



# THE FOCUS

April 2013

## Board Talk

Welcome to *THE FOCUS*, Oregon APSE's semi-annual newsletter. Here, we will share information relevant to Oregon APSE's vision while highlighting a current topic and Employment First activities happening around the state. We hope to spark conversations critical to advancing employment for Oregonians with disabilities.

In the spring of 2012, four Oregonians committed to moving Employment First forward, came together to launch Oregon APSE. On September 28, 2012, we held our first annual meeting and mini-conference in Beaverton. Attendees had the opportunity to dialogue with Bob Joondeph of Disability Rights Oregon (DRO), and Ces Coulson APSE Foundation Board Member and Implementation Team Lead of Oregon's Employment First Initiative. We also heard an inspirational story from Travis Matthews and his team about his job at the Village Ballroom. Since then, we have been building our infrastructure, getting ready for our spring activity and planning our fall conference.



I am deeply honored to serve as the first Oregon APSE President with such an outstanding group of individuals serving as the Governing Board. They are demonstrating that a small group of people CAN make

a difference in the world. Join us by "Liking" Oregon APSE on FaceBook and see what an even larger group can do!

Tara Asai, President

*Photo: Board members Nancy Milligan Mock, CJ Webb, Debra McLean, Paula Johnson and Tara Asai*

## About Oregon APSE

*Our mission is to promote equitable, integrated employment of people with disabilities that recognizes their contributions as community members.*

We represent the Oregon chapter of the national Association of Persons Supporting Employment First. APSE is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

## Join Oregon APSE

We look forward to joining with like-minded Oregonians! To become a member email [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com).



### **Oregon APSE Governing Board**

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### **Newsletter Editors**

Tara Asai, CJ Webb, Cynthia  
Owens, Molly Holsapple and  
Jaime Daignault



**Join us on Facebook**

The *A Cool Life* column will regularly showcase stories that demonstrate individuals with disabilities successfully employed by community businesses. Find more stories on pages 7 and 8.

Have a story? Send an email to [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com).

## ***A Cool Life***

What does it take to have a cool life? If you ask several people, you will hear a variety of answers – from spending time with family and friends, to becoming expert at something you love, to adventuring in exotic places. Having a cool life is an individual experience that requires a variety of resources, connections to people and community, and access to opportunities of interest. Most of us, like Jacque Straub, access these things through work.

Jacque is an office aide at a health and nutrition center in Oregon City called Hippocrates Secrets. Like many of her peers, she has a strong desire to work.



***Jacque Straub at work***

Jacque began looking for a job as soon as she graduated from high school. A job developer from United Cerebral Palsy's (UCP) Employment Solutions program worked with Jacque and her family to identify her skills and interests, and businesses in her community that would benefit from her talents.

Within a couple months, she landed her current job at Hippocrates Secrets, where she has worked for over three years. Here, she counts pills to fill orders and create product samples, labels bottles, files invoices, makes copies and completes a variety of other tasks for her employer. About a year ago, Jacque found a second job at Hilltop Cinemas as a ticket taker and greeter. Here, she likes meeting new people.

What does it take for Jacque to have a cool life? Responsibility, independence, contributing to her community, and earning income, among other things. Jacque says, "I enjoy watching movies, listening to music, and hanging out with my friends and family. Having a job helps me to do these things."

## Hot Topic

### Urgent Message to Oregon: Decide and Act

Oregonians have a pioneering spirit and know that we can accomplish significant challenges together. This is evident in the early development of supported employment, the closure of institutions, and the birth of support services. However, Oregon cannot move forward based on its history of having done great things – we must do the work!

The Employment First Policy was introduced five years ago. Yet, the foundation essential to achieving and sustaining integrated employment is not fully in place. In addition, today's economic climate contributes to a sense of resignation.

Oregon APSE believes there are two questions crucial to guide state and local leaders on a daily basis. First, we must honestly ask ourselves:

#### ***Where are we with Employment First today?***

We know the following:

- Creative, talented and hard-working people are diligently working on supported employment at the local and state level.
- Interagency Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Office

of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS), and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is in development.

- Eleven Employment First Teams are working on local projects without state funding to implement Employment First.
- Ninety people from provider organizations throughout the state are participating in the year-long Oregon Employment Learning Network (OELN) to increase supported employment capacity and transform their organizations.
- Many stakeholders are still unclear about what Employment First means and how it will work.



While there has been much analysis and discussion essential to initiate Employment First, person centered planning and customized employment are not commonly occurring. In addition, the political and legal environment appears to be diverting people's energy and momentum.

#### ***What needs to be done today for Employment First to succeed?***

Clear guidance is a foundation for systems change and achieving employment outcomes. Oregon must use the significant observation, study and discussion that has occurred over the past five years and **ACT NOW** to clearly communicate the intent and direction of Employment First:

- **Reaffirm the Employment First Policy.** Clarify the details about expected practices related to individual planning and inter-agency practices.



## ***Hot Topic continued...***

- **Revise the administrative rules to support employment.**
- **Establish and streamline the process for Individualized Employment Budgets.** Individuals who want a job, whether through brokerages or County Developmental Disability Programs (CDDPs), should have access to funds and education about time-limited VR services and long term funding from ODDS. ODDS and VR must clearly define the process for co-investing.
- **Establish and implement realistic rates For Supported Employment.** Apply knowledge learned through ReBAR.
- **Collaborate on an Employment First Strategic Plan with goals for interagency capacity building.** Strategic planning started in 2011 and is now supported with an ODEP grant. Clear communication addressing resources, future service models, building partnerships, and implementing the MOU at the ground level is needed.

### ***Why the urgency?***

We do not have resources or time to waste. It is essential that all stakeholders are engaged in Employment First. The Employment First Teams need clear direction and leadership to grow and move efforts forward.



We all know that increasing our skill and capacity to get and keep jobs is essential. The OELN organizations are finding jobs and developing supported employment capacity through optimism, good will and investing their organization's time and resources. As they continue this challenging work they need the foundational support of strong and clear public policy. Without it, optimism becomes frustration. We cannot lose the momentum.

### ***ACT NOW OREGON!***

Oregon APSE will continue to be actively engaged in conversations and forums to discuss systems change and collaboration to achieve real jobs for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). We challenge you, our readers to ask yourselves:

**Where am I with  
Employment First Today?**

**What can I do today to help  
Employment First succeed?**

The *Hot Topic* column was written by our editors and the Oregon APSE Executive Board with a sense of openness and collaboration. The *Hot Topic* column will regularly spotlight important employment issues to challenge our thinking and provide a platform for deeper discussion.

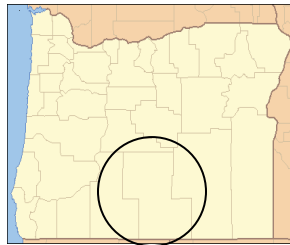
***Follow the discussion on the  
Oregon APSE FaceBook page!***

## ***Around the State***

### **Rural Job Development: It's about Relationships**

While Oregon is a great place to live, there are many areas in which the economy has not picked up—especially in rural counties where unemployment remains high. Yet, job still placement happens. Let's take a look at southern Oregon.

In December 2012, Lake County had an unemployment rate of 12.9%. Here, many businesses have shut down, leaving few employers. Meanwhile, the pipeline work that brought additional jobs to town has concluded.



Despite these challenges, Southern Oregon Goodwill has been successful in getting people with IDD jobs. Many people Southern Oregon Goodwill supports are looking for a 20-hour work week. Employers are more likely to see opportunities for a part-time employee, especially in small communities where people know and help each other.

When Jude was looking for jobs in Lakeview, a job developer approached a restaurant owner about employment options that resulted in a job share. Now, Jude works alternating days of the week, sharing the job with another person with disabilities. Both love their jobs. They get to see people they know and are thrilled to be working. Their satisfaction and pride shows in their work.

Billie works five hours five days a week at a local landmark building pruning flowers and landscaping. Even though the job is seasonal, she loves what she does and is proud of where she works.

Larry lives in Klamath County. When he and his job developer found a job with tasks that matched his skills and preferences, his support team was unsure he would be successful. Cleanliness was essential to the job and his team was not sure he could handle the hygiene requirements. To their surprise, Larry proved them wrong.

### ***Oregon Employment First***

#### **WE BELIEVE...**

Everyone can work and there is a job for everyone. Our job is to be creative and tenacious in providing support.

Not working should be the exception. All individuals, schools, families, and businesses must raise their expectations.

People will be hired because of their ability not because they have a disability.

Communities embrace people who contribute.

Everyone has something to contribute and needs to contribute.

People are healthier, safer, and happiest with meaningful work.

True employment is not a social service.

Employment is a win/win for everybody.

*Beliefs created 9/2/10 by a group of Oregon Statewide leaders.*

Get a copy of Oregon's Employment First policy here:

[www.ocdd.org](http://www.ocdd.org)



## ***Upcoming Events***

### **Employment Advocacy Day April 10th**

Make an appointment to visit  
your legislators

Check in at the DD Legislative  
Advocacy Headquarters

**9:00 am to 1:00 pm  
Oregon Capital, Room 243**

Refreshments and friendly  
support provided!

#### **Event Supporters:**



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### **APSE Board Meeting April 30th**

**1:00 to 3:00 pm  
SDRI,**

**12770 SW 1st  
Beaverton, OR 97005**

He took the job and has not had a issue during the past two years he has been employed. In fact, he has received several raises and promotions for his performance. This is a win-win for Fred and his employer.

***Why is Southern Oregon Goodwill so successful?*** One strategy they utilize is face-to-face connections directly with employers—usually in three visits. During an initial visit, job developers make a connection and gather information. This visit usually lasts about 15 minutes. When they are referred by another business, they “name drop.”

Job developers schedule a second visit to learn as much as they can about the business while looking for employment options. On the third visit, they talk about interests and may bring a resume or application when they see a match between a job seeker and the employer.

Another strategy for success is filling an employer’s needs. To make this work, getting to know the employer well is critical. This includes getting to know the business needs, building in natural supports and assuring the employer he or she can call if an issue arises.

Overall, with rural job development, building relationships is key. Employers must trust job developers. When trust is established, employers are more likely to work through challenges.

They are also willing to try again with a new person when a match does not work out. When trust is not established, employers are more likely to resist hiring another person with a disability.

To summarize, success is dependent on a good job match between a business and job seeker that you know well, the right supports, and trust. These three things are essential to assisting an employee to succeed.



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The *Around the State* column will features stories from Oregon APSE members that illustrate Oregon’s pioneering spirit from various regions of the state. If you have a story, please contact us at [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com).

## ***A Cool Life continued...***

Last September, Travis Matthews, Nicholas Von Pless, and Ryan Saari inspired guests at the Oregon APSE annual meeting. They shared their story of working together to make Travis' job at the Village Ballroom a success. Each provided a glimpse into their roles. This article is an update on Travis's accomplishments.

### ***Travis's work schedule***

The Village Ballroom is a venue for special events in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Northeast Portland. Travis works Monday through Thursdays in the mornings.



On Mondays, he cleans the "Big Ballroom," wiping down tables, sweeping and mopping the beautiful hardwood floors, and cleaning the bathroom.



On Tuesdays, Travis wipes down the bar, sweeps, mops and dries the floors, and takes out the trash.

Wednesdays and Thursdays also have set schedules; all kept in Travis' head.



***Travis Matthews and April Powers***

"Travis is pretty independent in his job," says April Powers, Travis' employment coach. "I mostly help him with difficult tasks, problem solving, or deciding the order of tasks when people are in the building."

Travis said that it was hard at first learning new things. For example, although he knew how to clean a bathroom, he had to learn the right way to do it at work. Over the past year, Travis has gained significant job skills. He has also become more confident interacting with others. Travis says he likes working at the Village Ballroom. "I get compliments on my work." He also says that Ryan Saari is a "good boss." In fact, Ryan received the Employer of the Year award at the 2012 Mega-Conference.

### ***What does Travis do with his paycheck?***

He spends his check on coffee and clothes! In his spare time, he goes to scary movies like *The Wrong Turn* or *Nightmare on Elm Street*. He also likes music and dancing—his musician is Usher.

Thanks to Travis and Ryan for continuing to inspire everyone with your story and spirit!

## ***A Cool Life continued...***



***Kristi and Rick Cule***

For years Kristi Cule wanted a job but she didn't look for one. She was told that if she worked, her income would reduce her husband Rick's Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Eventually, Kristi got tired of sitting at home alone and living off of Rick's small SSI check and \$60.00 in food stamps that never lasted an entire month.

With the help of a benefits planner and some friends, Kristi learned that she could work. She also learned that she needed to work to she maintain her benefits. Now, Kristi no longer gets an SSI check and she does not care. She would much rather be working and helping people instead of sitting at home alone while Rick is working.

### ***Kristi loves her job at Albertsons***

When Kristi started working at Albertsons last year, she only worked about 10 hours a week. As she became better at her job, her hours quickly increased. Within two months, she was working over 20 hours per week.

Now, she works four to five hours a day, five days a week. Her job duties include bagging groceries, loading them in cars, bringing in carts, and maintaining the bottle room. She restocks the bathrooms as needed and keeps them clean, sweeping the floors each hour. She also cleans the dairy and frozen food cases and puts returned items back on the shelves. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Kristi celebrated her one-year anniversary working at the best job she has ever had.

When asked what she likes best about her job, Kristi says "Spending time with customers and talking to them. I give them solutions when we might not have what they are looking for. I can offer a similar product."

### ***What does Kristi do with her paycheck?***

When asked what she does with the money she earns, Kristi says she saves a little each payday and then pays for food, household goods and bills. She also saves money for insurance and her hearing aides.

Working has greatly improved her quality of life. She is very happy to go to work each day and to help customers.



### ***A message to employers***

Both Kristi and her husband Rick contribute to their communities by working. Rick works at Walgreens. As tax payers and dedicated employees, both Kristi and Rick demonstrate daily that hiring someone with a disability is a great way to get loyal, qualified help. Kristi said she wishes every business would hire someone with a disability to help them become important members of the community.