The interns have been busy job searching and submitting applications in the Hattiesburg area. They also attended the governor’s annual disability job fair in Jackson, MS. They were able to meet business vendors, practice interviewing skills and review available jobs in Mississippi.
Interns Working with the PAES System

The Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) is a work development transition curriculum. Each intern has been working hard to learn new skills through PAES system even earning a ‘paycheck’ to purchase rewards (first picture on the left). They have also discovered a passion for one or more areas of the PAES lab in which the team used to assist them with finding employment in those areas of interest.

If you have information or news you would like to include in the next newsletter, email information to jin.mcclendon@usm.edu by May 10.

Program Contact Information

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Project SEARCH is a program of the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi. Funding is provided through a grant from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities.
Entrepreneurship at Work!

We encourage our interns to think outside the box when seeking a career. Maria has a passion for working with animals, volunteering at church and creating her own business. Maria’s parents along with the Project SEARCH team have been working with Maria to develop a pet-sitting/grooming, housekeeping and bath soap and clothes detergent business. She has thrived in this program, at home and in her community.

Please contact us if you would like to know more about her business services.
“Firsts” are some of the most special things in life -- first birthdays, first friends, first days at school, first bicycles. Jason Dean, a Project SEARCH intern at The University of Southern Mississippi, is excited to have just started his first job.

Project SEARCH Southern Miss is a program that aims to help young adults with developmental disabilities acquire the skills to succeed in employment. This year, Project SEARCH has 11 interns.

Dean is the first intern in the program year to be offered a job, which represents his first employment position. In fact, Dean was offered a job the day of his interview for a dishwasher position at Wendy’s restaurant. Dean said he is excited about the job opportunity, noting that it will allow him to be more independent. He hopes to gain more experience and hands-on training through this position so that he can explore other career options.

“I believe Project SEARCH is a great program,” said Dean. “It has given me the encouragement to reach my goals and full potential.”

Dean stresses that he wants to show people that he is a good mentor and leader who sets examples for others.

The staff at The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) and Project SEARCH Southern Miss partners are particularly proud of Dean for achieving this milestone in his life.

Elias Love, a Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services employment skills trainer for Project SEARCH, said, “Job training coach Cherish Ducksworth and I are excited that Jason was our first intern to accomplish the goal of being employed at a local business. Because of proper preparation through Project SEARCH and internships at Southern Miss, Jason was ready to secure a job. He completed the entire interview process on his own.”

“I’m very excited about Jason getting the first job of all the interns this semester,” said Jin Joo Crosby, coordinator of Volunteer and Transition Employment Services at IDS. “He is a hard worker and has done an excellent job in the classroom and at his internship sites. The activities and the hands-on individualized experiences the interns acquire in the Project SEARCH Southern Miss program has helped Jason and the other 10 interns improve their professional and personal skills.”

According to Crosby, Project SEARCH has made great strides since the initial pilot program in 2015–2016.

“We have learned a great deal from our first program year and therefore changed the way we individualize lesson plans and skills building both in the classroom and in the internship sites,” said Crosby. “Allison Hinz, a Hattiesburg High School teacher, and the employment skills trainers Cherish Ducksworth and Elias Lover have done an excellent job in developing the individualized pre-employment lesson plans and skills building. Because of their efforts, most interns are ready even sooner than anticipated to seek jobs.”

Article link: http://news.usm.edu/article/first-job-provides-confidence-independence-usm-intern