Alana threading pre-cored apples onto rods as a treat for our lambs.

Alana tossing sprouted barley into our ducks' pool.
Goals for Today’s Webinar

1. Recognize the importance of preferred tasks (passions), even when they seem inconsequential.

2. Understand how the simplest of interests can open the floodgates of possibility into the vocational realm and beyond.

3. Value the development of a “Life Goal” to focus a vision and to wrap supports around that vision.

4. Empower all participants to see a bright future for youth in transition, especially those with a significant impact of disability.

I sipped Celestial Seasonings tea while preparing theses slides. Ironically, the quote off the box read, “All passion becomes strength when it has an outlet.”
We’re a work in progress, but here are some things we’ve learned along the way…

Nearly 5 years ago, in a season of frustration, I pondered and settled on a “Life Goal” for Alana. “To live an engaged life full of joy and purpose that is rich in personal relationships,” and it’s been our mantra ever since. At about the same time, we started a Facebook page for her called, “Alana – A Jill of All Trades,” and our hobby business and volunteering ventures began.

Alana and her orphaned lamb.
This information is a powerful springboard into "Measurable Annual Goals," and it's a way to begin forming a vision for life after graduation.
Beginning in Alana’s sophomore year, we used her talents, strengths and interests to brainstorm vocational goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filling, Dumping, Pouring</th>
<th>Shredding Paper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Maintain bird feeders around the community (including the nursing home)</td>
<td>1- Bag shreds to be used in the nesting boxes of backyard chickens</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- Bake bread using a bread machine</td>
<td>2- Recycle old newspapers by adding shreds to a compost bin</td>
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<td>3- Water plants around the school</td>
<td>3- Repurpose shreds into fire starts by adding melted crayons</td>
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<td>4- Maintain a gumball machine</td>
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<td>5- Make concession stand popcorn</td>
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<td>6- Make dog treats</td>
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- Pushing-Pulling Carts, Dollies, Wagons
  1- Serve snack to the elementary students
  2- Offer Italian sodas to middle and high school students
  3- Make a mail run to the Post Office
  4- Grocery shop for cooking and baking activities
  5- Collect and shelve library books
  6- Help with school recycling program

- Shredding Paper
  1- Bag shreds to be used in the nesting boxes of backyard chickens
  2- Recycle old newspapers by adding shreds to a compost bin
  3- Repurpose shreds into fire starts by adding melted crayons
IEP Goal-
With the help and/or supervision of her aide, Alana will engage in all steps of the dog treat dough making process in 5/5 trials.

Step-By-Step Process

1- Gather all ingredients (flours, cornmeal, oatmeal, eggs, water, canola oil, peanut butter, vanilla)
2- Gather all tools (measuring cups and spoons, stand mixer, egg cracker)
3- Add all ingredients into mixing bowl
4- Mix ingredients
5- Clean Up

Strengths, Interests and Preferences Built Into Each Step

1- Opening and closing cabinets, opening and closing refrigerator, turning on and off water faucet
2- Opening and closing drawers, pushing cart with stand mixer on top
3- Scooping and dumping, unscrewing and screwing lids, cracking eggs
4- Turning on and off mixer, watching dough mix
5- Opening and closing cabinets, opening and closing refrigerator, turning on and off water faucet, throwing egg shells in garbage
When the task itself is the reward, there is engagement, joy and purpose... In other words, Alana is living her life goal!

Alana loves pushing buttons and watching ingredients mix!

Alana enjoys peeling stickers, zipping, un-zipping and filling plastic baggies.

Since 4th grade, the “EZ Cracker” has been Alana’s favorite kitchen gadget!
As Alana neared graduation, we continued to create opportunities for Alana to engage in her preferred tasks at school, in volunteer settings and at home. Now, with the challenges of COVID-19, we've been working harder than ever to give her more outlets for her passions at home.

Our Facebook page, “Alana – A Jill of All Trades,” has a collection of videos that show Alana doing what she loves in activities and settings crafted for her success!
Alana loves the children’s museum in Billings, but now she’s safer at home. So, we brought her favorite exhibit, the wind tunnel, to her! Alana now “throws clay birds” (paper plates) for her 10 year old brother and his NERF blaster.

Developing Alana’s talents, strengths and interests has not only given her opportunity in the vocational realm, but it’s given her an overall greater quality of life!

Alana also helps socialize our foster kittens by flinging cat toys using her wind tunnel.

Alana plays with our foster kittens in other ways, too. She enjoys shooting NERF blasters. So, attaching feathers, ribbon and a bell to the tip of a dart makes the perfect cat toy!
At the risk of sounding like a broken record, filling Alana’s days with opportunity for engagement, joy and purpose is absolutely worth the effort!!

Alana’s favorite job throughout her school years was raising and lowering the Flag. So, we found another way to use a pulley in a similar fashion...

Alana drops the empty bowls down and fills them.

After pulling the bowls back up and wrapping the rope, both Alana and the barn cats are pleased! (In the barn rafters, the bowls are accessible to the cats yet safe from the sheep, ducks and chickens.)
Although Alana is unique, applying the method of identifying and developing passions for another youth in transition is a similar process.

Meet Waldo! Waldo is a 16-year old male in his sophomore year of high school. Waldo has a non-verbal communication style. Waldo’s free choice activity is almost always sensory bins containing dry materials (i.e. beans, rice, popcorn seeds, sand, or oatmeal). Waldo enjoys gentle rocking, swinging and bouncing on yoga balls. At home, Waldo sleeps with a weighted blanket in a hammock, and he is seldom without his dog, Rascal.

Understanding Waldo’s preference for activities with high sensory input, which interests could his IEP team develop into vocational goals?
Waldo enjoys sensory bins.

- Mingle together wild flower seeds with specific traits (i.e. shady blend or semi-arid climate).
- Mix potpourri components.
- Explore custom wild bird seed blends for specific species (i.e. bluebirds).
- Create confetti blends for special occasions (i.e. weddings, graduations, or sports events – using wedding, school or team colors).
- Combine dried tea leaves to make unique drink offerings.
- Cultivate a mealworm farm using wheat bran, cornmeal, and oatmeal as substrate.
- Mingle together wild flower seeds with specific traits (i.e. shady blend or semi-arid climate).
When making a custom bird seed blend for backyard chickens, Waldo used a blender with an adaptive switch to grind dried corn kernels. In this process, Waldo placed his cheek next to the blender, and he seemed to quite enjoy the vibrations!

So, his team began thinking of other activities Waldo may like that encompassed the sense of vibration. Since they were brainstorming, the team didn’t want to analyze their ideas quite yet. So, they avoided questions like, “Is this practical?” “But how would we _______?” “What about transportation, cost and liability?” They didn’t want to stifle the creative flow, because they knew they’d look at these details later on.
Using free association, Waldo's team listed the following ideas relating to vibration!

- Maintain a mealworm farm using an electric sifter to remove frass and eggs
- Polish rocks with a vibrating tumbler
- Grind coffee beans with an electric grinder
- Do laundry (agitating and spinning loads may be of particular interest)
- Prepare purées using an electric blender
- Assist in wood refinishing with an electric sander
- Mix paint colors with an electric paint shaker
- Deliver mail on a rural route with gravel roads!
- Refinish rink ice with a Zamboni
- Polish floors with a riding buffer
- Clean dirt from roads with a street sweeper
- Groom dogs with electric clippers
- Mop with an oscillating floor mop
- Sharpen pencils with an electric sharpener
When identifying talents, strengths and interests, looking at MUCH older IEPs, IFSPs (Individual Family Service Plans), and evaluations (and notes) from private therapies may be helpful. We found that many of Alana’s current preferred activities were actually identified back in early intervention!

Alana enjoyed playing with a Jack-in-the-Box as a toddler. With practice, she was even able manipulate the hand crank! As a young adult, she still likes using a hand crank, and she likes these associated activities...

- Rolling out dog treat dough with a pasta maker.
- Squeezing water from pulp rounds using a vice (to make fire starts).
- Tumbling yard waste and food scraps to make compost.
Not every idea was a hit with Alana. We found the hand-cranked grain mill was too difficult to turn. However, Alana’s younger sister, Serena, jumped into help! We haven’t completely abandoned the idea, and we have thoughts on attaching a longer crank to give Alana more leverage.

Because we’re never quite sure if a new idea will work, we try our best to start small. Searching 2nd hand stores, yard sales, networking with family and friends or posting on local “ISO” pages is a good way to keep costs down in the exploring phases.

What if you’re having a mental block? Try typing the preferred activity into an online search engine, and go down those rabbit holes!! You’ll be amazed at what you’ll find!

Google

What uses a hand crank?

- Butter churn
- Egg beater
- Coffee mill
- Meat grinder
- Salad spinner
- Clothes wringer
- Pencil sharpener
- Emergency AM/FM radio
- Emergency flashlight
- Apple peeler/slice/corer
- Antique sewing machine!

And, YES, antique sewing machines can be found for purchase online!
A “Life Goal” brings all systems and team members together to work for the same outcome. It also brings clarity and proper division of resources across those systems to support the goal.

Use the goals in each of these ‘separate’ plans to support the LIFE GOAL!

DD (Developmental Disabilities)
Adult Case Management’s PSP (Personal Support Plan)

To live an engaged life full of joy and purpose that is rich in personal relationships.

School’s IEP (Individual Education Plan)

Voc-Rehab’s IPE (Individual Plan for Employment)
Review Goals for Today’s Webinar:

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4. Empower all participants to see a bright future for youth in transition, especially those with a significant impact of disability.

Coming in February…
How we turned our dream of a hobby business into a reality by seizing opportunity and building a community.

Questions? Thoughts? Did we miss anything?... Please reach out to us!
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