

LOCAL BUSINESS DEMONSTRATES OUTSTANDING PARTNERSHIP WITH FALCON SCHOOL PROGRAM

By Linda Tegtmeier , Transition Coordinator, ELEVATES Program

School and business partnerships are integral to the development and preparation of our students for life outside of public education. There is one business in the Falcon School District 49 community that has gone above and beyond the expectations of the Falcon School District 49 ELEVATES Program for 18-21 year olds with an Individual Education Plan. More than two years ago, the management at JoAnn's Fabric and Crafts (near Carefree and Tutt) entered into an agreement with the Falcon School District 49 Transition Coordinator to allow students in the ELEVATES Program to participate in unpaid work experiences at this store. The goal is to enable these students to have the opportunity to develop employability skills for future paid employment. The students participate in these work experiences once a week for a few hours each week. But, that was not enough for the staff at JoAnn's. One store associate, who planned for and supervised the students in job training wanted to do more to enrich these students' lives. With support from the store manager, Mary implemented a fundraiser involving the other store associates to raise money to start a monthly "Skills Class" for the students. Each Friday, store associates could pay \$1.00 per leg for the opportunity to wear a pair of jeans to work. Many associates got involved and raised money to support this opportunity. The money was used to pay for materials Mary uses to teach the students hobby skills for leisure and household skills for independent living. She has also involved them in community service projects. The outpouring of support and enthusiasm for working with Falcon School District 49 ELEVATES Students has been astounding! But that is not all... the management hired one of the students in the program and will continue to provide employment opportunities. Mary continues to teach our students valuable job skills in an authentic setting at JoAnn's and has been a guest speaker in our class. Thank you Mary Perkins for the generosity of your time and spirit! And, thank you Greg Francis, store manager, for providing the opportunity to learn so many valuable skills in your store! Other business leaders can use you as role models for what school business partnerships can accomplish for students in our community!