



# VOCATIONAL SERVICES OUTCOME REPORT



2018



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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR VOCATIONAL OFFICE

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Cascade Connections (CC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to Empower individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life. CC began when a group of parents came together with a vision to improve our community by ensuring people with disabilities are a part of it. Since that time CC has grown to serve nearly 300 people in 2018 through both residential and vocational services.

CC has experience working with many employers and types of industries. The success of our client's would not be possible without the business partnerships CC has made along the way. The staff at CC take time to understand the business needs and workplace culture and practices. By working with CC and tapping into a new resource to find employees, many employers have found an improved morale of the entire workforce as well as a decrease in turnover.

Diversity and inclusion in the workforce breeds innovation. Many employers seek to have employees who represent the make-up of their community, this includes people with disabilities. Everyone has skills, abilities and ways to contribute. CC works with local employers to find employees who are dependable, productive and committed to them. We take time to identify our clients' skills and match them with the personnel needs of the employers we partner with.

Like all of us, having a job is much more than just a paycheck. A job gives us a sense of identity, self-worth, and purpose. A job is where we meet people, build relationships, and of course, a job helps us to pay the bills and buy things we want. Cascade Connections has proudly supported the creation of 922 jobs for the people we serve!

Throughout this document you will see a showcase of success stories from variety industry employers and the applicants they have hired. Each employer became engaged with CC for a variety of reasons, but the ongoing partnerships are maintained because supporting people with disabilities in a place of employment makes good business sense. CC would welcome the opportunity to show you how.



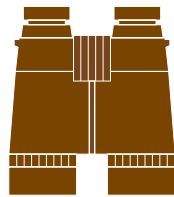
# OUR COMPANY

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## MISSION

Empowering individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life.



## VISION

We promote opportunities for everyone through community partnership and service excellence.



## CUSTOMERS

We provide residential, vocational, and home care services to individuals who have a broad range of skills, interests, and abilities.



## EMPLOYERS

We are committed to providing Whatcom County with highly valuable applicants who add to the diversity and value of businesses. We pride ourselves in being a resource to local employers on disability related issues.

# 2018 AT A GLANCE

## TOTAL JOBS CREATED IN 2018

**50** Jobs

## JOBS CREATED SINCE FOUNDING

**922** Jobs

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Customers referred by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) & contract for short term services, including:

- Independent Living Skills
- Community based assessments
- Job placement
- Retention services



## TOTAL NUMBERS OF CUSTOMERS

**91** Customers



## TOTAL CONTRACTS COMPLETED

**147** Contracts



## AVERAGE STARTING WAGE

**\$12.13** Per Hour



## AVERAGE STARTING WEEKLY HOURS

**14.66** hours/week

### AVERAGE DAYS PER TYPE OF CONTRACT

COMMUNITY BASED ASSESSMENT..... **131** Days

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES..... **140** Days

JOB RETENTION SERVICES..... **104** Days

## LONG-TERM SERVICES

Customers with developmental disabilities receive long term vocational services including:

- Discovery
- Job Preparation
- Job Development
- Job Coaching
- Retention Services



### TOTAL NUMBERS OF CUSTOMERS

**118** Customers



### TOTAL WAGES EARNED

**\$371,025.83**



### TOTAL HOURS WORKED

**27283.03** Hour

## CONTRACTED SERVICES

Cascade Connections contracts to provide custodial, production and landscaping services throughout Whatcom County. These commercial contracts provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



### TOTAL NUMBERS OF CUSTOMERS EMPLOYED BY CONTRACTED SERVICES

**65** Customers



### TOTAL WAGES EARNED BY CREW EMPLOYEES

**\$407,561.00**



### TOTAL HOURS WORKED BY CREW EMPLOYEES

**26353.00** Hour



# ABOUT VOCATIONAL SERVICES

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Vocational Services works with Bellingham and Whatcom County businesses to find creative solutions that increase diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. Vocational Services provides employment services to people with disabilities in our community.

Cascade Connections received a generous grant award from the Alcoa Foundation to fund Interview Skills Workshops throughout 2018. The culmination of this project helped bring local employers together with applicants with disabilities to practice their interviewing skills.



*"Kurt handles every task with a smile on his face. He is an absolute pleasure to have on the Bellingham Pet Supply team!"*

*- Jessica, The Manager of Bellingham Pet Supply*





Isaac celebrated his eleven-year anniversary working for Anvil Corporation – 40 employees showed up to have cake with Isaac and to express their gratitude for his hard work.

*“Try it, it’s a great experience for both the employee and the employer. You’ll get some great employees with lots of support.”*

– Bonnie Karb, Activities Director Avamere Bellingham Healthcare



*“Supported employment gives us the opportunity to give back to the community, creates a product that we need, and frees up labor here so that we can have people do more complex tasks.”*

– Dennis Imhoff, Production Manager Cascade Dafo



*“Grace has had a tremendous impact on our staff at Samuel’s Furniture. Not only is she dependable and consistent, she is one of the hardest working people that we have ever met. On top of that, she brings laughter, positive energy, and overwhelming kindness to our staff every single day.”*

– Lauren Small, Office Manager Samuels Furniture Store





# EMPLOYER OF THE QUARTER

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**WALMART**



Cascade Connections is pleased to announce that our Employer of the Quarter for Fall 2018 is the Walmart in Bellingham, WA.

Walmart has employed many participants of Cascade Connections' Vocational program over the years. Each of the applicants hired has had unique interests, skills, and abilities. Walmart has been able to work with Cascade Connections to assess each individual and find the position that would work best for them.

Recently, Walmart has hired six Cascade Connections applicants, including Tia. Tia has been working at Walmart since June 2018. She works in the apparel department, sorting clothes, straightening clothing, and handling go-backs. Tia has been highly appreciated by management because she is always working and she asks for additional tasks when she finishes the tasks she was doing.

When asked how she likes working at Walmart, Tia said "It's been great, I love it! I enjoy working with different clothing departments like young girls and boys and baby clothes. I also like working in shoes. Walmart has been great about scheduling me within my hours and the management is really nice too."

Kevin, who works in Human Resources at the Bellingham Walmart, said that he appreciates that Cascade Connections takes time to support applicants in finding





jobs that will be a good fit, and filling out job applications.

When asked about how Cascade Connections participants such as Tia add value to the business, Kevin commented that Cascade Connections participants bring a lot of unique skills and benefits to the workforce. "They definitely broaden the horizons of people working within Walmart. We've had numerous Cascade Connections participants in the past, and they've moved up. I've seen various people graduate to not needing a job coach because they're successful at their job. There's a lot of value in the business because it promotes diversity and equity."

Kevin says that he thinks other businesses should be open to trying supported

employment. "Other businesses should give it a try. It has been very successful for us!"

Thank you to Walmart for your commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce. Together we are creating opportunities for everyone.







A Child's Life Learning Center has been chosen as Cascade Connections' Employer of the Quarter - Spring 2018.

For several years, A Child's Life Learning Center, located in ALife Church on Meridian Street has partnered with Cascade Connections, giving several Cascade Connections' customers a

chance to not only experience informational interviews and site tours, but the opportunity to grow into professional childcare workers.

A Child's Life Learning Center's vision includes creating a community-oriented environment where children are respected, nurtured, encouraged, and valued. They have a total of eight classrooms and serve children ranging in age from 12 months to 5 years.

The Director and Supervisor of A Child's Life, Elaine Price, has been with the learning center for two years. She is very hands on and stresses the importance of children getting positive interaction and love. She tells Cascade Connections that she is very pleased with the Cascade applicant that she hired in 2016. After completing all Washington State required certifications and classes, along with a background check, that particular worker signed up to volunteer at A Child's Life to get hands on work experience. Elaine was so impressed with her skills and attitude that she decided to hire her as a support staff, and she thinks it was a good decision. "Our Cascade employee fits in and has been very reliable, available, teachable, and faithful to our center and the needs of the kids and teachers. She's a great team player."

Elaine said, "Cascade Connections provided job screening and training. Chris from Cascade was amazing at always checking in to see how things were going and if our employee needed help with anything." Elaine has valued the partnership between A Child's Life and Cascade Connections. "Everyone deserves a chance to do what they love!"





Thank you, A Child's Life Learning Center for partnering with Cascade Connections, honoring diversity in your business, and providing quality jobs for people with disabilities!

Here are quotes from the Cascade Connections' customers who are employed at the A Child's Life.

"I have enjoyed watching and learning from great workers like Cynthia, Aly, and Rebecca. I've worked there for 2 years and I've grown so much as an employee. I enjoy working with children and I'm excited to go to work each day! I've wanted to work with children since high school."

"I feel like Cascade helps me if I have any issues; they help me find solutions."



## THOSE THAT ARE DOING IT RIGHT!

Since 2005, Cascade has been selecting employers in our community who are doing it right by honoring them with what is known as the Employer of the Quarter. In order to be selected by our team as the employer of the quarter these employers have had to have made an impact on our mission. They have helped us to empower individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life by providing them the opportunity for meaningful employment.

What does it mean to do it right? It means these employers have been open to looking at their hiring practices a little differently. They have been willing to work with our employment consultants to create partnerships that will benefit their business and our applicants. Together we are changing the face of employment in our community.

Please join us in thanking all of the former recipients of the Employer of the Quarter in Whatcom County for helping us to provide Opportunities for Everyone.

***A Child's Life Learning Center***  
***Among Friends Adult Family Homes***  
***Anvil Corporation***  
***Avamere Bellingham Healthcare***  
***BAAY***  
***Bellingham Pet Supply***  
***Cascade DAFO***  
***Costco***  
***Denny's***  
***Downtown Bellingham Partnership***  
***Family Care Network***  
***Fred Meyer***  
***Haggen Food & Pharmacy***

***Hannegan Home and Farm***  
***Marlin's Auto Service***  
***Marshalls***  
***Millard Mall Services***  
***Northwest Health Care Linen***  
***Rusty Wagon***  
***Safeway***  
***Samuel's Furniture***  
***Soy House***  
***Target***  
***Walmart***  
***Whatcom Transportation Authority***  
***WFC Country Store***

# EMPLOYER NEWS

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## ALCOA FOUNDATION GRANT



Cascade Connections received the great honor of becoming a recipient of an Alcoa Foundation Grant in 2018. The Alcoa Foundation invests where Alcoa has a presence, partnering with communities to address local needs in a sustainable manner. With their nonprofit partners, they contribute to environmental excellence, economic success, and social responsibility around the globe.

Cascade Connections sought funding to expand an interviewing skills workshop (ISW) program in Whatcom County. People with disabilities have historically been marginalized and excluded from meaningful participation in the community. Societal attitudes, segregated living, and limited educational opportunities created a world of isolation for many.

People with disabilities are no different than anyone else. Everyone wants to live a life where their hopes and dreams can be fulfilled. Employment opportunities allow people to be a part of their community, make friends, earn money and become a contributing tax payer. Although there is a shift to provide more opportunities, there continues to exist fewer employment opportunities for people with disabilities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017, 18.7 percent of persons with a disability were employed. In contrast, the employment-population ratio for those without a disability was 65 percent. People with disabilities want to be a part of the workforce. Work provides not only a paycheck, but self-worth, relationships, and a feeling of contributing to the world.

Cascade Connections had relied on support from individual donors to fund this program previously. The results of this workshop have helped support individuals with disabilities to gain confidence and the skills needed to find employment.

The interviewing skills workshop consists of a six-week course focusing on the interviewing process. This series of classes is designed to help the people that attend to better compete with other applicants in the job market.

People attending these classes learn:

- How to answer common interview questions
- How to clearly communicate abilities, skills, and job experience
- What is appropriate to say and not to say during a job interview
- How to cope with stress
- How to increase self-image and self-confidence "from the inside out"
- Social skills, listening skills, appropriate language, and body language

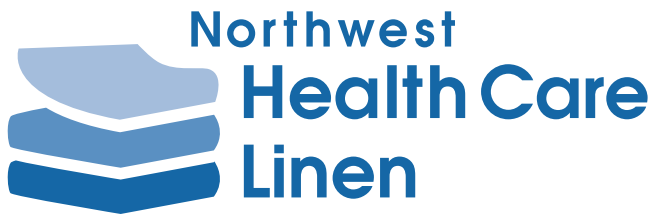
Students are provided an opportunity to perform two mock interviews as a “dress rehearsal”. Local businesses volunteer their time to provide the interviews. Students are provided with life experience and immediate feedback from real employers.

By involving the community businesses in the interviewing classes we have seen the following outcomes:

- Employers meet applicants they may not have considered
- Employers develop personal relationships
- Employers involved set up job shadows and work experiences
- Exposure to people with disabilities builds networks of new applicants
- People with disabilities find employment in our community

Cascade Connections would like to thank Alcoa Foundation for their generous grant to expand this program. We would also like to thank the many community businesses who have participated in the Interviewing Skills Workshop mock interviews.

### **LIFETIME PARTNERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT**



Cascade Connections honors Northwest Health Care Linen as our first lifetime partnership award recipient! Each quarter Cascade Connections selects a local employer who supports our mission to “Empower individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of

life.” Northwest Health Care Linen is in a league of its own and has gone above and beyond in their partnership with Cascade Connections by embracing our mission as if it was their own.

Northwest Health Care Linen was founded in 1992. President and CEO, Jim Hall had previously owned an extended-care center equipped with its own on-site laundry. Through gaining a reputation for providing unsurpassed linen service, Jim uncovered the regional need for a medical-only laundry service and established Northwest Health Care Linen.

As a leader in the industry, we’re focused on providing the best in customer satisfaction and the best in company and environmental performance. With careful attention to detail, quality and service, they continue to grow significantly as a business and with the services we offer.

Cascade Connections began working with Northwest Health Care Linen twenty years ago. The partnership began with one applicant and one job. The vocational department of Cascade Connections and supported employment in general was relatively a new concept to Whatcom County in 1996. This did not stop the leadership from moving forward in creating a customized position for one young lady with a visual impairment. This included providing a small inexpensive reasonable accommodation of taping white

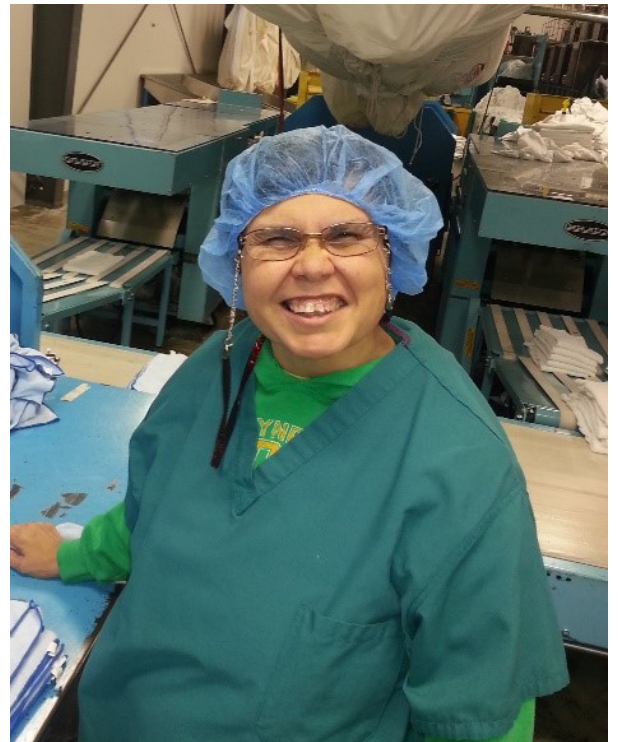




lines along the floor for our applicant to use in navigating her way to the work station. Her job description included stacking washcloths and other linen, a job that typically had high turnover. Cascade Connections was able to support this hiring process and reduced the turnover costs for this position considerably. Since that time this partnership has resulted in employment for dozens of people with disabilities over the past two decades.

The leadership at Northwest Health Care Linen has remained dedicated to providing a quality work environment for all of their employees, including those people with disabilities. It has been a pleasure to grow with a small local business. This growth was never more evident than in 2002 when the Bellingham facility underwent a significant remodel, tripled in size, and gained the ability to process laundry with greater efficiency and resource conservation. Equipment and technology began to change some of the processes within their facility. This did not change the dedication to their partnership with Cascade Connections.

Jim Hall states, "we have had some great job coaches. We have been very fortunate to have very responsible and receptive coaches. They listen to our management and really work with us in accomplishing our goals." One of those dedicated Cascade Connections job coaches is Drew Jamison. Drew has supported Cascade Connections partnership for many years. He says, "I am grateful to Jim Hall, Rob Burton (plant manager) and all of the employees at Northwest Health Care Linen for the consideration and care. There is a genuine partnership where we seek to meet their business needs with our applicants. They have truly provided opportunities for everyone."



"You will find no more enthusiastic employees than people with disabilities. They are so happy to have jobs, to have a paycheck. When they come in in the morning they are happy to be at work," Jim said. When asked what is the best part about working with Cascade Connections Jim had this to say. "The benefit of feeling like you're helping out your community. I didn't realize it would feel as good as it feels. It's a very very big plus."

Thank you Northwest Health Care Linen for your lifetime partnership with Cascade Connections.

# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO HAVE EMPLOYED SOMEONE THROUGH CASCADE CONNECTIONS IN 2018

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## PAID JOBS

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- A Child's Life Learning Center
- Adult Care Lynden (Dahlia House)
- Adult Care Lynden (Front St. House)
- AES Transportation
- Alcoa Intalco Works
- Alignment Brakes Plus
- Alzheimer's Society
- Anvil
- Appel Farms
- Avamere Bellingham Healthcare Center
- BAAY
- Barlean's
- Bellingham Pet Supply
- Bellingham Promotional Products
- Big Fresh Media
- Big Lots
- Bookkeeping Solutions
- Cascade Dafo
- Cascade Supported Living
- Connections Christian Store
- Connections SLP
- Costco
- DDA
- Endless Potential
- Evergreen Supported Living
- Fast Cap
- Five Guys Burgers and Fries
- Fred Meyer Bakerview
- Fred Meyer Lakeway
- Generations Early Learning and Family Center
- Gym Star
- Haggen Ferndale
- Hardware Sales
- Homestead Fitness Center
- Liquidation Car Co.
- Lynden Door
- Management Services NW (Northstar Medical)
- McDonald's (Telegraph)
- NAPA Auto Parts (Sumas)
- Pete's Auto Repair
- Ross
- Rude's Auto
- Rusty Wagon
- Safeway (Lynden)
- Samuel's Furniture
- Senior Support Services
- Service Alternatives
- St. Francis of Bellingham
- Steve's Sweet Shop (Self-Employment)
- Tangled Threads Quilt Shop
- The Green Barn
- The Jamison's (Private weeding)
- TJ Maxx
- Tonja's Stones (Self-Employment)
- Trader Joe's
- United Church of Ferndale
- Unity Spiritual Center
- Walmart

## CONTRACT JOBS

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- 12th Street Shoes
- Barkley Crew
- Bellingham Food Bank
- Cascade Connections Office (State Street)
- CC Laundry
- Checkmate Pawn
- Christ Church
- City of Bellingham
- Department of Homeland Security
- East Whatcom Regional Resource Center
- FaithLife
- First Christian Church
- FlowServe
- General Service Administration (Border)
- IdentiGo Fingerprinting
- Landmark Property Management
- Max Higbee Center
- MGM Solutions, Inc.
- NWHCL
- Ohio Street Properties
- Opportunity Council
- Pacific Continental Reality, LLC
- Rebound of Whatcom County
- Son-Rise Property Management
- WorkSource

# CONTACT INFORMATION



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## CASCADE CONNECTIONS ADMIN OFFICE

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Website ..... [www.cascadeconnections.org](http://www.cascadeconnections.org)

## SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

Facebook (Cascade Connections) .....		<a href="#">cascadeconnections</a>
Facebook (Hamster Events) .....		<a href="#">HamsterEvents</a>
Instagram .....		<a href="#">cascade_connections</a>
LinkedIn .....		<a href="#">cascadeconnections</a>
YouTube .....		<a href="#">Search for "Cascade Connections"</a>