

# Media Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **El Dorado teen who's visually impaired completes unique program**

Jarrold Hall of El Dorado is among the 20 teens who completed Jump Start, a career development program for high school students who are blind or severely visually impaired. The program ran from June 7 – June 26.

The unique program, sponsored by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) and the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI), was attended by students from across the state.

DSB placed students in part-time jobs in the mornings and offered educational and recreational activities in the afternoons and evenings. Jump Start participants stayed on the ASBVI campus during the week and returned home on the weekends.

This is the only program of its kind in Arkansas and is designed to assist students in transitioning from high school to employment or post-secondary education and increase their confidence in social situations. Applications for the Jump Start program are taken in the early spring of each year.

To the degree possible, students are placed in jobs in their fields of interest so they can gain insight into their chosen professions. Students who don't have specific career goals at this point in their lives are given other employment according to their experience, skills and abilities.



Hall was placed as a camp assistant at the ASBVI Summer Camp. He helped supervise children ages five to seven during field trips, meals in the cafeteria, swimming at the school gym, playing on the playground, and activities in the multi-purpose room, such as reading and exercising. Last year during Jump Start, he worked at the Billy Mitchell Boys and Girls Club. He reapplied for Jump Start this year to “gain more work experience and have something to do.”

“He did great. He worked with our younger children. He was always asking what he could do to help out,” said his supervisor Lori Cole, who was in charge of the Summer Camp.

In addition to job skills, Jump Start students learned independent living skills that many people without visual impairments take for granted, such as banking and money management. Students were taught meal planning and participated in a cooking lesson with Chef Brian Kelly of Little Rock.

Learning how to live independently also means learning how to get around. Students received orientation and mobility training on how to travel using a white cane and learned how to use city buses.

Students volunteered on a gardening project at Our House, an organization that provides shelter, training, and child care for people who are homeless or near homeless.

Working part-time and interacting with other students who are blind or visually impaired increased the students’ confidence, social skills and self-esteem. Some students who came from small communities had never met other teenagers who are blind or visually impaired. Social skills and interactions with others are a crucial part of life, so recreational activities were built into the program. Students went bowling, attended an Arkansas Travelers baseball game, saw a movie, went skating, toured a submarine, and painted their own works of art.

Students practiced skills learned in a class on business and dining etiquette when they experienced fine dining at Savoy 1620 restaurant, enjoyed a meal at Benihana Hibachi Grill, and saw a play at Murry’s Dinner Playhouse. At the end of the three-week program, there was a graduation event on the Mark Twain Riverboat.

After Jump Start, Hall will look for another summer job in his hometown. He will be a senior at El Dorado High School in the fall. After he graduates from high school, he hopes to enter culinary school at Pulaski Technical College.

DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to adults who are blind or severely visually impaired and whose goal is successful employment. The division also serves youth and older blind individuals. For information about DSB’s programs and services, visit the DSB website at <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dsb/Pages/default.aspx> or call 1-800-960-9270, 501-682-5463, or TDD 501-682-0093.

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Photo outline:

Jarrold Hall of El Dorado gathers materials for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Summer Camp for children. Hall was among students completing Jump Start, a career development program.