



CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM

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OUR STORY...



WHY WE STARTED

- Fear of the future. - every birthday brought more fear over what she would do when she aged out of school.
- There are very limited opportunities for adults with disabilities.
- Jordyn has significant fine motor, motor planning and speech struggles. At the time she struggled to do anything independently..



HOW WE SARTED JUNE 2018

- We brainstormed our idea. More on that later.
- We started out hoping to sell 40 shirts.
- We took preorders - aka, we didn't have upfront costs. We used Paypal to collect payments, we shared it on my personal Facebook page (free) and got to work.
- I feel the most important things we did right were telling people WHY we wanted them to purchase a shirt AND creating a product they would love when they receive it.
- We backed into our shirt cost.



WHERE ARE WE NOW

FEBRUARY 2021

- We have sold almost 300,000 shirts since June 2018.
- We use Shopify as our website, to take orders, collect payment and purchase shipping labels.
- We moved out of our basement last March into a 3000 square foot warehouse. Will be expanding to a 5,000 ft warehouse in November.
- Jordyn gets out of school early 5 days a week and on average works 4 hrs per weekday in the shirt shop.
- Ben and I spend hours a day working on the shirt project. We divide and conquer.
 - He handles fulfillment and ordering supplies.
 - I handle marketing and ordering merchandise.



BRAINSTORMING FOR YOUR CHILD

- What do you want to accomplish? For us we wanted to fill Jordyn's time plus make enough profit to pay someone to help her. We knew getting a job would be difficult, so we decided to create one.
- Stop thinking about what your child CAN'T do and focus on what they can learn to do. That was a game changer for us.
- Do you want something YOU need to be committed to in addition to your child (starting a business) or is your end goal to have your child working independently out of the house.

IMPORTANT GOALS

- Independence is (in my opinion) the goal to strive for.
- Help your child learn to tolerate a change in routine. This is critical for job skills and also for quality of life for your child and your whole family. Practice makes progress. More on this later!
- Think of your child's biggest strengths by also their biggest weaknesses. The weaknesses are things you need to work on at school or home **BEFORE** you try to get an opportunity for your student in the community. For example - you want him/her to work in the school cafeteria or a restaurant, but he/she constantly picks their nose. You need to work on stopping the nose picking first.

FEAR TO HOPE

- Focus less on what your child can't do and what's not available.
- When we started, Jordyn could do very little independently. In every IEP meeting we would have a goal on independence, and it was the one goal we struggled to move the needle on.

STARTING JOB SKILLS AT HOME

- In my opinions job skills need to start at home. It will take a lot of practice and a lot of prep work to get your child ready for a job.



START SMALL AND WORK UP

End goal?	If your end goal is to have your child work in a restaurant, don't start by contacting a restaurant. Practice at home.
1st	Take the spoons out of the dishwasher.
Next	Once independent, start taking out the spoons & forks.
Additionally	If a cup comes out of the dishwasher a little wet, have your child wipe it off with a paper towel. That step can lead to drying dishes, then washing dishes.
Be willing to help	Realize your child's first opportunity out of the house will probably be volunteer and almost certainly have you going with him/her.

LAUNDRY

End goal?	What is your child's strengths? As an example, let's say it's sorting...
1st	Start with two colors - Example, white and blue. Have clothes in a pile that only contain these two colors. Have two baskets and if needed put a piece of blue paper taped to one and white to the other. Then sort.
Next	After they mastered that step, teach them to take one of those baskets and put into the washing machine.
Additionally	Keep gradually adding more steps as your child masters the one they are one. Always celebrate their accomplishments.
Practice	Practice, Practice, Practice

SEARCH FOR IDEAS EVERYWHERE YOU GO

- Everywhere you go start looking around saying "what could my child do here."
 - Restaurants - roll silverware, folding pizza boxes, filling salt shakers
 - Dentist Office - fill patient bags (the ones they give out with toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss)
 - Nail Salon - washing the towels, folding them, refilling supplies
 - Office - shred papers, file, take out the trash
 - Car Wash - Drying off cars
 - Grocery Store - Stocking shelves
- If your child appears to be "higher functioning" don't get too hung up on the tasks being too easy. Everyone starts somewhere...think of your first job. They can work into harder roles as you go.



MODIFICATIONS

- Look at what your child will struggle with to complete a job/task.
- Jordyn struggles with one to one correlation. We worked on it for YEARS with little success. With appropriate modifications and she was able to complete the task independently within 5 minutes.
- Appropriate modifications will open so many opportunities for your child.

A SMALL CHANGE
MAKES A BIG
DIFFERENCE



PRACTICE
MAKES
PROGRESS



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT
IF YOU WANT TO CREATE
A BUSINESS FOR YOUR CHILD...



IF YOU ARE STARTING A BUSINESS - NONPROFIT VS LLC

- There is no right or wrong answer, it's what works best for you and your idea.
- We went with a LLC. Here's why...
 - I didn't want to give up control to a board. I had a vision of what I wanted our business to be. I knew if I had board members the vision would switch from "mine" to "ours." I wasn't willing to do that.
 - I felt like the business could be profitable and not need donations to be sustainable. I wanted it to be a way financially help with Jordyn's future needs.
 - I worked with a special needs attorney to guide me. The business is my name, not Jordyn's.
 - We are a profitable business therefore we financially support nonprofits and schools on a regular basis.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED....

- What are **YOU** good at? What are **YOU** passionate about? What do **YOU** like? If you want to start a business this is important to not only think about your child's strengths but also yours.
 - Why do I say you? Because it's going to take a lot of your time, work and energy. It needs to be something your child can do, but don't overlook that it needs to be something you can too.
- Think outside of the box. My head was stuck on "what could Jordyn make?" Making something was what I was picturing filling her time. Once I realized it was going to be a struggle to sustain sells with something she made, I was able to think of other areas for her to work. Filling the orders vs making the orders.

MARKETING
MARKETING
MARKETING



Word of mouth, social media, networking and more

TIPS FROM OUR EXPERIENCE

- As Jordyn has gotten better it takes a lot of work to keep her busy. Constantly search for new ways to build your child's skills.
- It is critical to get your child independently doing tasks. Even if it seems impossible, keep trying. Search for new modifications, news ways to do a task, don't give up on independence.
- Try to expand the amount of time your child can work independently.
- Social media is KEY for our business to be successful.
- A business is a lot of work (A LOT!) but totally worth it. You have to have the time and be committed if you take this route.
- Start small with an idea, see if works. If it doesn't, try something else.

PRACTICE VS BUSY WORK

- We want Jordyn to learn to package items but we didn't want to unpackage simply for the sake of packaging.
- We decided to add a decal to each tumbler purpose.
- Why? We want her to know her work adds value and has a purpose.



EXAMPLES OF OTHER BUSINESSES



WHITE CANE COFFEE COMPANY

"Now a bit about White Cane Coffee, and why we stand out. The reason I wanted to start White Cane Coffee is because, number one, "Who doesn't love coffee." But most importantly, my brothers and I are all on the Autism Spectrum and I am also blind. We have found that finding jobs extremely difficult. In our experience, employers didn't want to provide full time or a living wages to handicapped individuals. Or because of bullying on the job site staying at some jobs unbearable. So, at 22, I started to ask, "When you have the right people around you, the question stops being, "What can I do?" but, "What's stopping me?" So here we are." Erin - White Cane

www.whitecanecoffee.com



AUSOME BALLOON CREATOR

- "The Ausome Balloon Creator is Eddie Lin, a young adult who is on the autism spectrum. Thus the name "ausome." When Eddie was 10, balloon art struck a chord deep in his heart and has since grown into an expressive passion and gift to his community. Eddie started his balloon journey learning from various balloon artists on YouTube. He has since taken many balloon lessons from reputable Balloon professionals in Taiwan and the US to continue to better his balloon skills and knowledge. Eddie brings his special touch to all the special celebrations and life milestones he's a part of. Birthdays, weddings, and Christenings are just a few. Customers are continually impressed with his distinctive works of art and his charming personality."

www.facebook.com/AusomeBalloonCreator



CELEBRATIONS BY THE YARD

- "We are moms who found a way to get our special needs kids working. Our business helps our children learn and grow from working in the community. Our goal is to create a place for local special needs entrepreneurs to partner with each other, creating a network of business opportunities. As part of the business our kids are learning laminating, letter/email writing, scheduling, thinking through letter placement and more!"

www.celebrationsbytheyardGA.com



DRAWINGS BY TRENT

- The ability to draw has always been a part of Trent. Although he struggles significantly with communication, Trent expresses emotions through his drawings.
- www.drawingsbytrent.com

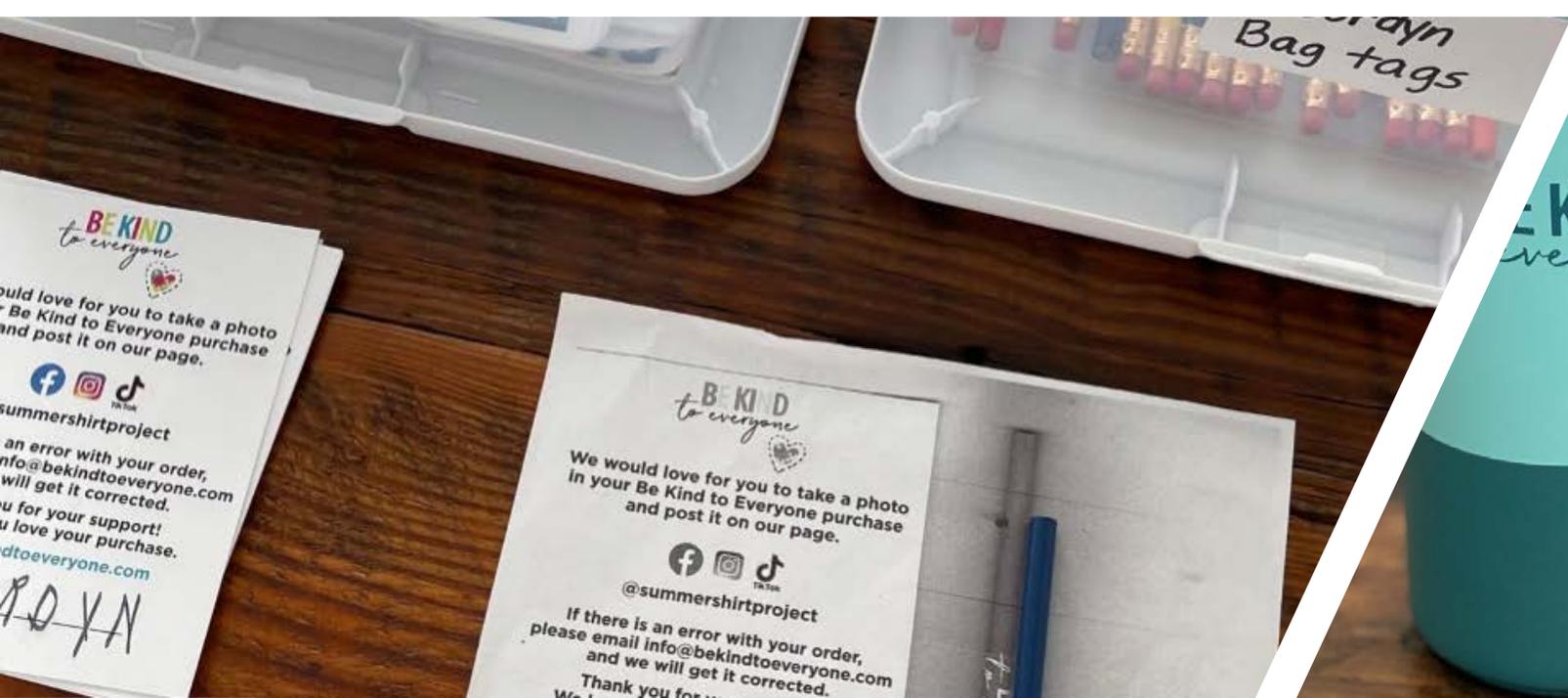


POPCORN FOR THE PEOPLE

- "Popcorn for the People is a non profit established to create meaningful employment for those with Autism and other disabilities. We aim to combat the current 80% unemployment rate in the autism community with the training and hiring of adults with Autism to create, cook, package, and sell uniquely flavored gourmet popcorn."

www.popcornforthepeople.com





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