

# Autism Services Center Summer Transition Program



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## Living on Campus

For students in the ASC Summer Transition Program, being away from home and living on their own is a big change. Many of our students come from towns smaller than WMU and were nervous at first, but they have grown a lot since their first week on campus.

Our students are learning what it is like to live independently and the challenges that come with it, including how to manage their time, maintain their living space, and find ways to get their laundry done. While a couple students have ventured to the laundry room, many have admitted that they take their laundry home with them like typical college students. They are learning how to coordinate times to work on homework, fit in social activities, and to get to meals, classes, and work on time. Soon after Pokémon Go was released, we had a discussion about including additional travel time to get to places on campus in case students wanted to play while walking.

The guys have enjoyed living in the same hall and have planned a weekly game night where they escape the heat of their rooms to get together in the lounge and play video games.





## On the Job Building Soft Skills

A big part of the ASC Summer Transition Program is on-campus employment with on-the-job training. Students are working in several departments and offices on WMU's campus, including the: College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean's office, CAS marketing office, CAS budget office, economics department, psychology department, University Computing Center, and University Libraries. Their responsibilities differ depending on their position but include answering the phone, greeting visitors, typing documents, pulling and shelving

books, and fixing online library guides.

This experience gives us the opportunity to work on the "soft" skills employers desire in their new hires. These skills include communicating with others, problem solving, and having a strong work ethic (National Association of Colleges & Employers, 2008).

Students are building and practicing these skills by managing their time when completing tasks, checking in after they have completed tasks or after returning from a break, asking for help, and working with co-

workers and supervisors.

We are including lessons from the Office of Disability Employment Policy's *Soft Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success* in our weekly workshop to build and practice these skills. So far, we have covered teamwork, problem solving, and communication. We will discuss networking during our last class.

The goal is to build skills they can use with other part-time jobs and even when they start their career.

## Program Sponsors

WMU's Autism Center of Excellence would like to extend our deepest thanks to the Great Lakes Center for Autism Treatment and Research and Novel Responses, INC for their generous donations to the Autism Service Center's (ASC) Summer Transition Program.

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# Coming Together on Campus

## Playing Pokémon Go

Some of the most important skills our students are learning during the Summer Transition Program are taught outside the classroom through social activities. We want students to find ways to use their free time to relax and recharge so they can focus on their academics and employment.

Some of our students are eager to get out of their dorm rooms and interact with their peers while others prefer to stay in their rooms and play video games. However, some activities were required to encourage all the students to get out.

One of our mentors, Patrick Wieszcieski, organized a social event for students to participate in while exploring WMU. Taking advantage of the latest gaming craze, Pokémon Go, students traveled around campus in search of Pokémon and hitting Poké Spots. This was a great opportunity for students to hang out together outside of class while focusing on a common interest. Even before the release of Pokémon Go, Pokémon has been a popular conversation topic. Many of the students are long-time Pokémon fans and have a wealth of information to share about the original games and Pokémon.

Not only was our students' Pokémon Go adventure a great night to take a break from class and work, but it was a great night to take advantage of the warm weather with a bit of exercise mixed in.



## Meet the Staff

### Kellie Skiba

This section will feature a different Summer Transition Program staff member each edition.

Kellie Skiba received a Bachelor of Science from Western Michigan University, where she majored in both psychology and philosophy. Currently, Kellie is working toward a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership, with a concentration in Higher Education and Student Affairs.

Kellie serves as a Graduate Assistant for the Disability Services for Students (DSS) office at WMU, where she has worked in a variety of roles since 2012.

This summer, Kellie is assisting with the ASC Summer Transition Program. Kellie's primary role has been to serve as support to students living on-campus, by living in the residence hall throughout their stay. In doing so, Kellie is readily available to meet students' needs, answer questions, address concerns, and serve as a point-of-contact for students in the program.

Kellie leads a weekly homework session and has been involved in developing a system for improving student classroom performance.



Kellie Skiba (left) is a Graduate Assistant for the Disability Services for Students (DSS) at Western Michigan University





To stay up to date with the Summer Transition Program and other Autism Services Center events, find us at...

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