

## Project Search gives on-the-job training at LVH-Schuylkill to special needs interns

By Ron Devlin Staff Writer Jul 12, 2023 Updated Jul 13, 2023



William J. Reppy, president of Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill and vice president of Lehigh Valley Health Network's Northwest Region, welcomes interns Wednesday at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street in Pottsville to the Project SEARCH program.

David McKeown / Staff Photographer

POTTSVILLE — Anna Turner beamed with delight Wednesday morning at the kickoff of Project Search in Wall Auditorium at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street.

"I'm really excited about this place," said Anna, 18, a recent Pottsville Area High School graduate. "I would like to do something that helps people."

The daughter of Bill and Cara Turner, of Mill Creek, Anna is one of four students selected to participate in the inaugural Project Search in Schuylkill County.

Project Search is an innovative post-high school internship program for young adults with mild to moderate disabilities.

LVH-Schuylkill is hosting the first class of interns in a yearlong program that provides on-the-job training in various departments.

Among other things, students will gain experience transporting patients, staffing information desks and working in housekeeping and food service departments.

“We’re excited to partner in this workforce preparedness program and to help in preparing interns for the next phase of their lives,” said William J. Reppy, president of LVH-Schuylkill and vice president of Lehigh Valley Health Network’s Northwest Region.

Doreen Milot, a Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29 information consultant, said Project Search is a skill-building program.

“The goal is employment,” she said. “Interns agree to enter the workforce.”

While in the program, interns work 16 hours a week or more and are paid the prevailing wage for the type of work they are assigned.

“You’ll be treated as if you are an employee,” Milot told the interns. “You’ll be doing the work of an employee.”

Milot asked LVH-Schuylkill staff members what kind of skills they felt the interns should possess.

Interns will be expected to be punctual, communicate well, dress appropriately and show up for work on time, staff members said.

Milot told the interns and their parents at an assembly introducing Project Search that as it progresses, staff members will incorporate the skill sets employers seek into the internship program.

In addition to Anna Turner, the first class of interns is made up of North Schuylkill graduate Cody Daka, Pine Grove Area graduate Alexis Kitchens and Minersville Area graduate Clare Purcell.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to help students transition from school to the workplace,” said Dr. Rene Evans, IU 29 director of special education. “It helps students make a successful transition from school to a productive adult life.”

Amanda Robinson, an IU 29 instructor, and Jacqueline Chaney, a Goodwill job skills instructor, will oversee the training program on-site.

Participants will start in September and rotate through three internships over the length of the program.

Milot said interns are eligible for a host of supportive services, including transportation.

Along with LVH-Schuylkill and IU 29, other sponsors are Goodwill; the state Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; and Service Access & Management Inc.

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Project SEARCH interns pose for a photo Wednesday at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street. They are from left, Cody Daka, Clare Purcell, Anna Turner, and Alexis Kitchens.  
David McKeown / Staff Photographer



Doreen Milot, a Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29 information consultant, speaks to the interns.  
David McKeown / Staff Photographer



Doreen Milot, a Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29 information consultant, welcomes Project SEARCH interns Wednesday at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street in Pottsville.  
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Doreen Milot, a Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29 information consultant, talks Wednesday with Project SEARCH

intern Anna Turner at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street in Pottsville.  
David McKeown / Staff Photographer



Project SEARCH intern Anna Turner looks through a welcome packet Wednesday at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Schuylkill E. Norwegian Street in Pottsville.  
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Read the article on the Republican Herald's Website: [https://www.republicanherald.com/news/project-search-gives-on-the-job-training-at-lvh-schuylkill-to-special-needs-interns/article\\_75c50a98-0060-52cc-8c55-a21fe907fb93.html](https://www.republicanherald.com/news/project-search-gives-on-the-job-training-at-lvh-schuylkill-to-special-needs-interns/article_75c50a98-0060-52cc-8c55-a21fe907fb93.html)