

1-20-17

To: Employment First stakeholders

Re: [Employment First](#): Statewide Transition Conference

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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Oregon Association of Vocational Support Needs Personnel ([OAVSNP](#)) has joined in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the Oregon Youth Transition Program (YTP), and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in development of the first Oregon Statewide Transition Conference. This conference will be held Feb. 16 and 17 in Portland. The event provides attendees an opportunity to learn, network, and share innovative approaches regarding transition practices in Oregon.

Heather Lindsey, secondary transition liaison for ODE, and Mary Joe Erickson from the University of Oregon, are the current board presidents of OAVSNP. Lindsey said the conference has a particular focus on presentations by self-advocates, as well as celebrating and recognizing the work of educators and students.

“There is a message embedded through the conference around high expectations for students and support services,” she said.



Karen Gaffney. (contributed photo)

Karen Gaffney, a self-advocate and founder of the [Karen Gaffney Foundation](#), is the keynote speaker. The Karen Gaffney Foundation is dedicated to championing the journey to full inclusion in families, schools, the workplace and the community for people with developmental disabilities.

In addition to her nonprofit work, Gaffney also works part-time at the Oregon Health & Science

University at the Institute on Development and Disability. Gaffney, who experiences Down Syndrome, travels the country speaking to audiences about what can be accomplished with positive expectations.

Gaffney also advocates for physical fitness and regular exercise and healthy nutrition. She is a swimmer and has completed many long-distance swims, including a relay across the English Channel.

There are four topical strands at the conference: Youth Transition Program; Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth; Educational Practices for Transition Youth; and Research and Evidence Based Practices.

Sarah Drinkwater, assistant superintendent of ODE's Office of Student Services, will open the event on Feb. 16 and VR Director Trina Lee will give the opening remarks on Feb. 17.

At 6:30 p.m. Feb 16, there will be an awards banquet to recognize and celebrate leaders in the transition services field. There will also be recognition of student accomplishments.

Information, including links to register, is available at: <http://www.oavsnp.org/>. The event is at the Marriot Portland Downtown Waterfront hotel.