

Internship Program at ZABS Place Begins This Fall

By Rebecca Gale

College students are always looking for a way to get their foot in the door. This fall, students pursuing careers catering to individuals with special needs will have this opportunity by interning at ZABS Place.

ZABS Place is a non-profit thrift boutique in downtown Matthews that employs young adults with special needs. The brainchild of Friendship Circle directors, Bentzion and Rochel Groner and Temple Beth El members, Charles and Caren Gale, ZABS Place became a reality through the overwhelming support of a key group of committed community members because they knew the statistics: There are 50,000 young adults with special needs and 70% of them are unemployed. After being featured in articles in *The Charlotte Observer* and *Charlotte Jewish News*, the organization was inundated with phone calls from parents all cradling the same hope: Can my child work at ZABS?

Knowing that they did not have enough job coaches to support these young adults, Caren Gale reached out to Isabel Owen, the Executive Director of Autism Charlotte, who with Laura Cozart had already established an internship program for their organization with several colleges. Gale saw the benefits of utilizing these colleges to draw from a population of students interested in fields such as psychology, special edu-



Intern Greg Trombello helps an employee sort some items.

cation, and speech therapy.

"It seemed like a perfect match," Gale says. "Our young adults benefit from having a peer mentor and the college students benefit by gaining hands-on experience for college credit."

Autism Charlotte provides college students with as many resources as possible before they begin their internship program. Cozart even takes them through a three-hour training program so the students know what to expect.

"We take everyone's needs into consideration," Cozart says. "We are there to provide hands-on support."

Alison Salerno Dugo, Supported Employment Coordinator at ZABS Place, also assists these college interns before they begin working with ZABS employees by providing them with materials

that outline preferred job coaching methods.

"Currently, teaching is through instruction, observation, and hands-on experience," Dugo says.

The interns assist employees in a variety of tasks such as sorting donations, working the cash register, and posting merchandise for sale on eBay. The goal is for the college students to support the employees while still promoting their independence.

Greg Trombello of Wingate University is one of ZABS Place's first interns. After working for

only a couple weeks, he feels he has already learned so much.

"All the workers here are good workers," he says. "Even though they have disabilities, they are just like you and me."

The internship program is offered to all college students in the Charlotte area, and students can contact Laura Cozart at Autism Charlotte or Alison Dugo at Alison@ZABSPlace.org if they are interested.

ZABS Place is grateful for the support of the Charlotte Jewish community and thrilled by their



new partnership with Autism Charlotte.

ZABS Place is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. ♦

Operation Understanding Includes Charlotte in Their Summer Itinerary Again

23 days. 6 states. 16 cities. 24 teenagers.

By Amy Krakovitz

Every year Operation Understanding DC selects both Jewish and African American teens from their area to travel the US in search of the past, present, and future of civil rights, tolerance, and an appreciation of each other's cultures. From New York City to the Deep South, OUDC's mission is to "build a generation of African American and Jewish community leaders who promote respect, understanding, and cooperation while working to eradicate racism, anti-Semitism, and all forms of discrimination."

In New York, they visit com-

munities in Harlem and in Borough Park; they meet with people who marched on Selma, and people who survived the Holocaust; they experience a living history and a turbulent past, all while planning for a brighter future.

Part of their visit includes Charlotte, where they visit the Museum of the New South to see the "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers" exhibit and hear from two notable local speakers. Susan Jacobs, director of Temple Beth El religious school, and lifelong member of Temple Israel, speaks to them about growing up Jewish in the south. And for a special



Andrew Goldberg and Lauren Lee Bellamy

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CJDS pointed me in the right direction!

Attending the Charlotte Jewish Day School was crucial to who I am today. At a young age, the teachers and atmosphere provided a place where students begin to grow. They taught strong moral values through religious stories, provided a safe atmosphere for students to cultivate their interests, and instilled a strong educational foundation through skilled teachers, independent learning tracks, small class sizes, and personalized attention.

I am currently a student at NC State majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Business. As any good designer knows, a structure is only as stable as the support upon which it's built. I believe this to be true in many aspects of life. Ice cream only lasts as long as the integrity of the cone holds, skyscrapers are only as sturdy as the floors beneath them, and a person's character is only as respectable as the values on which it was raised.

From an early age, CJDS provided me with a strong academic foundation. This allowed me to be more than prepared going into middle school and subsequently high school and college.

In addition to academics, CJDS imparted moral values through their annual school-wide mottos. Most of the themes, discussed during assemblies, guided talks and education programs, were centralized around being a Mensch in all walks of life. These lessons acted as the brick and mortar that hold the structure of my character together.

Today I am active on my college campus, as a University Scholar, current service chair of my fraternity, a committee leader of the Engineering Council, and a heavy participant in intramural sports. I hold myself to a high academic standard while also making sure not to take life too seriously. I have been fortunate to have two engineering internships, giving me essential insight into and guidance for my career path. This, along with strong academics, elevates me to higher floors of my life's structure.

I believe my time at CJDS provided structure, guidance, and direction regarding how to construct my life. I learned important lessons applicable to both the classroom and the real world; and because of CJDS, I am able to withstand any earthquakes life throws my way.



Join Us!

Wednesday, October 28
8:30am-2:30pm
Admissions Open House
Come for your private tour.

Friday, October 30
Morning Preschool Visitation

CJDS Charlotte Jewish Day School

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