The idea to tour the DeBrand’s chocolate company started over a cup of coffee during TRIO Coffee Hour this spring. Psychology major Taylor Talamantes mentioned that she worked at DeBrand’s and everyone around the table perked up. Then, she said that she could give TRIO Student Support Services a behind-the-scenes tour about how the Fort Wayne company makes their chocolates. So on April 22nd eleven TRIO SSS students learned more about DeBrand’s business while enjoying a few free samples.

“T really enjoyed the tour,” commented Britten Friar, an elementary education major. “It was so cool to see how a local company has grown so much.” Students learned that DeBrand’s, founded in 1987 by Cathy Brand-Beere, makes custom chocolates for the Trump Hotel and has been featured in O magazine as one of Oprah’s favorite things.

TRIO student Michael Hayes-Jenkins said, “It was an enjoyable trip. I didn’t eat as much chocolate as I might have liked, but I did feel just a little closer to Willie Wonka that night.” As part of the tour, students tasted an orange crème, vanilla gelato and an almond truffle.

TRIO mentor and graduating senior, Abby Wiegand, commented that she liked being able to see the people actually making the chocolates while they were there. “My favorite parts were the videos we watched because they showed the process of making everything and of course the samples!”
TRIO Holds its 1st Awards Banquet

On April 13th TRIO SSS held its first awards banquet to celebrate its graduating seniors, student volunteers and those who completed TRIO Leaders training. Ranesha Smith won the 2015 TRIO Excellence Award for the top GPA of graduating seniors. Abby Wiegand received the TRIO Student of the Year Award. In addition to being the TRIO Club President, Abby worked in the TRIO office for four years and served as a mentor to new TRIO students. Career Services also recognized the TRIO students who completed the Indorsed certificate which helps students prepare for the workforce and identify what makes them unique to employers.
TRIO Grads Prepare for Life after IPFW

Three of TRIO SSS’s 2015 graduates: Abby Wiegand, Kirsten Allman and Niki (Paliganoff) Koch pose before they receive their diplomas.

Nineteen current and former students in TRIO Student Support Services graduated in 2015.

Kirsten Allman:
Bachelor of General Studies. Once a professional ballerina, Kirsten plans help other dancers recover from their injuries. In order to do this, she is applying to physical therapy graduate programs.

Danielle (DD) Dukes:
Bachelor of General Studies. DD works with adults with disabilities as a direct support professional at Benchmark Human Services.

Taletha Flowers:
Associate of Science in Dental Lab Technology. She will continue working toward a bachelor’s degree.

Annette Fox:
Associate of Science and Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership and Supervision. Annette hopes to use her degrees to work in business management.

Nickolay (Paliganoff) Koch:
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. With a passion for helping people overcome life’s obstacles, Niki plans to work in a non-profit organization. She currently volunteers as a Wish Granter for the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

Rick Ryckman:
Associate of Science in Computer, Electrical, and Information Technology.

Elyisia Smallwood:
Associate of Science in Organizational Leadership and Supervision. Elyisia is continuing to work toward earning a Bachelor’s degree in this same major.

Ranesha Smith:
Bachelor of Science in Education. Ranesha is going to Fort Wayne’s sister city in Plock, Poland this summer to teach English conversation skills to high schoolers, teachers and adults. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the partnership between the cities and her trip is the result of the IPFW and Plock city co-sponsorship. While in Plock, Ranesha hopes to engage in academic research. Afterwards, she will be studying for her Master’s degree in ESL in Puerto Rico.

Tasha (Curry) Stewart:
Associate of Science in Dental Hygiene. This summer Tasha will work for IPFW new student orientation, then she will continue at IPFW to earn her bachelor’s degree in general studies.

Jabin Varghese:
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Jabin wants to move to a big city in order to utilize her degree.

Abby Wiegand:
Bachelor of Science in Human Services. The former president of TRIO Club hopes to help others by going on a mission trip to a third world country.

Tierra Wilder:
Bachelor of General Studies. Tierra’s goal is to work in the human services field.
Trina Neal Wins Scholarship

TRIO SSS student Trina Neal won the $500 Indiana TRIO Board of Directors Scholarship for part-time students in May. She said that she would recommend TRIO Student Support Services “to motivate people to dive in, dig deep, and go for the gusto in order to be a better student.”

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TRIO SSS Makes a Difference at the Big Event

Saturday, April 11th, TRIO SSS students and staff volunteered at Cornerstone Youth Center in Monroeville as a part of IPFW’s annual Big Event Day of Service. The students made quick progress painting a recreation room and were treated to lunch as a thank you. This year’s participants were Shar May Aung, Angie Brice, Alissa Buntain, Britten Friar, Monica Kaufman, Martha Manuel, Breanna Putt, Nathan Seelye and Abby Wiegand.