



CHARITY'S STORY

Charity began working Cascade Connections (formerly Cascade Vocational Services) shortly after graduating from Ferndale High School in 2008. When she first came we spent time getting to know Charity and her skills and abilities and then set out to find the right employment for her.

Our staff met with the Human Resource Manager of Cascade DAFO, Cathy Thomas, to tour their facilities and learn more about their company culture. By touring the facility we saw what types of skills and environmental factors might play a role in finding an ideal candidate. One area identified was the production of “flippers”, which are the samples sent to clinics that allow children to design their own orthotics. These samples play an important role in helping children to get excited to wear their new orthotics. Cascade DAFO mentioned that the perfect candidate would be someone who the company also serves as a customer. It just so happened that we had just the right candidate for the job, Charity.

Charity had been wearing DAFO braces since she was a little girl. It was only because of these braces that she is able to walk independently. Charity and her family were thrilled at the possibility of working at DAFO; Charity had even been to the facility several times to get her braces adjusted or fitted and knew several people there. Cascade helped Charity complete her application and arrange an interview.

After her interview Charity was hired for the position. The DAFO personnel worked with Cascade Connections and made a few minor adjustments to her work station, such as finding a chair that was easier for Charity to use with her braces. But, for the most part, the system in place for creating the “flippers” was set up according to universal design practices. Charity’s coworkers provided the typical training for this position and Cascade Connections helped Charity learn how to meet all the standards of the job.

Dennis, the production manager, said “hiring Charity gave us an opportunity to give back to the community, helps creates a product that we need, and frees up labor so that we can have other employees perform more complex tasks.” Cathy Thomas noted, “Charity has grown in both her skills and her confidence since starting at DAFO.” She continued, “when Charity was hired, she



was on the shy side, but as the months passed she has truly opened up.” With a regular schedule, Charity greets many of her same coworkers each day and has also learned new tasks besides “flippers” and loves trying additional new tasks to help out.

DAFO has made a place for Charity in their organization. Cathy continued “Charity is now a part of the family.”

Story continues on Page 3

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2015

6:00 – 9:30PM | BELLINGHAM CRUISE TERMINAL | \$50 PER PERSON*

The Hamster's Ball

BENEFITTING **CASCADE CONNECTIONS**
www.cascadeconnections.org

FOR TICKETS:

Please join us for a fabulous evening of **WINE, BEER, and CULINARY SPECIALTIES** from local restaurants and bars.

- ♦ Dance into the night to the sounds of GMB Entertainment
- ♦ Five lucky attendees will win a "Wine, Beer, and Chocolate Cellar"



Also learn more about and meet some of the wineries, breweries restaurants and bars that will be part of the 2016 HAMSTER CRAWL scheduled for Saturday, May, 21, 2016.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



*All attendees are asked to bring a fine bottle of wine, beers, or fine chocolates with a suggested retail value of \$25. Your bottle of wine or beers or fine chocolates will be contributed to the "Wine, Beer and Chocolate Cellar" packages.



Avamere Bellingham Healthcare is Creating Opportunities for Everyone

Cascade Connections has the opportunity to work with many employers throughout Whatcom County. It is our pleasure to meet new people, learn about industries and promote opportunities for everyone within our community. Each quarter we honor one employer who has gone above and beyond to assist in our mission to empower individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life.

This quarter it is our distinct honor to recognize Avamere Bellingham Healthcare. Cascade Connections first began working with Avamere in 2011. At that time we were able to learn more about their mission, their values, as well as their hiring needs. Avamere's mission is to enhance the life of every person they serve. Their core values include:

- Integrity above all else
- Passion for the quality of people's lives
- Quality that is obvious
- Innovation, not emulation
- A culture of trust and respect
- Reaching to learn, grow and embrace change
- Teamwork, camaraderie and fun!



Meghla setting up for
Bingo with the residents

Our Employment Specialist, Chris Notaras, knew right away she had some applicants that met both the skills and abilities required for the job, but more importantly had applicants who had the right values for this company.

Avamere staff have been open to performing informational interviews with people to help them to understand a little more about what it is like to work in a skilled nursing facility, what skills they are looking for in applicants and what different types of positions may be available. Avamere staff have performed many informational interviews and hired more than six people through Cascade Connections services.

One of the people hired is Meghla. Meghla obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Human Services from Western Washington University. After working with Cascade Connections to set up a volunteer opportunity at Avamere she was hired as an activities assistant. She is able to assist with activities with the residents including Bingo. Meghla says that she enjoys the interaction with the residents and her job is never mundane, “I enjoy getting to know all the residents at Avamere. I love working there!” Meghla, who experiences cerebral palsy, worked with Cascade to help her find a job which met her strengths and abilities. “Cascade Connections helped connect me with a position that I ordinarily wouldn’t have found on my own.”

Bonnie Karb, Avamere Activities Director, indicated she was looking for caring people who were interested in becoming activity assistants. Cascade was able to connect Avamere with Meghla and another applicant, both were hired. Bonnie indicated both of the individuals were very flexible with their availability which made it very easy for scheduling. Cascade Connections staff was able to assist with orientation and supports until the employees were comfortable in their positions. When asked what advice she would give to other employers who might be interested in supported employment she said, “Try it, it’s a great experience for both the employee and the employer. You’ll get some great employees with lots of support.”

Ken Cadman, the Nutritional Service Manager has also worked with Cascade Connections to connect him with qualified applicants. He said, “At first I was not sure how well it would work, but with the support offered through CC it has been a very easy and smooth process.” Cascade Connections staffs were able to learn about the organization, the different departments and their potential hiring needs. When we feel we have a qualified applicant we contact the department manager to let them know we might have a good fit for them. Ken feels this is a great opportunity to help people to gain some confidence in the workforce. He stated, “This has been a good experience and I would recommend working with Cascade Connections.”

Congratulations to the Executive Director Daniel Waddell and all of the Avamere Bellingham team of employees on being selected as Cascade Connections Employer of the Quarter.



Rita has worked as a dietary aide at Avamere for more than a year. Rita came to Cascade with previous caregiving experience. She knew that the long hours of caregiving work would no longer match her abilities, but she still wanted to work. Cascade helped Rita match up with a part-time position in the kitchen at Avamere. Rita states that the short shifts are perfect for her and she really enjoys working with the residents.

Charity's Story Continued...

In addition to her work, "Charity's' real life experience with DAFO products was a valued source of insight for DAFO employees" said Bill Weimar, DAFO President and CEO. Mr. Weimer even asked Charity and her mom to talk about their experiences with DAFO products at a company staff meeting. Mr. Weimer added "this experience was an amazing conversation that allowed us to connect to the people that we ultimately serve."

Cascade DAFO has expanded employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Whatcom County. Cascade Connections congratulates them on their success and recognizes them as an innovative employer in our community.

Charity has also been working with Cascade Connections Home Care department for the past four years. Nicole, a Home Care Program Coordinator, had a chance to interview Charity's mother, Nina, about her experience working with the Home Care department and she had some wonderful insight to share.

Nicole: How did your family get connected to Cascade Home Care?

Nina: It was a combination of an inquiry regarding respite care possibilities with our DDA case manager and then Cascade Vocational Services which was already serving Charity.

Nicole: How long have you been with Cascade Connections and how long have you been with Home Care?

Nina: I think about 6 years for Vocational Services and about 4 years for Respite [Home] Care.

Nicole: How would you describe Charity's life up to this point?

Nina: Charity is a petite, spunky, enthusiastic 28 year old gal who is nearly always eager for the next adventure. She currently lives at home with her parents, 2 cats and a dog. She works part time at Cascade DAFO, a job which she loves. Her favorite things are listening to stories and music on CD's,

looking at picture books, doing puzzles, watching movies (especially Pixar and Disney), anything to do with Winnie the Pooh and last but not least, hanging out with her care aide. They usually go out the house, just the two of them and visit her friend, eat out, visit local attractions including parks, specialty shops, museums and/or sometimes attend CAP events. She enjoys family time too, which includes being one of 7 siblings and an auntie.

Nicole: What are some the moments that have stood out with Charity and her care aides?

Nina: Her expression of glee and delight whenever she talks about her care aide- which is often. She always returns happy and content from her outings with her care aide, eagerly anticipating what's up for next time.

Nicole: What would you tell another parent if they were considering working with Cascade Connections?

Nina: My experience with the staff at Cascade Connections has been that they really listen, so if you ever have any concerns be sure to share them and they will do their best to accommodate.

Nicole: Is there any time you feel a staff member has gone above and beyond for Charity?

Nina: They have been very understanding about matching the care aid that best meets Charity's needs and personality.

We greatly appreciate Nina sharing some of Charity's experiences. Getting to spend time with Charity in the community and with some of her daily activities is a privilege and we are grateful to be a part of her life.

We also want to thank our supporters for your prayers and financial support. By partnering with us you help people like Charity and help them to live and work and be part of their community.

Fall 2015 Newsletter

Cascade Connections
PO Box 3174
Ferndale, WA 98248
(360) 714-9355
cascadeconnections.org

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Cascade Connections Annual Stakeholder's Meeting to be held at WECU Education Center at the Ferndale Branch on October 29th, at 6:00pm.

Please join us at the **WECU Education Center** located at 5659 Barrett Rd, Ferndale, and have dinner with us and help us celebrate our accomplishments last year as well help us plan for the future. RVSP no later than October 26th by 5pm. To make your reservations please call 360-714-9355 x 112.

People That Make a Difference

We would like to thank the following people, businesses, churches and civic groups that have partnered with us and make a difference in the lives of the people that we support:

Churches:

Third Christian Reformed church, Lynden, WA
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