

James Monroe High School Students Excited to Participate in Work Force Program

There is a new program in Fredericksburg City Public Schools that has many excited.

Seven James Monroe (JM) students were selected to participate in a work force development program, Start on Success (SOS). The school-work program is designed for students with disabilities pursuing a standard or advanced diploma. It was developed by the Virginia Department of Education and implemented in collaboration with the Center on Transition Innovations at VCU and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services. SOS is a year-long program designed to provide classroom instruction during the first semester and a paid internship at a local business during the second semester of the student's senior year. The program is spearheaded by JM teacher, Megan Waite, Job Counselor, Angie Poteet and CTE Coordinator, Kristi Allison.

Megan Waite shared, "This program adds to transition support provided to students with disabilities to further prepare them for life after high school. The students' excitement is infectious, and they have already shown great growth and maturity as they plan for their futures."

On January 21, with the partnership of the University of Mary Washington, the JM students began their 15 hours a week, paid work assignment at one of the following UMW locations, the Simpson Library, IT Help Desk, the James Farmer Multicultural Center, Student Activities and Engagement, or the Facilities and the Maintenance Department.

Allison expressed that, "The program is an amazing opportunity for our students to learn valuable employment skills in the classroom and also practice those skills in a work environment under the supervision of UMW."

One of the mentors shared how impressed they were with an intern, "He is a quick study and can complete his assignments with no supervision. [He] is a great addition to the Simpson Library."

With the support of a three-year grant from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS), students interested in applying for the program had to complete an application, provide references, complete an "I'm Determined" writing sample and interview with the SOS panel. Once the students were notified they had been accepted, they were required to complete the employment process at the FCPS Central Office Department of Human Resources to fill out paperwork, obtain an ID, open a bank account and fill out a timesheet. They also met with the Superintendent of schools, Dr. Marci Catlett and Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Matt Eberhardt.

Eberhardt said, "This was an amazing opportunity to talk with students and hear about their plans for the future."

As part of the SOS program, the JM students will also receive classroom instruction in a variety of work skills such as communication, resume writing, interviewing, email etiquette, workplace readiness and behavioral expectations in the workplace.

Dr. Catlett stated, "We are extremely pleased to be in partnership with UMW as we launch this new initiative, SOS, that provides our students with on-the-job experiences and opportunities in terms of developing their post-graduate endeavors. As usual, we value [all] of the phenomenal partnerships that we engage with the University of Mary Washington and our community."

