



Project 10 STING RAY presents

The STING RAY Current



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Bull Buds: Making Friends while Making a Difference

by Christian Haas

Students and mentors came together this year and created the newest student organization at USF St. Pete, Bull Buds. Led by Catherine, a student in STING RAY, Bull Buds is a service based organization that connects students at USFSP with their campus and community. Organized by STING RAY students and their mentors, Bull Buds has been active since January 2012. While the organization's main focus is service, the relationships that are being built within the organization are equally important. Bull Buds is open to all USFSP students!

Since its inception, Bull Buds has organized multiple successful events. In late January, Bull Buds connected with Student Government's Community Service Committee to plan a backyard renovation for a fellow USFSP student with a disability. Throughout the renovation, a vision of her late life partner, we tampered and leveled hundreds of pounds of sand, laid pavers throughout, and built three raised garden beds. This event was planned in January and culminated in a day of service on Friday, Feb. 24th, when most of the pavers were laid, the beds were built and students from USF St. Pete made a long term impact on the quality of a fellow student's life. Members of Bull Buds have also taken it upon themselves to support our troops. Through the AdoptaPlatoon initiative, members of Bull Buds have been collecting food and hygiene related donations to create care packages to be sent to troops in Afghanistan. The care packages are almost ready to be shipped out! The largest event we've done this year was a kickball game followed by a pool party and barbeque at The Waterfront. This event aimed to recruit new members and help the existing members get to know each other better. We had over 30 people on the field and in the pool! All of the hard work committed by members of the organization was rewarded at the end of the semester at the Annual Leadership Awards Banquet. Bull Buds at USF St. Pete won Most Outstanding New Student Organization of the Year for 2011-2012!

The students in Bull Buds have found a way to make a difference while having a good time in the process. Not only are we having fun and serving our community, we are developing organizational skills and learning the art of collaboration. The act of organizing people, brainstorming ideas, then implementing a shared vision is a very educational process and the inclusive nature of our organization empowers students to take the lead. The service we do and the relationships we will build along the way will have long lasting impacts on our campus and in our community.



Student Led Presentations: Mastering Soft Skills for Success

by Annie Johnson, M.Ed,
STING RAY Curriculum Coordinator

In planning for our two PowerPoint week orientation to introduce next year's new recruits, I wanted to showcase the skills of our current STING RAY students. I have been so impressed with their academic and social growth, that I felt they would be excellent mentors for our new STING RAY recruits.

One of the new releases from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, (ODEP) is the "Skills to Pay the Bills" curriculum which is designed to address "soft skills" – such as teamwork, communication, and attitude. These skills aren't typically addressed in an academic environment, but they have been identified as a critical component for success in school and work based learning experiences. After creating a PowerPoint of 3 of the 6 identified skills and presenting an overview of the curriculum, the students were able to choose their own skill to present. In planning their PowerPoint, they worked on 3 different aspects of their presentation; 1) the introduction, 2) the activity, and 3) the wrap-up.

The students accepted this challenge with flourish. Laresa chose to present a lesson on Communication, Evan and Trent chose Teamwork, and Isabel chose Enthusiasm and Attitude. Each student was perfectly matched to their topic.

They created a PowerPoint of their lesson plan and in the introduction they included an example of how they used the soft-skill in their own life. The lively part of the

presentations came when each presenter coordinated an activity which not only underscored their message, but acted as an ice breaker and team builder for our new recruits. From acting out emotions printed on an index card using body language only, to building a tower using spaghetti and marshmallows, there was much laughter and fun, but the message of the lesson always came across.

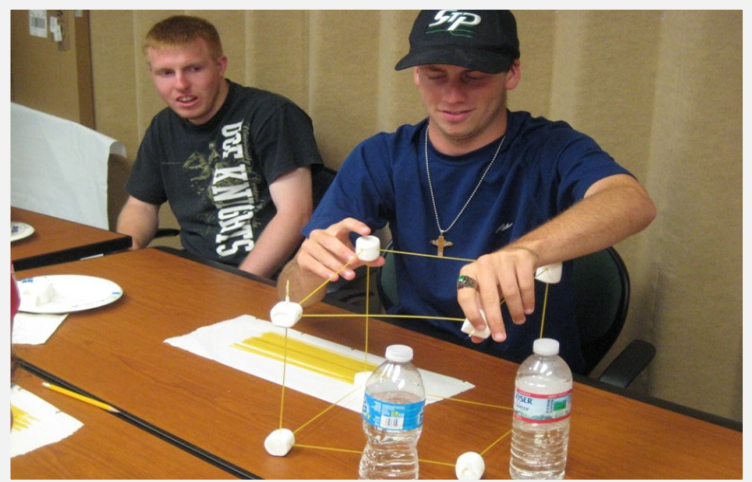
The students enjoyed creating PowerPoint presentations and being in charge of instruction. They suggested we include a writing activity at the end of each presentation to keep track of the lessons. Based on the success of this project, I plan to incorporate the ODEP soft skills presentations into our curriculum throughout the school year.



Annie, with students Isabel & David, sailing at USFSP



Laresa presenting on Communication



Evan & Michael working on a team building activity as part of a student-led presentation



Leaving STING RAY: A Reflection

by Evan L.

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My experiences in the STING RAY program for the past three years have been awesome! I was excited to get in the program because I knew it would be cool. I was excited when they called me to tell me I got in the STING RAY program because some of my other friends got in the

program too. I was excited to take college classes like Oceanography, Latin American Civilization and Anthropology. I was excited about getting my own place and living on my own and meeting new friends on a college campus. I played Intramural Sports at USF St. Pete like soccer, flag football and softball. I have a great time with my peer mentor Glenn; we play basketball at the park every Tuesday and Thursday morning. We would meet together to just go over things and to hang out at the pool at my condo. I



work at Publix now as a bagger. I am going to work full time there after I leave the program. I also had a community mentor whose

name is Jon. We would go over driver license requirements so that hopefully one day I can get my driver's license.

I had the experience of living out on my own by getting my own condo in St. Pete. The first semester I had two roommates named Amy and Trent. Last semester, Christian Haas took Amy's place. Christian was a mentor and a nice guy. He helped me find a job at Publix. This semester, I just have one roommate named John. My favorite thing on our college campus is Davis Lounge. Because I like to play pool and hang out with friends. I can't wait until the new student center at USFSP is finished because I'll go there and check it out. At the end of this semester, we planned to go to different places, like go to a Ray's game and the Seabird Sanctuary. We even met the Mayor of St. Pete, Bill Foster. Our Program coordinator helps us make plans to go where we want to go at the end of the year when we age out. I will take what I learned in the program out into the big world, and I thank the staff at Project 10 STING RAY and the professors at USFSP for helping me get as far as I have.



Campus Internships

by Trent T.

I like to work out and when we had to pick an internship for the second semester, I naturally thought of working at the gym. I work in the gym at USF St Pete. Some of the jobs I do are cleaning the placemats, vacuuming the upstairs, cleaning the seats and the handlebars on the equipment, wiping down the treadmills. Luckily, I don't have to clean the bathrooms!

After cleaning a few times, I noticed that the equipment would get really sweaty and realized that there were a lot of germs that could be transferred from one person to another. So now I am extra cautious to use hand sanitizer before and after I use the machines or lift.



Of all the internships I've worked at, including the mailroom, I liked the experience I had at the waterfront the best. I like the people at waterfront because they're like a family. They helped me do my work and made everything fun. I love working over there and would like to become a lifeguard. I know that I would be a great lifeguard, because I am a good swimmer. I would watch over the swimmers to make sure no one drowns on my watch.

My First Year in STING RAY

by Laresa B.

The 2011/2012 school year I started working at CBVI Program Post Card Inn on St. Pete Beach. I started working in the housekeeping department changing linens, mopping the floors, cleaning windows, cleaning bathrooms, and taking out the trash. After I gained experience with the housekeeping department, I switched over to the laundry area and learned how to fold towels and put them in the hotel rooms. Within a month, I was working in the restaurant, putting cups on every table and wiping down the booths. It was fun!

In October of 2011, I was called to interview for STING RAY at USF St. Petersburg. The more I heard about the program, the more I wanted to be in it. And now, here I am! I am doing an internship at the Project 10 office and in the spring semester I worked as an intern for the Multicultural Affairs on campus. I do most of my work on the computer; I have been working on developing my reading and math skills. I

found the teachers here at USFSP to be so nice. I love being at USFSP! At the beginning of each week, I organize my time on Google calendar. I go to Davis Hall to eat lunch and hang out and if I want quiet time I go to the library to read. I have three mentors who work with me, an academic mentor to help me with my class, a community mentor to take me into the community to check out different phone plans, learn how to buy a car, how to set up a bank account, etc. With my peer mentor, we go to breakfast, the mall, out to lunch, swimming, sail boating or sometimes we just hang out and talk.

Now I am thinking about what I want to do after college. I think I would like to get a job and live with a roommate. I need to learn how to cook so that one day I can cook by myself! I want to get a car, drive everywhere, and do things that I think are fun!



St. Pete Mayor meets with STING RAY at City Hall

The students in STING RAY, along with Christian Haas and Annie Johnson our teacher, met with Mayor Foster and got the chance to speak with him one on one. Trent's aunt, Lori Matway helped us get this special appointment. All of us got a chance to speak with Mayor Foster about different topics, like what the future has in store for Bay Walk, Rays Stadium and other things in Saint Pete area like parks, too.

Also, we took a tour of city hall and the TV studios and printing department. At the mayor's place we all had a great time together and it was a lot of fun.

USFSP wrote a Press Release on this which you can read at:

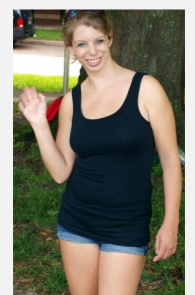
<http://www.usfsp.org/iNews/view.asp?ID=743>



Isabel's Internship as a "Toonarian"

by Danielle Roberts-Dahm

I am proud to announce that our very own Isabel was accepted into an internship with Toonari Post for the summer, where she will become a "Toonarian" as they call themselves! Toonari Post is the premiere global community which provides aspiring journalists & young professionals an opportunity to network, train and develop their careers by receiving hands-on training in a diverse, multi-cultural environment. This wonderful opportunity will give her amazing experiences in the field of digital journalism, media, technology, and design all while utilizing her creativity. This program offers a chance for you to work with an international team of likeminded individuals, attend online training sessions in journalism and online marketing, and get published.



My Time in Project 10 STING RAY, So Far

by Catherine R.



My time in STING RAY has been a great one! When I first started I wasn't too sure about the program because I was scared and there was a lot I still had to learn and the staff had to learn about me because I would be there first four year student, right out of high school. After High school I wasn't too sure about where or what I wanted to do with my life. The goals I had my senior year were to be musician, actress, journalist, child life specialist, and join the Air Force. Another goal was to get my GED, since I was graduating with a special diploma and knew that I could not go to college with that. I have always had a wide range of goals throughout my life but I never really achieved them, they were just dreams in my mind. Some stayed over the years and some just faded.

When I first began STING RAY I was a shy person. It felt like kindergarten all over again nerves and meeting all these new people - it was a dramatic shift in life for me. I second guessed being in the program because I later found out that the college classes that I would be taking I wouldn't be getting credit for them. I stayed anyways and today I am glad that I did. Over the past two years, there has been a change in my academic skills, communication skills, my personality, my goals and the way that I learn in general. Today I am more of an advocate for myself. My mother has let go some and is letting me learn the ways of life the way I need to learn it. I have a job at Project 10 and had worked at TJ Maxx temporarily. The goals I have now have changed a bit. I am still going to get my GED, hopefully by the end of this summer. I hope that in the fall I can begin taking college courses at either St. Petersburg College (SPC) or USFSP for credit to get 15 college credits I need to join the military. I want to go into the Marines because I want a challenge, to learn new things, broaden my knowledge, serve my country and to keep the freedom that doesn't come free. I am willing to pay the sacrifice for my country to keep it safe. I want to become a Marine because I love the courage and the sacrifice that they make for their countries battles, the history behind the Marines. To travel the world, meet new people, and maybe even learn another language are the benefits of joining the

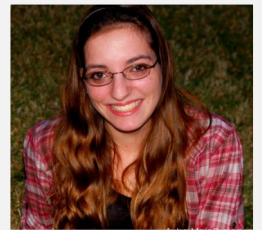
military. I want to make a difference. It's a calling for me and I am going to answer that call.

I plan to get the 15 college credits I need to enlist into the Marines and finish my education through one of their colleges or universities. I will go to school and learn to lead Marines through OCS (Officer Candidate School) over the four years of my college career. After I graduate with my bachelor's degree, I will be considered an officer and will be able to lead Marines. Through STING RAY, I am already learning how to lead others through LLS (Lead Learn Serve) which is the leadership department on the USFSP campus. I enjoy learning about leadership; it's a great skill to have. I am a person with an intellectual disability, but I don't let that define me or stop me from what I am destined to achieve. If I set my mind to something I don't back down I keep going no matter what. For example, in middle school, I learned sign language and still know it today. I taught myself guitar and took classes in high school. I found my singing voice in 8th grade, and began to write my own lyrics and music, which I still do to this day. My music is what keeps me going when I think I cannot stand anymore. I got my driver's license in high school my junior year and am hoping to get my own car soon.

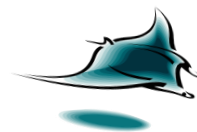
If the military does not work out, I plan to stay in school, major in music with a minor in journalism. I want to teach kids with disabilities music because growing up most of my teachers saw me as a person that could not learn anything. I see the potential in these kids when no one else does. I believe anyone can learn music if they set their mind to it and if the person teaching them is patient. I was lucky to have a teacher in high school, my case manager Rachel Luisi, who saw my potential and never saw me as a person with a disability. She helped me achieve most of my goals and let me take regular education classes as electives, such as algebra and creative writing. She believed that I could achieve anything I set my mind to, and I honestly would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for her. I was her first four-year student and she was sad to let me go, but she knew that I was ready for anything

because she helped me get to where I needed to be. She was there for me when I needed her. If a teacher was talking bad about me or didn't treat me equally, she was there standing up for me telling them that they were wrong. My music teacher also saw me grow from a shy person to belting notes like everyone else, and even would stand up for a solo. I performed at Ruth Eckerd Hall at the All County Music Festival twice and it was broadcasted. Music is the air I breathe if I don't have it I don't know what I would do. As for journalism, I am in the process of writing my own novel, titled "Never Ending", which is kind of like twilight in a way. I'll be writing two books, the first one is already finished just tweaking it a little. I hope that one day I can publish my books and let everyone read them.

I hope that in my future I inspire people just as I inspire myself. I want to be a role model for that student with a disability. For them to look up to someone and say, "Hey if she can become this, then so can I." I don't like it when I hear the words "I can't" because they can, they just choose not to because they either believe they can't or people tell them they can't. I was that person who believed I couldn't become what I really wanted to be. I was always based on my disability. As a kid I was always seen different. I do have a diploma, but it is a "Special Diploma". When I tell people, they ask what's that? I have to explain. The word "special" makes you feel less of yourself. If a regular education student would ask me if I could help them with their homework, I had to say no because I didn't learn the same criteria as them. Then I was viewed as stupid or retarded and people looked at me different after I told them I had a disability. I didn't like that feeling and I know that other people with disabilities don't like it either. Therefore, I hope this article helps open eyes that you should not judge a book by its cover because everyone can learn to do anything if you set your mind to it!



Changing Tides with the Director

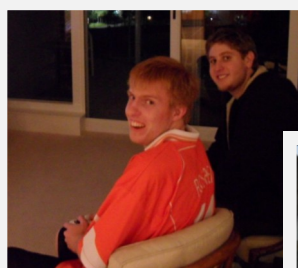


By Jordan T. Knab, Ed.S.



It is with deep sadness in my heart that I report that our STING RAY family has lost one of our own. On June 26, 2012, Evan Nestor Lyle passed away during his sleep from apparent natural causes. Evan was a member of the inaugural STING RAY class of 2010 and had just recently completed the program. Evan was competitively employed and was living independently in downtown St. Petersburg with support from his family. Evan demonstrated great pride in being a USFSP Bull and he participated in a number of athletic programs on campus. Evan always had a big smile and friendly “hello” for everyone he knew on campus. He was loved like a son and brother to many of us here at USFSP. We miss you already Evan - And, of course, “Go Rays!” (a phrase Evan used often at the end of texts and phone conversations.)

In Loving Memory of Evan Nestor Lyle August 1, 1989 – June 26, 2012



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