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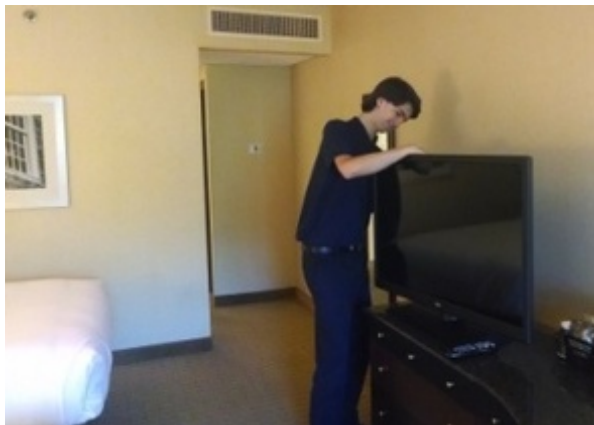
East Brunswick — Education Top Stories



Old Bridge resident Matt interns for the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick's engineering department doing everything from fixing wiring to maintaining appliances *Credits: Jerome Montes, Easter Seals New Jersey*

Photos

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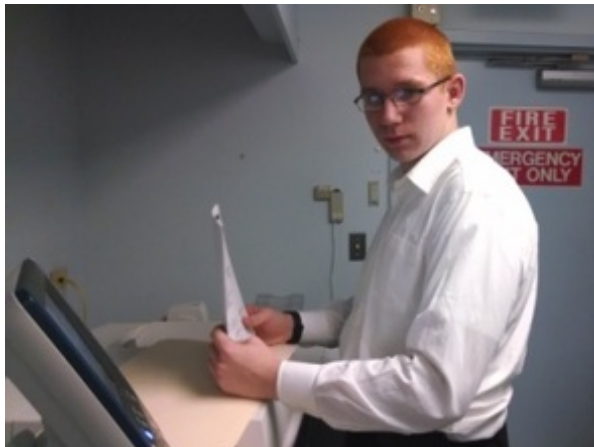


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Easter Seals New Jersey High School/High Tech summer internship program allows Brian to work 6 to 12 hours a week for central New Jersey radio station WGMQ-98.3FM and get paid while closely simulating the environment of a sound engineer. *Credits: Jerome Montes, Easter Seals New Jersey*



High School/High Tech intern Bill is a rising senior at Middlesex County's Vocational and Technical Schools, Piscataway campus and works in marketing, catering and sales this summer at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick *Credits: Jerome Montes, Easter Seals New Jersey*

Easter Seals New Jersey Prepares Youths With Disabilities For The 21st Century Workforce

Myra Burks-Davis

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EAST BRUNSWICK, NJ – If you live in Central New Jersey and you listen to radio, it's possible you've heard something Brian helped produce.

The 20-year-old North Brunswick resident suffers from severe cerebral palsy, has difficulty walking and needs help getting in and out of cars. But that doesn't affect his ability when it comes to working as a paid summer intern at Magic 98.3 Radio Station. For several hours a week Brian edits sound files for everything from promotions to music programming. He sometimes even helps produce live radio, mixing in the traffic reports with playlists.

Brian graduated from North Brunswick High School this past June, but obtained his internship through Middlesex County High School/High Tech (HS/HT), an enrichment program run by Easter Seals New Jersey that prepares youth with disabilities for the world of work. During the school year, the program runs workshops for high school students on topics ranging from interview skills to networking for jobs. The workshops sometimes feature guest speakers such as local employers. Students are also introduced to companies like Merck and PSE&G through High School/High Tech sponsored field trips.

For youth aged 16 and older, the program's highlight is a chance at a paid summer internship with an area employer. As of 2014, the national youth employment data obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, youth employment rates for those 16 to 19 years of age without a disability is 34.0 percent while employment rates for those living with disabilities is 14.2 percent. Brian is just one of nine HS/HT interns working this summer through this Easter Seals New Jersey program in fields ranging from radio to information technology to facilities management.

Bill, a rising senior at Middlesex County's Vocational and Technical Schools, Piscataway campus, suffers from a specific learning disability. He studies computer systems technology and provides freelance hardware and software maintenance in his North Brunswick neighborhood.

Bill joined Easter Seals New Jersey's High School High Tech (HS/HT) to expand his career horizons. He is a summer intern at the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick's marketing/catering department. He says he chose that department to gain experience outside his field of study. "I want to own my own business someday," he said. "I'll need to learn more about marketing and sales and the Hyatt would give me a great opportunity to do that."

With an "ability over disability" approach, Easter Seals New Jersey's HS/HT program provides students the opportunity to explore jobs or postsecondary education leading to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-related fields through hands-on training and internships with local businesses during the school year and through summer internships.

First conceived in the 1980s as a community partnership between schools, businesses, students and parents, HS/HT has been established in ten different states. Middlesex County's program is the first of its kind in New Jersey. "Easter Seals NJ is proud to be able to positively impact the lives of high school students by helping them discover and reach their potential through this program," said Easter Seals New Jersey High School High Tech Coordinator Jerome Montes.

Matt is a rising senior at Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools, East Brunswick campus. He has a specific learning disability and is training to become a heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) technician. He found his field interesting enough, but didn't really see its full potential until his summer internship with the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick's engineering department.

As an intern for the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick's engineering department, Matt ranges all over the hotel. The Old Bridge resident works there three days a week, doing everything from fixing wiring to ensuring all the appliances available to guests function properly at the 288-room property. "Matt does whatever we ask of him and he is eager to learn what we do here," said Pedro Carrasco, the hotel's director of engineering. "We wish he could be here five days a week."

Matt, recently admitted to the National Honors Society, is captain of the track team and has blossomed as a leader in part because of his involvement in HS/HT. "Thanks to the program he is interested in getting involved in green technology and is thinking for the first time of continuing his education after high school," Montes added.

Matt credits HS/HT with teaching him to think seriously about how to search for jobs and how to plan for the future. "I really didn't know anything about resumes, about interviews or networking," he said. "High School/High Tech taught me about other important skills I need to succeed."

About Easter Seals New Jersey

Easter Seals New Jersey has helped individuals and families with disabilities or special needs to live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence since 1948. Annually, over 7,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities including autism, physical disabilities, mental illness and other special needs receive services in our programs designed to help them work toward achieving independence and full community-integration. For more information on Easter Seals New Jersey and its statewide disability services, please contact 732-257-6662 or visit www.eastersealsnj.org or www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj.



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