



# THE FOCUS

December 2019 Vol. 9 No. 12

## Hot Topic

### Rising to the Challenge for All Transition-Age Students!

In the last five years Oregon has seen great improvement in the numbers of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) entering supported employment services. This has been positively influenced by several factors:

- a) Collaboration between Department of Human Services (DHS), Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and in schools in accordance with the amendment to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act
- b) Lane v Brown agreements
- c) Federal Medicaid funds requiring services delivered in integrated settings, and
- d) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) extending Transition services.

These are all hopeful efforts in mitigating the dismal outcomes of the recent past for school leavers. Yet, the state commitment to Employment First for youth with IDD of transition age has still to be fully realized. Despite its high placement rates for school leavers, Youth Transition Program (YTP) is not funded for state-wide access but only operates in select school districts. Further this program serves only about 30% of youth with IDD, focusing mostly on those with less significant disabilities. Other positive efforts, but insufficient to the need is a small increase in summer youth work programs and statewide Transition Network Facilitators.

As recently as September 2019, Lane v. Brown Independent Reviewer, Cathy Ficker Terrill noted that Special Education Transition Programs in many districts continue to serve students with IDD particularly those with significant disabilities in segregated [Continued on page 2](#)

### 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 People Supporting EmploymentFirst. [APSE](#) is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

As of September 2019, we have 67 members!

### [Join Oregon APSE](#)

We look forward to joining with like-minded Oregonians!

To become a member, click on the "Join" link or email:



[oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com)

**Check out our website**

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

## Hot Topic continued...

settings. In addition, they conduct “mock shelter workshops” in lieu of community based work experiences and individual internships. These practices have continued even as adult vocational services have worked diligently to close sheltered workshops services to meet Medicaid requirements. The Oregon Department of Education has discouraged such approaches but cited that many school districts were “resistant to best practices.” Families reported a lack of information about transition, supported employment, and adult services. Even with the needed information from schools, Services Coordinators and Personal Agents, families report long waitlists and high caseloads at Vocational Rehabilitation. Thus, causing further long delays leading to a longer time in accessing paid supported employment.

Illustrating their recognition of best practices, the State funds exemplary programs such as Pre-ETS, Project Search, YTP, summer work and the State of Oregon internal hiring programs. However, Oregon needs to invest on a larger scale across **all** school districts and to hone their collaborative efforts across ODE, VR, and DHS, particularly for students with significant disabilities.

These programs with their high paid employment placement rates belie the myth that “employers don’t want to hire.” It is our own disparate service and education efforts that need to be streamlined and rallied around Employment First. Current national and state efforts provide a unique opportunity

to ensure that all students with IDD leave school with more than a dream of a paid job. Time to rise to the long overdue transition challenge!

Debra McLean

December 2019

References: DHS Employment First Outcomes Oct 2018, Independent Review of Lane v Brown Settlement, Cathy Ficker Terrill, March 2019



## Stories inside The FOCUS

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## A Cool Life

~The **Cool Life** column showcases stories that demonstrate individuals with disabilities successfully employed by community businesses. Have a story? Send an email to: [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com)

Victoria Peckerman was 20 years old when she made the decision to move out of the foster care system and live on her own. While in her transition program, she applied at Ashland School district and secured a position working in the kitchen. Thanks to her transition teacher Rebecca Bjornson and fellow classmates, the life lessons of finding and furnishing an apartment, and living independently became real.

At 25, Victoria has had a cool life! She continues to work 15-20 hours a week for Ashland School District and what she likes best about her job are her coworkers, rotating around to the different schools, setting up the salad bar, prep work and dishes. Working has enabled her to reach for many of her dreams.

One of Victoria's dreams was to see a Justin Bieber concert. In 2016, she convinced her personal support worker to accompany her to attend his concert when he was in Portland. She competed at the Special Olympics Nationals in Seattle making many friends, and this year she flew unaccompanied to Portland to visit some of those friends. She volunteers and coordinates many of the activities offered at Ashland Parks and Recreation adaptive programs, is a community activist, attends a weekly meditation group and was a staff member for Easter Seals camp. Victoria's greatest

accomplishment will be purchasing her own home this year. With help from Denys Austin, a Benefits Coordinator with Work Incentive Network (WIN), she has been able to take advantage of the many opportunities that are available and will no longer worry about the continuing increasing rent.

Written by Cindy Cameron, Southern Oregon ESD Transition Network Facilitator, Region V

~



Victoria Peckerman

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## Oregon APSE Updates

Did you see? We've already nailed down our dates for the next **Pacific Northwest Employment Forum!** While the big decisions of when and where (Tigard) are taken care of, there's still lots of work to be done. Our all-volunteer board works hard to make sure you have the best conference experience, but you can help make it even better! Any APSE member is warmly welcomed to jump on board one of our [planning committees](#). You can choose to lend your skills to our Hospitality, Logistics, Proposals, Awards, or our Website committees. This is your chance to keep our forum the best in the Northwest! Get in touch with us at [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com)!

**Elections updates:** All Board members running for office were elected as well as Selena Mitchell, a previous board member. She is excited to share her perspective.

### **The Governing Board Officers has some changes for 2020:**

President - Nicholas Von Pless  
Regional Vice Presidents - Erin Cochrun-Westin and Michelle Furman  
Secretary - Toni Smith  
Treasurer - Paula Johnson

## Guess... Who is our Mystery Member?

Our Mystery Member is a Certified Employment Support Professional. S/he /they has extensive experience structuring environments for independence, supporting those experiencing challenges to employment and maintaining employer relations. S/he/they has supported individuals with I/DD since 1996 and employment services for 12 years. In addition, s/he/they has consulted with agencies making the transition from sheltered / facility- based services to community services. A native Oregonian, the Mystery Member loves the outdoors, is a Crazy Star Wars fan, and the mom of two young adults.



### **Can you guess who?**

*([Go to page 8](#) to reveal the Mystery Member's identity.)*

**Check out Oregon APSE's website**

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

# Save the Date

## Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2020

# Pacific NW Employment Forum



## Board Talk



### Roberta Dunn

Roberta is a member At Large on the Oregon APSE chapter Board of Directors. *She has been a Board member since June 2019.*

### Big Dreams are Necessary!

As the parent of an amazing young man that is 27 and working in his community, I have a real appreciation for the work of APSE and am in my first year as a member at large on the board.

It starts with a Dream! Those are words I hold near and dear as a parent of an amazing young man that is 27, living in his own place, working at a job he loves, who happens to experience intellectual developmental disability. They are also words I share with families across the state as the Executive Director of FACT Oregon, an organization with a [Continued on page 8](#)



### Oregon APSE Governing Board

Nicholas Von Pless,  
President

Michelle Furman,  
Vice-President

C.J Webb, Secretary

Paula Johnson, Treasurer

Emily Harris, Social Media  
Coordinator

Tara Asai, At Large

Erin Cochrun-Weston,  
At Large

Roberta Dunn, At Large

Ryan Farrow, At Large

Liz Fox, At Large

Debra McLean, At Large

Selena Mitchell, At Large

Dan Peccia, At Large

Ryley Newport, At Large

Toni Smith, At Large

Ivy Tate, At Large

### Get Involved!

To volunteer for sponsored training events, Board sub-committees or to be considered for the Board of Directors, contact [oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com)

Please keep your information [up to date.](#)

### Newsletter Editors

Tara Asai, Paula Johnson,  
Debra McLean, Dan Peccia,  
Nicholas Von Pless and CJ Webb

## Upcoming Events

### Job Development Training

With Paula Johnson

**January 17, 2020**

in Eugene from 9:30am to  
2:00pm, lunch included

[Register TODAY!](#)

### Opening Day of the 2020 Oregon State Legislature Sessions

**February 3, 2020**

[See the legislative  
calendar](#)

Registration open in  
January 2020 for **April 3rd**  
[JOB COACH TRAINING](#) by  
Jacque Gerdes in Eugene.

### 2020 National APSE conference

Denver, CO

**June 15-18, 2020**



## Around the State

### About Students in Rainer

Among the 275+ conference attendees at this year's Pacific Northwest Employment Forum in Bremerton, Washington were five special guests from Rainier School District. Three students were accompanied by Shalana Harrison, YTP Transition Specialist, and Heidi Schafer, Special Education Director, for a very full day with Students for APSE. This year, Rainier was the only Oregon school district invited as all other students came from the greater Seattle metropolitan area. Students enjoyed their day, creating a shield with information about who they are, listening to keynote and session speakers and touring a local hotel to learn about possible jobs. They commented on new subjects such as internships and opportunities at NIKE while also having a review of previously taught employment related information.



Alicia and Special Ed. Director, Heidi Schafer

Sitting on the south bank of the Columbia River, Rainier is a small town serving rural Columbia County. Because of its close proximity to the more populous

## Around the State continued...

Longview / Kelso area, students participate in both Oregon and Washington educational and recreational activities. A typical student day is a combination of required and elective classes plus work experiences around the school. Due to a lack of public transportation and the school being far from the town center, work experiences off-site are more challenging. As a YTP Specialist, Shalana coordinates the educational program as well as providing job coaching as needed. She connects with the local VR, DD, and brokerage agencies, and participates in Columbia County Employment First as well as annually hosts a Vocational Night for students and families.

In a conversation following their participation at the conference, the students shared their visions for the future. Alicia is looking forward to moving out, going to college and getting a job. Shirilana has her sights on dental assistant training. Z. is excited to find a job that he can do. Their communication and self-confidence demonstrated a knowledge of self-advocacy. In all interactions, it was evident that they had been mentored and nurtured on the importance of asking questions and voicing their opinions.

Thank you Rainier School District for being our guests and sharing your time and enthusiasm with us!

Tara Asai  
Oregon APSE



~ Alicia, Shirilana, and YTP Specialist, Shalana Harrison

## Upcoming Events

### Pacific Northwest Employment Forum

Tigard, Oregon  
Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2020

[Information coming soon](#)

### Oregon Statewide Transition Conference

Eugene Oregon  
April 2-3, 2020,  
social April 1st

[Registration OPEN and Call for  
Presenters](#)

### Breaking Barriers: Life Beyond Labels

April 16, 2020  
Deschutes County  
Fairgrounds  
Redmond, OR

[Call for Presenters is Open](#)

### Ideas for FOCUS articles

Please send them to:  
[oregonapse@gmail.com](mailto:oregonapse@gmail.com)  
with the Subject: FOCUS



## **Board Talk continued**

mission to empower families to pursue whole lives for their child experiencing disability. The dreams we as parents dream must be big bodacious dreams, in that they set trajectory, and like a star in the sky, guide us on a journey. Those dreams inoculate us from deficit based systems that don't see possible what we see possible in our children. They also give us tenacity in our pursuit over time (think of the children's book *The Little Engine That Could—I think I can! I think I can!*). Our dreams are bigger and more holistic than the various systems we encounter, whether they be medical, education, housing, formal system support, or in the area of employment. We want whole lives for our children. ([see image on page 5](#))

With the utmost respect for the many professional partners Todd and I have worked with over the years, you would have had a better chance getting blood from a stone than to achieve your professional objectives if I (his parent) wasn't dreaming big dreams for him. Now, in the season of life we are in, Todd dreams big bodacious dreams of his own, and my role has changed. I now partner with him in his pursuit.

My desire as a Member At Large on the APSE board is to increase awareness of families' experiences, their stories, and how important it is to incorporate parent engagement in all that we do in

***[Follow the discussion on the Oregon APSE Facebook page!](#)***

## **Meet Mystery APSE Member**



### **Amber Robles**

Director of  
Employment Services



**Living Opportunities,  
Medford, Oregon**

pursuit of the vision of APSE – whole lives for individuals experiencing disability that include the right to competitive inclusive employment in their community. ~



## Tips for Working with Families

Roberta Dunn and Karen McKenny of FACT Oregon provided their top tips for working with families who have transition aged family members. Below are their top tips to consider and implement in your process.

**High expectations** – having high expectations when working with transition age students while having a “can do” attitude and a “buckle up buttercup” approach in your role as a partner in the pursuit of the student’s hopes and dreams, and vision for the future.

**Person first, strength based approach** – recognizing the importance that no two people are the same, and that each individual has their own gifts, strengths and talents. Understanding that we can sink our own ship when we put all our energy into what doesn’t work instead of embracing what does.

**Appreciation for the family voice** – understanding that while working with transition age students, data shows that these students are going to rely on the strength of their families well into their twenties, and appreciating that families are partners in the student’s employment success.

**Follow the discussion on the [Oregon APSE Facebook page!](#)**

### Employment Specialist Corner

**Community building** – appreciating that our worlds are bigger than the school yard, so when working with transition age students we prioritize the skill that is building community.

**FACT Oregon’s mission is to empower families experiencing disability in their pursuit of whole lives by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping parents, caregivers, and professionals.**

