



FOCUS ON *ability*

An Update from ODC, Inc.

AUGUST 2017



Jo Ann (standing) with Skills to Pay the Bills students (L to R) Andy, Joe and Liz. When his classroom work was over, ODC staff helped Andy secure a temporary work experience at Mo's Bar in Friendship.

LEARNING SKILLS TO PAY THE BILLS

Jo Ann Beaudette spent her career helping students with disabilities transition from school to the world of work. Now, says Jo Ann, she has the opportunity to do what she loves and serve her community as well.

About one year ago, Jo Ann became an ODC volunteer, and she's the perfect fit! Her years of experience make her the ideal person to assist ODC in teaching Skills to Pay the Bills, a curriculum authorized and funded by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

New federal laws have created a shift in the types of services that schools and DVR must offer for students with disabilities prior to graduation, as early as age 14. Skills to Pay the Bills is one of those services, so ODC has begun contracting with school districts to teach the curriculum.

"I was a school transition coordinator," said Jo Ann. "I know that teachers have so many kids to provide services for, they can't possibly do it all! They are looking to ODC because we already have the curriculum in place and the experience and expertise to teach it."

Classes have been held during the summer in Adams and Marshfield, and will continue to be offered to all schools in ODC's service areas throughout the school year. The curriculum contains six different units, all focusing on "soft skills" including communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking,

problem-solving and critical thinking, and professionalism.

The activity pictured here stresses the importance of communication in the workplace. Students were given a sheet of paper and specific instructions: fold the paper in half, tear off the corner, etc. They were also told that they must not ask any questions as they completed the project. The students were surprised that, when finished, no two sheets of paper looked alike!

"They knew they had listened to the instructions," said Jo Ann, "so why were their finished products so different? We discussed that this is what happens when we can't or don't ask clarifying questions, so we're sure that we're clear on our instructions. This will be so important when taking direction from supervisors in the workplace."

ODC staff will follow up these classroom sessions by securing DVR-supported temporary work experiences for the students at local businesses. Students will put into practice what they've learned in the classroom., assisted by ODC job coaches.

"This is where it really hits home," said Jo Ann. "What we've taught in the classroom will give them the skills and confidence to be more successful on the job."





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