



May 2021

vol 11, no 15

# The Focus

The Oregon APSE Governing Board hopes you enjoy this new format. Please provide feedback to assure we are meeting your needs.



## My Employment Journey

Let's get to know one of Oregon APSE Governing Board Members

**by Michelle Furman**, An Oregon APSE Governing Board Member At-Large since 2015. She currently is the co-Vice President with Erin Cochrun-Weston.

I want to share my employment journey with you as I have enjoyed a rich and diverse employment history. I want to show that everyone deserves the right to their own employment journey, on their terms.

Since entering the working world, at age 15, I have worked with children, families, adults, and seniors. For the past 11 years, I have worked with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). I am grateful for the opportunities that led me to where I am today.

My first job was a lifeguard and swim instructor. I continued working in similar aquatic positions as I went to college. Upon graduating with a degree in Health Sciences, I worked in long-term care settings until our daughter was born. I then switched to independent consulting, working in the evenings and weekends until she was six. This allowed me the privilege of





## My Employment Journey (cont'd)

being an “at home mom” while continuing my career. Once she went to school, I took a temporary position with NW Senior and Disability Services (NWSDS), helping enroll clients in Medicare D plans.

My next adventure was opening an Adult Foster Care Home for seniors in Polk County. Sadly, this was short lived due to the recession in 2008, and transition occurred again. I took a position with Salem Hospital in their rehab department as an aquatic specialist—Full circle in my working career! However, only staying one year in that position, my next opportunity led me to the I/DD field.

Now, 11 years later, I have worked with 2 different provider organizations, building employment teams to support people with I/DD, and finding competitive integrated employment with them in their communities. I promoted Employment First on every level. Having that provider understanding of Employment First helped me immensely in my current role as an I/DD Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Oregon’s Department of Human Services (ODHS) in

Central Oregon which I began in September 2020. Being on “the-other-side-of-the-fence” now, so to speak, seems to be a natural progression. Plus, I’m still working with all the same team players, just in a different role. Of course, all services have been provided virtually since I started, and I do miss that in-person connection with clients and community partners.

What a journey it has been! I am truly blessed to have met so many wonderful partners, colleagues, and clients, and they have guided me in ways I wouldn’t have imagined. **Thank you to everyone!**



## Public Policy

### SB 5529 Fully funding DSP wages

Oregon APSE supports SB 5529 to raise DSP wages to a living wage. Thank you ORA for sharing the attached flyer explaining the bill.

### Value the Work. Raise the Wage.

ORA has another email campaign they would like you to know about.

Do you know an Oregon Foster Care youth (14-27)? There may be COVID relief funds. Email: [ILP.Central@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:ILP.Central@dhsosha.state.or.us) or Call Hotline: 1-855-503-7233

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 2** — APSE Hour 4pm to 5pm

**June 14- 18** — Illuminate - 2021 National APSE Conference

**July 14** — Job Development for Successful Placement (rural focus)

Dates for future APSE Hours: July 7, Aug. 4, Sept. 1st, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, & December 1



## Who is our Oregon APSE Mystery Member



Starbucks has been recognized for their great work hiring people with disabilities, but did you know that they have also helped us on the provider side? The Mystery Member was a Starbucks Manager who hired a fantastic employee and then later was recruited to become a Job Coach by a provider organization. Since those early years, the Mystery Member has been a leader in that organization, guiding the process for transitioning their sheltered workshop into individualized employment services. Previously, the Mystery Member attended Gonzaga University, earning a BA in Political Science and Religious Studies, and lobbied for mental health benefits in Washington DC. Our Mystery Member is married with three children and loves hiking, wine tasting, and all things in McMinnville, Oregon. Can you guess who our Mystery Member is? **[See who it is at our website](#)**



## About Oregon APSE

Oregon APSE Vision:

**Oregonians with all types of disabilities are employed, enjoy careers, and build assets in pursuit of meaningful lives.**

Oregon APSE Mission

**To promote equitable, integrated employment of people with disabilities that recognizes their contributions as community members.**

Oregon APSE supports:

- Integrated individual employment defined as a job that meets the needs of the business community, pays competitive wages, provides comparable benefits and opportunities to fully engage with non-disabled co-workers, and for most people is at least 20 hours per week.

Therefore, Oregon APSE will:

- Build alliances with advocates, families, employers, providers, funders and local communities to promote integrated individual employment throughout Oregon.
- Advocate for policies, communication, and training that supports substantial improvement and measurable outcomes specific to integrated individual employment.

**Want to become an Oregon APSE member? [Membership information.](#)**

