



News from THE WALLACE GROUP

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FACT-ORIENTED HIGH-SCHOOLER TAKES CAR WASH KNOWLEDGE TO NEW HEIGHTS AT FULL SERVICE WASH

**With help from ProAct, student with challenges masters car wash facts,
pushes for and gains position at Red Wing's full service car wash**

When it comes to car washes, ProAct client Andrew Voges, 17, is far more than a quick study. After spending hundreds of hours online researching the subject, he has a new outlet to pursue his passion, an attendant position at Red Wing's full service car wash.

Voges, who has autism, is an aspiring soft cloth automatic car wash expert. Tapping his enthusiasm and drive, together with some help from ProAct and his family's persistence, he landed the position at the Red Wing Auto Spa.

"That was like his dream job," said ProAct Employment Services Manager Pam Veith, who helped open the door to a job assessment or evaluation at the car wash. The assessments are temporary job tryouts, of sorts, where people with disabilities are paid through a program, rather than by an employer. "This gave them (the car wash) the opportunity to see what he can do," she said.

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Voges was more than prepared. His father, Rick, said the young man probably knows even more about the components at the wash than the owner. Take Andrew's favorite car cleaning step, an original mitter curtain, the old style strips of cloth hanging from above that clean vehicle roofs as they're pulled along a slotted track. "It's Permacolor cloth, which I assume is the original, and if it is the original, this stuff has held up well for 25 years. Calcium and corrosion on the mitter baskets above point to the unit's age," Voges said.

After explaining the flex step brushes that come next, he goes on in great detail about the location of each car wash component when the wash originally operated in the opposite direction. "That's the person that he is and he just stays with it," said car wash owner Joe Melson. Veith describes Voges as having a "very acute mind," and "one who is thinking all the time."

Andrew's car wash and car history is lengthy for a high school junior. "He was fascinated all the way," said Rick. "We used to buy him the play car washes, the Hot Wheels." Melson learned that Andrew's parents took him through car washes as far away as South St. Paul and Cottage Grove on his off days.

And, Rick's son has been perusing Motor Trend magazine since he was 4 years old. "I still have most of the old ones in my bedroom, in the closet," Andrew said.

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Melson first learned of Andrew's abilities when he came for the job assessment with a ProAct job coach. He knew details about the equipment before he came in, the owner explained. Later, after Andrew got his driver's license, Melson was convinced that he should hire him. Andrew now works four days per week.

Now, as the wash works through its busy season, the focus is on being efficient, and professional. Andrew often takes extra time to wipe every spot from finished vehicles. "There's nothing wrong with being a perfectionist, as long as you can do it fast," Melson said.

Melson's dedicated employee may be the most fact-passionate, equipment savvy, car wash attendant in southern Minnesota, and, perhaps, the Midwest. "They're fun to go through and a great place to work," said Andrew. "I'd like to own this place, too, after college."

Andrew's father said he and his wife appreciate the opportunity given by Melson at the car wash.

ProAct is headquartered in Eagan and maintains additional sites in Red Wing and Zumbrota. Its mission is to serve adults and students who are experiencing barriers to employment and self-sufficiency due to intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and other challenges.

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