



Bridges to Transition

Alex's team was trying to figure out how they could best assist him as his time in high school was coming to an end. He had been evaluated for the JVS, but the only programs they recommended were the janitorial programs, and he did not want to do that. The Service and Support Administrator from the County Board of Developmental Disabilities invited the Bridges Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator to the IEP meeting, and the Coordinator spoke to the team about Bridges. The family was hesitant about starting the program, as they did not want Alex to be directed to the sheltered workshop. With further clarification about Bridges, and its flexibility to be as individualized as Alex needed, the family decided to give it a try.

Alex's father has developed a business to allow his son to be competitively employed, called Alex Industries, which makes personalized garden stepping stones. From the company's website www.alexindustries.org:

"Alex Industries, Inc. is a corporation whose general purpose is to endeavor to employ developmentally disabled persons in such positions that meet their capabilities. In that regard, such persons are paid a fair wage for their services, along with reasonable profit participation. The Company was formed as an alternative to participation at a sheltered workshop for its Chairman, Alex Short. Alex Short was born in Colorado Springs in 1990 with Down's syndrome. While seriously disabled when using any common measure of evaluation, he has a spirit that transcends his disability. As a junior in high school, he was evaluated as reading at a second grade level and having "significantly impaired language skills", but the same evaluation stated "Alex is able to maintain relationships with peers and staff due to his charming personality, affectionate nature and polite manner". The founders of Alex Industries are dedicated to their belief that people with

developmental disabilities have the ability and desire to participate in a working environment where their individual skills and personalities are appreciated and rewarded."

Alex's father has hope of opening up this business to other individuals with disabilities in the future.

