

High achiever gives credit to learning center

BY BILL KRASEAN
KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

In June, Robert "Bo" Parfet will complete a one-year internship as a research analyst at the Financial Accounting Standards Board to join J.P. Morgan Chase, a New York City-based global financial service firm with more than \$700 billion in assets.

The move caps an impressive series of accomplishments for Parfet, the son of Bill Parfet and Mauri Reed.

A 1995 Hackett Catholic Central High School graduate, the 24-year-old Parfet has a bachelor's degree in economics from Colorado State University, where he was on the dean's list.

He earned a master's degree in applied economics at the University of Michigan in April 2000, compiling a 7.7 grade-point average on an 8.0 scale.

While in Colorado, he worked full time in the restaurant business to finance all of his college expenses.

In the few years since graduating from U-M, Parfet has:

- Created and evaluated common stock comparison, discounted cash flow analysis, deal comparison and an average variable price model at Goldman, Sachs & Co.



Robert "Bo" Parfet

- Analyzed and evaluated grant proposals as part of \$120 million economic development initiative for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- Developed working knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry and created a "Pharma" database for senior bankers to use for client meetings.

This is the same Bo Parfet who, while a bright student and quick learner, struggled with reading and writing throughout his years in school and whose dyslexia made him easily distracted.

The same Bo Parfet who literally had to modify the way he approached learning to accommodate his dyslexia.

"He's a shining star, an amazing young man," said Blaine Lam, whose son Brian is a close friend of Bo's and who has known the young Parfet for years.

Parfet's accomplishments, Lam said, came from dedication and hard work.

"You think you can shake it, but you never conquer dyslexia," Parfet said. "You have to learn to work around it."

Parfet attributes his success to the SLD Learning Center in Kalamazoo. Founded in 1974, the center provides one-on-one tutoring for children and adults who have shown dyslexic tendencies or who have not succeeded in learning to read, write and spell through traditional teaching models.

"The center helped me in multiple ways," Parfet said. "They showed me how to learn in my way and build self-confidence. Without all the help from the SLD Center I would not have graduated

Want to be a tutor?

People who want to be tutors at the SLD Learning Center can enroll in classes that start June 17.

Tutors certified through the program are paid by the hour to work with students of all ages. Classes teach the Orton-Gillingham learning method and are taught in the Learning Center, 504 S. Westnedge Ave. For more information on charges, volunteer tutoring and other details, call 345-2661.

from college — for sure."

The center's Leigh Anstat said benefits from the one-on-one tutoring affect not just reading and writing but "self-esteem, behavior in school and at home, relationships with parents and siblings — it all gets better.

"We're a pebble in the pond — the effects ripple."

Parfet said he had trouble from the start reading and pronouncing certain words. His struggles led him to the SLD Center and tutor Gayle Ahleman, who Parfet described as "phenomenal."

"I remember that she had me write in a tray of rice," he said. "They teach you through feel, touch, smell and hearing in the learning process."

While math came more easily to him — he said he developed a knack for it — Parfet found that he had trouble focusing on school

work, his attention disrupted by the even minor actions of other students. He often needed quiet places for tests and a little extra time to compensate for moments when other children were near and he lost concentration.

Once he got to college, the distractibility was a major hurdle. "I had an anthropology class with 300 people," he said. "If the test was 45 minutes, there may have been only 25 minutes of the silence I needed.

"I had trouble focusing because of the distractions from what others were doing and I almost failed that first semester."

At his mom's urging, Parfet sought help from the college's disabled student services. Armed with documentation from the SLD Center, he was given an opportunity to take tests in private and allowed extra time.

Professors gave him their cell phone numbers so he could call them if he didn't understand how a question was worded.

"I went to school year-round so that I could carry a lighter load of credits each semester," he said.

The rest, the accomplishments, are history.

"I am passionately involved in what I do and that helps me focus," Parfet said. "Writing is challenging and I bounce what I write off of someone.

"If I wasn't gregarious and motivated I wouldn't have done so well. The SLD Center has a lot to do with it. They gave me the tools I needed."

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