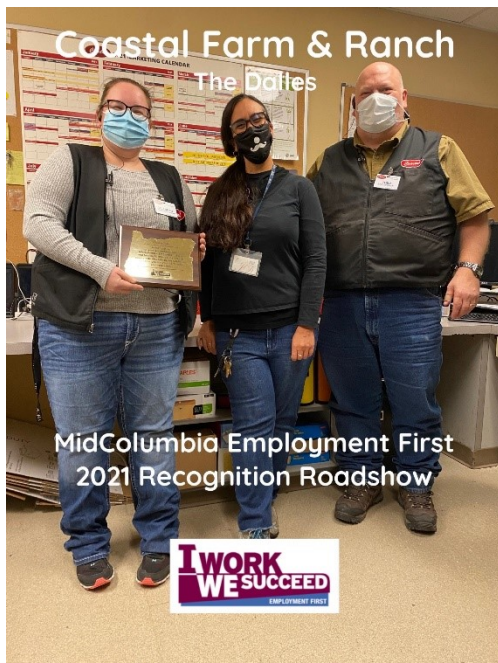




Dec. 3, 2021

To: Employment First Stakeholders
From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator
Re: Employment Event in Mid-Columbia



Coastal Farm & Ranch in The Dalles received any Employment First award. Photo contributed.

The Mid-Columbia Employment First team held its 3rd annual “Working in the Gorge” Employer/Employee Recognition Event to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month on Oct. 13-15, 2021.

This year’s event was more innovatively planned due to Covid and the necessity to follow social distancing guidelines. The Mid-Columbia Employment First team created the “Appreciation Caravan” which allowed businesses in Hood River, Cascade Locks, White Salmon and The Dalles to be visited personally at their place of business and recognized for their contributions to the local community by hiring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Eight businesses and seven employees received awards this year for their outstanding

service and commitment.

The businesses recognized were: Sawyer’s Ace Hardware (The Dalles), Home Depot (The Dalles), Coastal Farm and Ranch (The Dalles), Rosauers (Hood River), Lignetics Brands (Cascade Locks), Three30Three (Hood River), Providence (Hood River), and Innovative Composite Engineering (White Salmon).

Outstanding employees recognized were: Jacob Haigwood, Fred Meyer (The Dalles), Lehanna Winters, Rosauers (Hood River), River Gildeheau, Innovative Composite Engineering (White Salmon), Sam Sullivan, Ace Hardware (Hood

River), Melody Lachino, Providence (Hood River), Jack Schroeder, Safeway (Hood River), and Aiden McNair, Three30Three (Hood River).

Despite the turmoil and hardship caused to both businesses and individuals during the pandemic, the event celebrated the commitment of local teams to continue the mission of Employment First. Businesses remain determined to support their local communities not only by fighting to stay open but also contributing by recruiting and hiring individuals with disabilities.

Also, please note: the Oregon Statewide Transition Conference (OSTC) is accepting awards nominations accepting until Feb. 25, 2021. Please think about nominations for any of the awards but please consider nominating someone for the: **“I Work We Succeed” Award for Excellence in Employment First Efforts.**

The “I Work We Succeed” Award for Excellence in Employment First Efforts recognizes a provider, agency, VR counselor, Educator, Service Coordinator or Personal Agent who has gone above and beyond to provide community employment services to transition-age youth. Nominee should be involved in Oregon's statewide efforts to support the Employment First Policy and should exemplify outstanding professional contributions and special efforts made by a staff member, provider or agency to help people with I/DD transition into community-based employment.

Nominate someone using the online form: <https://forms.gle/69iRCcYpz4Jp6c4v8>

Thank you for supporting employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Acacia