



Cascade Connections Supported Living Welcomes James to East Lynden



Cascade Connections' Supported Living program in East Lynden recently welcomed James, a hard-working but easy-going young man whose winsome personality and great attitude have quickly endeared him to his support staff, neighbors, and housemate. To help

our community get to know him better, James graciously agreed to participate in an interview supported by Cascade Connections Area Manager Nikki and Site Manager Chase L..

James started the interview by highlighting some of his enthusiasms, which include country music and cowboy-style outfits and hobbies. "I'm a fan of Toby Keith", James told staff, adding that he is very pleased with the new Toby Keith blanket he received for his new



place in Lynden. James also prizes his white cowboy hat and his ostrich-leather cowboy boots, which were given to him by two teachers who have supported and advocated for him.

James comes to us after many difficult years in a precarious living situation. When Nikki asked James how he likes his new home, James reported how grateful he feels to "finally get a good night's sleep"! James had very little privacy where he previously lived. With no door in his room, bright lights from the living room streamed in and kept him awake. A broken window meant that it also got too chilly in his room, and rats often kept him awake as they scampered by his bed. James has expressed relief over having a more private and comfortable living space. Best of all, he no longer has to wrangle Clifford, the bull that broke James' nose twice when it repeatedly escaped its pen at the old farm! (When James listed his dislikes, Clifford made the top of the list, along with fighting and hot stoves).

Since he began receiving our services, James has been able



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E-Newsletter

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To sign up, go to:

cascadeconnections.org/newsletters

Thank you to those who completed Cascade Connections' 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey earlier this summer! It's not too late to fill out the survey if you haven't already done so: bit.ly/cc-2023-com-survey

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to explore his cowboy-related interests and activities without breaking any bones. Our staff have supported him in spending time with horses, as he has expressed interest in horseback riding. James also got to sport his cowboy duds during some line dancing lessons at Station 49 not long ago. Station 49 also has go-karts, and James says he's eager to return for a go-karting session with Nikki and Chase.



James gets a real kick out of joking around with Chase, who always provides a fun reaction! During the interview, grinning at Chase, James confessed how much he (James), his neighbor Kevin, and Cascade Connections staff Katie “like giving Chase a hard time!” Chase grinned back and nodded as James added how much he enjoys sitting next to Chase and skipping him on purpose whenever they play UNO.



James' growing connections with new friends, neighbors, and staff have been very meaningful for all involved, and quite a welcome contrast to James' previously isolating life. James and his friends and support staff have been making the most of the summer weather by biking around the

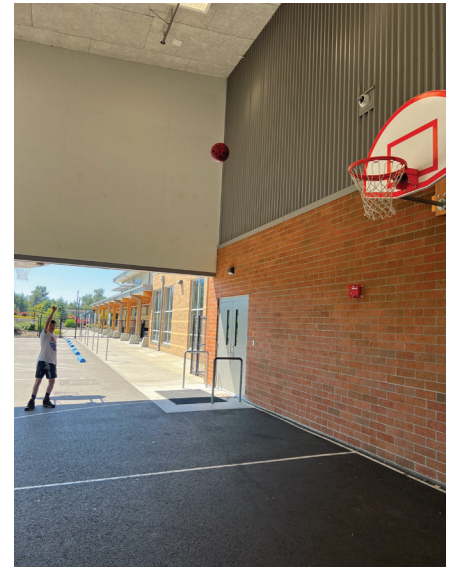
neighborhood, attending outdoor concerts and movies, and going dancing. James recently played the drums along with friends in Out of the Ashes, an inclusive, local band that plays at Boundary Bay in the summer.

James' new home life is going well also. His Cascade Connections team and community have helped him secure clean clothes, food, and other things he lacked when he arrived.* With access to a new fridge, cupboard space, and cooking support at home, it's been easier for James to eat healthier, more consistent meals. He especially likes to make sandwiches and use his air fryer. James appreciates his housemate Evelyn, and he goes out of his way to help her with things. James and Evelyn both enjoy watching Texas Ranger and attending church together on Sundays at North County Christ the King.

After years of very difficult circumstances, James has set many goals for himself and his future. Eager to get a job working outside, James has begun some vocational training at two local golf courses where he enjoys fetching golf balls and driving golf carts. A very active and energetic person, James recently enjoyed a workout session at Forge Fitness Center, as well as some summer kayaking and three camp sessions hosted by The AIROW Project.

Last but not least, James would like to be a better basketball player and to find a girlfriend who enjoys watching basketball at the park. He wants to get a nice suit so he can go on some dates, and he plans to use some of his paycheck to buy a dress and other gifts for his future girlfriend. Needless to say, Cascade Connections looks forward to supporting James as he pursues each and every one of these goals and dreams. Welcome, James!

*If anyone would like to purchase a gift from James' wish-list, here is the link: <https://a.co/iG54pVY>



Group Home Welcomes Mark



Cascade Connection is very pleased to welcome Mark as a new resident of our group home in Lynden! Our group home's director, Tara, describes Mark as "industrious and routine-oriented, while also being a witty and funny trickster at times." Mark has received Vocational Services

from Cascade Connections for many years, and we are excited to have him as part of our residential community as well. In fact, our Vocational Services staff played an instrumental role in getting Mark into our group home, where he now thrives.

When he learned that Mark was going to lose his prior housing, Mark's Cascade Connections Employment Specialist, Drew, jumped into action.



With the support of Vocational Services managers, Drew went above and beyond his job responsibilities and advocated for Mark to get the waiver necessary for living in our group home. Drew even accompanied Mark



to his first visit at our group home, to help ease the process for Mark. Tara commented on how Drew's response to Mark's predicament illustrates that Cascade Connections staff "are so dedicated to supporting the

individuals we serve, making sure they have what they need."

Partly due to support from Vocational staff, Mark's transition to his new home went very smoothly. As soon as he arrived in February, Mark took the time to carefully feel his way around his new room and put all of his belongings exactly where he wanted them. His new space, community, and services enhance his quality of life in significant ways. Mark receives more person-centered



support and gets out into the community more often. Group home staff have assisted Mark in reestablishing his relationship with one of his family members and in returning to speech therapy. Mark is now attending weekly virtual speech-therapy appointments and learning to use a

Grid 3 talking tablet. He has more support with his overall health as well and has been making it to his doctor's appointments.

When he's not out and about, Mark enjoys relaxing at home with his housemates and watching I Love Lucy, a long-time favorite show of his. The social environment at the group home is a much stronger match for Mark, who previously lived with housemates with very different needs due to Alzheimer's and dementia. Group home staff and residents alike are grateful to have Mark among them. Everyone looks forward to watching Mark build more connections at home and in the surrounding community. Welcome, Mark!

Justesen Industries Inc. Wins Employer of the Quarter



Cascade Connections Vocational Services is pleased to announce Justesen Industries Inc. as our Employer of the Quarter for Spring 2023! This family-owned business opened its doors in 1981, just one year after Cascade Connections began serving individuals with disabilities in

Whatcom County. Located in Blaine, Justesen Industries manufactures residential, commercial, and glass-door screen mesh products. They have earned our Employer of the Quarter award for their amazing support of Aaron, one of our Vocational Services customers, who has worked at Justesen since March of 2021.

Aaron was very happy to find work just 15 minutes from his home, and his successful work performance and relationships at Justesen have boosted his confidence and his social life.



Kelly, the Cascade Connections Employment Consultant who supported Aaron in getting his job at Justesen, reports that Aaron's personal growth has been remarkable since starting this job. Before he started at Justesen, Aaron often seemed nervous about interacting with people, particularly those he did not know. Now, after two years of supportive interactions at Justesen, Aaron uses his break time to visit with each of his coworkers. He likes to talk with them about football and the other shared interests he has discovered as he has gotten to know them.

Aaron's coworkers have stepped up again and again to support Aaron as he learns his work tasks. When he was learning how to use a ringing tool, one of his coworkers welded the tool to a size that would better fit Aaron's hand. When Aaron was learning how to put pulls into the screens he was processing, his coworkers made him a jig (a device that holds the screen and guides the tools operating on it). This device helped Aaron to line up his product and get



A close up of a jig Aaron's coworkers made for him.

the pull placed in the right spot. As is the case with many accessibility-related innovations, the new jig worked so well that his coworkers began creating them for their own work stations as well. Excited to have learned this new production step, Aaron asked Kelly to let the Cascade Connections community know that he is developing some additional skills at work!

Aaron absolutely loves his job – he's always early to work, and he almost runs in the door. Kelly enjoys seeing how happy Aaron's job makes him: "The smile on his face when he gets to work is so cool. He just beams." Aaron has a very strong work ethic, and when the whistle blows to signal the end of break time, Aaron announces loudly to everyone: "Alright, it's time to get back to work!" He is very precise about the difference between personal time and work time, which he sometimes calls "Wolfgang's time." Wolfgang, the owner of Justesen Industries, has commented on Aaron's exemplary employee behavior: "He's the quickest one to get back to work, he rarely misses days, and he doesn't loaf around or get distracted when he's at work. He sets an example."

Kelly advocated for Justesen Industries to receive the Employer of the Quarter award because "they are so supportive, not just with the customer they hired, but with all of Cascade Connections. They've opened up their space for informational interviews and site visits, and Wolfgang has given tours to other customers of ours as well. His approach to supported employment says a lot about him and his business."

Congratulations, Justesen Industries, for this well-deserved honor! We are grateful for your contributions towards a diverse and inclusive workforce in Whatcom County. Together, we are helping to create opportunities for everyone.



Lan Totten Nominated for Community Legacy Award



Cascade Connections Vocational Services Program Manager Lan Totten recently had the honor of being nominated for a Whatcom Women in Business (WWIB) Community Legacy Award! WWIB considered nominees based on their business acumen, leadership, professionalism, mentorship,

and community involvement. Lan's 27 years of skillful, determined advocacy and leadership in the disabilities field made her a very competitive candidate for this award.

Lan began her career with Cascade Connections as a job coach, supervising workers experiencing disabilities in a custodial crew. Over the years, she invested her time and passion into becoming a skilled Employment Specialist and eventually a Program Manager. She currently directs services for individuals receiving support from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Foundational Community Supports (FCS). Lan carefully navigates this partnership by communicating professionally and collaboratively with DVR rehabilitation counselors and FCS administrators, as well as by supporting her staff to creatively customize the services provided to meet the individual needs of each job seeker.

Again and again, Lan has taken it upon herself to respond significantly to community needs in our agency and beyond. For example, Lan saw a need to bolster the interviewing skills of those we serve, so she created a workshop to meet this need. She invited individuals from our community to assist with mock-interviews that provided necessary, real-life experience and training for Cascade's job seekers, not to mention valuable community education and networking for business partners.

Always listening for advocacy opportunities, Lan even turned her WWiB award-nominee interview as a means of educating businesses on inclusive employment! When asked why she accepted the nomination, Lan replied that she wanted to raise awareness about the benefits of

inclusive employment: "According to surveys, the number one objection or concern that employers have is around liability, but in fact statistics are exactly the opposite...folks with disabilities make fewer LNI claims than do employees without disabilities."

Throughout her career, Lan has shown great perseverance and adaptability in the face of many difficulties with government funding, reporting expectations, and the revolving needs of our community. Local and national social services and programs are tough to navigate, but Lan has displayed competence in advocating for answers and building partnerships with other service providers. In some instances, this persistence has made life-saving connections for those Lan serves.

Lan also volunteers her time to various community organizations, and she has been a champion to those struggling with mental health issues, substance abuse, and homelessness. She regularly attends the Whatcom Coalition to End Homelessness and has brought her learning back to support customers at Cascade Connections. This community involvement has expanded Cascade Connections' effectiveness in providing wrap-around services when possible.

Humble, authentic, down-to-earth, and honest, Lan has made it a priority to continually grow and share her knowledge of community services and programs. She has mentored and managed many Employment Specialists, training them to be excellent business partners to individuals in our community. Thoughtful and proactive,



Lan sees the potential in others and pushes them into more nuanced, challenging work. According to Cascade Connections Vocational Services Program Director Carrie Carron, "Lan has trained myself and many others...to be courteous and respectful while strongly advocating for those in need."

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Lan's lifelong dedication to vocational services derives, in part, from her belief in the dignity of work. When the WWIB interviewer asked Lan how her work makes her feel, Lan answered:

"When somebody gets a job, they develop the means to have more

control of their own lives – that's what money does for us. And what's more impactful, when folks have a job, they have a place to belong... I've seen people just fill up with confidence and a sense of wellbeing and purpose when they have a place to go in the morning...in fact, I find it true for me as well."

Thank you, Lan – we are very grateful that for all these years, you have chosen Cascade Connections as the place you go in the morning!

Thank You, Haggen!



Thanks to Haggen Food & Pharmacy and generous customers at the Ferndale and Barkley Haggen stores, Cascade Connections will receive \$14,100 of the \$160,000 that Haggen raised for local nonprofits this

summer during their 2023 Inspiring Change Together fundraiser!

Cascade Connections plans to use donated funds to expand access to financial skills and work-preparedness training for individuals with disabilities. Participants will build skills in managing personal finances, interviewing for jobs, meeting workplace expectations, and developing friendships at work.

We are extremely grateful to Haggen for their loyal support year after year! Haggen's generosity makes a significant difference in the lives of those we serve.

To learn about the many ways Haggen inspires change in local communities, check out Haggen's website or search [#HaggenHelps](#) on social media.

Cascade Christian Home Goes Spin Dancing

Group home residents and staff climbed into the vans for a joyous evening of Spin Dance at Depot Market Square in Bellingham in May 2023. What a great night of dancing, twirling ribbons, and connecting with the community! Thank you so much to Max Higbee Center and Bellingham Parks and Recreation for making this fun and inclusive event happen every month.



Thank You to Our Donors!

Donations from Foundations and Churches:

AmazonSmile Foundation, Lairmount Foundation, Lynden Lions Club, Netherlands Reformed Church, Schwab Charitable, Third Christian Reformed Church

Donations From Businesses: Facebook, Kroger, Network for Good, Thrivent, Willands Tech Auto

Memorial Donation in Memory of Christopher Charleston: Erin Yousling

Special thanks to the dozens of individuals who have donated since February 2023!

Cascade Connections Celebrates Third Annual Employee Appreciation Month



Cascade Connections celebrated our third annual Employee Appreciation Month in June, 2023! Every day that month, Cascade Connections staff members were

celebrated in personalized social media posts on our agency's Facebook and Instagram pages. Staff at our agency sites also received thank-you baskets of goodies to munch on at work. On all five Thursdays in June, staff names were drawn from a raffle and awarded \$25 Amazon gift cards.

On June 29th, Cascade Connections wrapped up Employee Appreciation Month by providing lunch for all employees. The event also included games, music, a photo booth, and 10 raffle-prize giveaways. Sincerest thanks to the following employees who helped with planning, setting up, and cleaning up from this get-together: Nikki H., Chase L., Ryan S., Mary N., Jake H., Lucy W., Tara B., Jessica S., Melissa M., George B., Sarah G., Taylor R., and Kristin N.!

Cascade Connections is so grateful for the helpful, caring, and fun energy that our staff bring to Employee Appreciation Month and every other month!



Please visit us on the web at
cascadeconnections.org
to learn more.



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Summer 2023 Newsletter

Cascade Connections

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Larry Stegink
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Shara Davis

We Are Hiring!

View our current openings here:
bit.ly/cascadejobs

Stakeholder Meeting - You're Invited!

Cascade Connections invites community members to make their voices heard at our upcoming Stakeholder Meeting **at 6:30pm to 9:00 pm on Thursday, September 28th at Faith Community Church (586 Birch Bay Lynden Rd, Lynden, WA 98264)**. We look forward to gathering with you!

Due to current difficulties in finding members for our Board of Directors, stakeholders at the meeting will be asked to approve an amendment to our current bylaws. The change would allow our nonprofit to function with a Board of three members, the minimum number allowed by the IRS. The proposed amendment appears below.

RESOLVED, that the following amendment to Section 4.1 of Article IV of the Bylaws of the corporation is introduced as follows:

*[Existing Text] **Section 4.1 Board of Directors.** The business and property of the Corporation shall be managed by a Board of nine (9), but not more than twelve (12), directors.*

*[Revised Text] **Section 4.1 Board of Directors.** The business and property of the Corporation shall be managed by a Board of three (3), but not more than twelve (12), directors.*