



## **For Immediate Release**

Contact: Stacy Adado

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Phone: 517.244.1324

## **Student Finds Success with Local Insurance Agency Amid the Pandemic**

For Joseph Wolbeck, a former student in Ingham Intermediate School District's Project SEARCH program with the state of Michigan, the pandemic could have derailed his future plans. As a Lansing Public Schools student, Joseph was enrolled in the State of Michigan Project SEARCH program when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. When the state of Michigan employees began working remotely, the opportunities for in-person internships were eliminated. Luckily, for Joseph, a local insurance agency, The Eric King Agency, was willing to give him a shot.

During a normal year, [Project SEARCH](#) combines classroom instruction with a year-long unpaid internship at either Michigan State University or the State of Michigan. The combination of instruction and immersion in the workplace prepares interns to meet employer expectations. Participants gain experience in a variety of settings that align with their interests and abilities to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Eric King, owner of the Meemic Insurance - Eric King Agency, was willing to give Joseph an opportunity. Eric's wife, Wendi, happens to teach in another Ingham ISD transition program, Skills for Adult Independent Living (SAIL), and King had worked with her students in the past. According to the Kings, they are glad they took a chance on Joseph, as he has become an important part of their team at the agency.

"Meemic Insurance is a company created by educators to provide special discounts for educators. What better way for our agency to show its commitment to the field of education than hiring the very students the system produces," stated Eric King, agency owner. "I want to be clear, Joseph was not given a job. He submitted a resume, communicated via email, showed up on time for his interview and completed a full skills analysis prior to being offered the position," notes Wendi King, Eric's wife. "My knowledge from working with the SAIL program made it easy to develop a task list that allows Joseph to work independently in our agency," Wendi King also noted.



As an intern with Project SEARCH, Joseph learned various office tasks such as mail sorting and distributing, alphabetizing and inputting information from files into a given spreadsheet. Wolbeck's Project SEARCH instructor, Alana Anderson, says each student has unique skills that allow them to be successful in a variety of employment experiences.

“During his time with the State of Michigan last year, Joseph had the opportunity to intern at DTMB Procurement and MDHHS Adoption and Guardianship, which greatly expanded his marketable skills leading to competitive and integrated employment,” Anderson says. “Joseph is an amazing young man who takes great pride in his work. He was an ideal candidate for our program, and I wish him the best in his future endeavors,” Anderson also noted.

“So many people play an important role in the success of these students,” says Sarah Winslow, Director of Transition and Itinerant Services at Ingham ISD. From our Project SEARCH host sites, to the instructors preparing students for internships, to our partners at Michigan Rehabilitation Services who serve the interns on the actual job site, to the employers who take a chance on these students, everyone's piece of the puzzle is crucial to their success,” Winslow also noted.

Ingham Intermediate School District offers program and services to staff and students in the districts of Dansville, East Lansing, Haslett, Holt, Lansing, Leslie, Mason, Okemos, Stockbridge, Waverly, Webberville and Williamston. For more information, visit [Ingham ISD](http://www.inghamisd.org) (www.inghamisd.org).

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