

GOOD NEWS REPORT

MR. DONALD WHITMAN Technology Education Teacher

The following letter from a Unit 5 parent about Mr. Donald Whitman, Technology Education teacher at Normal Community High School was recently printed in the Bloomington Area Vocational Center Career and Technical News. The letter was so powerful and illustrated so clearly the influence teachers have on their students, we received permission from the parents to share it with you.

Dear Mr. Whitman,

My husband and I wanted to thank you for your support and advocacy on behalf of our son, Aaron. You probably remember Aaron from your welding class at the old NCHS. We had talked about possible places of employment to compliment the experiences and training he'd gotten in shop class. Luckily I held onto the list of possible employers that you gave me a few years ago where Aaron might be able to work. In 2003, Jane Collins, job coordinator at NCWHS checked into a few businesses on the list, some were interested, she didn't think others would be, but no one was hiring. In May of 2004, I brought "the list" to Aaron's IEP and asked Mrs. Collins to check on some of the places again. She had a good feeling about Mechanical Devices and they were hiring, so she sent Aaron over there with his rep R. P. Malick for an interview. The letter of support you wrote helped the owners realize Aaron was safety conscious and would be a good fit in their business. The interview was successful and they hired him mid May.

Aaron has been steadily employed with Mechanical Devices since then. He loves his job. He is a final inspection operator in the clean and pack division. He is running an inspection machine that tests parts for Caterpillar. (Highly motivating since his dad works for Caterpillar). He recently had his review and has received an increase in pay, has helped train other guys to run the machine, de-burring parts and using an air hose to clean them off. He's made several friends there. In fact, one of the guys asked him to go to lunch about a month ago. He's got a lot of guys saying "you the man". He is well liked and happy there, and feels good about himself and his job. He does have a coach and we are starting a fade plan to decrease the amount of time she is there. One day she was sick and Aaron worked solo. He has a tendency to stay on task better when she's there, but that's all she does. He knows his job very well and performs it to the Sperry's satisfaction. In fact, they've now hired another person with a disability to work there which is very cool.

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I wasn't sure if anyone from West had shared Aaron's story with you, so I wanted to let you know how grateful we are for teachers like you who go the extra mile for students. As a parent of a child with a disability, I cannot thank you enough. Actually Aaron's success is a rarity. I know of no one else from his class who has such a good paying job. Typically kids like Aaron end up working at fast food places, do janitorial work or some kind of cleaning, or don't have a job at all.

So we wanted to let you know what a difference you have made for Aaron and others like him. We are so proud of him. Thank you again.

Aaron, Deb & Vern Gillan

Thank you, Mr. Whitman, for being such a dedicated and committed teacher to your students and program.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Pye,
Assistant Superintendent
of Operations and Human Resources