

A letter from Sherry Smith highlighting Project SEARCH and how it helped her son, Ryan
February 28, 2018

We feel like Ryan hit the Lottery when he was accepted into Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is an amazing program and has already made a huge difference in Ryan and his outlook on his future.

Ryan is an introvert with high functioning autism. He is smart, but he suffers with anxiety about new things. Social interactions are difficult. He had no self-confidence. His comfort zone is at home playing video games. Ryan is 24 years old. He has been taking a couple classes a semester at AB Tech with assistance, but he has never worked. It was obvious to me with his focus and his desire to please, he would be a great employee, if given the chance. But how was a young man with no experience, poor social skills, and being scared to death to try new things ever going to impress a potential employer.

Project SEARCH has been a Godsend. Ryan has benefited in so many ways. At first, he dreaded the program. To see him now, you would find that hard to believe. He loves everything about Project SEARCH – the other participants, his instructors, his supervisors and coworkers, and most of all, his job.

Project SEARCH has helped Ryan acquire the skills he needed to be successful in the workplace. He can ask for support when he needs it and independence when he does not.

Ryan has more self-confidence. He feels good about himself because he is accepted as he is and he feels good because he is contributing and his work is being appreciated.

Ryan has matured so much since joining the program. At home, he has become so much more tolerant of his special needs twin brother, and I attribute that to his being more aware of people's differences in abilities, which he has seen at work, and if he can help someone, he should.

Ryan's social skills have improved. I think he may even enjoy talking to others.

Ryan now has invaluable hands on experience in the workplace!

Ryan is happy. That is saying a lot because he is so serious by nature. He enjoys going to work. He looks forward to his day and being around others like him, and I know, he is proud of the work that he has done.

We will be forever indebted to everyone involved in Project SEARCH. Thank you, Project SEARCH, with all my heart, for making my son a happy, thriving, productive member of society! I could not be prouder!

Sherry Smith