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Not Everyone Chooses to Work

What About Volunteering First

Families and Professionals

Frequently students with autism or other learning differences may not be ready for the world of work when their school-time comes to an end. Perhaps not enough time was focused on developing interests, during their school years, which generally lead the majority of us to our world of work.

So, perhaps the way to go is to first create volunteering opportunities. Volunteering helps develop curiosity which leads to interests which could lead to job development skills and then a job. Volunteering provides a way of observing and learning first.

Try making a list of curiosities or interests or activities, places and people your son, daughter, student or client are happy going to, have enthusiasm over or engaging with.

Next, think about what tasks, places, businesses and people in your home and community could offer opportunities to expand interests. Make observations of these places with them. Take pictures of these places and develop a visual story around these places. Take pictures of people in these places doing work and talk about the work they do in your visual story. Develop curiosity.

Have you ever taken your son, daughter, student or client to the library, book store, coffee shop, bike shop, auto shop, museum, garden shop, flower shop, art-store, pet-store, hardware store, fire department, laundry mat, gym, movie theater etc.? Have you visited parks and outdoor centers? Are they aware they could be working in one of these? They could be volunteering in one of these.

Have you introduced your hobbies to them? Do they know their grandparents' hobbies? If they have siblings, have they shared their hobbies with them? Hold hobby sessions. They can first watch the hobby being enjoyed. Then they can participate in the hobby or help with the hobby.

Be a good observer. What tasks and places do they smile more at? What activities do they seem to enjoy engaging in and stay focus on the longest? Identify the top 3-5 and then explore with those sites volunteering opportunities. Assure the businesses you are not looking for a paid job. Make sure they know the strengths of the volunteer. Maybe model activities at home, use videos of activities and put them through similar activities at home before on-site volunteering occurs.

Make volunteering very short at first. One hour, once a week. Find out what the site really could use some extra help with. Make their needs a priority for your volunteer.

