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Transition Works

Where your future begins

Nebraska VR

Nebraska Department of Education

Learning to Earn: Christopher Rowan

Christopher Rowan's advice to high school students working with Nebraska VR is "Don't be afraid to ask questions, even if you think they are irrelevant." Nebraska VR's Lupe Stevens agrees. "The more you engage, the more you benefit," says Stevens who is an experienced Transition Coordinator working with students in the Kearney area. "Christopher is a great example of someone who was willing to get the most of work-based learning experiences and job exploration."

Christopher will be attending Central Community College - Kearney in the fall with a plan to do an academic transfer. His major, graphic design, matches the interests identified in job exploration activities and discussions he participated in with Nebraska VR in partnership with his high school.

His mother, Kristen Aungst, heard about Pre-Employment Transition Services from a friend and invited Lupe to her son's Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Kristen was pleased to have another person supporting his transition from high school.

According to Christopher, "Everything was simple and easy to understand and it helped me find a career goal." As a student who experiences Autism Spectrum Disorder, Christopher found it difficult to fit in and relate to his peers. He is described as a polite young man who is shy until you get to know him. However, through job exploration, work-based learning, and activities to learn how to self-advocate, Lupe says he gained confidence and broke out of his shell.



~Christopher Rowan

During the school year, he participated in a work-based learning experience at HyVee to develop job readiness skills. Some of the time he was working on customer service skills by helping shoppers find different items in the store.

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Opportunity Knocks!

The Nebraska State Leadership Council (NYLC) seeks students to participate in a unique opportunity to:

- Meet others who experience a disability
- Make friends
- Develop communication and life skills
- Gain confidence
- Learn how to self-advocate

The Nebraska State Leadership Council (NYLC) Mission:

"The NYLC was created "by youth for youth". We are leaders and advocates who experience a disability. We travel the state promoting disability awareness and educating our peers on transitioning to college or work."

To learn more about the NYLC go to their new website at: nylc.nebraska.gov/nylc





Employers Speak

It is important for students transitioning from school to work to know what to expect in a job interview. We've asked Nebraska employers to provide some insight to help students prepare for their first job interview.

What interview question do you always ask a potential employee in an interview?

I always ask the applicant to "walk me through your job history, education, and accomplishments". This gives me a chance to see if they can do things like engage with another person, form complete sentences, organize their thoughts in a logical response. I can also get a sense of their attitude towards past employers. I then ask a series of questions around our core values of respect, integrity, service, and excellence.

What types of questions do you like to hear a potential employee ask about your worksite or job opening?

Genuine questions! I can tell when an applicant has just looked over our website and is asking something just to ask a question. If you're interested in company culture, ask about that. If you want to know about benefits, ask about that.

If a job candidate doesn't have previous job experience, what can they do to stand out?

Go to a job fair or open interview day. If I could meet you in person first, instead of on paper, it might sway my decision about you.

What are some qualities you like to see in a potential employee?

Those core values are what we like to see in potential hires. An applicant should be prepared to tell me how they've respected others, display their integrity, how they serve, and how they strive for excellence. If I can find these things I will do my best to find a place for them in our organization.

Source: Alye Kussman, HR Generalist
SAC Federal Credit Union, Papillion

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions from parents, students, and educators

Q: What is Nebraska VR's role?

A: The role of Nebraska VR in providing services to students in the school system is primarily one of exploring appropriate post-school goals and needed supports that lead to employment. Nebraska VR's transition services help students with disabilities prepare for and obtain competitive integrated employment. These may include vocational counseling and guidance, pre-employment transition services, independent living, self-advocacy instruction, benefits planning related to employment, assistive technology, post-secondary education or training, job placement, and other services leading to competitive employment.

Q: How do students receive pre-employment transition services?

A: Pre-employment transition services can be provided in individual or group activities. The best first step for students interested in pre-employment transition services is to participate in general pre-employment transition services group activities. These activities will be provided by Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators and other partners. Individual activities are tailored to the student's goals in collaboration with the school.



Learning to Earn: Christopher Rowan

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He also retrieved carts from the parking lot, sacked groceries, and performed various cleaning tasks. Because he did such a great job, the store asked him to work part-time over the summer as a courtesy clerk.

Going forward Christopher will be able to use the skills and experience he acquired to flourish in his continued education and work life.

Resource Spotlight



EducationQuest Foundation is a nonprofit organization with offices in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and Scottsbluff. With a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska, services include free college planning and need-based scholarships.

Their website features blogs, videos, and tips for planning for the future. Be sure to check out their publications section where you can find the College Planning for Students with Disabilities Handbook.

Go to EducationQuest.org to learn more!

The Facts About Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning may include experiences and mentoring and it is a great way to explore your interests, skills, and abilities. Think of it as a test-drive for the world of work waiting for you after high school where you can learn things you may not be able to in a classroom. It is an opportunity to discover your true interests and dip your toes in the water to see what it is like in a specific job role.

Let's take a brief look at a few myths and facts about work-based learning.

Myth These are long-term commitments that will interfere with my school schedule.

Fact Work-based experiences can be formal and arranged for extended periods of time but often they are informal and last a few hours. These experiences could include a company tour or job shadow.

Myth As a high school student, I'm already too busy.

Fact Because Nebraska VR works closely with your school, it is possible that you can earn school credit for work-based learning experiences. Now that is multi-tasking!

Myth There is no payment to me for work provided.

Fact Sometimes work-based learning opportunities are volunteer or unpaid, but most come with a wage.

Myth I have a job already, so there is nothing I can gain from a work-based learning experience.

Fact Remember, these experiences are your opportunity to learn and explore a variety of work interests so you can truly find the job that is right for you when you transition from school to the world of work.

Myth This is something I have to do to keep my parents and teachers happy.

Fact These are opportunities to strengthen key soft skills areas like communication, teamwork, enthusiasm, problem solving, and work appropriate behavior. This can provide a competitive advantage in achieving your employment goals.

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VR

The Facts About...

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The Benefits to Students, Schools, and Employers are Many

For Students. Work-based learning is an excellent way to explore a field of interest and see if it is a good choice for you. You get to practice employability skills and make personal connections in the community. This may help you in the future when you are looking for a job. You will also learn how the classroom and the real world are connected.

For Schools. Work-based learning is a great way to foster relationships in the community and improve student retention rates. These unique opportunities expose students to technology and state-of-the-art equipment while meeting the needs of diverse populations of students.

For Employers. Work-based learning provides an opportunity for businesses to connect to the community by helping prepare potential future employees with workplace expectations.

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Connect with Us

Nebraska VR has a long history of providing transition services for students with disabilities as they transition from school to work. We partner with parents, schools, and employers to help students prepare for the future. Transition Works, published by Nebraska VR, is intended for students with disabilities and their families, as well as educators.

Find additional resources for students at:
vr.nebraska.gov/students

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Nebraska VR - *Where your future begins*