

10-24-14

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: [Employment First](#): Central Oregon Employer Recognition Event

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Last week I was honored to be invited, along with Joe Miller with Vocational Rehabilitation, to speak at the Third Annual Employer Recognition Event in central Oregon.

The [Central Oregon Employment First local team](#) started the award event three years ago as a way to recognize and honor local employers and businesses contributing to the community by hiring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It started with a group from Deschutes County, but this year expanded to include Jefferson and Crook counties as well.

Cortney Gibson, a VR counselor from Bend, said she has been on the planning committee for the event for the last three years. This year about 125 people attended the awards.

“The goal is to have employers get excited about hiring people with I/DD and tell other employers and their friends in the community,” she said. “This is a tight knit community, so we recognized that an event like this that brings people together is really important.”

Many community sponsors contributed to the success of the evening, which was held at the Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond. Sponsors included Abilitree, Central Oregon VR, Deschutes County Developmental Disabilities Program, Full Access, and the Opportunity Foundation of Central Oregon. The Bend Rotary provided all the food and refreshments, making it possible to have a larger event at less cost.

A video showcasing employers in central Oregon and employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities helped set the tone for the evening, which was built around the theme of “Expect. Employ. Empower.”

The Central Oregon Employment First team helped pick the award winners. More than 40 businesses were nominated and 12 employers won awards. The recipients were:

- Best Individual Placement: [One Street Down Café](#), Redmond
Runner-Up: [The Center](#), Bend.
- Outstanding Commitment to Multiple Placements: [Madras Cinema 5](#),
Runner-Up: [Cold Stone Creamery](#), Redmond
- Supportive Local/Small Business: [Ruffwear](#), Bend
Runner-Up: [Local Ledgers](#), Bend.
- Supportive Large Business: [St. Charles Health System](#), Bend
Runner-Up: [Redmond Area Park and Recreation District](#)
- Best New Placement: [Triumph Fitness](#), Redmond
Runner-Up: [Newport Avenue Market](#), Bend
- Outstanding Commitment to Sustainable Employment: [Bend Broadband](#)
Runner-Up: [Comfort Inn](#), Bend.

“It’s a huge collaborative effort,” Gibson said. “Everyone needs to be on the same page and work together going forward around Employment First. It’s a cliché to say it takes a village, but it does take a good collaborative effort to move forward and help people get jobs.”

The event also received local TV news coverage, which can be viewed [on the web](#).

These employer recognition awards are a great example of how local leadership groups are important to achieving success in moving the Employment First initiative forward. If any other organizations are holding similar events in Oregon, please let us know.

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