



SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS PREPARE FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION LUNCHEON

The Archway Schools' gear up for annual event celebrating students and local business partnerships

Archway Programs' Upper and Lower Schools host its 12th Annual Career and Technical Education Luncheon to celebrate the relationship between the working students and cooperative employers who participated in this year's Structured Learning Experience and Community Based Instruction programs on and off-campus. At the luncheon, a special guest speaker and awards were given to the students who excel at their job, as well as an award for the employers who make the Career Education Program so successful.

The guest speaker is former Archway student, Sam Toney. Mr. Toney attended Archway's Upper School for six years and graduated in 2010. During this time, he played on Archway's basketball team and won the Student of the Year Award in 2010. Archway Programs' staff is eager to have him speak at the event and is looking forward to students hearing his story. Mr. Toney's hindsight can be another student's foresight.

"Many of our students are facing some of the same struggles that Mr. Toney faced. Hearing a story from someone who went through some of the same challenges that these kids and young adults are dealing with right now, can have an incredible impact. It will help them realize that they aren't alone, that others have been in similar situations and not only survived but are thriving. Sometimes, that is all someone needs to get through a tough time and feel inspired. No matter what adversities they may be currently facing, they will know that with hard work and determination it is possible to accomplish their goals and come out stronger," said Susan Lafferty, Executive Director of Education.

Mr. Toney is currently a sophomore at New Jersey City University studying Criminal Justice in addition to playing basketball for the NJCU's Gothic Knights. He has a very inspirational story and a positive outlook on life.

"I'm not someone who because they've been through so much they want to stop. I still want to play basketball professionally. I still want to own my own security company. There are a lot of things I want to do and you can't do that if you're always thinking negatively about the past. At some point, you have to move on. My story isn't over, it's still being written," said Sam Toney.

The Archway Schools' Career Education Program enables students who have special needs with associated behavioral challenges to learn in the classroom and on-the-job, skills necessary to transition from school-to-work and offers a number of vocational and career training opportunities to its students in both the Upper and Lower School. Students are able to begin the Career Education Program at the age of eight and are able to comfortably master relevant life skills that will make the transition from school to work much easier, as well as promising. Students are given the opportunity to gain first-hand work experience by participating in on-campus, off-campus job samplings, cooperative education, sheltered workshop phrases, classroom instruction and job placement. The careers staff includes educators experienced in food service, multimedia design and technology, horticulture and job coaching in addition to a certified New Jersey Department of Education Structured Learning Coordinator.

Students, staff and cooperating companies work together to identify and meet career goals in the areas of horticulture, merchandising/retailing, communication technology, food service/hospitality, banking/finance, television/media and maintenance. By providing school and community-based learning experiences, while at the same time aggressively pursuing partnerships with local businesses to sustain meaningful employment opportunities in the community, Archway's Career Education Program empowers an often times stigmatized population of students to develop positive work attitudes, essential job skills and preparation for meaningful careers. The Career Education Program has several benefits and provides unlimited growth and opportunity for Archway's students. It gives students who cannot be placed into a vocational/trade school an option. Students also gain work-readiness skills and experience increased social and independent skills gained in the work environment. For some, the program provides a skill set training for obtaining a position after graduation. Each student leaves the program with a fully completed resume, cover letter template and mock interview experience to aid in obtaining a job after graduation.

Students can participate in the many on-campus jobs which include: a fully-functional broadcast studio, a button making station, café, tee shirt press, vinyl sign making, candle making, wood working, auto detailing, Ellison lettering, sheltered workshop, school store, bank, landscaping and greenhouse, advanced floral, business and office skills, maintenance services, sheltered workshop, gymnasium, nurse, office and teacher assistant programs. Off-campus jobs for students are through partnerships Archway has with successful businesses active in the local community. By partnering with other organizations that work to empower and promote the success of children, adolescents and early adults with special needs, the Career Education Program demonstrates leadership that provides direction to other organizations. Currently, Archway has business partnerships with: ShopRite, BJ's, TD Bank, The Fountains at Cedar Parke, iHop, Marshall's, Dunkin Donuts, Dambly's Garden Center, Discount Decorative Flags, Voorhees Virtua Hospital, Nutri-Serve, Modell's Sporting Goods, Absolute Perfection Detailing, Kepple's Carpet and Chocolate Pretzel Heaven.

"We are fortunate to have so many long-standing relationships with local business partners and are grateful that our students get to benefit from real-work experience. Since the program was established, we have experienced tremendous growth. Archway alumni attend this event and being able to see how they benefitted from the program and hear how well they are doing is incredibly rewarding. Each of our students have individualized needs, and staff helps prepare each of them, providing supports for life post-graduation," said Brooke Chmura, Careers Teacher at Archway Programs.