



Helping individuals with autism to start meaningful careers

In this issue:

Recent grads at College of the Canyons, introducing two new Board Members, completion of the Time To Shine project, good news about new funding, and scaling up to create Uniquely Abled Academies across the country.

A Message from our Founder and President

Thanks for tuning in! It's been quite a while since our last Newsletter, but we have been busy and there is plenty of progress to report.

Since the UAP was founded, we have opened nine Uniquely Abled Academies. Over 100 students have graduated, with almost 100% job placement! Thanks to our successful program model and support from generous grants and donations, we now have the capacity to expand and open many more UAAs later this year.

Notably, we have just received a \$200K two-year grant from the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, following their grant of \$120K in 2020. This will allow us to scale up, and support even more uniquely abled individuals in finding meaningful careers that provide income, dignity and purpose while filling a major need for employers.

We are also investigating how we can offer training for even more vocations, like information technology, cybersecurity, and programming manufacturing robots.

I hope you enjoy reading about our progress and recent successes!



Ivan Rosenberg

Our Uniquely Abled Academies

- Glendale Community College (CA)
- College of the Canyons (CA)
- Long Beach City College (CA)
- San Bernardino Valley College (CA)

Ivan

- Rhodes State College (OH)
- Milwaukee Area Technical College (WI)
- South Central College (MN)
- Northern Pennsylvania Regional College (PA)
- Crawford County Career & Technical Center (PA)

Scaling up: Replicating the UAA Model Across the Country

Over the past few years, we have had amazing success with our training program model, the Uniquely Able Academy. Individuals with level one autism are starting secure, meaningful careers as CNC machine operators after training for just one semester. We now have over 100 graduates, and job placement is nearly 100%. Because of our successful program design, at least 15 communities are ready to replicate the UAA model.

As a small volunteer organization, we would have been unable to handle this level of demand. So we are delighted that the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation has awarded a \$200K two-year grant to support our expansion. The MEAF is a non-profit foundation funded jointly by Mitsubishi Electric Corporation of Japan and its US affiliates. Funding goes towards innovative strategies empowering young people to lead productive lives. This generous grant will enable the UAP to hire dedicated personnel, publicize the program, and create resources to help communities across the country to start their own UAAs. A tremendous opportunity!

We'll keep you updated as our grant-supported activities proceed in 2022-2024.

Welcome New Board Members

Matt Fieldman is Executive Director of America Works, a nationwide initiative to coordinate the manufacturing industry's training programs and build a more capable, skilled, and diverse workforce. Matt works across the Manufacturing Extension Partnership to increase collaboration, efficiency and impact in local and regional workforce development. He served previously as Vice President for External Affairs at MAGNET, and is also the founding Board President of EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute. In his free time, Matt mentors other nonprofit professionals, and is a Civil Society Fellow at Aspen Institute. An avid sports fan, Matt is free for a rousing ultimate frisbee match anytime.





Randy Lusk is General Manager of Lusk Quality Machine Products in Palmdale, CA, a production machine job shop with approximately 65 employees. He has employed graduates of the UAA program as CNC operators since the summer of 2018. Randy and his wife are active volunteers with Young Life Capernaum, a Christian ministry to young adults with unique abilities. His wife was a teacher for 30 years and has a masters degree in Special Education. They have two nephews and one niece with autism.

Resources Update

Did you know that we offer helpful resources for individuals with autism, their families, educators, and potential employers?

We've overhauled the Resources section of our website to make it even easier to find the information you need. Here are the highlights!

[Resources](#)

Topics

The Uniquely Abled Project: *articles and videos about our work*
Shifting Our Perspective: *from disabled to uniquely abled*
The Uniquely Abled Academies: *articles and videos about UAAs*
The Uniquely Abled Project Newsletter Archive: *past newsletters*
Resources for Uniquely Abled Academies: *for setting up and managing a UAA*

For Uniquely Abled Individuals and Their Families

Being a CNC Machinist: *what is this career really like?*
Job Search Resources: *search for the right job*
Social Service Organizations: *nonprofits that provide vocational services*
Government Vocational Support Agencies: *grouped by state, government agencies that provide vocational support (coming soon!)*
Vocational Education Programs: *for the uniquely abled*

For Potential Employers

Employing Uniquely Abled Individuals: *information for employers, including benefits*

News and Events

Calendar: *upcoming events, such as open houses and graduations*
Job opportunities: *work with us!*
Recent News: *our bulletin board (coming soon!)*

About Autism

About Autism: *suggested reading and helpful articles*
From Temple Grandin: *informative videos from a well-respected speaker*

Additional Information

Additional Websites: *how to's and resources*
Useful Articles: *programs, checklists, stories, and autism in the news*

The Time to Shine Project

An update from Emily Iland, Project Manager

In 2020, The UAP was awarded a \$120K grant by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation to create program assets for our UAAs. Comerica Bank, Citizens Bank, and the McRae Care Foundation Fund also made significant contributions. With this funding, we created the Time To Shine Project.

The project is now complete, and we are delighted to offer these four resources to support institutions starting a UAA:



- **The Time To Shine Job Readiness Curriculum** is a comprehensive employment training program designed for our Uniquely Able Academies. Ten interactive lessons help students enhance their social communication, impression management, problem solving, and self advocacy skills. Instructional videos feature actors with autism demonstrating the skills students need to be successful in their future jobs. *Starting this summer, students at Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio will be the first cohort to use this curriculum.*
- **Teaching Uniquely Able Students** is a video designed to help CNC course instructors tailor their teaching style to the learning style of students with autism.

We are proud to be able to offer the following resources not only to our UAA institutions, but also free to the public. If you are curious about what it might be like to start a UAA or hire our graduates, this is a great way to learn more!

- **The Future of CNC** video features three UAA graduates whose successful careers demonstrate the excellent fit between CNC manufacturing and workers with autism. Their experience highlights our vital role in providing skilled capable workers to fill critical vacancies in the industry. Randy Lusk, who has hired several UAA graduates, shares his perspective on this win-win business solution. *MEAF hosted the debut of this video in a live webinar on April 27, 2022. [Watch it here!](#)*
- **Working with Uniquely Able Employees** is designed for employers hiring UAA graduates and contains useful information for anyone who works with uniquely able individuals. The video helps employers recognize the benefits these employees bring to the workforce, and includes tips for managing and mentoring them. [Watch it here!](#)



Eastern Region Update

from John Wheeler, UAA Consultant

Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio - the first Uniquely Aabled Academy outside California - has begun training their second cohort, with five students enrolled. The second cohort at Milwaukee Area Technical College in Wisconsin will begin this fall. Crawford County Career & Technical Center in Meadville, Pennsylvania is planning a Fall 2022 start date for their first cohort. We are also excited to welcome Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, and Lakeland Community College in Kirtland, Ohio. We have had interest from institutions in North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

Western Region Update: Spotlight on College of the Canyons

from Mike Bastine, UAA Consultant



Graduates and Staff at College of the Canyons

This cohort started their training in March 2020, stayed dedicated through the pandemic and the building of a new training center, and finally graduated on April 8, 2022. Congratulations, Grads!

West of the Mississippi, the future looks bright for more UAAs in the next 6 months. Several colleges in California are planning to start CNC Operator training programs this fall, including San Bernardino Valley College, Glendale College, Laney College, and Bakersfield College.

UAA programs could start within the next 12 months in Centennial and Mesa, Colorado, and in Phoenix, Arizona. Several schools in Texas are also considering our program model.

Here at College of the Canyons, we are thrilled to celebrate the graduation of our third cohort of UAA students. An amazing college-wide effort took place to achieve this success story. The graduates were able to complete their training in a brand new CNC training center built in partnership with B&B Manufacturing. B&B is a major aerospace parts manufacturer, and has been instrumental in supporting CNC pre-apprenticeship training. The 2100-square-foot training center is co-located at B&B and houses 4 Haas mini-mills, 2 Haas lathes, and a CMM unit.

We continue to work with Strong Workforce Apprenticeship Group, Goodwill, and employer partners. On their graduation day, our students had a job interview session with ten local manufacturing companies. They had stellar interview success, showing off their industry credentials and the CNC-manufactured parts they had made, plus discussing their practical CNC skills and knowledge. We wish them all the best for a great start in their new careers!

Our next cohort is planned for 2023.

Thanks to Our Donors!

We're proud to be a grassroots organization, with 90% of our budget going straight to serving our students. We greatly appreciate generous support from:

- Citizens Business Bank
- Comerica Bank
- Marisol Puga
- McRae Care Foundation Fund
- Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation
- Wells Fargo Bank

Thank You for Your Support



Serving students, families, and companies

The Uniquely Able Project enables those with autism to start meaningful careers that provide income, dignity, and purpose while filling a major need for employers. To grow our impact and serve more students, families, and companies, we need your support! Help us:

- develop new tools to identify our students' unique abilities
- create training programs for uniquely able individuals
- collaborate with employment programs
- match graduates with meaningful, fulfilling jobs

[Donate Today!](#)

