that will serve as a program model for post secondary institutions to host students with significant cognitive disabilities who have graduated with a special diploma and wish to continue their education on a postsecondary campus.

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