

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY



Project SEARCH students and alumni, including Brian Bodfield, Ivett Felix, Esdras Juarez, Gerardo Juarez, Jerome Kurczodyna, Matt McAuliff, Chris Marienau and Freddy Sanchez hosted an open house on Thursday, Feb. 23, at Saint Francis Medical Center. McAuliff, Marienau and Sanchez are all Project SEARCH alumni.

Project SEARCH hosts open house

By Terry Douglass
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This year's Project SEARCH class at Saint Francis Medical Center welcomed visitors to an open house on Thursday, Feb. 23, in its classroom area, located in the former birthing unit.

The open house featured current and former Project SEARCH students as well as educational displays about the program. Refreshments were also served.

Project SEARCH is a high school transition program. It uses internships that are designed to transition young adults with disabilities into employment within the workplace.

Throughout the school year, interns participate in a functional academic curriculum that

stresses employability and independent living skills that includes career exploration, money management, goal-setting, job-seeking skills, employability skills, healthy life choices, communication, social skills and job-specific skills. The goal for each intern is competitive employment.

Project SEARCH business partners include Saint Francis Medical Center, Grand Island Public Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Health and Human Services Developmental Disabilities, Nebraska Commission of the Visually Impaired and Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership.

Students are referred to the program through their school district and apply in the spring of the year prior to entering the program. The student and family complete and

submit the application by a predetermined deadline.

Space is limited for students applying and the selection is carried out by members of the Project SEARCH Advisory Committee. The committee reviews the application packets, interviews the students and notifies eligible students and families.

Project SEARCH began in 1996 at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Concerned with a high turnover rate, the hospital experimented to see if individuals with disabilities could fill entry-level jobs.

Since then, Project SEARCH has grown from one original program to more than 150 programs across 42 states and four countries.

This year marks the third Project SEARCH class at Saint Francis Medical Center.