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News Release

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Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano Announces Project SEARCH

(DETROIT) – Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano will welcome 12 developmentally disabled Detroit Public School students to the Guardian Building where they will spend their senior year of high school working for county government and picking up key skills that will help them as they move into the next phase of their lives.

A special open house and tour to launch the initiative is planned from 1p.m. to 3p.m. on Wednesday Aug. 31 on the 32nd floor of the Guardian Building, 500 Griswold.

Project SEARCH enables people with physical and developmental disabilities to integrate into the workforce, which aligns with Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano’s commitment to diversity, inclusion and opportunity.

“We are excited to be partnering with Detroit Public Schools on this important initiative. These young people will gain professional on-the-job experience which will dovetail perfectly with their classroom instruction,” Ficano said. “The students will be placed throughout Wayne County government. We know it will enrich both the students and our employees. We are helping Project SEARCH, but Project SEARCH is also helping us to exhibit more inclusive management styles, and broaden our beliefs in the strengths of acceptance, diversity and openness.”

The county’s Autism Task Force brought the project to fruition with DPS, although not all of the students have autism. There are 17,543 students with development disabilities in the Detroit Public Schools, and 769 have some level of autism. The potential to enrich many more lives is real, which is why Wayne County Executive Ficano will also be issuing a challenge to other organizations and institutions to adopt Project SEARCH.

Participating students will report daily to their classroom in the Wayne County Guardian Building. One teacher, one para-professional and skilled trainers employed by the Detroit Public Schools will manage the classroom and train students in employment skills before they move to their work areas which include The Office of the Wayne County Executive, Communications, Community Outreach, Economic Development Growth Engine, Wayne County Land Bank, Management and Budget, Technology, Corporation Counsel, Health and Human Services, Personnel and the Wayne County Commission.

Orientation begins Sept. 6 with the first day of classes beginning Sept. 13

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