

FitEvo Wins Cascade Connections' Employer of the Quarter for Fall 2023!



Congratulations to supportive employer FitEvo, the winner of our Employer of the Quarter award this season!

Located on Iowa Street in Bellingham, FitEvo has been in business since the late 1990s. This spacious, locally owned and operated fitness center focuses on creating affordable ways for people to improve health. For an unusually low monthly membership fee, gym users get access to a wide array of fitness classes as well as the usual free weights and fitness equipment. The gym also features personal training opportunities, a kid's club, a smoothie bar, and a cardio theater where you can watch movies during your workout!

Best of all, FitEvo employs Josh and Larry, both of whom receive vocational services from Cascade Connections. Josh cleans and sanitizes machines and other high-touch areas, and Larry cleans the locker rooms and cardio deck. Josh and Larry also contribute substantially to the positive workplace culture at FitEvo.

According to Josh's Cascade Connections job coach Jackie, FitEvo "has really fostered a supportive and inclusive environment for all its employees, including Josh. It's clear that he feels a part of the team as much as he is! As a job coach, one of the best parts of the shift is seeing him and his coworkers help each other out, joke around, and have a good time."

This past August, FitEvo and Josh assisted Cascade Connections with advocacy by hosting State Senator Sharon Shewmake during her tour of FitEvo to learn more about supported employment. Josh got to meet Senator Shewmake, show her what he does for work, and give her an idea about how supported employment works.

FitEvo has been very supportive of both Josh and Larry as they grow and learn on the job. Josh's other job coach, Abi, recalls how "back in the summer months, Josh asked for additional tasks during his shift. His coworker Avery helped create a new task list for Josh and even laminated it!"



Meanwhile, according to Larry's job coach, Riley, "Fitness Evolution has played a pivotal role in creating a workplace culture that is conducive to Larry's personal and professional growth." When Cascade Connections approached Larry's manager, Jerad, with ideas for how Larry could work more independently, Jerad replied affirmatively: "Well, isn't that the goal?!" Jerad has encouraged Larry's growth by attending meetings to discuss fading plans with Larry and his job coaches that will help foster more independence at work.

FitEvo's inclusive culture was in evidence on Larry's birthday a couple months ago, when his coworkers went out of their



way to appreciate him with cupcakes, a birthday song, and even an announcement over the loudspeaker. When we posted about this celebration on our social media, FitEvo commented: “We had a great time celebrating Larry on his birthday! And we appreciate his hard work, quick wit, and playful banter about sports teams!”

Cascade Connections Employment Consultant Rhiannon emphasizes the FitEvo management team’s impressive dedication to creating a positive and accommodating work environment: “when complications arose with Larry’s work routine or schedule, the management team

has truly shown that they care about their employees. Jerad and Avery have worked with Larry and Cascade staff as a team, showing compassion, kindness, and a desire to make sure everyone feels heard, comfortable, and safe.”

When asked about FitEvo’s partnership with us, Jerad replied: “It is an absolute honor working with Cascade Connections to help employ amazing individuals, Josh and Larry. The relationships we have built with them, and the inclusive environment that our entire staff helps promote, ensure that our Cascade Connections team members and partners feel supported and valued! Our business and the culture of our gym wouldn’t be the same without them!”

As Cascade Connections job coach Riley put it, “FitEvo offers a great example of what inclusion and empowerment can look like for the people we serve.” Thank you, FitEvo, for setting an example for other local businesses! We look forward to a continued partnership with you.

THOSE THAT ARE DOING IT RIGHT!

Since 2005, Cascade Connections has recognized local employers who are “doing it right” in their hiring of employees with disabilities. Employers who receive this recognition have contributed substantially to Cascade Connections’ mission. By offering meaningful employment, these local partners have helped us to empower individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life.

What does it mean to do it right? Our recognized employers have been open to looking at their hiring practices a little differently. In collaboration with our employment consultants, these employers have formed partnerships that benefit business and support our applicants. By working together, we have changed the face of employment in our community.

Please join us in thanking all of Whatcom County’s current and former employer recognition recipients for helping Cascade Connections to provide opportunities for everyone.

A Child’s Life Learning Center	Costco	Hannegan Home and Farm	Soy House
Among Friends Adult Family Homes	Denny’s	Justesen Industries Inc.	Target
Anvil Corporation	Downtown Bellingham Partnership	Marlin’s Auto Service	The Seedlings Early Learning Center
Avamere Bellingham Healthcare	Elenbaas Country Store	Marshalls	Walmart
BAAY	Family Care Network	Millard Mall Services	Whatcom Transportation Authority
Bellingham Pet Supply	FastCap	Northwest Health Care Linen	WFC Country Store
Burlington	FitEvo	Rusty Wagon	Woods Coffee
Cascade DAFO	Fred Meyer	Safeway	
Connections Speech Language Pathology	Haggen	Samuel’s Furniture	

Cascade Connections Vocational Services has been providing employment services throughout Whatcom County since 1992. We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce. Join us to create opportunities for everyone. For more information, contact us at **360-647-9087** or visit our website at: cascadecconnections.org/vocational-services