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SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ISSUE: PASSING THE EMPLOYMENT TORCH

Transitional Employment at the Academy transforms lives. Members like Brianna Stirrat, Grant Goodin, Gerry Zago, Preston Zorn, Regena Grant, Ellen Russell and Hunter Lanoue share how these opportunities helped build confidence, find purpose, and create new paths with support from Hope Family Services, Sunset Cadillac, the State Attorney's and Public Defender's Offices.



**JUST
STARTED!**

GRANT GOODIN

State Attorney's Office

"When I first toured the Office of the State Attorney, 12th Judicial Circuit, to learn

about our Transitional Employment position, I had mixed emotions. I was awe-inspired and excited for this potential opportunity, but part of me was terrified. The prestige of the

State Attorney's Office was intimidating and, honestly, I wasn't sure I was cut out for the work.

When the position was offered to me, all of those feelings, the excitement and the fear, intensified. But my excitement won out and I accepted the position. I've been on the job for four weeks now. Academy staff trained me and stayed with me on the job for the first two weeks, until I told them that I was ready to go it alone.

I start my day by collecting mail and other documents and delivering them to the courthouse and the judicial center, and picking up mail for the State Attorney's Office. Then I scan documents. When that is complete, I prepare documents for shredding.

I still carry some fears around my abilities, but I am told that I am doing a good job. I have been conditioned to expect disappointing news, so it's been a really big deal that the Academy, and State Attorney Ed Brodsky, put their trust in me. In turn, it has made me a more confident version of myself. I'm allowing myself to set goals that I wouldn't have dreamed of before. I'm still dealing with a lot of fear, but I'm no longer letting it stop me or define me."

**BREAKING
NEWS!**

NEW EMPLOYMENT PARTNER

Hope Family Services

There is no bigger component to our career services than our Transitional Employment (TE) program. It often takes a year or longer to create a partnership with a local business; one that is

willing to collaborate with us in a unique way. These businesses first identify a need in their workforce and then, together, we "carve" an entry-level position to meet that need. They also agree to allow us to choose the member to be employed by them. Before we put a member out on a job, our staff will first learn the job. When an Academy member starts working at one of our TE partners, they are trained by Academy staff. In fact, our staff will work side-by-side with the members until they have developed natural supports on the job and feel comfortable working solo, typically between two to four weeks.

We look for companies with whom our culture and values are aligned. It takes a special kind of employer to place so much trust in us, and it takes a lot of time to build that level of trust. And with that we are pleased to share Breaking News! Recently, we added Hope Family Services to our impressive list of TE employment sites! Congratulations to Brianna Stirrat who will begin the Hope Family Services position soon.



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Brianna Stirrat will begin our Hope Family Services TE soon.



**MID-
WAY!**

AARON COLLMER

Sarasota Memorial Hospital

"Work hard at what you do and you will achieve what you strive for. Thank you for this opportunity to work at Sarasota Memorial Hospital."

Aaron Collmer at SMH



Gerry Zago at the Manatee Public Defender's Office.

GERRY ZAGO/*Public Defender*

"I had not worked in over 20 years, and I began to believe that I would never work again. I'm learning that I'm capable of more than I ever imagined. I'm grateful to the Academy and to Public Defender Larry Eger for believing in me before I believed in myself."

MID-WAY!



Preston Zorn at the Sarasota State Attorney's Office

PRESTON ZORN/*State Attorney*

"I've been working at the State Attorney's Office and it has been a great learning experience. One of the biggest things I've learned is how to take the time to problem solve and look for an answer before asking for help."

MID-WAY!



Regena Grant at the Sarasota Public Defender's Office.

REGENA GRANT/*Public Defender*

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to have worked at the Office of the Public Defender 12th Judicial Circuit this past year, as part of the Academy's Transitional Employment (TE) program. It was a great experience! Scanning documents

JUST FINISHED!

effectively and efficiently, I managed to clear a large office containing boxes filled with case files during the time I was there.

Thank you to the Public Defender Larry Eger and his staff; I enjoyed working with them. Thank you to the Academy for giving me a chance to shine. I am looking forward to new possibilities and a bright future. I am happily 'passing the torch' to fellow Academy member Ellen Russell who said, 'I am grateful and honored for the opportunity to begin my Transitional Employment position at the Office of the Public Defender through the Academy. This position is an exciting new step for me. I look forward to learning new skills and contributing to the team. Thank you to everyone at the Academy for their confidence, encouragement and support as I begin this new chapter of my journey.' "



Ellen Russell at the Sarasota Public Defender's Office.

JUST STARTED!



Hunter Lanoue at Sunset Cadillac of Sarasota.

HUNTER LANOUE/*Sunset Cadillac*

"I've been working at Sunset Cadillac for 9 months. I started on October 15 which is wild to think about because it feels like just yesterday. I was a nervous wreck when I first took on this opportunity. I can't thank the Academy and

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Sunset Cadillac enough for everything they have done. This is the first job I've ever had in my life. I'm getting great experience and learning a lot as I move forward. I've learned that there can be many changes, challenges, and hiccups on the road to success.

Sometimes there will be mistakes, but I'm learning to adapt, to evolve, and to keep going no matter what. For example, one day my computer wasn't working, and I didn't know what to do. I didn't have the best social skills at the time, but I went out of my comfort zone to ask one of the employees for help and they resolved the problem and taught me what to do if it happens again. It's a simple example but it was a big deal for me; it really did help me a lot. Everyone is really kind to me and are willing to assist me when they can.

What I look forward to most now is to find permanent employment so I can start my next chapter in life and become independent. There are more chapters to come, and I look forward to writing the next one."

SARASOTA CAMPUS

1910 Glengary Street
Sarasota, FL 34231
(941) 921-9930



BRADENTON CAMPUS

601 12th Street West
Bradenton, FL 34205
(941) 929-2800



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