

10-30-15

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First: Central Oregon Employer Recognition

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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The Central Oregon Employment First team held its 4th annual Employer Recognition Event on Tuesday, Oct. 27 at the Eagle Crest Resort.

More than 40 employers were nominated for awards, which recognize local employers hiring employees who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. The event is a result of strong local collaboration between employment agency providers such as Abilitree, Good-2-Go and Opportunity Foundation along with support services brokerage Full Access High Desert, as well as Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook county developmental disability programs and Vocational Rehabilitation.



Katie Aljets (left) with her employer Martha Hinman speaking at the Central Oregon Employer Recognition Event.

Seth Johnson, executive director of the Opportunity Foundation, was the master of ceremonies. He said the rising popularity of the event, as well as the increasing amount of local employers hiring people with I/DD, meant that this year there were a great deal more nominees than award winners.

Julie Huber, employment specialist with the Office of Developmental Disability Services, was the keynote speaker. She shared her personal story

of growing up as a young person with a disability, and the difference that employment has made in her own life.

“I cannot emphasize enough the power of employment. It’s about belonging, about contributing to your community,” Julie said. “It’s about having a life.”

Multiple speakers noted the collaborative energy in central Oregon, where providers, agencies and local employers are working creatively to find jobs for many people with I/DD.



Kloe Olkowski, manager at Café Yumm East in Bend, accepts an award on behalf of the company at the Central Oregon Employer Recognition Event.

“Bend is made up of small businesses and entrepreneurial people who want to be creative and want to make the community better,” said Jeff Labhart, owner of Bontà Natural Artisan Gelato as he accepted an award for his business. “Hiring people with disabilities is great for the community, great for businesses and great for the individual.”

Martha Hinman with the Redmond School District accepted an award on behalf of the district. She shared her story of employing Katie, their office assistant.

“Katie is a member of our team, a member of our family,” Martha said. “I only see ability, not disability.”

New this year was an award for Job Developer of the Year. The award went to Victoria Young of Good-2-Go Oregon for “putting in long hours to find just the right fit for folks who need extra accommodations or customized employment and the delight she brings to our community to make it better and more diverse every day.”

The other award winners were:

Best Individual Placement:

Bend: [Newport Market](#)

Redmond: [One Street Down Cafe](#)

Supportive Local Business:

Redmond: [Wet Willy’s Car Wash](#)

Bend (two-way tie): [Bontà Natural Artisan Gelato](#) and [Visiting Angels](#)

Outstanding Commitment to Multiple Placements:

Madras: [Madras Cinema](#) (hired four people)

Bend: [Local Ledgers](#)

Supportive Large Employer:

Bend: [Target](#)

Madras: [Fresenius Dialysis](#)

Redmond: [Redmond School District](#)

Best New Placement

Bend (four-way tie): [Café Yumm East](#), [Barrett Business Service Inc.](#), [Webfoot Painting](#) and [Heatherman Law Firm](#)

Outstanding Commitment to Sustainable Employment:

Redmond: [Triumph Fitness](#)

Bend: [Haggen's](#)

Note:

- The Request for Application (RFA) for Project SEARCH in Oregon has been [posted online](#).

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike