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United Way's Career Transition Project continues to expand

FedEx Ground teams with United Way to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities

Pittsburgh, Pa. (October 6, 2016) – Just in time for National Disability Employment Awareness Month, United Way of Southwestern PA's 21 and Able program announced that FedEx Ground will become the fourth local employer committed to hiring more young people with disabilities through the Career Transition Project.

"Promoting an inclusive workplace environment is a top priority at FedEx Ground," said Kelly Gray, senior vice president of Human Resources, FedEx Ground. "By collaborating with United Way, we are able to reach more people in our community searching for employment. I am proud that FedEx Ground will now have its own designated Career Transition Professional, who will assist in our hiring and accommodating of more workers with disabilities."

Launched as a pilot program in September 2013 by United Way and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald's office, Giant Eagle, Inc. and Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, the Career Transition Project is an innovative employment and training initiative that helps young people with disabilities secure work experience and paying jobs as they transition out of high school. Participating employers work with local agencies to embed a Career Transition Professional in their offices, whose job it is to help young people with disabilities obtain employment and ensure their needs are met.

The Career Transition Project has far exceeded its original goal of hiring 24 youths. Since the launch of the pilot program, more than 200 young people with disabilities have been hired and more than 500 individuals have received job search assistance.

"We are so pleased to have FedEx Ground come on board with this project," said Heather Sedlacko, director, programs for seniors and people with disabilities at United Way. "This collaboration opens another door for people with disabilities in our community looking for employment."

With the Career Transition Project, FedEx Ground will be looking to hire more people with disabilities by the end of the year to support the busy holiday season. The company is looking to hire package handlers at FedEx Ground locations in Neville Island, North Pittsburgh, Clinton, and Greensburg.

There are approximately 1,000 young adults with disabilities who graduate from high school each year in Allegheny County. Approximately forty percent of young adults ages 20 to 24 with disabilities in Allegheny County are neither in school nor working.

The Kessler Foundation awarded United Way a grant to support the expansion of the Career Transition

Project to more companies in the region. The University of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County are also participants in the program.

About United Way of Southwestern PA – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

About 21 and Able — 21 and Able, an initiative of United Way of Southwestern PA, is working to create a roadmap for youth with disabilities who are transitioning out of the education and supportive services system to continue their education, work, live independently, and participate actively in their communities. 21 and Able is working toward this goal via three strategies: the development of a public policy agenda and coordination of advocacy efforts; the creation of a public awareness campaign to draw attention to the urgency of issues related to youth transitioning to adulthood; and the design and launch of pilot projects that address the transition needs of youth with disabilities and their families.

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