

Gov. Walker: Celebrates Project SEARCH graduates at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton

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Contact: Amy Hasenberg, (608) 266-2839

APPLETON – Governor Scott Walker joined staff from the Appleton Area School District and Ascension Health and Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Deputy Secretary Chris Hagerup today to congratulate the latest class of Project SEARCH graduates at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton.

“Eight years ago, we had one Project SEARCH site in the state, and by this fall we will have 27 sites to help young adults enter the workforce,” said Governor Walker. “Wisconsin has one of the best success rates in the country with 88% of graduates finding employment immediately or soon after graduating. Programs like Project SEARCH continue to open new doors for those with disabilities and build a strong workforce that is inclusive of the unique abilities and backgrounds of all Wisconsinites.”

Project SEARCH is a business led collaboration that enables youth and young adults with disabilities gain and maintain employment through training and career exploration in a hands-on work environment.

Project SEARCH has undergone significant expansion in Wisconsin since Governor Walker took office, growing from a single site during the 2010-2011 school year, to 24 sites during the 2017-2018 school year.

The 2017-2019 biennial budget includes several initiatives to promote employment for people with disabilities, including:

\$35 million to maintain the maximum federal funding for DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). As a result, the total funding for DVR is \$185 million over the two-year budget.

\$7.6 million in funding to support and expand programs that ensure students with disabilities gain the practical skills they need after high school. This includes \$6.1 million to fund awards for school districts that successfully place students with disabilities in employment as well as \$1.5 million to support the developments of school district efforts to connect students with disabilities with employment opportunities.