

Project SEARCH Graduates First Class of Interns at Meijer, Celebrating Growth and New Opportunities

Excitement filled the air as the Greater Flint community celebrated a momentous occasion - the graduation of its inaugural Meijer class in partnership with [Project SEARCH](#). Six students, brimming with newfound confidence and skills, marked the culmination of their 9-month internship journey at Meijer as they commemorated this incredible milestone.

Nearly 30 years ago, Project SEARCH originated at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, providing internship programs consisting of training, education and workforce development for students with disabilities. Today, the organization not only spans across North America, but it also offers opportunities across Europe and Australia with the common goal of helping prepare students for employment.

Kearsley Community Schools, part of the Genesee Intermediate School District, and Meijer launched Project SEARCH at the Burton, Mich. Meijer location in September 2024 and welcomed six students with special needs into their team to learn job skills in areas like grocery stocking and the bakery. The internship ended in late May 2025.

Brendan Birchmeier, Burton Meijer store director and a passionate advocate for the program, emphasized its transformative impact on the interns' lives.

"It's about creating alternative pathways for these students to develop work skills that allow them to integrate into the workforce," Birchmeier explained. "They've learned not just job skills, but how to navigate the world with independence and confidence. They've become more open, more resilient – it's been incredible to witness."

While some of the graduates have already been hired by Meijer, Birchmeier and the Project SEARCH team are committed to ensuring every student finds suitable employment opportunities. They've begun outreach efforts to connect graduates with potential employers who value their unique skills and abilities.

"This is just the beginning," Birchmeier added. "We're actively working to place each graduate in roles that match their talents. They've proven themselves here, and now, we want to see them thrive in the broader job market."

As the ceremony concluded amidst cheers and heartfelt applause, it marked not only a significant achievement for the graduates but also a profound milestone for the community. Each student embarked on their next chapter with newfound optimism and determination, armed with the skills and support to pursue their dreams.

Additional assets available online: [Photos](#) ⁽²⁾

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