

North Star



2008 BRYAN FELLOW

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HOMETOWN: Asheville, NC

MAJOR/DEGREE:
Master of Social Work
Class of 2009

PROJECT TITLE:
North Star

FACULTY MENTOR:
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COMMUNITY PARTNER:
Arc of Orange County

PROJECT LOCATION:
Orange County, NC

“Working as a Bryan Fellow was so meaningful because it allowed me to work with an agency that does vital work in our community by serving people with intellectual disabilities.”



The North Star project's goal was to make the Arc of Orange County's Summer Work and Wellness Program (SWWP) an experience that truly fulfilled the desires and needs of its participants for transition to adulthood and wellness. The concept that undergirded this project is the belief that persons with disabilities have the right to have a say in their own lives and the chance to realize opportunities to their fullest extent.

Project Goals

1. Introduce a pre- and post-test rubric to evaluate the progression of students relative to various work readiness skills.
2. Address how to improve the SWWP and make it a quality experience for the people who are currently served.
3. Help the SWWP become more sustainable through the introduction of two documents: the Weekly Communication Sheet and the North Star Vocational Plan.

The Arc of Orange County serves persons with intellectual disabilities (ID); my fellowship served adolescents with ID via the annual Summer Work and Wellness Program (SWWP). The goals of North Star included addressing existing program challenges, including its untested efficacy; increasing the number of youth served; and sustainability. As I learned more about the needs of this program, my project's focus shifted more toward Goals 1 and 3: addressing the relationship of the SWWP to the actual lives of participants and what they need and want to learn

and experience. I was able to accomplish the first goal by introducing a pre and post-test rubric to evaluate the progression of students relative to various work readiness skills. The SWWP became more sustainable through the introduction of two documents: the Weekly Communication Sheet and the North Star Vocational Plan. The first allows care providers to communicate with students' parents about successes and concerns, which helps family connections remain strong (a necessity in this type of program). The latter form is a critical piece that will allow students to return to their public school classrooms with a document that explains how they spent their time during the summer, what new skills they learned, in which areas they still need improvement, and the type of work they are interested in pursuing as they make the transition into adulthood.

One unforgettable moment for me was the contra-

dance that I planned. This is an activity that many people in our region enjoy, and is one that none of the participants had ever experienced. I relied on the goodwill of the community, as the Arc did not have funds to pay musicians or a caller. Thankfully, the community responded and three very talented people partnered with us to provide a day that our students truly enjoyed. Words are inadequate to describe the togetherness and sense of community that existed in the room as care providers and students danced and learned together. This special moment made me thankful that I could be a part of this public service fellowship that would not have been possible without the existence of the Robert E. Bryan Fellowship.



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