

1-9-15

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: [Employment First](#): Jerry's Job at Wildhorse Resort & Casino

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Note: This story is also available [online](#).

Jerry Hansen, 51, works 30 hours per week at [Wildhorse Resort & Casino](#) in Pendleton. Previously he worked at the sheltered workshop at Pendleton-based Trendsitions. Trendsitions has a community job program, where people who are interested in community-based employment meet weekly to go over resume-building and job interviewing skills.



Jerry Hansen works for the Wildhorse Resort & Casino in Pendleton as a laundry attendant. He works almost 30 hours per week.

Photo: Lightflies

According to Ed Cortez, the program director at Trendsitions, the organization is beefing up its supported employment program. Jerry's job at Wildhorse is part of increased efforts to help people with intellectual and developmental

disabilities get jobs in the community.

“We helped Jerry fill out the application and did a lot of work prepping him for the interview,” said James Fasthorse, an employee at Trendsitions and Jerry's job developer.

Jerry is a friendly man with an easygoing nature. He works, along with about five coworkers, in the laundry area of the resort. Jerry works five days a week and six

hours per day, except on Tuesdays. He experiences an intellectual disability along with mental health disorders.

Jerry started at Wildhorse in August 2014. He expressed strong interest in working in the community, and Trendsitions put forward multiple job options.



Jerry Hansen (second from left) with his coworkers (from left): Norma Mendoza, Derek Guerrero, Marcia Johns, and Lydia Ruth Crane at Wildhorse Resort & Casino.
Photo: Lightflies

Jerry picked the job at Wildhorse Resort & Casino because he liked the training options and extras that came with working for a larger organization. In addition to the casino and hotel, the grounds also have a golf course, a movie theater, RV park, restaurants, and a museum.

Called “Wildhorse University,” the resort offers a variety of customer service and

safety classes for all employees, depending on the department.

“Wildhorse is awesome to work for,” Jerry said. “We have lots of trainings and classes that all the staff go to, like safety trainings and things like that. I really like going to those and learning more all the time.”

Roy Jones, director of lodging at Wildhorse, said the organization strives to be inclusive. The resort and casino is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

“We believe in giving people a chance and to show they really want to work,” he said. “And Jerry does a great job. He is a great worker and gets along with everyone.”

Jerry is also valued by his team, who laugh and talk while doing their duties. Derek Guerrero, who has been at Wildhorse for 17 years, said Jerry is one of the few on the laundry team who appreciates his music choices.

“Jerry is polite to every single person he meets,” Derek said. “He’s never boring to be around, always nice, and he always gets his work done. We love to have him around.”

When he isn’t working, Jerry said he likes riding his bike, hanging out with his cat and playing bingo. He also said he wants to be an advocate for employment. He said he would like to be a spokesman to prove that people with intellectual or developmental disabilities can work. Jerry said he has thrived and become happier working at Wildhorse, and believes others can do the same.

“I like everyone I work with and I really like my job,” he said. “What I really like is getting to talk and meet so many different types of people.”

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 questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike

A slideshow of Jerry at work is at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dhsoregon/sets/72157649665646507/>