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STAR Gets Grant to Help People With Disabilities Find First Jobs

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STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way received a \$20,000 grant from Fairfield County's Community Foundation to support local individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) find first jobs through their My First Jobs Program.

— *an announcement from* [STAR Inc., Lighting the Way](#)

STAR's My First Jobs Program provides support to workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities in entering the workforce. Current research indicates that only 15% of people with IDD are employed.

However, with the right supports, many people with IDD can build a career alongside their typical peers. STAR is recognized as a leading agency in Connecticut in job placements, coaching, and hours worked competitively by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“This funding is a catalyst to our current job placement success and the future of our Jobs Program that is

unique in Fairfield County,” said Katie Banzhaf, executive director of STAR. “We are extremely grateful for this generous support, especially as more and more of our participants are returning to work or seeking new employment after Covid-19.”

STAR is proud to help graduating local high school seniors with IDD transition to meaningful employment and continued inclusion in their local community, finding many their first job. In addition to generous support from local donors, STAR is thankful to Fairfield County’s Community Foundation for its history of supporting STAR’s “My First Job” Program for graduating seniors and adults with IDD.

"Together with our community business partners, we are able to place people with IDD in productive and paying jobs while creating win-win-win scenarios," said Martha Spiegel, one of two job developers at STAR. "Our average tenure of people placed in jobs is now over 9.5 years. That says it all."

STAR is one of the only a handful of agencies in Connecticut chosen to participate in a Customized Employment Certification Program that is the benchmark for job placement of people with IDD in the future.

STAR offers a customized employment program for people with IDD that leads the state in job placements and hours worked. STAR has a team of professional job developers, employment managers and job coaches who work with local individuals and network with businesses to create job opportunities and supervise training as well as finding locations to host classes in life, social, arts, and recreational skills.

[Fairfield County’s Community Foundation](#) promotes philanthropy as a means to create change in Fairfield County, focusing on innovative and collaborative solutions to critical issue impacting the community.