



# FOCUS ON *ability*

An Update from ODC, Inc.

JANUARY 2020

## OPPORTUNITY + SUPPORT + PERSONAL EFFORT = ACHIEVEMENT!

According to his mom, Traci, Ian’s autism creates many differences in the way he experiences the world and processes information, and in the way he communicates and socializes with others.

“Despite all of these differences,” said Traci, “Ian has the same desires as you and I – he wants to build relationships, and to share his passions and successes with others.”

But when everything feels and looks and sounds so different, life can be challenging. Opportunities – whether educational, social or employment-related – can be few and far between.

“Success can be hard to come by,” she said, “and acceptance can be hard to find.”

Traci shared these words with a group of high school students with disabilities from across Central Wisconsin at a recent Youth Transition Conference called “Your Journey, Your Choices, Your Future”. ODC partnered with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and many other local organizations to host the conference at Mid-State Technical College in Wisconsin Rapids, another partnering agency. Over

**“TO BE ACCEPTED AND FIND OPPORTUNITIES TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE.”**

opportunities to learn more about employment, post-secondary education, social and independent living skills, and self-advocacy.

“To be accepted and find opportunities takes a lot of hard work and perseverance,” Traci told the students. “Ian and our whole family have been blessed that Ian has had so many special programs and people that have shared this journey with us.”

250 students attended the conference, which featured a day full of presentations designed to give students



ABOVE: Ian spoke with his mother, Traci, to a group of students at the first annual Central Wisconsin Transition Conference.

During his junior year in high school, Ian was able to participate in six work opportunities with the help of school staff and programs like ODC and DVR – at the public library, a pet store, Walgreens, a book store, a day care center and the local co-op. And every day, said Traci, Ian was supported by willing employers and “really fabulous” job coaches from ODC.

During his senior year, Ian participated in Project SEARCH, a school-to-work transition program which provides employment and life skills training in real-world work settings throughout the school year. One of Ian’s Project SEARCH internships was in the shipping and receiving department at Prevention Genetics of Marshfield... at the end of his internship, Ian was offered a permanent position.

“Right away,” said Traci, “Ian was invited to participate in weekly department meetings – they really encouraged and were

SEE OPPORTUNITY / PAGE 2



**Opportunity Development Centers, Inc.**  
 1191 Huntington Avenue  
 Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494



**Administrative Office**  
 1191 Huntington Avenue  
 Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494  
 715-424-2712



2406 East 21st Street  
 Marshfield, WI 54449  
 715-387-1161



41 Park Ridge Drive  
 Stevens Point, WI 54481  
 715-344-4563



**www.odcinc.com**



**Make a gift!**  
[www.odcinc.com/donate](http://www.odcinc.com/donate)  
 715-818-6451



## OPPORTUNITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

interested in his input. He was invited to holiday parties, costume parties... you name it, Ian was right there with all the other employees.”



ABOVE: Ian, back row, second from the left, with his Project SEARCH class in May 2018.

In May 2018, Ian graduated from Project SEARCH and there were a whole row of his coworkers at the ceremony to celebrate his graduation.

“Ian still has challenges,” Traci said to conference participants, “and work days can still be overwhelming and stressful and frustrating. Still, he gets up every day and goes to work to face those challenges, because he knows that what he’s doing is important.”

And, she said, Ian is not alone. Every day, ODC staff and his coworkers are there to help him work through his challenges. They accept his differences and see his abilities, and help him celebrate his successes.



PLEASE NOTE: ODC and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) work together to fund and support individuals through job search and training services.

Project SEARCH Wisconsin is supported by DWD’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The program was developed at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, which is still the administrative headquarters for the organization.