

For Immediate Release:

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ROCK BROOK STUDENT GETS THE JOB DONE ***Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month***

Skillman, NJ (October 24, 2016) –Once a week, 18-year old Ewing resident, Javier, a student from Rock Brook School in Skillman, NJ, makes his way to Kismet Farm, also based in Skillman, to work at Club O.T.I.S., a special program which stands for Opportunity, Training, Inspiration and Support.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Kismet Farm is a remarkable place where students with special needs can learn various aspects of farming. Students from Rock Brook School often visit the farm to help out in the garden and spend time with the animals. Javier has been hired by the farm and gets paid to spend a few hours a week making sure the farm is in tip-top shape. His job responsibilities include mowing the lawn, cleaning the barn, brushing the horses, cleaning out the chicken coop and is even helping to make a path in the woods.

“It’s kind of hard work, but it makes me feel good,” says Javier. He continues to say that one of the most important things about work is showing up on time. When asked his favorite task, with a big smile he responds mowing the grass. Javier works the riding mower and after some training he now does a terrific job mowing the grass in nice straight lines.

“Javier has made wonderful progress on learning his new skill. Riding the mower is fun and he had to quickly learn that it was not a game but an expensive piece of machinery that does a lot of work on are farm. His ability to track and build discipline to complete a thorough job improved every week,” says Anne Michaelson, owner of Kismet Farm. She continues to explain how she became involved with Rock Brook School.

“My son began volunteering at the Rock Brook in 2009. The tradition has continued every year and now both my girls are Rock Brook volunteers. The school has provided my kids with a distinct picture of how hard it can be for kids with disabilities. Rock Brook has made my kids better people, they are more patient, they accept all people, no matter what their challenge and most important all plan to include working with children and families with disabilities in their future careers. When we purchased the farm we were novices, no one in our family knew how to farm and we learned the hard way, a lot of trial and error. It did not take long for me to realize that opening my farm to the Rock Brook School was something I needed to do. Club O.T.I.S. at Kismet Farm has provided a venue for these students that is unique.

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While farming is challenging and sometimes quite dirty, the animals never judge how someone acts and the garden is always grateful for some attention. I have loved watching how the kids have adapted on the farm, and how each has become comfortable with their favorite task. "

With his earnings, Javier has purchased a wrestling video game. He also likes to buy hot chocolate at school on Fridays.

"We are so grateful to businesses such as Kismet Farms who employ individuals with special needs," says Mary Caterson, Director of Rock Brook School. "These opportunities allow our students to learn skills that will prepare them for life after graduation. A critical component of Rock Brook's high school program is to teach students functional skills in order to reach his or her potential as a fulfilled, self-confident person and become a productive member of the community."

National Disability Employment Awareness Month was established in 1945 and is an important opportunity to recognize the contributions individuals with disabilities make to our society and workforce.

To learn more about Rock Brook School or if you are a business interested in partnering with the school visit www.rock-brook.org or call (908) 431-9500.

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About Rock Brook School

Founded in 1974, Rock Brook School is a NJ State approved school designed for students aged 3-21 with multiple disabilities and communication impairment. RBS provides a full academic program along with individual speech and language therapy. Celebrating more than 40 years of commitment to educating children with special needs and their families, RBS has demonstrated best practices to the special education community and continues its legacy of quality education, providing support and ensuring success. For more information visit www.rock-brook.org or call (908) 431-9500. Like us on Facebook/follow us on Twitter.

About Kismet Farm

A free ranging farmette, Kismet Farm was purchased by the Michaelson family in August 2014. The family made a decision to turn the farm into a nonprofit organization which introduces teens with developmental disabilities to farming. Welcoming its first students in September 2015, the Michaelsons knew they were onto something special. Club O.T.I.S. (Opportunity, Training, Inspiration and Support), an environment that is safe and caring, where individuals can grow and thrive was established. For more information about Kismet Farm and Club O.T.I.S. visit www.kismetfarm.org.

Photo Caption: October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Pictured is 18-year old Rock Brook School student Javier, mowing the grass at his job at Kismet Farm in Skillman, NJ.