**mission statement**

*The mission of the Occupational Skills Program is to prepare students for competitive entry-level employment in the community.*

The Occupational Skills Program (OSP) is pleased to announce that we can now accept students under Post Secondary Educational Options (PSEO). In the past all students had to have graduated from high school and have a signed diploma in order to be accepted into OSP. Now if a student’s high school IEP teams agrees that OSP would fit the needs of the student, and they are between the ages of 18-21, they can attend under the rules of PSEO. This is another way that Ridgewater is meeting the needs of youth with disabilities.

We are also hosting our Spring Open House on Thursday, March 19th from 9:30-1:00p.m. Our open house is another way for students, parents, and professional to take a closer look at the program as well as Ridgewater as a whole. The 3 ½ hours includes guest speakers, tours, lunch, and prizes (including 2 - $100.00 scholarships)!

**club activities**

Our OSP club has been busy having fun and learning, under the leadership of Becky Kuhlman – President; J.T. Sorell – Vice President, Tiffany Garberding – Secretary, and Victoria Trevino – Treasurer. Following is a list of our most recent activities:

- Christmas Party in the classroom. Students all brought food and/or games.
- Toured 4 current internship sites. The students gave a tour and told their fellow classmates what kind of work they do at McMillan’s restaurant, Running’s Farm Store, Auto Value, and Tire’s Plus.
- Bowling at the Kandi Entertainment Center
- Out for lunch at Applebee’s
- Tour of the YMCA and then used the facility for 2 hours.

**internships**

Because the goal of the Occupational Skills Program is to train our students for competitive entry level employment, the internships that our students participate in while in the program are very important. In order for our students to be successful on their internships they will need to:

- Be able to follow directions and schedules
- Have work readiness skills such as willingness to work, good attendance, be honest, have good grooming, and be able to show some initiative
- Have potential to perform duties at a competitive level

The two internship classes are:

**OSP 1750 Supervised Occupational Training I**
This course uses a community-based training site to teach job skills. Students participating in supervised occupational training will have individualized training agreement. Credits: 5

**OSP 1850 Internship I**
This course provides the student opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned at the Supervised Occupational Training site or in the classroom. The content for each student will be individually developed. The job site will be community based. Credits: 4
scholarships

We have many different scholarships available and ready to award to deserving Ridgewater students... over $180,000 is available! Don’t miss out on this opportunity. Check it out and Apply Now!

check and connect

Check & Connect (C&C) is a free service for students with intellectual disabilities attending Ridgewater College. C&C is a student engagement intervention model to promote students’ success with school, reduce dropout rates, promote student involvement in campus activities, and increase school completion. C&C is a grant funded program that originated from a partnership of researchers, practitioners, parents, and students led by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

What’s New with Check & Connect at Ridgewater?
C&C had Upstream Arts, a group from Minneapolis, come to Ridgewater and work with students on vocational skills and social skills by using different modalities in art and creative communication. The students took risks and participated in various activities.

The most important news....Check & Connect will be around for another year! Due to some carry over funds, C&C will continue throughout the 2015-2016 school year. This is exciting news as the 5 year grant was set to end in September, but will now be extended through July 1st, 2016. I look forward to working with current C&C students still attending Ridgewater next year and hopefully adding many newly enrolled Ridgewater students to the program!

For more information about Check and Connect, please contact:
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