SMHS graduate to join WCU’s University Participant program

Smoky Mountain High School graduate Corey Hambrick has been selected for Western Carolina University’s University Participant Program for fall. A collaboration between the Arc of Haywood County and WCU’s special education department, the program provides a way for young adults 18-25 with developmental disabilities to experience university life and learning. It was developed two years ago by David Westling, WCU’s Adelaide Worth Daniels Distinguished Professor of Special Education. Participation is based on a competitive admission process, and Hambrick is one of four students selected.

An avid sports fan, Hambrick participates in Jackson County Special Olympics and was manager of the SMHS baseball team. He also was elected “Mr. Mustang” his junior year.

“Corey displays a high degree of responsibility, ambition and enthusiasm,” said Rae Bachus, one of Hambrick’s former teachers. “He was one of the hardest working students in each of his classes.”

Hambrick’s other achievements include passing the Hunter and Wildlife Safety Course in 2007 and working successfully for two years after high school. He is currently employed at the 30th Judicial District Domestic Violence-Sexual Assault Alliance in Waynesville as a custodian.

“I think it is a good opportunity, and I want to learn to be independent,” Hambrick said. “I’m excited about living on campus.”

The program’s goal is to facilitate the transition of participants from secondary school to adult life. Students receive $6,500 per year for tuition support and are expected to complete requirements for a UP Certificate of Accomplishment, based on an Individual Plan for College Participation.

Partial funding comes from a sub-grant through The Arc of the United States and the Wal-mart Foundation.

The Arc of Haywood County is one of 45 local chapters awarded $100,000 as part of the Wal-mart Foundation School-to-Community Transition Project.

Part-time project coordinator Kelly Kelley, a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte who’s completing research at WCU, will oversee daily operations.

“I am so excited to be a part of such an innovative program that will further enhance the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities,” Kelley said. “I consider it an honor and privilege to work on a project I am passionate about and helped develop.”

The Arc of Haywood County has been serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families since 1976. For more information, contact Kelley at kellyrkelley@gmail.com.