

Maryland Focuses on Children with Disabilities
and the Workforce

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for Disabilities At Work.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hello, I'm Ray Zardetto and welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. Our program today is sponsored by the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services.

Today, we focus on the State of Maryland and a group called the Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities, or to make things easier for the rest of us on this program we are going to call this MANSEF, its acronym.

And MANSEF is comprised of 99 schools throughout the State of Maryland who serve children with disabilities. And with us together is the executive director of MANSEF, Dorie Flynn. And Dorie, I'd like to start with you first, if we could.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Absolutely, thank you.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you. First, welcome to the program, thanks for joining us.

>> DORIE FLYNN: I appreciate it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'd like to just start, if I can, with the big picture. The 99 schools associated with MANSEF, what do they do and for how many children?

>> DORIE FLYNN: These schools are specialized therapeutic schools, they serve children with disabilities and we serve a

multitude of different populations. These schools can do anything from three years up, three-year-olds, up to 21.

We serve approximately 45,000 children -- I'm sorry, 4,500 children, across the State of Maryland. The children are referred by their local public school systems because the public school system does not have an appropriate program. So each child has what is called an IEP, and the IEP stands for an individualized education plan and when the public school, again, cannot serve the child appropriately or doesn't have the adequate resources and they are obligated to, under federal and state law, then the local public school system can refer a child to one of these unique specialized settings.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And how is the IEP funded?

>> DORIE FLYNN: The schools are funded by a state and county local school system formula. It is a cost sharing where the state pays a part of the tuition and the local school system pays the rest of the tuition.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay and how does -- how does a student become part of a MANSEF associated school?

>> DORIE FLYNN: When the child is in their public school building and it turns that they don't have enough service that can adequately program for the child, the child needs to receive educational benefit from all the services. And, again, it's when a county cannot do that, that's when they make the referral to a nonpublic school so the child can receive what is

called FAPE, a free and appropriate public education.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And you said, I think, that you serve -- your service is for children from the age of three and up, so pre-school up through and past high school, right?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Correct. I mean, the ages are up to 21. So if there is an individual that has, maybe, um, needing continued services, the federal law mandates they can have that up until the age of 21.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And the Ivymount School which is in Rockville, Maryland, is a member of the MANSEF Association and Jan Wintrol is director of Ivymount and she is also with us. Jan, thank you also for spending some time with us here today.

>> JAN WINTROL: Well, thank you, it's a pleasure to be here.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you. For the Ivymount School, why don't you tell us first where is Rockville in Maryland?

>> JAN WINTROL: Well, Rockville, Maryland is located in the greater Washington D.C. metropolitan area. So we have -- we are located in Montgomery County, Maryland, in the state. And we are located in a former elementary school that had been closed and renovated now to house our program on Seven Locks Road.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay, and do you -- does the Ivymount School also have children from the varied age ranges that Dorie was describing?

>> JAN WINTROL: Actually, we do. We have probably most of

them. We are licensed, because all of the MANSEF schools are licensed certificated special education schools by the Maryland State Department of Education, and our licensing allows us to serve students ages 4 to 21. And actually when students leave here, they may be hitting their 22nd year, but our licensing is 4 to 21. So we have developed programs along the entire special education continuum for students who can stay here through their -- into their early adult years.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. You said you have a wide range of ages for the students, what about the range of disabilities?

>> JAN WINTROL: We actually do have different model programs, a variety of model programs, set up for the students with varying disabilities. So we have what we call a multiple learning needs program for students who have cognitive learning disorders. They may be on the autism spectrum, but are served well in that program. And we have a lower school, a middle school and a high school program for multiple learning needs. We have an autism program. We have a program on the other end of the spectrum and autism for students with Asperger's syndrome. And then, of course, we have our post high school program for our students who are 18 to 21.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we are going to spend some time talking about the post high school program during the hour, but, um, a question for either Dorie or for you, Jan, because you are schools and the word school, of course, usually associates with

education and the classroom, it would be a mistake, though, to think of this as just a classroom based kind of program though, right?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Right. Well, um, actually it is, um, it is a classroom based program. Because education is primary, but we think about it in just the broadest sense possible, if you can think of education.

And I think it's wonderful that we are able to have students to 21 because what we are thinking about every step that we take and thing that we do is very individually devised for our students and our goal, that prize for them, is how independent we can help them become as independent persons when they leave this program at 21, we are looking at their lives. We are looking as much as we can the rest of their lives and take every a step with their families from the time they are younger all the way through the varying programs and ages that they are at Ivymount. They don't all come at 4 and stay until 21, because we are always making individual decisions for them.

There is -- Every year there is an annual review meeting and every year you are asking is this a good placement for this particular child. And if there is a different kind of placement needed, then we definitely need to consider that. That's part of the law, and we need to consider that. And sometimes the best place is for them to stay here and sometimes it's for them to go back to their public school, and sometimes

it is better for them to move on to a different nonpublic school. And nonpublic schools are uniquely equipped to provide the specific and the multi disciplinary frequently intensive services that students of special needs require.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I was just going to go right into that before, I'm sure that you are going to make a point on that, but before you do, just back up for a little bit and tell us or explain for us, you know, what kind of services and what kind of focus we are talking about here.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Well, the Individual Disabilities Education Act mandates that children be served in a least restrictive environment. And, as I said before, they need to be provided with FAPE, the appropriate education. And so schools like Ivymount have very specialized and unique services that they can individualize for each child. And Jan, you may want to add to that.

>> JAN WINTROL: Yeah, for example, and the reason why a student would come here is because of the intensity of the services they need, not only the educational services, which are very important, but also those other services that Dorie was talking about and that are the related services. And those services are speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy. And our case here at Ivymount we have students with a lot of counseling needs, behavioral therapies. We also, at Ivymount, have a full nursing staff. So we have

students with health plans here because some of the students who have health fragilities that keep them out of their educational programming need a place to be in school. And so, we offer an intensity of services, all of that is dictated by the individualized educational program. And students come here because they need that unique combination, if you will, of services in order for them to be able to approach their educational classroom and to be able to progress.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay.

>> DORIE FLYNN: And again, these are highly trained teachers and related service providers who are uniquely qualified specifically for children with disabilities.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And Dorie, is it fair to say that as we described the various programs at Ivymount and the way they go about it that that's fairly traditional across the other 98 schools as well?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Yes, every school is definitely pursuing all sorts of programs for children with disabilities. It's just, again, very individualized. And many of the schools can only serve, for example, children with autism, but another school, like Jan, at Ivymount can serve children with speech and language impairment and autism or, you know, traumatic brain injury.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> DORIE FLYNN: It's a number of things.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And, of course, MANSEF is focused on Maryland, but do you have counterpart associations and programs in other states as well that you are aware of?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Yes, there are. Connecticut has it, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Arizona -

>> JAN WINTROL: Virginia.

>> DORIE FLYNN: -- Virginia and Washington D.C.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you see this is going to expand into other states as time goes on?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Having an association? Probably. That will certainly expand, but the states have their own nonpublic schools already as well.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And let me -- just one more question about that and then I want to get into the workforce or the training in preparing students for the workplace. What do you think is the advantage of having this association of schools organized this way as opposed to them each being just an individual entity?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Jan, I'll let you speak to that.

>> JAN WINTROL: Okay. Well I think that, you know, MANSEF has been around for a long time and it's been, it's -- there's a lot of work that needs to be done on the state level. And so, for legislative reasons, for working with the Maryland State Department of Education, because we are highly regulated, because we have students who are referred to us by the local

education agencies, we are then have to follow all of the rules and regulations that are laid down by the State of Maryland. And there is a number of them. So we are very highly held accountable for everything that we do.

MANSEF really helps in that, because policies and procedures are changing all of the time. MANSEF helps clarify that. If there are questions that need to go to the Maryland State Department of Education, that can be funneled through MANSEF. It also, um, provides opportunities for families and staff members who need more training and or cross training, we provide that. The association provides that for us.

Also, working down at the legislative level, there is always some kind of law, laws that are being passed or legislation is that being presented that needs somebody monitoring it, and that is one of the functions of MANSEF. All of us are doing the education; we are all up here trying to run our schools. We needed this -- we needed a commonality to pull us together, even though we all function very independently of each other. This association really helps us in all of those ways that I mentioned.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Jan, you just described the member benefits perfectly. I have it listed in front of me and I think you hit every one.

>> JAN WINTROL: I'm glad.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. That's a good place then for us to

stop for a minute and take a break. When we come back, we are going to start talking about how MANSEF, how Ivymount and some of these other schools deal with preparing children for the workforce, children with disabilities for the workforce. And we will be joined by one of Jan's colleagues at Ivymount who specializes in directing one of those particular programs, it is a very interesting initiative called School-to-Work, and we will discuss that when we come back. So please stay with us. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. One of our program sponsors today is the Kessler Foundation, dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled through the rehabilitation research done at the Kessler Foundation Research Center and through the work of the Kessler Program Center which helped prepare the disabled for the demands of the workplace.

On today's program, we are speaking with Dorie Flynn, the executive director of the Maryland Association of Nonpublic

Special Education Facilities or MANSEF. And Jan Wintrol, director of the Ivymount School, one of the schools in the MANSEF. And joining us now is one of Jan's colleagues, Lu Merrick; she is the director of the School-to-Work program at Ivymount. And, Lu, let me first welcome you and thank you for joining us here today.

>> LU MERRICK: Thank you, Ray.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Would you give us a quick overview of exactly what the School-to-Work program is?

>> LU MERRICK: Well, it's pretty simply what it says. We are preparing students while we still have them in school through age 21 to be able to be successful in the working world.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: What does that entail directly?

>> LU MERRICK: Well, it really needs to go across environments, so we have a school based component to our program. And by our program, I'm specifically talking about students who are in their post high school years, 18 to 21-year-olds. And while they are in school, we work in a trans-disciplinary team model. So I have folks from all disciplines and special educators, speech language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, transition specialists, um, who work with our students both individually and in small groups to help them learn how to become self advocates, how to set goals and how to plan for their future, really critical skills that they need to have.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> LU MERRICK: In the school based component, one of the ways we do this, um, we have what we call our TCL group, taking charge of your life. And in these groups, the students learn the skills that they need, not only to become active participants at home and at school and in their classes, but in their IEP meetings and I think earlier did Dorie referred to an IEP, an individual education plan. Our students not only participate, but they learn how to run their meetings. They learn how to introduce everyone who is at the table and how to speak up and share what their goals are and what their hopes and dreams are. So we really focus with the students on, not only developing the obvious skills for work, but the critical thought skills that are essential indicators for overall success.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. And when you start to work some of these programs, do you it in league with specific employers in the area or does that come later?

>> LU MERRICK: The minute my students come in at age 18 into the post high school program, part of their weekly schedule includes a community based job site. So I have a long list of incredible employers. I think you will be speaking with some of my partners in another segment.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yes.

>> LU MERRICK: But we have all of our students go out to job

sites as a freshman. First year in the post high school they may have a job site schedule where they are out at the job site two or three half days a week, so maybe for a couple of hours each time. And as they increase and get up through their senior year and age 21, that time out at the job site and in the community increases.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Dorie, I'm wondering, again, just to ask the same question again, is the program we are describing here, this School-to-Work program, is that also something that is common across most of the schools in the association?

>> DORIE FLYNN: It varies depending on the disabilities that they are serving. But, yes, that is a function of what the schools want to do is, again, to provide these children and students with the necessary skills that they are going to need for later in life. Many of the programs now have set up vocational services so that they can take children to job sites or do internships at different employers in the community.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm. And a general question for Lu or Jan or Dorie, how do you get employers interested in participating in this program?

>> LU MERRICK: That's a major part of what I do, and I have staff members who help. It is sort of everybody's responsibility. We say at every opportunity you have when you are going about your personal life, as well as connected with the school, that if you meet someone we talk about the program,

we talk about what our students have to offer and how they are an untapped stream for employers.

Our students are incredibly dependable and reliable and very consistent in their work performance. So we are continually, if given the opportunity, we will create the opportunity to talk about the students and to try to make a connection and get a partner interested in becoming one of our job site partners.

>> DORIE FLYNN: And as Lu said, it's very important for us to go to these employers and explain to them we are here as a support base, we are going to help this child or student, you know, fit right into your work culture.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I'm curious, when you approach employers about this, are the majority of them willing? Are they a little doubtful or reticent given the situation or how do they respond the first time out usually?

>> LU MERRICK: It runs the gamete, but most need some convincing I would say. But once we are there, we ensure, we make sure, you know, that the employer understands that we absolutely want to succeed. We wouldn't want to set ourselves up in a situation when I'm putting students in a job site just because they need to have that vocational experience. I will match students who I absolutely believe have the skills to meet the employers needs and because I want them to have a successful experience. I want the employer to be happy and I

want my students to be successful in gaining new skills.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay.

>> DORIE FLYNN: And can I add something to that too? I think it's -- part of this education mission, it's not just for our students, also we are trying -- it's part of the mandate and we are trying to educate the folks in the world that they need to be ready for these very capable young people that have a lot of offer and that is the other -- that's the outcome of all of this. And it's really trying educate one person at a time out there that these individuals that are coming into their workforces are very capable and it's trying to get them understand that and it's a big job.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. And, Lu, let me go back to you for a moment. What's the parents' role in this?

>> LU MERRICK: The parents are certainly partners throughout every step of the way. And one of the challenges is in supporting the parents to help them give more opportunities for their son or daughter to allow them to stretch and to be more independent. The parents certainly have been there for them all of this time and now we are saying, hey, give them a chance.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> LU MERRICK: And as a parent myself, not of a daughter with individual -- with special needs, but, you know, parents have a hard time letting go and sometimes it's just easier for us to

kind of step in and do it ourselves, less emotional trauma and sort of more time savings.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> LU MERRICK: But we really need to give the students the opportunity to show that if they can do it and that we expect them to do it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Are there particular employers who are more attune to doing this than others? You know, particular kinds of businesses or size of businesses or whatever that are more, you know, open to this idea?

>> LU MERRICK: It hasn't been my experience. I really have a range of employers and types of businesses and sizes of the business. And actually, that is intentional on our part because we want to give our students a variety of work experiences. In my program, we don't train our students to develop a specific career path. They could be a data entry and have the skills to do data entry specifically and that alone. We really give our students the opportunity to try a variety of different jobs and different work environments and work experiences so that they are able, through those real experiences, to develop what their own interests are and where their abilities match different job needs. So they leave us with a very rich resume and can really share with the adult provider who will be helping them after school to match up those skills and experiences with an opportunity for work where

they should be more successful.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And I'm wondering, Dorie or Jan, if I could address this question to either of you, um, first, are there measures of success to this program that you can summarize and share with other schools or other associations or other states as something they should look at doing as well?

>> DORIE FLYNN: When you mean specific program, you are referring to the Ivymount model program?

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yes.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Jan, if you are --

>> JAN WINTROL: Well, measures of success, I think, are, you know, when students leave the school, you know, what are some of the outcomes for them when they are out there, that throughout the MANSEF Association, that would be a number of different -- there would be a variety of responses to that.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Right, a high school diploma.

>> JAN WINTROL: Depending on the disability of the student and what they have, I think, and actually we are looking at our outcomes and we are trying to look at a number of things. Number one, have we helped the family's transition? Those are things, have we helped them get to the next step, i.e. out of the safe environment of Ivymount School now into the adult service world? Most of our students are going to need supported help when they leave, not all students that leave schools that work with them in their disability areas, will

have that needed support all the way through. Most of our students will or a good many of them will. So, how well have we helped parents get to that next step? How, if we look at a few years out, our students working with the adult service providers now are they employed, are they satisfied?

And it's not just about work; it is also about their life. Are they -- for all of us, are their -- do they have some social interaction that brings them some joy in their life? Do they have some independence and have those independent skills continued? Those are measures that you are looking at just as we are looking at it for any individual who is trying to leave at 21 and go on with their life. And I think that we are trying to look at the whole piece of not just employability but also life satisfaction.

The State of Maryland has been very supportive and a strong advocate for making sure that the children with disabilities have, again, those appropriate supports in place. These children, who sometimes will not be able to get a high school diploma or even completion of certificate -- a certificate of completion, they are developing what is called a portfolio.

Federal law mandates that transition for children with disabilities start at the age of 16. Maryland has decided to be more prescriptive than that and, instead, the age of 14. So, again, they are getting transition plans at such a young

age that can help guide these decisions. And there is an exit exam that can be taken. But there is a portfolio that an individual can take to an employer to say these are the skills that I have.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Alright. Good. This is a good time to take another break, I think. I do want to continue this discussion after the break and maybe talk a little bit about some specific examples in this program and later on in the program, we are going to talk about another initiative called Project Search, which does some things that are also related to this kind of approach and also brings a new take on internship. But before we get into that we do need to take another break and before we do that each, let me acknowledge and thank Karasch and Associates and ASL Interpreter Referral Service for their generosity in making Disabilities At Work accessible to those with hearing loss. Thanks to them, transcripts of our program will be available on our website, Disabilities At Work.org, a week following each program.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we are back on the VoiceAmerica Business Network and this is Disabilities At Work Radio. I'm Ray Zardetto. Today's show is sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services, which is part of the state of New Jersey's Division of Human Services. And the Division of Disabilities Services focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live their lives more independently in their communities.

And so now let's get back to our discussion with Dorie Flynn, Jan Wintrol and Lu Merrick. We have been talking about the School-to-Work program at Ivymount School in Rockville,

Maryland. And we have talked in some general and high level ways about what the program is and does. And I'd like, if we can, maybe to talk in a few more specifics now about some of the employers, Lu, that you have worked with in the School-to-Work program and some of the students who have been involved and what the outcomes were.

>> LU MERRICK: Sure. We have been really lucky in that we have put a lot of effort into developing a variety of different partnerships with the employers that we currently have students placed with. And we have about 20, 25 employers right now that we are actively having students placed with. And, for example, our variety includes recently we started working with United Communications Group, UCG, which is a large publishing communications company. And we go there a couple of days a week working on a variety of different office tasks, including mail distribution, packaging, publications, data entry, um, just a variety of office assistant types of tasks.

We send three students with a job coach, who offers the support and makes sure that we are living up to the expectations that the employer has and maintaining good quality standards.

We also, we were lucky in the Washington metropolitan area that we have some great organizations like the Smithsonian Institute. I have just been doing some job development with the Smithsonian Institute and their accessibility center. And

we are getting ready to start working at the National Zoo. We will be working on a research study helping them in the lemur exhibit to study the different behaviors of the lemurs and to take data on that. So I have a specific student who I'm job matching for who has just an incredible interest in animals and specifically his dream is to be at the zoo. So I'm able to give him that opportunity.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: You know, this is probably an obvious question, but just to follow up on that really quick. I suppose that the students approach these opportunities with a great deal of enthusiasm.

>> LU MERRICK: Oh, absolutely, it's their brass ring. The last thing they want to hear is I'm sorry, your job site has been canceled today, which can happen, but it's just devastating for them and, I mean, they just light up when it's time to go to work. They meet their job coaches down in front of the building and they go off to work together. It's just -- it's everything to them. It gives meaning to what they are doing.

>> DORIE FLYNN: One of the other job opportunities is veterinary services. We have a number of, I think, three or four schools that have a number of children that are interning at a veterinary clinic in the community. So that's been another really strong positive.

We also have a school that has set up a partnership with

Jiffy Lube where the young men are getting trained on automotive and, again, how to do the Jiffy Lube oil change.

We have schools that actually have set themselves up like a town where they can operate their post office. We have a school member that has invited the local credit union to have an office inside the school and the children run it. We have a school that does their own radio show, so it's really very concrete skills that they are obtaining to go directly out into employers, similar, obviously, to what Lu is doing.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Uh-huh. And do you know, I mean, are similar programs like this run by other schools in other states that you are aware of, or is this something that you think is fairly exclusive or unique to Maryland?

>> DORIE FLYNN: I would definitely think that other states are doing it, but I just know that Maryland is very strong about it. I feel very proud to represent what is happening at all of the MANSEF member schools. It's wonderful.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. Um, Jan, this question is for you. I'm just wondering, based on everything that Lu has described, how much of what Lu has described, in terms of the School-to-Work program, how much of that is part of the overall context of what happens at Ivymount?

>> JAN WINTROL: Well, that is a great question because -- and I was hoping that someone was going to ask, mainly because it doesn't just start at 18. If you heard Dorie, transition plans

for Maryland start early on. And everything that we do with our students, certainly they are in their educational programs related services, but we are always thinking about every skill, how we can apply it to something. How it can be applied and thinking about where they are going to be.

So when they leave, say the lower middle school, and they are going into the high school, our high school program is a very vocationally -- it has an educational component and it has a vocational component. I have vocational specialists who work with the students. They start creating portfolios and resumes at that level. We have students, they will be doing job interviewing. We have job fairs so they can actually go down and talk to people and see different kinds of opportunities. Students are, we have a variety of jobs that we do in-school jobs, we develop in-school jobs in the school. So we do a lot of recycling as one example of that. We have some students who are actually working in the library. We have students who in the past have worked in one of the day care centers that is located in the building. We have students that have done some of the office work. We have students that do -- we run a print shop through the high school. And we actually take jobs in from the outside as well as do some of our own jobs inside of printing and different things that need to go out.

Um, so we are trying provide in a very systematic way,

if you will, and in a very, um, individualized way because some students need different opportunities. Some students need to be in their educational program a little bit more and working not as many hours in the school program, in the vocational program, and others are working many more hours in the vocational program and less in the classroom. And it really depends on the individual needs and abilities of the particular student.

But everything is trying to get them ready for going to post high school when Lu is going to take them. And we try and work together and communicate as much as we can. And our students are often the best ones who are informing us of what they can do because they are always surprising us at their tremendous abilities in spite of their great needs. We are always trying to learn what they can do and keep creating more opportunities internally so that when they get to Lu, then Lu takes it and she is trying now really get them out of Ivymount, out into the world on a very regular basis, from the time they turn 18 until the time they leave us.

It's a something that we -- we even have in-school businesses. And they are wonderful. The students run businesses. They apply their math skills. They apply their reading skills. They apply their writing skills. They apply their social skills in terms of coming down and taking orders. They cater it to us and bring us one of their businesses will

deliver in the morning if you ordered coffee and muffins, for example. So, using everything we can during the day, lunch time, et cetera, to try and integrate that, if you will, into our program.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: It sounds like a great program and obviously there is a lot of strides being made. Lu, let me ask you this question now, what's the biggest obstacle to continuing to moving -- to continue to move a project like this forward?

>> LU MERRICK: The biggest obstacle, there are several, I mean supporting the parents and you know, knowing the differences between the entitlement services of special education and being prepared and ready for the eligibility services of the adult, um, world. The individuals receiving services, the students, need to be able to communicate with providers, not have the parent be the ones that communicate. Students need to be able to speak up for themselves and to know that it's expected and it's okay for them to do so, and also, just increasing, um, our presence in the business community and giving the business community an opportunity to see our students, um, not as a community service, but as viable employees and a real hiring stream here that has gone untapped.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. I'm also curious; we have touched on the topic of the parents a couple of times. Does some of what you do in this program, or any of the related programs, focus on dealing with or training or educating the parents to a great

degree?

>> DORIE FLYNN: For MANSEF as a whole, yes, we do. We offer all sorts of workshops for parents. We encourage them to participate at all different levels, locally at their school. We also have a statewide parent network. We have taken the parents to Annapolis, which is our state capital to lobby on behalf of more advocacy services for children, students of disabilities. So, we have taken a really strong role in ensuring that our parents are part of the playing field.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And that is, you are talking about that as part of MANSEF, a statewide initiative that way?

>> DORIE FLYNN: Yes, definitely.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Jan, what about at Ivymount?

>> JAN WINTROL: At Ivymount. I mean, it is just critically important, as Lu said earlier, parents are really our partners. They are -- and the truth is, they are going to be there after we are long gone. So the issue is to help them as much as possible to understand what their student's abilities are as well as, to allow them to be as independent as they can, but to help them in that process because it's a hard process. And it's not easy, but we do, more specifically, we have parent evenings. The post high school and for even the high school parents, there are different topics that offered during the year.

Just recently they had parents who have students that

graduated and are out in the world of work, invited back to talk about current parents to let them know this is what I wish I knew when I was in the transition process. So listen carefully and pay attention to this and pay attention to that. And so I think all those things we are always thinking about, what can we do to help families really understand life after school, especially when they are going to be dealing with a student that has disabilities moving into the world.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. That's very good. We have to take one more break in the program. Might as well do it right now.

Dorie and Lu will be staying with us. Jan, thank you very much for joining us today and for your insight and the information you provided for us.

>> JAN WINTROL: Well, thank you.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you. When we return, we are going to focus our final segment on another equally important project, a program that places students at interns in business settings and is part of a national initiative called Project Search. And we will talk about that and some other things when we return. So stay with us. I'm Ray Zardetto, this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio, I'm Ray Zardetto and for the balance of our show today, we are going to look at another initiative involving the Ivymount School MANSEF and preparing students with disabilities for the workforce.

Let me introduce first Denise Ford, she is the chief of the Office of Hospitality Services for the National Institute of Health Clinical Center. And Ken Karbeling who is the general manager of American Reprographics, a digital document managing company located in Rockville, Maryland. Denise and Ken welcome to the program

>> DENISE FORD: Happy to be here. Thanks.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you. We are going to talk a little bit about Project Search now. We have spent some part of the last couple of segments talking about a School-to-Work program that Ivymount is one of the key sponsors of. And now, let's talk about Project Search. Denise, let me start with you, why don't you give us an overview of exactly what project search is.

>> DENISE FORD: Okay. The NIH Project Search is a pretty

innovative workforce and career development model that provides a business site for young people with disabilities to gain post high school experience and employability skill training in the workplace. So, we provide organization specific education and training for these young adults. Our program is a one year School-to-Work program, and it takes place entirely in the workplace.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And is this -- are the students who are involved in this, do they actually go to work sites?

>> DENISE FORD: Yes. They do. Our structure is that they report to the clinical center at the NIH every day, five days a week. And they have classroom time in the morning. We have a dedicated classroom for the Project Search program. And, um, the resources we have to support it here on-site are, we have a full-time instructor from Ivymount that is dedicated to our program. And we have two job coaches that are dedicated to our program from Seek, which provides our disabilities services support. And these kids, uh, report to our classroom in the morning. They are there for about 45 minutes doing check in, some employability skill reinforcement; we send them out to the work sites. I have them placed in ten clinical departments throughout the hospital. And they work on-site for approximately four to five, almost -- well, about five hours a day. Then they check back in in the classroom again for another about 45 minutes of training, and that's the end of

their day. And they do that full-time.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And what kind of jobs, what kind of responsibilities are they usually taking as they go out for those four or five hours in the hospital?

>> DENISE FORD: So our interns are placed. I have two placed in patient transport. They are responsible for actually transporting by wheelchair, or as a second person on a stretcher, patients throughout the hospital. I have one in the office of clinical research and medical education, and they are doing clerical work to support the functions of that office. We have one in our housekeeping department laundry service. They distribute clean laundry through the hospital. Two in our pharmacy department. One of the roles is sorting medications by expiration date. We have one in the department of perioperative medicine. And that person is responsible for preparing all of the operating room instruments for the sterilization procedures. And we have one in materials management that is receiving supply, inventory and stocking distribution areas. We have two in the office of hospitality services greeting patients and processing medical record identifiers.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Sounds like they are all over the place.

>> DENISE FORD: Yes, they are. We have twelve interns. And if you ask our employees, and there is over two thousand employees, they will say -- they always challenge me, I'm

positive you have more than twelve because they see them everywhere.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm just wondering, how are students picked for this program?

>> DENISE FORD: Um, it is a joint selection process really led by Ivymount and also with our partnership with Seek. And I participate as a business liaison because I'm the representative of the business site. So it's really led under Lu Merrick's role.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And Lu, just quickly if you can, from your point of view, how are the students chosen for this program?

>> LU MERRICK: We have quite an involved process. They first are given the opportunity to apply to the program, so there is an application, um, component to the process. Then we set up interviews, individual interviews for each of the applicants. And our team goes through all of the applications and sits in on all of the interviews. So Denise is our business representative, our adult provider agency representative from Seek, and representatives from Ivymount interview each of the candidates.

And this is a hybrid program, meaning that we have students from Ivymount who participate in the program and we also have four slots in the program that are adult provider agency, Seek, is able to fill with appropriate candidates that they support and work with.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Let me turn to Ken now for a couple of minutes to get another business perspective on this program. Ken, your company, Digital Document Management in Rockville, Maryland, is that correct?

>> KEN KARBELING: No, that's what we do, the company is American Reprographics.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. I'm sorry. You manage a digital document management company.

>> KEN KARBELING: Right. Which involves copying or scanning documents or other times we are processing files.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And how did you get involved with Ivymount?

>> KEN KARBELING: Well I had a phone call from someone from the school. They were talking briefly about a post high school program if we are interested in hiring students out of the school. And we have been hiring students from different schools, high schools, colleges all along, and I have always enjoyed having just fresh people come in and they learn really fast and they are eager to be here.

And when they came here from the school and we described what the programs where, I realized, you know what, this is no reason this can't work with kids from this school as opposed to from another school. They are going to come in here with a job coach, so basically I'm having two people, and, at first, you know, we were a little bit hesitant. We just did it a few days

a week for two students, each with a job coach, two hours at a time. And then we realized this is working fine. And it expanded to five days a week.

And it, what will happen is the job coach from the school, there is one in particular that does an awesome job with them and he learns what we do here and he makes sure that they not only understand what they are being asked to do, but what are we are doing here. So they can have a picture of where we are and what this company does. And the kids will come in and they will learn, depending on which student and what their abilities are, some will have recycling and just sorting the paper, others will put together Fed-Ex boxes, others will scan documents, they will rename files.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: How long have you been involved in this now?

>> KEN KARBELING: I'm not certain. I want to say about three years. Lu might know exactly. But one of the great things that I have found from it is having these guys come in here; it does, I would say, more for us than for them.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: In what way?

>> KEN KARBELING: Well, I mean, I know they are getting skills and they are learning about how to do in a workplace and they are learning a lot of things, but it's given guys in here a chance to teach people something and the way that my staff works together and cooperates with each other has completely changed. They have transformed once they have been exposed to

the kids from Ivymount. Because, you know, here is somebody, who it's a challenge for some of the kids to learn everybody's names here. And the guys in here feel fantastic that somebody will come in and say hello to them by name.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> DORIE FLYNN: And Ray, these programs are really providing such positive outcomes, positive results; we obviously want our investment in these children to be for the long-term. And schools like Ivymount, which are, again, all over Maryland, we have 99 schools, they are just doing such great things. And these partnerships that we have been able to development with all of the business community has just been a complete win win.

>> KEN KARBELING: It's been great. And there have been people in here that don't necessarily treat each other that wonderfully sometimes, but then when they have these kids coming in here that are just so eager to know who to do and how to do it, they are so gentle --

>> RAY ZARDETTO: It changes their perspective on things, doesn't it?

>> KEN KARBELING: Oh, yes, just completely. These guys come in and they are just glad to be at work. When they come in here, they bring in such a positive attitude. And like we have had people come in, you know, you first meet them they can't look at you, they can't talk to you or you can't -- you realize they are not going to look you straight in the eye, but they

get everything you are telling them. They figure out exactly what you are saying. And they will point out if a machine is low on paper or if a certain size paper is missing. And they will rename files, which is something that I don't give a lot of my people to do, and some of the kids from Ivymount will work on projects like that. And they are flowering.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Wow.

>> DORIE FLYNN: We definitely see that as well.

>> KEN KARBELING: And it's funny, when we first got started with it, a lot of people were really doubiant, like how is this going work? How are the guys here going to treat these guys? And I could see no reason not to do it. I really couldn't.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: That's really great. Unfortunately, we have run out of time. We have to stop the discussion there, but before I do, um, Dorie, I want to give you just a couple of seconds if there are other companies or perspective employers who are interested in more information or getting involved in this, whom should they contact and how?

>> DORIE FLYNN: They can definitely contact me directly at MANSEF. It's MANSEF@aol.com. Our website is just MANSEF.org. And I'd be happy to talk to them. I know some of the hotels have recently gotten involved with this as well. Food service. So, yes, I'd be happy to talk to any potential employer, business out there to set up this program for them as well.

>> KEN KARBELING: And Dorie, you are welcome to give my name

to them as a reference if they are on the fence, I'd be glad to help.

>> DORIE FLYNN: Thank you.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Can't do much better than that. Let me thank my guests for the program today. Dorie Flynn, Jan Wintrol, Denise Ford, Ken Karbeling and Lu Merrick. It's been a great hour. I think a very enlightening hour.

And let me also thank our sponsors together, the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services. And one more again, a big thank you to Karasch and Associates and ASL Interpreter Referral Service for their generosity in making Disabilities At Work accessible to those with hearing loss. Thanks to them, the transcripts of our program will be available on our website disabilitiesatwork.org one week following each episode.

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