

Project SEARCH:

Training Developmentally Disabled Young Adults for the Club Workforce

AT BOCA WEST COUNTRY CLUB in Boca Raton, Fla., club management and members consider each member of the team to be family. Through a partnership with Project SEARCH, Unicorn Children's Foundation and Unicorn Village Academy, a talented group of young adults, ages 18 to 24, with intellectual and developmental disabilities, play an important role in the Boca West family.

During the 2018–2019 season, a group of seven young adults completed an inaugural 10-month internship program at Boca West Country Club during which they trained for the workforce. All seven young adults in the program were offered jobs at Boca West following their graduation in May, serving in the club's food and beverage, retail and golf course maintenance departments.

The internship program in partnership with Boca West is the only residential club in the world to participate in the Project SEARCH program and the interns learned competitive, transferable and marketable job skills. The second pre-employment intern class began in August with two interns.

Unfortunately, 68% of adults (and 80% of youth) with intellectual/developmental disabilities are unemployed despite their desire and ability to work. Project SEARCH, with more than 435 programs across 45 states and eight countries, is teaching job skills and adding talented and hardworking individuals to the workforce.

"This incredible group of individuals became an immediate part of the Boca West family the day they started. All of them came to work each day with a great attitude, inspiring work ethic and a huge smile, and they became close not only with the staff, but also with our members," said Matthew Linderman, Boca West Country Club pres-



Interns celebrate the completion of a 10-month program with Boca West Country Club COO-GM Matthew Linderman. From left: Gabriel, Shane, Jason, Matthew Linderman, James, Trent and Marc.

ident, chief operating officer and general manager. "We were thrilled to make job offers to all of the graduates and are excited for them to remain on our team."

Five of the intern graduates accepted jobs with Boca West Country Club, which has positively impacted the staff, the interns and their families. "Not only have they developed friendships and camaraderie, they have also developed valuable job skills and confidence that will enable them to go onto meaningful careers at Boca West or elsewhere in the future," Linderman added. "We are truly happy to have them on our staff now and are excited to greet the next class of Project SEARCH interns."

"We are grateful for our partnership with Boca West Country Club, which has transformed the lives of these young

adults," said Sharon Alexander, CEO of the Unicorn Children's Foundation. "Thanks to this program, these young adults received valuable training and a job. We are very proud of their great work."

About Boca West Country Club Project SEARCH

Boca West Country Club Project SEARCH provides a job training internship program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who range in age from 17–24. By providing extensive internship opportunities, it is expected that at least 74% of interns will find competitive and meaningful employment following graduation. [CD](#)

Barbara Crowley is director of human resources at Boca West Country Club. For more information, visit bocawestcc.org or unicornchildrensfoundation.org/search.html.