



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

CONTACT: DWD Communications, 608-266-2722

On the Web: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/news.htm>

On Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/WIWorkforce>

On Twitter: @WIWorkforce

Lt. Governor Kleefisch, DWD Officials Recognize 1st Class of Project SEARCH Graduates from General Mitchell International Airport

General Mitchell International Airport is the world's first and only airport-based Project SEARCH site

MILWAUKEE – Today, Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and officials from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) recognized the accomplishments of six talented Project SEARCH graduates from Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport, the program's first and only airport-based Project SEARCH site. Project SEARCH is a business-led collaboration that enables youth and young adults with disabilities to gain and maintain employment through training and career exploration in a hands-on work environment.

"I am so pleased to congratulate our Project SEARCH graduates," Lt. Governor Kleefisch said. "Wisconsin has become a leader in employment for people with disabilities and in seeing the work of Project SEARCH participants it is easy to see why 41 percent of workers with disabilities are employed here, versus 35 percent nationally. This cohort will be an essential addition to Wisconsin's talent pipeline."

The cornerstone of the program is total immersion in a business environment. DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff, teachers, and business human resource staff collaborate to screen and select Project SEARCH interns. The interns report five days a week to the business and learn employability skills in a classroom and hands-on job skills within the business environment. Participants complete multiple 10-week rotations to maximize their exposure to different career paths.

"Project SEARCH is a proven talent-development program dedicated to enriching the lives of Wisconsin's talented young adults with disabilities by providing valuable workforce training opportunities that put these individuals on a path to rewarding employment," Secretary Ray Allen said. Congratulations to this latest class of graduates, and thank you to all the partners,

including officials from General Mitchell, that have made the program possible at this unique Project SEARCH site."

This year, 207 individuals with disabilities participated in the program, with over 190 expected to graduate from the program (over 90% graduation rate). The vast majority of these individuals will be gainfully employed by their host site business or another business in their community shortly after graduation. With the additional graduates from this year's class, Wisconsin has graduated over 800 individuals from the Project SEARCH program since its inception in 2008.

Wisconsin Recognized as a National Leader in Project SEARCH

During this year's Project SEARCH National Conference, held July 24-27, 2017, at Kalahari Resort in Pocono Manor, PA, Wisconsin Project SEARCH sites were among 198 sites from across the world honored. Three Wisconsin Project SEARCH sites were recognized for having a 100 percent successful employment outcome for the 2015-2016 school year: Aspirus Riverview Hospital and Clinics in Wisconsin Rapids, Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, and Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield. Six additional sites were recognized for achieving successful employment outcomes between 80 and 89 percent and two sites were recognized for successfully placing between 70 and 79 percent of Project SEARCH participants. Through the 2016-2017 school year, Project SEARCH sites in Wisconsin have an average employment success rate of 88 percent, outpacing the national Project SEARCH employment rate by 15 percent.

The 2017-2019 biennial budget that Governor Walker signed last summer includes several initiatives to promote employment for people with disabilities, including:

- Invests \$35 million in General Purpose Revenue (GPR) to maintain the maximum federal funding for DVR. As a result, the total funding for DVR will be \$185 million over the biennium.
- \$7.6 million in funding to support and expand programs that ensure students with disabilities gain the practical skills they need for life after high school. This includes \$6.1 million to fund awards for school districts that successfully place students with disabilities in employment as well as \$1.5 million to support the developments of school district efforts to connect students with disabilities with employment opportunities.

For more information, please visit <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov>.