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**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator**

**Re: Employment First: Employment Path Community and Andie's Employment Success**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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**Note:** Andie's Success Story is [online](#). A photo slideshow of Andie at work at Target is online at: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmiPnGeS>

In recent months, we've had many questions regarding the Employment Path Community service. There is some confusion in the field about best practices for this service and how it should be delivered. We also have heard from many providers and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities that, when the service is delivered correctly, it helps people find individual, integrated jobs in their communities.

This message is to provide materials and information related to Employment Path Community. There is a detailed [PowerPoint](#) with guidance on best practices on this service. State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) has issued [guidance](#) on volunteering, unpaid work experiences and internships. We also have a [fact sheet](#) and a [Powtoon video](#) on Employment Path Community. A Community of Practice on the topic of Employment Path Community services will be announced soon.

Below you will find a success story about Andrea, who works up to 15 hours per week at Target. Andrea's provider used Employment Path Community services to help work on the skills she needed to be successful in individual, integrated community employment. This is always the goal of this service – an individual, integrated job in the community.

~ Acacia

## Andie works at Target in Bend, continues to make her dreams come true



Andie Gifford works at the Bend Target.

Photo: Andre Harboe

Andrea “Andie” Gifford loves taking care of guests.

That is what Target calls its customers – guests – and Andie is quick to correct anyone who may forget this important fact.

“My favorite part of my day is when a guest comes in that may be having a bad day and I make them smile,” Andie said, her shy smile brightening. “I love meeting new people every day.”

Andie, 29, has worked at Target since August 2014. Andie has an intellectual disability and has been in services with provider [Opportunity Foundation of Central Oregon](#) since 2010. When Opportunity Foundation closed its sheltered workshop, Andie started working in Employment Path Community services in the provider’s thrift stores. Her team said that experience has been essential to her success at Target.

“Learning appropriate interactions, not talking about personal things and making good eye contact was important,” said Patti Jo Colburn, employment specialist with Opportunity Foundation. Patti Jo developed the job for Andie and also is her job coach.

“She continues to work on certain skills at the thrift store. I shared with the staff at Opportunity Foundation that she uses a checklist at Target so they could make sure to work with her on that at the thrift store.”

Andie works up to 15 hours per week as a front-end cashier support at Target. Her duties started limited but have expanded greatly over the past few years. She started primarily as a support person to the cashiers, making sure bags were stocked and the register area was cleaned. Now she also cleans the break room, does merchandising for the “bull’s eye area” of \$1-\$5 items, helps guests find items, restocks the entire register area and sometimes does “re-shops” or re-stocks returned items in the aisles.



Andie Gifford with Target HR Leader James Gricios.  
Photo: Andre Harboe

Target Human Resources Leader James Gricios said Andie’s skills have grown and she is an essential member of the team.

“Many of our guests look forward to seeing her,” he said. “She is part of the family here.”

James credits Andie’s job coach Patti Jo with not only supporting Andie appropriately, but taking the time to understand and learn the workplace culture.

“Patti Jo understands the culture here at Target and how important our guests are and that is essential to us with training and supporting Andie,” he said, adding that he encourages other employers to consider hiring someone with an intellectual or developmental disability.

“Don’t underestimate the value a single team member can bring to a store,” he said.” The kind of qualities Andie brings to our team are invaluable.”



Andie’s team includes, left to right, Opportunity Foundation Employment Manager Lydia Hemsley, Andie, job coach Patti Jo Colburn, and Target HR Leader James Gricios.  
Photo: Andre Harboe

Andie works two days per week at Target and also is available on-call during busy times. She continues to work on her job skills at the thrift store using the Employment Path Community service. Patti Jo said the current focus is working on Andie’s cashiering and money counting skills to increase Andie’s hours and build toward her long-term goal of becoming a cashier at Target.

“I did a lot of systematic instruction to help set her up for more independence,” Patti Jo said. “She is taking initiative now and asking questions.”

Patti Jo also supports Andie when she takes the annual online trainings required by Target for all team members.

Andie's own confidence has grown as she becomes skilled at her job. Andie confided that she was unsure of her ability to read well enough to do the merchandizing for the "bull's eye" area of the store. Patti Jo worked with her on it and now it is a regular part of her job. Andie beams as she describes what that accomplishment means to her.

"I never thought I'd read well enough to do it," she said. "It makes me so happy and proud that I can do it. And it makes everyone around me happy too."

Like many people, Andie was nervous about leaving a sheltered workshop for community employment. She was anxious about failure, or her ability to do the work. Now she said she loves having a job in the community and she also volunteers in the community, and takes classes with the Parks and Recreation department. Her advice to others?

"Don't be scared – it will be okay," she said, smiling shyly. "Just focus on things in the community that you like. You get to meet a lot of new people."

Andie's employment team includes: Cortney Gibson, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor; Patti Jo Colburn, job developer and job coach with Opportunity Foundation; and Jaime Kuhry, service coordinator with Deschutes County.