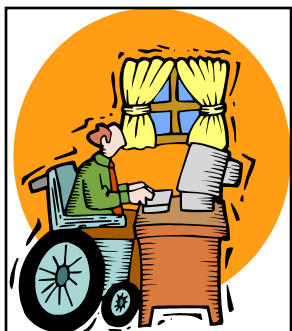


# The People First Connection

The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon  
Published by Self Advocates As Leaders



Here's something new. The Editorial Board has published an issue with a theme.

In choosing a theme, The Editorial Board wanted to pick something Oregon self-advocates care about. We have been listening to people from Ontario to Coos Bay, from Beaverton to Grants Pass, who think employment is an important issue.

We gathered stories on jobs, work, how you spend your time, and retirement.

Happy reading!

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## Why Is It Important To Have A Job? Or Is It?

**By Nancy Ward, Oklahoma**

I believe that people are judged by if they have a job or not. One way to tell someone's worth is by how much money they have. I feel it is far more valuable to see people for who they are

as a person. You can't buy integrity, dignity, or respect.

I say if you have these values you have something far more valuable than money. Maybe we need to look at our

**Send Us Your Story!**  
Share your Ideas!

Voices in Oregon are getting stronger.  
Be a part of it.

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value system. When the Pilgrims landed in America they had to rely on each other to develop our country. If we could come together now, we would be able to work together again. This is why I think a huge part of our country's workforce is not valued as contributing members of their communities.

We call our country the **United** States of America. United to me means coming together to work as a group. How can we say we're all one group when we aren't even included?

My job as the Information Coordinator for the Medicaid Reference Desk has given me many opportunities to gain confidence in myself by learning more about the computer. For example, when we were developing the web site I didn't have any idea how we were going to get this big stack of paper put on the site. Team members work with me. They explain big words, and how to build a web site. This has helped me have a lot more confidence in myself to use my computer, and to try to learn new things on it. I feel I am a very valued member of our team because other members make the meetings accessible to me any way I need it and include me in everything the team does.

We make states' Medicaid systems accessible by using pictures and defining the hard to understand definitions. For example, Medicaid's definition of physical therapy had 54 words, 27 of them with big words (3

syllables or more.) We use a process where the whole team is involved in making the definition accessible. When we were done, we had gotten the definition down to 17 words with only 3 of them being big words.

My job has given me many different opportunities to share information and to have information shared with me. My job makes me an important member of my community. This is why I think it's important to have a job. People will have to answer this for themselves as to whether it's important for them or not.

**Medicaid Reference Desk**  
**Information about Medicaid for**  
**people with cognitive disabilities**  
[www.TheDesk.info](http://www.TheDesk.info)

## Satisfying Work



**By Kelly Fork, The Dalles**

I helped my friend, Paul, build an 18-foot deck on a lady's house in Goldendale, Washington. I helped Paul build a cover so the lady won't get wet walking to the door. We put a tin roof over the beams. We finished the deck and it looks good. We also built steps to get up to the deck.

Paul paid me \$112.00 for the work. I liked working with Paul and I enjoyed building the deck. In the future, I would like to build more decks.

## Valued in My Community

### By Joe Steffy, Kansas

My name is Joe. I am known as 'Poppin' Joe.' In April of 2005, I became the owner of Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn.

People other than my family did not think I could work. One of my principals asked my parents, "Can Joe think?" They wrote in my IEP I would go to a workshop and live in a group home. My family knew I like to keep busy. They knew my abilities. Dad and I did morning chores at a stable every morning for four years. My swim teacher got me on a maintenance crew at a swimming pool. I worked there five years.

My dad made it possible for me to try the kettle korn business. I learned by watching and doing exactly what my dad did. It took me time to learn each step. I can now help set up the equipment, bag, pop and restock the supplies. I am trying to greet customers. My parents were so happy when I asked a passing customer, "Would you like to try some kettle korn?" and the man turned to me and said, "No, thank you." You see I do not speak much. People can't understand me.

Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn pops at local festivals, fairs and events during the spring, summer and fall. I do my job. If I need a change, I do a different job and my worker adjusts accordingly.

It works well this way. I like the space under the tent, that sets the boundary for me. The sound and smell of the kettle korn popping gets people to check us out.

I love being Poppin' Joe. The benefits of working are awesome. I love my new guitar. I get to fly by myself to visit family. I can do a lot now because I own my business. The best part of my business is being a valued community member. People look at me differently. They all love Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn.



## I Love My Job

### By Micki Amaral, Grants Pass

I love doing my job. It's fun. I work at the front office at SPARC Enterprises. I do paperwork. I do the fax, copying, and invoices. I'm the best worker in the whole office, everyone tells me that. If I was gone, it would go downhill. At SPARC, my coworkers are so nice. I see myself at this job for a long time.



## Talking With Cindy Helvington, Executive Director of SAAL

Cindy Helvington has been the Executive Director of SAAL for 6 years now. She took a few minutes out of a busy week to talk with us at The People First Connection (PFC) about her job.

**PFC:** What is your job as Executive Director?

**Cindy:** I support professional development of SAAL staff, our committee chairs and other SAAL members. I do training with other self-advocates, and I help develop training. I help to plan and put on training sessions and outreach events. I also help long-term planning happen for Self-Advocates As Leaders. I gather information and make connections that support the organizational development of SAAL. I oversee grants and contracts, including quarterly reports to the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities.

**PFC:** What are you responsible for?

**Cindy:** I make sure the group is on track with their plan and I make sure we have enough money in our budget. I oversee staff.

**PFC:** Did you ever think it would be possible for you to get a job like this?

**Cindy:** No, there were other people going for the job so it was hard. I doubted I would get it because I did not have the education for the job. I still have doubts when things don't go well. I had jobs before that didn't prepare me for a higher up job like this.

**PFC:** In this job, you are a role model for others. Are you comfortable with that?

**Cindy:** Yes and no. I do not like to be in the center of things. I like the group to be in the center of things. The attention should be on their work as members. My advice for others? Don't take no for an answer.



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**A Shout out to Jill Murray!  
(Our heart felt thanks and acknowledgment)**

**On behalf of the Editorial Board, we would like to welcome Jill Murray as our new Editor to The People First Connection!**



ADVOCATE'S CORNER

## EVERYONE NEEDS A REAL JOB

**Written by Judy Cunio,**  
Self-Advocacy  
Coordinator, OCDD

**All we want is a chance!**  
There are many people around the state that truly want to work and could do a great job. Many of them would be dedicated and hard working employees but they are too often overlooked. The reason that they are overlooked is because they have disabilities.

There are some myths that many employers have about people with disabilities. A couple of examples include:

- They can't do the job.
- They will miss too much work.

- They don't care about the Job.

We know that we may need the right supports to be successful. That could be done in a number of ways. Some people may need a little help or accommodations to do the job. Once you know what will work the best, it could be very valuable for everyone.

It would be good to hire people with disabilities because we are very dedicated and hard working. We want to work and give back to the community.

There needs to be more education for both employers and people who want to work. There needs to be more public awareness as to what will benefit both the employee and employer.

People may need to think outside of the box and get creative. There could be a different way that a person with a disability could do the job and get the same outcome by using some assistive technol-

ogy. An adaptive keyboard, magnifying glass or even a lower work station will allow people to be more independent and do a better job.

Families and individuals with disabilities need to be informed about the opportunities that are out there. There needs to be more information about what jobs are out there for people, how to get those jobs, and what the responsibilities are.

### **Why should you hire people with disabilities?**

Very often we are hard-working and devoted employees. We do have skills that make us very productive.

People with disabilities want to work and they can be very valuable employees. We just need a chance. We want to give back to the community. If more people with disabilities were working the state would save money because they would be taxpayers.

All we want is a chance!



## My Job At Powell's

Andy Owens,

### Portland

It has been just over 5 years since I started at Powell's Book Store and I still love going to work and getting a paycheck!

High school transition was a challenge for me, since most people did not believe I could work. So right from the start there have been many challenges for both me and my parents. Really too many to list, the biggest challenge for me was people's perceptions. When you look at me, I look as if I am not someone with a lot of capabilities. **Well, that is wrong!**

Luckily for me, "No" was not part of my vocabulary when it comes to something I really want, and I really wanted a job.

I was also lucky to find a good company like Powell's who was willing to work with my job developer, parents, and en-

gineers who helped to make the needed adaptations to assist me at work. It took a lot of time and planning.

I have to be just like any other employee at Powell's: show up on time, work hard, get as many books processed as someone without a disability, follow the union guidelines, and I hardly ever call in sick. I am dependable.

Since I started the challenges still come up, but because I am a valued employee, Powell's works with me and we figure it out. Some of the challenges have been technical equipment, and the need to adjust the way I do my job.

The biggest challenge has been finding a new assistant that helps me with my personal needs. It takes sometimes months to hire the right person - someone I feel comfortable with and that will be responsible, fun to be with, and someone I can trust.

Part of the problem with finding people is that the pay is pretty low (for how much responsibility the person has) with no benefits. The plus is that they get to hang out with a fun guy like me!

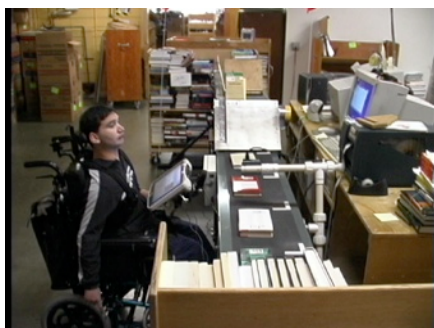
The other thing is that I have to plan ahead when I want a day off or vacation. You cannot just decide you don't want to go to work at the last minute. You have to get time off the schedule. But that is OK with me and my family, because we all have jobs and all of us take work seriously.

If I were to give someone else advice on what to do to get work, I would say two things, start early while you are in school with good transition planning to gain the skills to go to work and do a person centered plan to help you know what kind of work fits your interest best. That is what made all the difference for me. Once we did the person centered plan, then we had a better idea what kind of work to focus on

that I could do, and that I would like.

The two things I think I like best about my job are having friends I get to see at work five days a week and being part of a team. And getting my paychecks! I earn \$10.41 an hour and I get to spend that on things I want. I never have to ask my parents for money and I like the independence that gives me.

I hope you will decide work is something you want to do. **If you need help in learning more about transition and employment go to the transition conference: "Building Futures" May 14 – 16, 2007 at the Embassy Suites Hotel, in Tigard.**



### About Virginia By Virginia Melquist, Grants Pass

My name is Virginia. I am 71 years old. I was born in Kent, Washington. I live in Grants Pass now in a pretty good place. We have four ladies including me that live there. Darla is our caregiver and she is nice.

On Saturday I go out with Cathy. We go out to eat, bowling, out shopping. For Thanksgiving we went out to JJ North's Buffet and I liked it.

At home I help with the birds. I take the cover off of them. We have four cats and three birds at home. Our cats are Sylvester, Oreo, Piggy and one that is visiting for a while. Sylvester growls at everybody.

I like to help other people.

I like to go on vacations. I go with TRIPS, Inc. I have fun. They are real nice to you. I just went to Las Vegas. We went to see shows, went to the hotel, and had a lot of fun.

I have a lot of friends. I see some of them at the retirement program.

I am on the Board of Directors at Creative Supports. I am glad I got that position. I am a speaker at the Dream Café with Creative Supports. I tell people about my trips. I like that.

My boyfriend is David. We've known each other since we were kids. We knew each other when we lived at Fairview. I used to work at Martin Cottage at Fairview, with the babies. They were cute little ones.

I am a nice person.

### Resources

Here are 2 websites with more stories about people who have started their own businesses:

[www.griffinhammis.com](http://www.griffinhammis.com)

[www.start-up-usa.biz](http://www.start-up-usa.biz)

## Pittsburgh

By Ruth Morris

On October 7, I flew with Bill Lynch of the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities from Portland to Pittsburgh for the NACDD conference. (That is the National Association for Councils on Developmental Disabilities.) I went as a member representing the Oregon Council.

I went to workshops. One I really liked was a People First group from back east. Their idea was to make money from cards the members made. They went around and got business sponsors. Another speaker told about when he taught high school. He got students from special classes to get involved by talking about their emotions. I learned a lot of things while I was back there. That was good.

Bill and I went sightseeing on a trolley to the top of a hill to look at the lights of Pittsburgh by night. It was beautiful.

## I Want to Be Me

By Nancy Brown,  
Grants Pass

I was born in Detroit, Michigan on May 1<sup>st</sup>. I will be 60 on my next birthday. I liked to read Fun With Dick and Jane. I always had good doctors that took good care of me. When we moved here we lived on Portola Drive. I lived with my parents and brother. My parents are nice. My Mom now lives in Rogue River, but wants to move back to Grants Pass. My Stepdad has Parkinson's disease. I love my parents. I have a yellow lab at my Mom's named Mitzi. She likes to jump up. Mitzi lacks manners, like me.

I used to live and work at Royal Gardens. I was very frustrated there because I didn't want to be there. I sometimes hit the nurses. My boss saw that I was frustrated and helped get me out of there.

I now live at House One. Right now they are upset at me because I

have a bad attitude. Sometimes it's hard to live there. It's cold, but I've met some good friends like Lee, Tom and Ted. I think my friend Triva getting married is good, but she's not there as much and I miss her. I think that's why I act out. My mind acts up and I act out. Kay needs to learn more about me. Sometimes I think so much I can't sleep. I feel it all through my body. I like to do things to calm me down like talk to my Mom. I want to be me.

### Calendar

**Advocacy Days Training at Oregon State Capitol:**

January 24, 2007

February 13, 2007

March 12, 2007

April 13, 2007

All sessions 9:30 am - 2:30 pm

**Arc of Oregon Convention**

Pendleton, May 4 & 5, 2007

**Oregon PTI Conference**

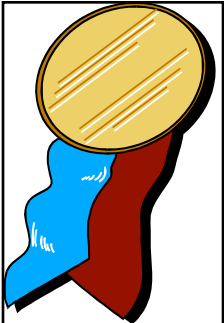
Seaside, May 18-19, 2007

**Oregon Conference on Direct Supports**

Corvallis, July 24 - 26, 2007

## Working for a Gold

By Kathleen Sitton,  
Medford



This summer, I got picked to go travel with 12 other Special Olympics athletes to Nationals in Iowa. My golf partner and I traveled with 12 athletes from Medford (one bowler was from Grants Pass.) We all met at the Medford Airport. Then they had a little send off party for all of us athletes and the coaches. Then we got on a plane and we traveled to Denver. Then we all got off of the airplane in Ames, Iowa. This is where we would be spending the next week competing in golf and basketball.

We left Medford at 2 o'clock, then we landed in Denver just in time to get something for dinner. Then we got on another

airplane. It was 10 o'clock when we landed in Ames, Iowa. We slept in college dorm rooms at Iowa State University. We came to Iowa on Saturday July 1<sup>st</sup>, and then we practiced on the golf course Sunday afternoon. Then we had our first day of competition. It was very hot in Iowa almost every day I was there.

We had a second day of competition. The second day we were more focused and that helped our scores. The last day our friends came and watched our practice. I felt excited about how I golfed. In practice, I was nervous I wouldn't do very well, but I did. My golf partner, two other Oregon athletes and I made our team, with a coach from Oregon. We all got gold medals. When we got our gold medals, everyone wanted to take pictures of us and congratulate us and take pictures of us. It was one of the most exciting experiences that I've gotten to do.

It was special because I

got to be there with my friends. I was excited that it was my first time away from my parents. Most of the people who went with us had never flown on a plane before. They all got through it.

That was the best experience of the summer.

The SAAL Newsletter invites readers to share ideas. Here is one response to "Ask Saaly"

**By Kristi Laney, Baker**  
O.K. Saaly, here's my answer to your question. What drives me crazy?

I had my food stamps taken from me (without my consent.) I was a bit angry.

When other people try to make my decisions for me without my word first.

Folks who try to "correct" me.

When I'm told to do something and ordered around, and people tell me to do things that they can do for themselves, that is not okay.

These are the things that drive me crazy.

## Luke's Story

By Luke Wariner,  
Grants Pass

I went to a concert and it was great. When I go to concerts, I hear new people, new artists. I like seeing other people in the crowd, from other places. At a concert, I enjoy myself, I get relaxed and excited, I enjoy the beat and the story from the music.

I go to the Britt Festival, or Concerts in the Park (in Grants Pass,) or at the Fairgrounds. I saw America, Foreigner, and Air Supply. I pay my own way to the concerts.

I work to earn my food. I work at The Bistro, an Italian restaurant. I clean up in the morning. I like my job. I have to make sure the bathrooms are clean and vacuum. If the vacuum is not working, I check what's wrong. I'm good at checking out problems.

In Mexico, I grew up on a farm. I was really good at farm work, like taking care of horses,

pigs, and cows. My sister milked the cows. I fed the animals alfalfa and hay. I rode a horse in Mexico. It was important to stay calm, to be cautious. Don't get anxious and don't hurt the horse.

## About Lindsay

By Lindsay King,  
Grants Pass



I took a trip with my family to Bandon, Oregon. We went for a walk on the beach. I stayed at the beach house and I saw the Christmas lights at Shore Acres. I liked spending Christmas in Bandon. It was nice, and it was pretty.

I work at SPARC Enterprises. I work for recycling with all of my best friends. It's easy to work with my best friends because it is quieter. I got my paycheck today, I was so proud.

I graduated from Grants Pass High School in 2002. I do Special Olympics: basketball, volleyball and track and field. My favorite is basketball.

I like movies, dancing, and I like to hang out with my boyfriend Troy. My first date was bowling. I like to travel with my family and to hang out with them. I go to Medford to see my sister, Alicia.



## Retirement

By Richard Jones,  
Eugene

I have been retired for two years. I worked at Dairy Mart and the Pearl Buck Center. I retired because I was getting older, I couldn't do as much anymore, I move slower.

I would like to travel more but it can cost a lot of money. Gas is expensive for my van. I might want to go to Seven Feathers or to the coast.

I like to go fishing, with my tackle box. I especially like to go to Winchester Bay.

## Past and Present

### By Gerald Cowie, Grants Pass

I was born in Vancouver, Washington and lived there until I was 20 years old. When I was a kid, I would take trips up and down the Columbia River to the Washington border. Then I moved to Arizona. I lived in Black Canyon City, Arizona until my mother died.

I was in Special Olympics once. I was in bowling and I won a Gold Medal. When I moved to Arizona, I lost it. I was in my twenties then.

Now I am living in Oregon and I am thinking of doing latch hook work. I like doing latch hook and needle work. I am also thinking of building a small boat.

### **March is DD Awareness Month!**

We encourage everyone to help educate others by sharing your stories about what it is like to live with a disability. Your story can make a difference!

## My Story

### By Charles Cook, Grants Pass

My dad was a logger. He would let me help with a wagon. He was also a wood craftsman. He made a model ship; he also made a real sailboat. My dad also made spinning wheels with spokes. My mom would spin wool with the spinning wheel that he made. She would then turn it into clothes, pillows and other things. He made the spinning wheels for everybody. He made a bed for me that is still used at House 2, where I live. My brother Forrest has a kitchen table and a chair at his home that my dad made.

Another special thing my dad made was grandfather clocks. Three are still in our family. One is at my sister Alice's, one is at my brother Forrest's house, and one is at my home.

I feel proud of my dad's skill. He made a lot of beds, dressers, and desks. He was a good man, with a lot of talent.

## I'm a Self-Advocate

### By Megan Mahoney

Hello my name is Megan Mahoney. I'm 38 years old. When I was little I was involved in an automobile accident, which left me with a brain injury.

I received a companion dog named Cocoa Mahoney. He was a big part of my life. He went everywhere with me including the beach. He gave me confidence to let me stay home alone. He was a great guard dog. He passed away on March 14th. It was hard for me. He gave me unconditional love. There is something special about pets.

I also go swimming on Sundays, which helps me stretch my arm and do other things. I've been swimming for twenty years. My teacher's name is June. I do swimming therapy with her to help with my healing. I was in the newspaper (West Linn Tidings) that talked about me and June.