



ON THE JOB -- Scott R. (left) has been working at the Sam's Club in Budd Lake N.J. for over a year and a half. He enjoys his job of corralling shopping carts. Scott meets regularly with Employment Specialist Violet Sekyere-Marfo who monitors his progress and helps him communicate with his employer.

Taking Pride in His Job Pays Off Employee's Strong Work Ethic Gets Noticed

Scott R. enjoys going to work and doing his job well. For the past year and a half, Advancing Opportunities' Employment Services Department has worked with Scott, helping him find and maintain two jobs.

Scott is married and lives independently in an apartment. He recently purchased a car. "A nice, silver Subaru," he says proudly, and commutes on his own to work. When Scott is not working, he enjoys his hobbies, photography and ham radios.

In August of 2014 Sam's Club, a warehouse membership store, hired Scott. When he started, Employment Specialist Violet Sekyere-Marfo provided hands-on support, helping him learn the responsibilities related to his job, which is retrieving shopping carts from the store's vast parking lot. She also helped with tasks of daily living, reinforcing the importance of good grooming and dressing appropriately for the weather. As Scott learned what he needed to do to do his job well, Violet reduced the amount of supervision she provided. These days, Scott puts in a 30 hour week at Sam's

Club and Violet visits him on site weekly. She monitors his progress and identifies tasks or skills he might need work on. In addition to meeting with Scott, she talks to his managers at the store. Rebecca Lata is Scott's supervisor. "He's a great worker," she said. Rebecca is helping Scott with telling and keeping time. "He is so busy, he may forget to take his breaks and lunch, which we are required to provide," she added.

Once, Scott arrived late to work because his car broke down. Ever since that day, he arrives for his shifts extra early. "He'd rather be very early than just a little bit late," said Violet. "Scott is very dedicated." His dedication and motivation at Sam's

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Will Your Legacy Promote Independence and Inclusion?

Dear Friends,

For many who receive our quarterly newsletter, Advancing Opportunities, Inc./Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey has been an organization you have supported for many years, either with the gift of your time or through monetary donations. We appreciate the generosity of our supporters; without your help, we would not be able to accomplish all that we do.



In our 66 year history, we have advocated for and provided supports to many individuals with all types of disabilities. We have moved developmentally disabled adults from institutions into homes of their own. Over the years, our family support services team has given parents and caregivers hundreds of thousands of hours of rest and respite.

Our assistive technology team has helped students from Kindergarten through college find the tools and devices that allow them to reach their fullest potential in the classroom. Our employment specialists have helped men and women who want to work and contribute find and keep jobs. Our advocates have helped thousands of students get the education they are entitled to.

Many people we serve receive our supports at home and at work or school. Some of our consumers rely on Advancing Opportunities for care 24 hours a day. To ensure the children and adults we serve continue to receive these quality supports far into the future, I am asking donors to consider gifts through planned giving.

Gifting life insurance is a convenient and effective way of leveraging assets to support Advancing Opportunities. There are several different ways this can happen: adding a charitable giving rider to a policy; donating a policy; or naming the agency as a sole or partial beneficiary.

In some instances, donating a life insurance policy may lower the overall value of an estate in terms of what is taxable, thereby lowering the amount of estate taxes your inheritors will have to pay.

I would encourage anyone considering using life insurance as a way to leave a lasting legacy to consult with their insurance agent, attorney or financial advisor for more information.

As a person passionate about helping people with disabilities live as independently as they are able, I hope you will consider Advancing Opportunities in your estate planning.

Thank you,

**Jack M. Mudge, Chief Executive Officer
Advancing Opportunities, Inc.**



Advancing Opportunities

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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.

Taking Pride in His Work Pays Off

FROM PAGE 1

Club helped Scott land a second job.

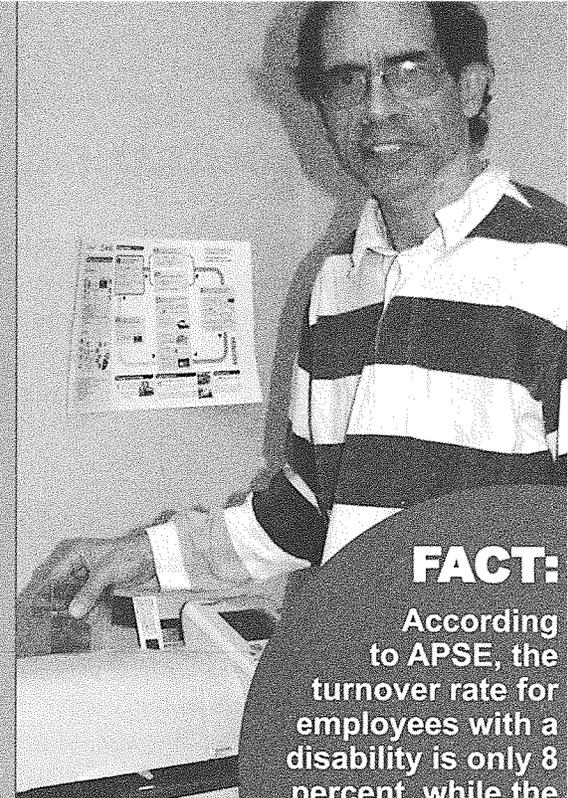
Last fall, when Terri Abato, the office manager of Advancing Opportunities' Budd Lake office was looking for someone to do part-time janitorial work, she contacted the Employment Services Department and Violet was able to recommend Scott.

His initial duties included vacuuming, dusting and emptying the shredder. Since Scott has shown an interest in learning new skills, his to-do list at the office has

grown. Now he is maintaining the postal machine too. Terri said Scott remembers all of the little details. "He goes above and beyond," she said. "He is always willing to do extra."

Scott takes pride in his work at Advancing Opportunities. "I love this job," he said. "The people are so friendly."

***NEW OPPORTUNITIES** -- Because of his sterling work ethic at Sam's Club, Scott was recommended when a job opened up in the agency's Budd Lake office.*



FACT:

According to APSE, the turnover rate for employees with a disability is only 8 percent, while the turnover rate for people without disabilities is about 45 percent.

Because Everyone Who Wants to Work Should Services Benefit Workers and Their Employers

This February, the U.S. Department of Labor reported the unemployment rate for people with disabilities had increased to 12.5 percent. This rate is well over two times higher than the unemployment rate for individuals without a disability.

"It is important for everyone to have the opportunity to gain both financial independence and personal satisfaction through a career," said Advancing Opportunities' Employment Services Assistant Director Karl Craft. Craft and a team of six Employment Specialists provide a variety of employment-related services to over 60 men and women around the state.

Career Planning

The team helps job seekers with career planning, which encompasses not only finding a job that is

a good fit for an individual's interests and abilities, but helping them develop a strategy for being successful, advancing through promotion or moving on to a more challenging job.

Job Development

The employment specialists help the consumer learn what he or she will need to know to perform the job well and grow professionally. They also focus on cultivating workplace skills, appropriate behaviors, and communication with coworkers.

Follow-Along

During follow-along, the employment specialist works alongside a new employee to reinforce the skills needed for the job. As the employee learns what he or she needs to know to work independently, the employment specialist's role is decreased.

Worksite Accommodations

Sometimes a job site or work environment needs to be modified slightly so a person with a disability can perform required tasks. Advancing Opportunities' Employment Specialists are well versed in the types of solutions available to employers and can make recommendations. They can also let an employer know when assistive technology would be helpful.

Advancing Opportunities' Employment Services Department enjoys a close, working relationship with the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It can also provide services through the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities Employment/Day Supports.

For information on Employment Services, contact Karl Craft at 888-322-1918 or at kcraft@advopps.org.

Supporting Students' Abilities

Encouraging Learners to Aspire to College

This year, Advancing Opportunities introduced its Student Success Center (SSC), an initiative designed to increase the number of students with disabilities who enroll in and graduate from postsecondary programs. Led by Program Manager Linda Soltes, the SSC represents a collaboration of the agency's assistive technology, advocacy and employment services with the objective of ensuring students with disabilities realize college is an option and understand what resources and supports are available to them.

"We encounter many students who have disabilities, including learning disabilities, who are not enrolling in or achieving success at the postsecondary level," said Jack Mudge, CEO. "We want students to recognize college may be an option and we want them to be prepared for the barriers and challenges they may face. The Student Success Center provides resources and services to help them meet the rigors ahead," he said.

During the past year, the Student Success Center introduced several new programs:

College Aspire and Inquire

This program encourages middle school students to begin thinking about college as an option. Structured learning experiences introduce students to assistive technology. Participants learn how they can integrate AT resources into their school work to improve reading,

writing and study skills. While the students are involved in hands-on exercises, parents receive information on transition planning and helping their child prepare for college. The first College Aspire and Inquire Forum was held at the Microsoft Store at the Freehold Racewall Mall in February.

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LEARNING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY -- Middle schooler TJ Elliott (left) and his mom Michelle Ciao of Piscataway display the certificate he received after attending the College Aspire and Inquire Forum at the Freehold Raceway Mall in February.

Student Success Center Advisory Board

Advancing Opportunities, Inc. would like to thank the following volunteers who have agreed to share their time and expertise:

John P. Duggan, Ed. D.

Newark Schools Administrator, Retired

John Gunkel, Vice Chancellor

Academic Programs and Services
Rutgers University, Newark

Lawrence H. Krampf

President
Medical Avatar

Vaughn Lauer, Ph.D.

Founder and Owner
Educational Learning and Training, LLC

Helen Liu, MSW

Supervisor
NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Denise Migliaccio

Special Education Teacher, Retired

Kevin J. Speina

Princeton University Ph. D. Candidate

Arlene Stinson

Director of Academic Support Services
Mercer County Community College

Kimberly Vavrence

Vice President and Recruiting Manager
Wells Fargo Regional Banking

Elaine Weir Daidone, M.ED. CRC

Department of Counseling and Career Services
Middlesex County College

Jordan Westwood

Advocate



EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR --The Pennington Quality Market (PQM) was recognized by the New Jersey APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) during its annual conference, *Facing the Future*, co-sponsored by The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. The store received the award for the Special Education Transition partnership it has with the Hopewell Valley Central High School. Shown are: (from left) Rebecca Shulman, President of NJ APSE, Maryann Babice, Transition Teacher and Structured Learning Experience Coordinator at Hopewell Valley Central High School, Mike Rothwell, PQM owner and Advancing Opportunities' Board of Directors member, Deb Delutis, Front End Customer Service Manager, and Charlie Coward, Store Manager.

Hope to See You at the Spring Hoedown!

Advancing Opportunities, Inc. will be holding a Spring Hoedown on April 30, 2016 at the Fieldhouse and Sports and Expo Complex in Robbinsville, N.J.

During this event, the agency recognizes individuals and organizations who share its vision and support its mission. This year, the Leadership in Business Award will be presented to Michele Siekerka, President and CEO of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association; the Elizabeth M. Boggs Award for Advocacy will be given to Norman Smith; the Corporate Citizenship Award will be presented to

Fulton Bank of New Jersey; and Althea Parker-Alford will receive the Andrew J. Murphy Award.

There will be plenty of country music, cocktails, line dancing, fine dining and a silent auction. Proceeds raised will provide vital services and supports for people with all types of disabilities.

Visit www.advopps.org/hoedown to buy tickets or take advantage of sponsorship opportunities. For more information, contact Liz Graham at 609-882-4182 ext. 511 or via email at lgraham@advopps.org.

Encouraging Learners to Aspire to College

FROM PAGE 4

College/Career Access Institute

A five-day preparedness program for high school students who are planning to attend college will be offered this July 11 through 15, 2016 at Middlesex County College. It will feature five days of instruction on assistive technology, writing skills, self-determination, and advocacy. Students will participate in group activities to foster communication and leadership skills. The program is

designed to help students set realistic goals and develop a concrete plan to achieve academic success.

College Coaching

This program consists of a menu of supports offered to students planning to enroll or students already enrolled in college. College Coaches are available to provide one-to-one direct services on all campuses across New Jersey in the following areas: academic support, in-

dependent living skills, socialization, assistive technology, mentoring, and employment services.

Visit the Student Success Center online for additional resources and detailed information about the programs offered: http://www.advopps.org/college_aspire.

For more about the SSC, email SuccessCenter@advopps.org or call Linda Soltes at 609-882-4182 ext. 532.

Andrew J. Murphy Award Winner

Persuing Education as a Way Back to Work

This year at the Spring Hoedown on Saturday, April 30, 2016, Advancing Opportunities will present the Andrew J. Murphy Award to Althea Parker-Alford, a student enrolled in the Human Services program at Rowan College at Burlington County.

The award is given to an individual who receives services from the agency and lives life with courage, determination, confidence and spirit. Althea fits the bill.

She began losing her vision in 2012. She suffered a detached retina and has had two eye surgeries. Because of the vision loss, Althea had to retire from a job she held for 22 years as a Certified Nursing Assistant. Today, despite her visual disability, Althea is determined to get back to work.

With a referral from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Im-

paired, Althea began working with Assistive Technology Specialist Lolly Cheatham, MAT, to learn how to use technology to complete her assignments. Althea uses a variety of tools including JAWS screen reader, Magic software for screen magnification and Kurzweil 1000 text-to-speech software.

Althea is working toward working toward a master's degree in social work. "I want to work with young women. Help them understand how important it is to save money, get a job and be independent. I want to let them know what's out there and that they can have it," she said.

Althea finished last semester on the Dean's list and has an internship with Parents Anonymous, an organization that provides counseling to families.

"I call Lolly my Angel," she said. "She has helped me so much!"

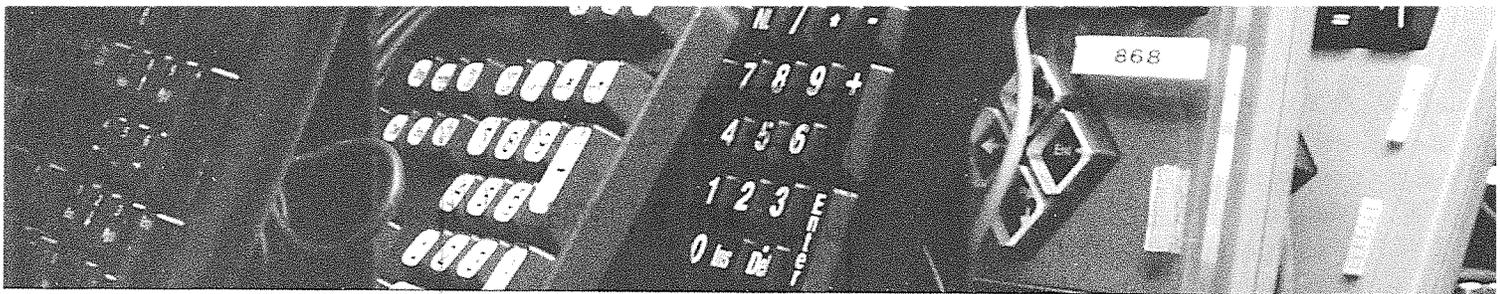


TOOLS FOR SCHOOL - Althea Parker-Alford needed to learn to use assistive technology so she could attend college and become a social worker.

MUCH OBLIGED— The agency offers Texas-sized thanks to the community leaders and fundraisers who have helped organize and plan this year's Spring Hoedown: (standing from left) Donna Bongiovi of Distinct Hospitality Group; Kacie Maslowski of HBK; Heather Aanonsen of Distinct Hospitality Group; Nina Melker of First Choice Bank; Jack Mudge of Advancing Opportunities; Lori Danko of DanMor Mechanical, Inc.; John Goeke of Mercer Management and Development; Heather Hansberry of NJ Business and Industry Association; Committee Chairman Jim Bartolomei of HBK; (seated from

left) Greg Kay of First Choice Bank; Matt Pentima of Trenton Thunder; Ken Giacin of StemCyte; and Liz Graham of Advancing Opportunities. Not shown are Honorary Co-Chairman Christopher Vernon of Mercer Management and Development; Mike Rothwell of Pennington Quality Market; and Janell Petrocelli of the MIDJersey Chamber of Commerce.





DID YOU KNOW there are over 20 different types of keyboards available in the TLC? Some have large keys for people with visual impairments; some are flexible and rotate, twist and flex into a variety of different configurations; some are designed for people who type with one hand.

Removing Barriers to Assistive Technology

Membership Fees Eliminated for Technology Lending Center

Advancing Opportunities is pleased to announce its Technology Lending Center (TLC) is now a free service for anyone with a disability living in New Jersey. When it was first established in 1989, the lending library of assistive devices required members to pay an annual registration fee. While the pricing structure was fairly modest, it was an impediment to some.

The TLC is run by Coordinator Dave Lam, who enjoys helping people find the tools they need to live, work, and learn independently. He cites the Liftware spoon as one good example of why the TLC is such a vital service. The spoon is designed to help people with hand tremors eat. It has a computer and motors built into the handle and costs about \$200. Lam admitted he was a little bit skeptical when he first saw it. However, the first person to borrow the high-tech cutlery reported that using the spoon, a woman with Parkinson's disease was able to eat on her own for the first time in 20 years. After borrowing and trying it, her family was able to purchase one confidently.

The Lending Center also features devices and software for learning. Many students with learning disabilities have

improved their reading, writing and study skills with things like word prediction and speech-to-text software.

In the TLC, a charging station holds a line of iPads, ready to lend. Tablets and handheld devices, with the myriad of apps available, have become a staple in the Lending Center. Some are loaned as augmentative communication devices and some are set up to serve as memory aides for people with traumatic brain injuries.

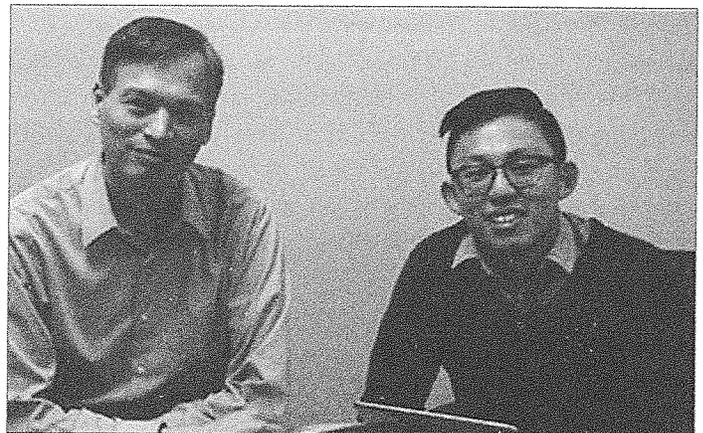
Advancing Opportunities' Technology Lending Center is the largest in the state. Individuals, schools and organizations are all invited to open a membership and begin borrowing assistive technology at no cost. To see what is available for loan, visit www.assistivetechologycenter.org. New members can register online and begin borrowing right away. For information about the TLC, contact Dave Lam at 888-322-1918 ext. 536 or via email at tlc@advopps.org.

Join the TLC When You Visit the Abilities Expo in Edison

Advancing Opportunities' Assistive Technology Department is pleased to be hosting the AT Pavilion at the 2016 Abilities Expo in Edison N.J. from April 29 through May 1, 2016. Visitors to the Expo will be able to sign up as members of the TLC and start borrowing equipment right away.

Admission to the Abilities Expo is free and there will be hundreds of exhibitors with products and services specifically for the disability community.

For more information about the Expo, visit <http://www.abilities.com/newyork/>.

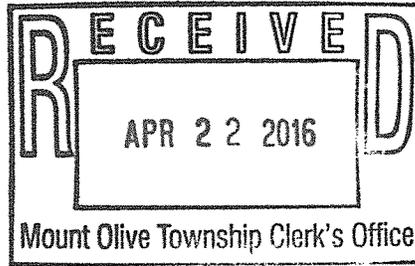


G'DAY – Fred Tchang, Director of Assistive Technology Services, (left) recently met with Kelvin Kong, an Occupational Therapist from who works for Rocky Bay, a non-profit similar to Advancing Opportunities, in Perth, Australia. Kelvin requested the meeting to learn from Fred how to effectively transition Rocky Bay's Assistive Technology offerings to a fee-for-service program. Kelvin is working on a project that specifically targets independence in the home environment.

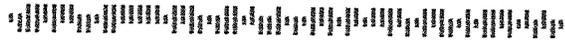


Advancing Opportunities

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All Disabilities. Many Services. One Agency.

Enroll Today for Summer College Prep Program

Advancing Opportunities is currently accepting enrollment in the **College/Career Access Institute**. Held from from July 11 through 15, 2016 at Middlesex County College's Edison campus, the Institute is designed to help students meet the challenges of postsecondary academic programs. From the application process to discovering how assistive technology can improve academic performance, the program uses real world activities to demonstrate the college experience. Some area's of focus include:

Assistive Technology – Students will experience hands-on exploration of tools and software that can improve reading, writing, note taking, and study skills.

Advocacy – Students will learn their rights and responsibilities. They will receive information on finding resources on campus and learn how to ask for support.

More about Me – Students will discover the importance of self-determination. Activities will help students identify personal strengths and areas for improvement.

Career Awareness – Students will evaluate personal career goals. They will explore necessary skill sets and competencies required in the field.

College and Career Readiness – Exercises will help students with decision making and problem solving skills. They will learn about priority setting and effective time management.

The fee for students who register by Monday, May 2, 2016 is \$325. The program will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aftercare will be available for an additional charge. To register, visit www.advopps.org/ccai. For more information contact successcenter@advopps.org or call 1-888-322-1918 ext. 532.

