INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY – Colin Rogers (left) enjoyed the opportunity to spend three months working at Allegra, a busy printing and marketing company in Cranbury, N.J. Career Development Services Director Karl Craft provided job coaching. Karl made sure Colin understood the tasks he was asked to do and helped to keep him focused and on track.

Career Development Services
Internship Provides Opportunity to Learn

Colin Rogers is a student in the Graphic Arts Technology program at Mercer County Technical School. He has a passion for video games and would like to one day design them. Karl Craft, director of Advancing Opportunities’ Career Development Services program, worked with Colin, who has autism, to help him find an internship position that would allow him to further his graphic arts abilities and also utilize his skills in a real world setting. Allegra, a full service marketing, printing and mailing company, opened its doors to Colin and gave him a chance to experience what a career in graphic arts might be like.

During his internship with Allegra, one of Colin’s main responsibilities was getting print jobs ready for production. Working at a computer station, Colin reviewed files before they were printed, checking to make sure the sizing was correct and the resolution was perfect. Allegra’s CEO David Kovacs noted that Colin’s ability to focus and his keen eye for precise detail made him a good candidate for that specific role. Colin also flexed his creative muscles at Allegra by designing sample logos to illustrate how designs would look on different types of promotional materials. Allegra is a firm that offers marketing and printing solutions, including graphic design and full-color printing on

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quick look at what’s inside:

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Make a Positive Impact on 2018
Join Me in Celebrating the Accomplishments Our Agency Achieved This Year

Dear Friends,

In broad strokes, it has been a banner year for Advancing Opportunities. I’d like to recap a few of our highlights.

Our Student Success Center launched an Internship Development Program with the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It will help college students with disabilities find and participate in internship programs. This pilot initiative builds on the strong relationships our Assistive Technology and Career Development teams have established with DVR and it enhances our ability to provide seamless services during the transitions from high school to college and then from college to career.

Our Assistive Technology team partnered with the Kessler Foundation on a research project designed to improve the productivity of individuals with spinal cord injuries who use assistive technology at work. They are helping develop a new standard that will be recognized as a best practice guideline for assistive technology professionals across the country. We are proud to be a part of this research effort!

In October, we moved four young men into our 17th group home, which is fully accessible and located in Jackson, N.J. Jersey Central Power and Light, the region’s utility company, partnered with us to build Smart Home technologies right into the house. We will be using this house as a lab to further our understanding of how technology can be used to keep our residents safer and advance their independence. What we learn at the Jackson Group Home will be applied to our homes across the state.

While we are pleased that big things are happening at the agency, we are still very focused on the small steps the people we serve are making toward their goals. We understand the powerful and positive impact our supports can have on people’s day to day lives -- people like Colin, a student who is gaining experience through his internships; Wayne, who is operating his own business; and Stephanie, a life-long learner who continues to feed her thirst for knowledge and grow using assistive technology.

Our team is strong and dedicated. Every member works hard to make sure people with disabilities have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. We appreciate the support you have given us in the past and hope we can count on you again to make a tax deductible contribution before the year is done so we can continue to have a positive impact for people with disabilities in 2018. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jack Mudge
Chief Executive Officer

Advancing Opportunities
All Disabilities. Many Services. One Agency.

Advancing Opportunities, Inc./Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey helps children and adults with all types of disabilities gain independence. We believe people with disabilities have the right to participate fully in society. Since 1950, we have provided services, support, education and advocacy to individuals with disabilities and their families to help them lead fuller lives at home, school, work and play. Advancing Opportunities, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.
OPEN HOUSE: Supporters and staff gathered to celebrate the opening of Advancing Opportunities’ newest group home in Jackson Township, N.J. Shown along the ramp that leads to the front door are (from left): Board of Directors Member Warren Kelemen, COO William Cumman, Registered Nurse Yvette Thomas, Residential Manager Walter Isaac, Assistant Director of Assistive Technology Services Garth Heid, Residential Director Paul Ronollo, Board of Directors Member Ken Gacian, Assistant Director of Intake and Behavioral Services Alyssa Lovitt, Board of Directors Member Floyd Carl, Assistive Technology Services Director Fred Tchang, Residential Business Manager Janet Zoda, CEO Jack Mudge and Career Development Director Karl Craft.

Open House Highlights Accessibility & Technology Features
‘Smart’ Group Home Opens in Jackson, N.J.

Advancing Opportunities, Inc. recently rolled out the welcome mat at its newest group home in Jackson, N.J. and during an open house on October 6, 2017, demonstrated for funders and supporters the accessibility features and smart home technologies installed to enhance the independence of the residents who will live there.

“Advancing Opportunities’ Assistive Technology Services team made sure this environment is as accessible as it could be and that it includes technologies to support and empower the four individuals who will call this house home,” said CEO Jack Mudge. “We are also fortunate that Jersey Central Power and Light has joined us as a partner in this project. JCP&L has made a generous commitment to help fund the different technologies we build into our group homes to promote the safety and autonomy of our residents.”

“Using technology, the residents will be able to do things they may not be able to do physically. This home uses a Google Home system, so a resident can turn on or dim the lights using a voice command or with their iPad. As they move in, we will work with the residents provide them the means to control as much about their environment as they are able,” explains Assistive Technology Services Director Fred Tchang. “We’ve also built in technology to keep residents safe. Water temperatures in the kitchen and bathrooms are controlled electronically to prevent scalding accidents, and all doors have been outfitted with alerts so staff are notified when someone enters or leaves the home,” said Tchang.

Some of the accessibility components of the Jackson group home are: ramps and concrete paths that lead up to the front and back doors; power door openers; counter tops with clearance for residents using wheelchairs; electronic ceiling lifts to carry residents from bed to wheelchair to bathroom; and a roll in shower with simple controls.

Funding to establish the residence as a group home was provided by: Jackson Township, the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities, Advancing Opportunities, Inc., and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency. The house in Jackson brings the number of group homes operated by Advancing Opportunities to 17.

For more information about the Residential Services and Supports provided by the agency, contact Paul Ronollo at 888-322-1918 or via email at pronollo@advopps.org
Word Prediction Software Makes A World of Difference

Technology Fuels Stephanie’s Passion for Learning

Stephanie P. is a life-long learner. In her early 50s with limited physical mobility due to cerebral palsy, Stephanie rarely used a computer. This meant she didn’t get much of a chance to do two of her favorite things: researching the archives of the Vatican Library and browsing on Amazon.

At the Abilities Expo in Edison this past May, Stephanie’s Mom Alberta ran into an acquaintance from long ago -- Garth Heid, the agency’s Assistant Director of Assistive Technology Services. Following up on a suggestion from Garth, Stephanie contacted the agency for an assistive technology evaluation. Soon after, she began working with Assistive Technology Specialist Kristen Russell to find a way to make working on the computer easier.

Kristen had Stephanie try various adaptive devices, including keyboards and joysticks, to access to her computer. After all the trials, Stephanie preferred using the keyboard on her laptop even though with her limited hand control, typing each letter of a word accurately was laborious. At that point, Kristen realized Stephanie needed software, not a device, to help her work around her limitations; she recommended a program called WordQ.

WordQ provides an interface with most text-based apps, both offline word-processing programs and online Internet browsing and e-mail. While WordQ provides word-prediction similar to what anyone who has texted on a smartphone has seen, it is much quicker and can suggest words or phrases with far fewer keystrokes than what mainstream apps offer. The convenience and saving of time are readily apparent. For individuals with various disabilities, this technology can be much more than merely an expediency.

Built-in text-to-speech technology says each letter and word out loud, which has helped Stephanie hear mistakes or confirm that what she typed is correct. With WordQ installed, Stephanie is learning keyboard shortcuts, which are much easier for her than using the mouse. In addition, Kristen changed the accessibility features already built into the Windows 7 operating system on Stephanie’s laptop. For example, the “sticky keys” feature allows Stephanie to type in her keyboard shortcuts in two separate steps rather than having to hold down the keys together. “This is easy to learn,” says Kristen; Stephanie readily agrees. “Though I’m just learning, I feel more independent.”

Stephanie is grateful for the opportunity to pursue her passion for learning and discovery on her computer. She has a Bachelor’s degree in religious studies, having graduated with honors. With WordQ, Stephanie can continue to do the research that fosters her inquisitive personality. Stephanie and her Mom both marveled at how knowledgeable Kristen is and how positive and patient she is to work with.

TOOLS TO ENHANCE STUDYING -- Assistive Technology Specialist Kristen Russell (left) worked with Stephanie to help her find a way to make using her computer easier. Word prediction software has made Stephanie’s research into the archives of the Vatican Library much less cumbersome.

Abilities EXPO

This year’s NY Metro Abilities Expo will be held from May 4th through May 6th at the NJ Convention Center in Edison, N.J. Advancing Opportunities is a proud sponsor and the Assistive Technology Services team is hosting the AT Pavilion. Look for us in booths 143 and 245.
Innovative Tools Keep Kean’s Kitchen Cookin’

At 8 a.m. the state office building on Haddon Avenue in Camden is bustling. Down a side hallway off of the main corridor, the smell of coffee wafts out of the door from Kean’s Kitchen. Behind the counter Wayne Kean chats with the steady stream of customers who come in. Some make a beeline for the coffee canisters at the back of the shop, some hit up the vast selection of teas. Some grab a snack to go with their caffeine. Wayne greets his customers by name and they joke about the weather or the Phillies. Wayne, who is blind, says he can tell who is who because he knows their voices, or in some cases their perfumes.

He has been running his shop since April of 2010; it’s a Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ) venture, overseen by the state’s Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBV). During a 21-week program, Wayne learned what he needed to know about running the snack bar and managing the vending machines in the building.

Wayne takes a great deal of pride in providing the best possible customer service. “It doesn’t matter what you sell and how you sell it. What matters is how you sell yourself,” he said, reflecting on the work ethic he cultivated while working in his father’s hardware growing up. “It’s not about the money, but about the people,” said Wayne.

Assistive Technology Specialist Norm Rothstein works with Wayne, helping him with the tools and devices he uses to manage his business.

A talking bar-code reader helps Wayne manage his inventory. He pulls a package of salted nuts off of the rack and scans the code. The device tells him how many packages have been sold, how many more are on display. Wayne also uses JAWS (Job Access with Speech) which is a screen-reading software to read and send emails, and OpenBook, which scans printed materials, including money, books and invoices, and converts them to speech. In the future, Wayne hopes to learn new ways to use his iPad, which has an app for swiping credit cards.

Wayne enjoys learning new ways to apply the technology with Norman. “He’s very good at what he does. Norm is a people person. He makes the learning fun,” said Wayne. “He gives me that energy, so I want to do everything, especially after fatigue sets in after spending the day interacting with people.”

MINDING THE STORE – Wayne Kean manages the coffee shop on the first floor of one of the state office buildings in Camden, N.J. He uses assistive technology to get the job done.

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https://www.youtube.com/user/assistivetechcenter
SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY -- CEO Jack Mudge presented David Kovacs, Allegra's owner, with the Champion of Inclusion Award for providing Colin with the opportunity. Shown are (from left): Jose Cruz, Digital Production Manager, intern Colin Rogers, Allegra CEO David Kovacs, Advancing Opportunities CEO Jack Mudge, and Pre-press Manager Jason Booth.

Internship Provides Opportunity to Learn and Grow

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state-of-the-art presses. The firm is based in Cranbury, N.J.

Allegra’s pre-press manager Jason Booth worked on a daily basis with Colin and was quite impressed with both his technical skills and his vision. “Colin was very knowledgeable about Photoshop and the other programs he used. He also has a very creative mind and can put things together on the screen that looked really good,” he said.

In August Advancing Opportunities, Inc. presented Allegra with its Champions of Inclusion Award for recognizing the value of a diversified workforce. “We established this award to recognize businesses that are creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to join the workforce and contribute in their communities,” said Advancing Opportunities’ CEO Jack Mudge. “David Kovacs and everyone at Allegra welcomed Colin. They gave him a chance to apply his skills, learn new things and experience working as a part of a team. Together, we’re helping Colin take his first steps along what we hope is a long and satisfying career path.”

For more information about the job coaching services available through the Career Development Services program or employment-related community supports, contact Karl Craft at 609-882-4182 ext. 502 or via email at kcraft@advopps.org.

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DIVING IN TO HELP OTHERS -- Advancing Opportunities received a special gift this fall from Brianna Swartz. Brianna participated in a Swim-a-thon on October 22 at the South Jersey Aquatic Center and decided to turn the event into an opportunity to raise money to help people with disabilities, like her Aunt Jennie who has multiple sclerosis. Brianna swam 220 laps during the Swim-a-thon and raised $673 in donations for the agency. Thank you, Brianna. Your efforts mean so much to all the people we serve.

Emerson Hosts a Sip and Paint Party

PAINT AND SIP – Staff and residents of the Emerson Group Home in Emerson, N.J. hosted a Sip and Paint party and invited residents from some of the agency’s other group homes. Party-goers enjoyed light refreshments, desserts and sparkling cider while they painted wooden masks. The team pitched a tent to keep residents out of the sun. Staff and residents had a great time. Above, residential support specialist Melody Williams helps residents with their projects.

Words We Work By
Agency Mission, Vision & Credo

Mission: Achieve full societal participation for all people with disabilities.

Vision: We will become New Jersey’s best known and most trusted organization for people with disabilities, with an unrivaled reputation for excellence, caring and innovation.

Credo: First and foremost, we believe in ensuring the Health and Safety of our consumers, team, and constituents of Advancing Opportunities.

We strive always to ensure that the Human Rights and dignity of the individuals we serve is a great priority.

We deliver Quality Services that maintain the well-being and happiness of those we serve.

We work towards every consumer’s potential to strive for greater independence; it is our responsibility to guide and support them.

We strive for team member satisfaction, accomplishment and professional growth.

We are committed to make sure that both personal and public property will be treasured and given the utmost of care.

We will be transparent in our actions to ensure that trust and value is presented to our consumers, team, and constituents.
New Partnership with Mercer County Community College

Additional Supports for STEM Students With Disabilities

Starting next January, Advancing Opportunities’ Career Development Services team is partnering with Mercer County Community College to deliver supports to students with disabilities who are pursuing degrees in STEM-related majors (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

Through the collaboration, which is funded in part by grants from the Investors Bank Foundation and the Roma Bank Community Foundation, students with disabilities will work one-on-one with a Career Development Specialist to help secure internship or employment opportunities. Students will receive individualized supports, including self-advocacy training, resume building, and an assistive technology consultation to identify any tools or devices that may increase independence and success in the workplace.

“Ensuring all students have the support they need to achieve their career goals is a key component of our mission,” said Advancing Opportunities CEO Jack Mudge. “With the help of our professional career coaches and our assistive technology team, we are confident students with disabilities at MCCC can thrive in STEM fields. We look forward to seeing what they achieve.”

For more information about securing individualized supports for students with disabilities who are enrolled in or planning to enroll in a postsecondary program in New Jersey, contact Director of Career Development Services Karl Craft at 888-322-1918 ext. 502.