



The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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Gessler is on the Road to Success

David Gessler is sitting in the driver's seat as he plans for his future and he is on the road to success.

Gessler, of Mingo Junction, is the epitome of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) which is being observed during October. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the event celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present and showcases supportive, inclusive employment policies that benefit employers and employees. This year's theme is "Advancing Access and Equity" and also marks 50 years of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To his credit, Gessler is earning an honest day's pay by working with Parkhurst Dining at Franciscan University, and he is also studying for his driver's permit to gain even more independence.

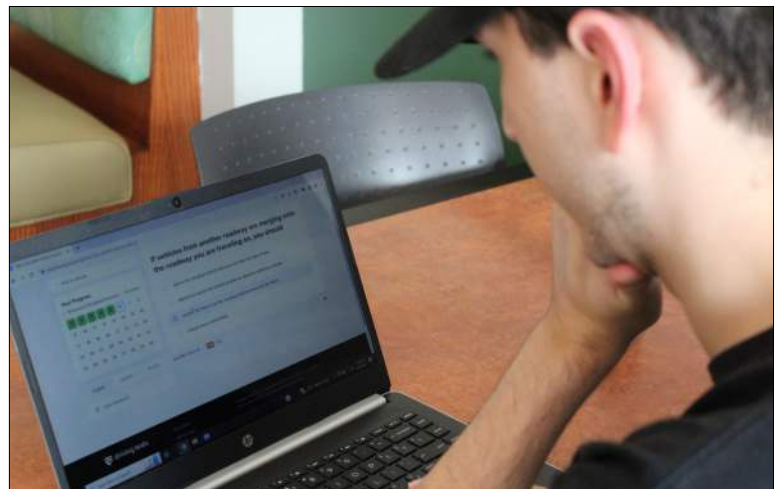
The 2021 Catholic Central High School grad has been working with Angela Loppe Goodrich of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Community Employment Services and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) to not only secure a job but also to obtain his driver's permit. He relies on his parents, Benjamin and Mariely, to transport him to the campus where he works weekdays at the Antonian Dining Hall. His father also works on the campus, but Gessler wants to carve out his own path.

Although he has only been at the site for a month, his tasks have grown from serving as a dining room attendant to aiding in the dish room and being a runner between the dining rooms. He speaks with pride about his duties and said working gives him a chance to develop relationships with co-workers.

"My job has turned out fantastic. One of the biggest accomplishments is I'm friends with so many



David Gessler is getting his life in gear by pursuing a driver's permit with assistance from the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Community Employment Services and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). CES also helped him obtain a job through Parkhurst Dining at the Franciscan University of Steubenville and he practices up to three days a week with online tests to earn his permit, then ultimately his license and car for further independence. Gessler is also a prime example of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month for October and its 2023 theme, "Advancing Access and Equity."



people at Franciscan University," he noted, saying he has built a rapport with faculty, staff and even the clergy. "It feels like friends and family. I am really thankful and it's been my privilege to honor and demonstrate the company's values. My job is to show support for the entirety of Parkhurst and to respect their time and help them out."

Goodrich said Parkhurst has been very accommodating to Gessler's employment and scheduling needs.

"David has had temporary jobs in the past; CES started working with David through OOD to help secure a permanent job," she added. "David is a breath of fresh air."

(Continued as GESSLER)

“He has a great attitude and a great work ethic and is all about the team being successful where he’s working. Parkhurst has always been a valued employer to CES. They have always supported the individuals we work with and provided long-term employment for some.”

She added that CES has worked with individuals on their driver’s permit for the past decade and a dozen clients have been successful. Gessler began permit tutoring after expressing a need to obtain one. His goal is to earn his license and get behind the wheel of his own vehicle, not only to travel to work but also to help his family that includes six brothers and sisters. He and three siblings remain at home and Gessler said wants to support his parents by transporting his younger family members around the community.

Goodrich began tutoring Gessler on the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles handbook and he also prepares for the official exam by taking online and written practice tests.

“We’ve been working two to three days a week,” she continued. “We go over the signs, road hazards, crossings and other rules. We’ve created a program that gives the individuals we serve online practice testing, CES started driver’s permit tutoring with the adult population and has since grown to working with 16-year-olds and above. Eventually, David will go to Bridgeport or New Philadelphia for the official exam so that he can take the A-B pencil test. It’s a permit test on paper with two multiple choic-

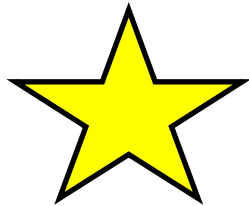
es and it’s not timed. We’ve helped 12-15 people and everyone so far has obtained a permit.”

“We study the signs and it takes a lot of time to learn it well. The more you study, you’ll do fine on the test,” Gessler interjected. “Permit tutoring has really helped me a lot because I’m about to start driving in a couple of months. My mom and dad help by getting up and getting us to Mass and dropping the kids off at school. I really want to step up and help with driving. I promise I will drive safely and I’m always going to be helpful.”

Goodrich said participants will then be referred to Mercy Hospital for a simulated test or a local driver’s education company to hone their driving skills. She noted that in some cases OOD may defray costs to repair a dependable used car to help people get to work.

Meanwhile, Gessler’s other passion is the arts and he longs to pursue work in lighting and sound production and work in the theater. He was a longtime member of the CCHS Drama Club, National Honor Society and National Thespian Society, plus he earned several awards in high school. But for now, he just wants to get his life in gear. Gessler plans to gain his permit and license, save up his hard-earned pay to purchase a car and pursue his dreams.

“My second main goal in life is to have a car and give my youngest siblings and nieces and nephews a ride. We’ll see where the dear Lord wants me to go.”



Nick Saggio



Nick Saggio is someone who wants to help others, and he has been doing just that for more than a decade with the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

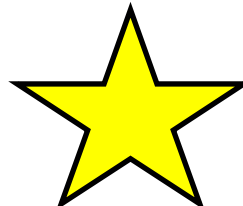
Saggio, of Steubenville, has served in various aspects from the former Jeffco Training Center to currently acting as an Early Intervention Service coordinator, the latter of which he has done for nearly six years. He earned a bachelor’s degree in social work from Franciscan University in 2006 and said he was led on his path by an educator.

“I’ve always wanted to do something to help others and Dr. Jerry Jo Gilham, one of my professors at Franciscan, convinced me that social work would be a good option for me, and I’m glad that she did.”

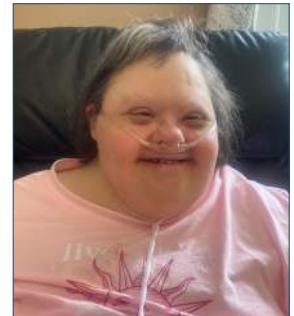
In his spare time, Saggio cheers on the Pittsburgh Steelers and Notre Dame Fighting Irish and enjoys moments with his family, including his wife Darci and children, Brooklyn and Mason, as well as his dog, Bentley.

Above all, he is glad to be part of the community and JCBDD.

“I am proud to live and work in the Ohio Valley,” Saggio said. “I’ve been blessed to be able to work alongside many amazing people at the county board for over 10 years.”



Judy Yates



Judy Yates’ smiling face and contagious laughter are a fixture at Shaffer Plaza.

Yates, a resident at Home C and a native of Rayland, has a longtime connection with the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities since she was a student at the School of Bright Promise. She has fond memories of her days at the school and chuckled when she shared some of those recollections. Her fondest memory, the one that got the most giggles, is when she played the star role of “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.” She laughed at how her glittery nose seemed to end up all over her face and clothing, even in her mouth.

Judy went on to share that her favorite movie is the “Wizard of Oz,” and coming in at a close second is “Grease.” She was also quick to say her favorite food was tacos and dessert was chocolate cake.

Now that she is retired, she enjoys doing crossword puzzles. She also lit up when reminiscing about her younger years at Hopewell Church where she had lots of fun at Vacation Bible School. Judy misses her orange, white and black cat named Annie, but ended the conversation with a very contagious chuckle, saying she enjoyed living with the housemates and cares about the staff.