

Project SEARCH[®] Leads Interns to Jobs

LITTLE ROCK – A standing room only crowd with bright smiles and a few tears.

Each year, that is the view at UAMS at the hospital’s annual Project SEARCH[®] graduation ceremony as the interns selected to participate in the program share their experience with their family members and supporters. Project SEARCH[®] is an international, one-year internship program for adults with disabilities who aspire to have a job. The program, funded by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, provides real-world work experiences, in addition to job coaching skills, to the interns.

While UAMS has hosted this program since August 2013, Arkansas Children’s Hospital launched Project SEARCH[®] on its campus in August 2015 and just graduated its inaugural class. Both sites have already begun accepting applications for the next year.



“Project SEARCH[®] gave me a chance to provide for my family. The teachers treated me with respect, and they made me feel good about myself,” said James Tyler Philemon, who graduated from the UAMS program.

Twelve interns took part in the program at UAMS, while Arkansas Children’s

ARS Counselor Lakera Davis congratulates her client, Shakemia Rayford, for completing Project SEARCH[®].

Hospital welcomed eleven participants in its first group. The bulk at each site has already found a job – either on the campus or elsewhere in the city. Each of them went to various departments at the hospitals and learned critical job readiness skills, which can be transferred and applied in any environment.

“Hard work pays off and staying positive and motivated can take you very far in life,” said Shakemia Rayford, who became emotional while sharing her thoughts. “I want to thank the job coaches for their hard work along the way.”

At the Arkansas Children’s Hospital ceremony, Shirley Nixon, a parent of a participant, said she will forever be indebted to program administrators and hospital staff in helping her son, Jared, and the other interns to gain not only skills but also confidence.

“I want to thank you for opening up your departments, your knowledge, and your hearts. Thank you for putting in that extra effort to make them feel welcomed and part of your departments,” Nixon said.

The relationship between the interns and Project SEARCH[®] coordinators do not end right at graduation. The organization is committed to working with the interns over the next five years, making sure they are employed and remain employed.



ARS Commissioner Alan McClain gives remarks at the Arkansas Children’s Hospital ceremony.



Graduates of the Project SEARCH[®] program at Arkansas Children's Hospital are all smiles with program coordinators Melinda Spradling (second row, left) and Emily Ward (second row, right).

The Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) prepares a job-ready, career-bound workforce to meet the needs of Arkansas employers. For more information about ACE and other programs please visit the website www.ace.arkansas.gov or follow us on Twitter at @ARCareerEd.

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