

# the IOWA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

## special 4PLUS issue



**74%**  
of ISD 4PLUS  
students are working  
at least one year  
after exiting the  
transition program

Filing income tax returns for ISD's 4PLUS (Post-senior Learning for Ultimate Success) students may not be so bad— it means they have income.

Chris Nipper, the transition program's work experience coordinator, said as of January, all 13 students in the ISD

transition program have held paid employment this school year. In fact, all but one are currently employed- due to a seasonal position ending.

These students know the process of landing the first job is complex, and can be made even more challenging with communication differences unfamiliar to potential employers.

4PLUS staff work with students to even the competitive work pursuit. Interest surveys, job shadows, mock interviews and more prepare them for first-time

experiences. They discuss soft skills at work, like the importance of having a positive attitude and teamwork.

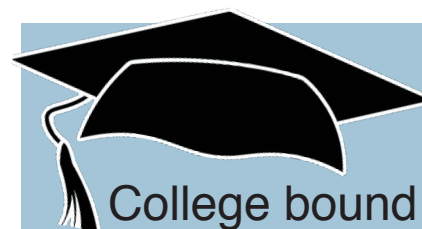
It's all critical preparation for students to gain confidence about how they can contribute to a future employer.

"Some people may think I can get a job easily, but I feel like I need

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**Just about out** — 4PLUS students Jon Mayer (left) and Sam Jacobs will exit 4PLUS this spring. Mayer obtained his driver's license, job and apartment with assistance through the transition program. Jacobs is on track to earn his certificate in web design, with most tuition paid by his home school district.



4PLUS students who enroll at Iowa Western Community College (located in Council Bluffs, have different goals in mind.

1. Earn a certificate in a trade. Students take specific classes with the goal to complete the requirements within two years. Sample certificates: HVAC, nursing assistant, industrial technology.
2. Enroll into introductory courses to experience college-level academics and expectations.
3. Enroll with plans to continue with a diploma, associate's or transfer to a 4-year program.

## No charge.

4PLUS classes, tutoring, transportation, room and board are all **FREE** for students and families. The local school district pays for college tuition.



**The goal is for all students to have work experiences.**

**Where students work  
2018/2019**

Best Quality Countertops  
Design8 Studios\*  
Creighton University Dining  
Menards  
Agri Star \*\*  
Spice Pot Breads & Biryani\*\*\*  
Dollar Tree  
Kohl's  
HyVee  
Omaha Children's Museum

\*Full service sign company  
\*\* Meat processing plant  
\*\*\* Restaurant

**Volunteer work  
experience locations:**

Bethany Nursing Home  
Midlands Humane Society  
Assistants in ISD classrooms

## 100% employment

*continued from front*

more experience and skills," said Cassie Koehn, who was a senior last year at North Fayette Valley High School in Iowa. Koehn had four interviews this fall.

With 4PLUS, she could identify her strengths. "They (interviewers) ask me to tell about myself, and I can tell them I like to do my own thing, but see how what I do is part of a team effort to get the job done," she said.

Just because she likes to work by herself doesn't mean she isn't

**In 15 years, dozens  
of students have benefited  
from 4PLUS.**

a team player. Now, Koehn can clarify to interviewers that yes, she enjoys working with people. And as a person who is hard of hearing, she will understand more directions in 1:1 settings than in group settings where several conversations may be happening, she said.

Koehn said she has a good first job fit with a position in Creighton University's food service department. She is also looking at trying a college class soon.



**Students are required to be  
in the 4PLUS student center**

## 10 hours

**for tutoring, classes, or  
waiting for job and college  
transportation.**

Budgeting, planning, nutrition and safe food prep discussions result in a tasty lesson in the 4PLUS kitchen for Jacob Brigham and Ana Rosa Torres (exited last May).

## Been there, done that, now what?

**H**ome. It's where most 4PLUS students want to return when they meet their transition goals and exit the program. Sometimes, retail and restaurant chains are able to transfer students close to home. Other times, home means rural areas where work opportunities aren't as prevalent in a bigger city.

That's why 4PLUS supports transition out of the program, too. 4PLUS team members from the ISD dorms often join the effort, traveling to hometowns and meeting with potential employers. They also ensure students are able to live at home or help them find independent living.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors can also be involved. These counselors are each assigned to several Iowa high schools, and employed by Iowa Workforce Development. Ideally, the counselors have met with students before graduation from their local high schools to have the best outcomes.



## 100% employment

*continued from p. 2*

**Paid work experiences are a primary goal at 4PLUS, and teaching life skills is a close second.**

Layne Guerrero works weekends at a meat packing plant in his hometown of Postville, Iowa. He was a senior at ISD last year. Although he found the job on his own, he enrolled into 4PLUS this fall to improve his English skills.

Better English means he will have clearer communication when writing notes with coworkers and

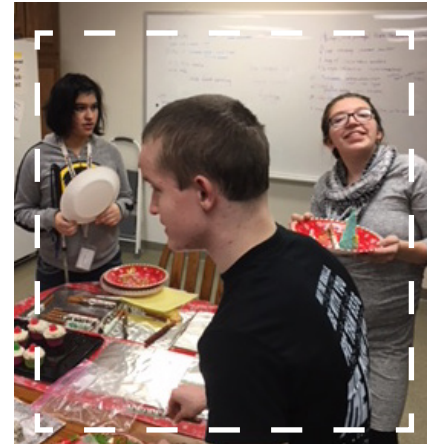
others in the community, he said. He's also learning the steps to buying a home. Guerrero wants to taste all life has to offer.

"I want to experience college, I want to work and I want to own my own home," he said. During the week, Guerrero takes welding and engine design classes at Iowa Western Community College.

He said 4PLUS's other strengths is that it helps students improve their relationships with others, confidence and independence.

There are many advantages to enrolling into 4PLUS. Is it right for someone you know? ■

## Better together



Before holiday break, the programs shared the 4PLUS kitchen, baking up a storm of treats for campus departments. Left to right: Emma Russo, James Cheek and Cassie Koehn. Russo and Cheek are from IESBVI. IESBVI students may also live in the ISD dorms.

Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IESBVI) reestablished its 4PLUS program on the ISD campus in 2016. For school year 18/19, 8 students are enrolled. Students have their own teachers and classroom space. Both programs emphasize work and life skills. Currently, one work experience coordinator serves both programs. IESBVI students live in the dorms on ISD's campus.

**"My goal is to empower students to achieve their independent career and college goals."**

— Chris Nipper  
Work Experience Coordinator



### Is 4PLUS right for you?

**Now** is the time for IEP teams and families to consider 4PLUS. For details, click [here](#) or go to:

[iowaschoolfortheblind.org](http://iowaschoolfortheblind.org)

- Across Iowa
- Statewide Services
- 4PLUS



**Some life skills 4PLUS faculty like Jan Loverin (pictured) and Wendy Rustad cover:** literacy (grammar and vocabulary relating to employment, driver's tests, leases); money management (bills, banking, budgeting); cooking/ kitchen essentials (nutrition, cooking, shopping); employment (paychecks, ADA provisions, decisions); life skills (using interpreters and communicating without them, stress management, advocacy).

## Certifications: fast tracking to employment

When time is not on your side, the certificate program is the track to take. 4PLUS students are limited to taking 9 college credits per semester, which means finishing an associate's degree in two years may not be possible.

With certification programs, "the student has something to offer businesses and it is feasible for them to complete (while in 4PLUS)," Kristi Wills, high school and 4PLUS counselor said.

Students, parents and IEP team members were involved in 4PLUS's decision to focus on certification. Those wanting to pursue an associate's degree after exiting 4PLUS still have that option. Although paying for classes then becomes the former student's responsibility, "many apply for and are awarded scholarships to help with the cost," Wills said.





## Employee news

■ **Kathy Miller**, lead worker in the dorms, was recognized by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) this summer with Knights of the Flying Fingers Award.



The award recognizes Miller's volunteer service on behalf of the NAD and the American deaf and hard of

hearing community. Click [here](#) for more details on Miller's service leading to her award, or go to [iowaschoolforthe deaf.org](http://iowaschoolforthe deaf.org) and scroll down to the Prowler.

■ We express our sympathy to **Cindy Bryan** (secretary for ISD

and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired) whose father-in-law passed away in January.

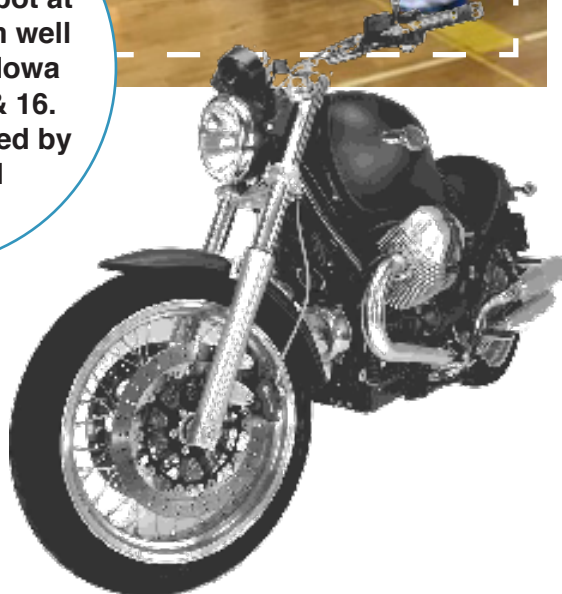
■ We extend our condolences to **Michelle Konvalin** (girls dorm) whose father passed away in January.

■ **Nancy Pietrzak** (interpreter) and her husband, Robert, became grandparents on Jan. 28 with the birth of their second grandson Jaysper (Jasper) Jordan Pietrzak. He was born weighing 7 pounds 3 ounces and was 19 1/2 inches long. His parents are Joshua and Haley. Jaysper joins big brother Jayden who is 6.



ISD's Special Olympic Basketball team earned a spot at state! Wish them well as they play in Iowa City March 15 & 16. The team qualified by placing 2nd at districts.

**Poker Run drives donation**  
Thanks to those who participated in the local Deaf Poker Run this fall! ISD's Special Olympics program received \$1,000 from the event.



## Upcoming events

**Lots of good stuff coming up this spring for students, families and the general public! Pass it on!**

**A Hollywood Night**  
**Thursday, Feb. 21**  
**ISD Auditorium**

A free event for local school-age students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Get ready for the star treatment at this fun dress up party! For details and RSVP, click [here](#) or contact [tapeterson@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org](mailto:tapeterson@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org).

**6 on 6 volleyball**  
**Saturday, March 16**  
**3 on 3 basketball**  
**Saturday, March 30**  
**ISD Lied Multipurpose Complex**  
Get in on these first-time fundraisers for the Class of 2019! Volleyball is March 16; basketball is March 30. Assemble your teams and register today. Click [here](#) for details or email [mshama@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org](mailto:mshama@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org).

**Deaf Cultural Celebration**  
**Saturday and Sunday, April 5 & 6**  
**ISD Lied Multipurpose Complex**  
You've waited all year for it! So many events and information, it has its own website. Click [here](#) for details or email [jmeyer@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org](mailto:jmeyer@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org).

## Senior appears in recruiting video

Takoda Krauel is an ISD senior who enrolled into mechanic classes part-time at the Council Bluffs Community School District's Tucker Center last fall. Truck Centers of America, which has an office in Omaha, approached the Tucker Center to include students in its recruiting video.



Krauel appears several times in the video (upper right), which is targeted toward teens and young adults who might be interested in a trucking-related career.

**ISD students at the Tucker Center** – This facility provides students with hands-on, cutting edge technology and relevant opportunities to gain experience that prepares them for the workforce or postsecondary education in a specific career.

Iowa School for the Deaf students may enroll at the Tucker Center in a variety of classes. Two ISD students have earned their Certified Nurses Assistant training, in preparation for a degree in nursing.

## Last year for Optimist contest

### It's been a good run.

After 40 years of sponsoring oratorical contests and awarding thousands of associated scholarships to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Council Bluffs Optimist Club has decided the 2019 contest season for these students will be its last.

April 25, in the Lied Multipurpose Complex, the final contest will be held as a combination ISD/Iowa District event.

Since 1980, the local Optimist Club sponsored a contest just for ISD students. In 1992, an additional contest began in conjunction with Optimist International for all Iowa 7th - 12th grade students who are deaf/hard of hearing, mainstreamed or at ISD. **Between these two contests, up to \$4,750 can be awarded in scholarships each year.**

The 2019 theme is, "Is There a Fine Line Between Optimism and Reality?" Email [cbanks@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org](mailto:cbanks@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org) for more contest details.

## The Spirit Sticks with them



ISD's cheer squad brought home the 3rd place trophy at this year's Great Plains Schools for the Deaf cheer competition in February. Also? They showed so much pride and outstanding school spirit during the weekend basketball games they were awarded the Spirit Stick, too! Didn't get to see their performance? Check out their routines from Parent's Night [here](#). Left to right are Jada Bushman, Sadie Kindt, Ashley Schroeder and Shayla Dobias.

### ISD's 2019 basketball season wrapped up

the weekend of Feb. 8-10 at the Great Plains Schools for the Deaf tournament held at Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf.

ISD girls won the sportsmanship trophy and earned 6th place. Kali Nipper was named to the all-tournament team.

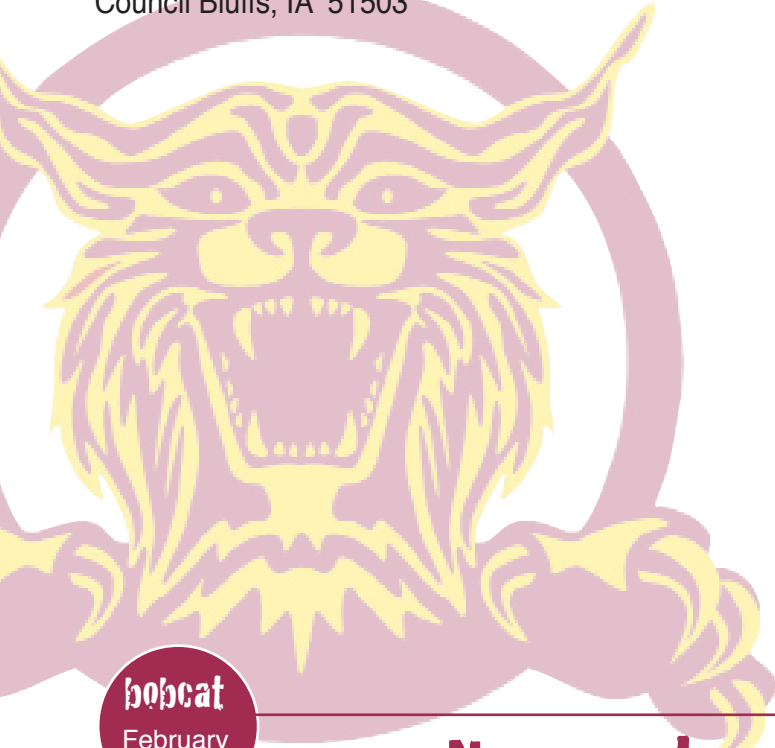
ISD boys placed 7th and CJ Autery was named to the all-tournament team.







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bobcat  
February  
2019

## New seal could be big deal

Iowa, along with a growing number of states, is now allowing high schools to award a seal of biliteracy to students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional language by the time they graduate high school.

Iowa School for the Deaf has chosen to participate and will include American Sign Language as a biliteracy seal option for interested ISD students.

**How does the seal benefit students?** When job seekers indicate they are bilingual, the seal provides evidence of the skill. *Other advantages are listed at the link at the end of this story.*

Language proficiency will be proven through approved assessments.

It is currently voluntary for high schools to offer the seal of biliteracy. Click [here](#) for more seal of biliteracy details from the Iowa Department of Education.



ISD high school students like seniors Angel Torres, Ben Brakke and junior Nathan Weigel can choose to pursue a biliteracy seal for their diplomas.