



## Samantha's Story



Meet Samantha, a 14-year-old who receives support from Cascade Connections Home Care program. Samantha loves caring for animals, building LEGOs, and playing games with her sisters. She also enjoys exploring movies, books, and

games at the library, and she appreciates having stories read aloud to her by her family members. Samantha's communication methods include speaking, signing, and using a ProLoquo2Go communication device. Cascade Connections Home Care staff currently support Samantha twice a week as she works on important personal care and life skills.

Although her life is rich with activities and relationships today, Samantha faced significant adversity for much of her life. Having entered the foster care system at a young

age, Samantha lived in nearly two dozen homes before finding a placement in 2020, at age 12, with foster parents Allison and Gregory Hill and their daughters, Madison, Emma, and Dakota. Allison and Gregg both work for Cascade Connections – Allison is our Training Director, and Gregg is an Assistant Program Coordinator in our Supported Living program and a Teacher at a local school district. The Hills' considerable experience with supporting people with disabilities really helped Samantha integrate into their family. It took some time to secure DDA support and other services during the pandemic, but the Hills were able to officially begin the adoption process in early 2021.



Having experienced, supportive parents and three awesome sisters has been great for Samantha. She loves playing video games with her sister Madison, and she recently enjoyed having a hot chocolate and game night with her sister Emma. Samantha and her sister Dakota are both in 9th grade this year, so they get to share the new high school experience together! Building these family relationships has given Samantha – perhaps for the first time – an ongoing sense of normalcy and connection.



*Continued on page 2*

*Continued from page 1*

In March of 2021, Samantha began receiving Cascade Connections Home Care services. Staff work with her on practical skills as well as social and emotional skills. During beloved outings to Starbucks and Petco (where she loves to buy toys and pup cups for her family dog, Olive), Samantha works with staff on learning money management strategies and budgeting. She is now comfortable enough to carry her own purse containing money and her Starbucks card.



Samantha also likes attending events in the community to strengthen her communication and social skills. She has enjoyed going to the arcade with staff, and she recently attended an “Are You My Human?” event in Bellingham to play with puppies in a community setting. Staff have helped Samantha navigate these social interactions with other members of the community. Her mother



Allison reports that having additional emotional and social support from people outside her immediate family has been really helpful for Samantha.

Samantha has developed friendships of her own and played some school sports, including basketball and soccer. She participates in Special Olympics bowling, and she hopes to join the high school bowling team, which is coached by none other than her dad, Gregg! Samantha is also interested in joining the Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) Club at school. Her mom has gathered some D&D terms that they can put into Samantha’s Proloquo2Go communication device, which often helps Samantha to be more confident and interactive in social situations.

During her time with the Hills and with Cascade Connections Home Care services, Samantha has accomplished goals such as completing chores around the house, earning an allowance, and traveling to Disneyland! She continues to make progress daily with the help of Home Care staff and her adoptive family. Cascade Connections is very grateful to be part of Samantha’s success story.



## Thank You to Our Donors!

### Donations From Businesses:

Community Food Co-op, Environmental Pest Control, First Fed, Rusty Wagon Old Tyme Food, Harbor Lands Company, HUB International, Kroger, Oasys, Inc., Panda Restaurant Group, Scholten’s Equipment, Inc., Van Loo’s Auto Service, Van’s Plumbing and Electric, Inc., Whole Foods Market

### Donations from Foundations and Churches:

AmazonSmile Foundation, Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Haggen Foundation, Hope In Christ Church, Third Christian Reformed Church

### Memorial Donation in Memory of Sheila Anderson:

Ron Bronsema

**Special thanks to the dozens of other individuals and businesses who have donated since June 2022!**



# Alex Moves to Bellingham Supported Living



Bellingham's Supported Living team is excited to welcome Alex, an active, highly sociable young man who moved up to Bellingham from Rainier State School last month. Alex really anticipated the big day! During the preceding months, he had made several visits North to meet his roommate, socialize with support staff, and get a feel for the picturesque locales Bellingham has to offer.

Alex has been a great addition to the Bellingham Supported Living community. He loves to joke around and have fun! At the same time, he takes his tasks seriously and likes to keep busy. Exceedingly thorough in everything he undertakes, Alex enjoys cleaning, sorting, and recycling. In fact, he often looks up videos to research the industrial processes involved in creating and disposing of things. With a quick and curious mind, Alex doubtless has many promising vocational opportunities ahead of him!

When it comes recreation and relaxation, Alex frequently opts to visit local dog parks or play with his neighbor's pet bunnies. As this photo shows, he is absolutely delighted by animals! He also particularly enjoys scenic bodies of water such as waterfalls and the ocean, which makes



Bellingham a great place for him to live. Since the big move, each day has offered Alex a new chance at exploration.

Alex's principle mode of communication is through American Sign Language. While his support team works on building their ASL fluency, Alex is receiving daily interpretation services to help facilitate communication during this time of transition. Alex recently gained access to video-remote interpreting, a new tool that will take a bit of time for him to practice and master.



Interpreters have long been Alex's main lifeline to socialization, so naturally he often engages them with personal questions to chat and pass the time. With mentorship and modeling, CCSL staff hope to show Alex that the friendly interpreters on the screen also are able to facilitate his communication with others in his immediate environment. We are confident that Alex soon will be socializing easily

with anyone he wishes!

Alex will be sorely missed by the Rainier State School community, who are deeply saddened by his departure yet also thrilled by the possibilities that lie ahead for him. All of Alex's strongest advocates reached a confident consensus: building a new life in Bellingham will open up new avenues for Alex to explore and flourish. His supporters realized that the time had come to remove any barriers that would prevent him from spreading his wings.

Needless to say, Cascade Connections Supported Living Team in Bellingham is honored to play an integral part in the next steps in Alex's journey! We look forward to supporting him as he grows and thrives.

# Meleah Joins East Lynden Supported Living



a playful sense of humor and an empathetic nature that bring joy to those around her.

Meleah was born in 1980 and was moved between homes several times before being adopted at six months old. During her childhood years, Meleah faced significant health challenges and diagnoses. She attended countless medical appointments, was hospitalized many times, and underwent multiple unsuccessful surgeries. As adolescence approached, her mental health also suffered considerably. Her parents weathered years of crises, advocating hard for Meleah to receive behavioral support, therapy, and medical treatments that might help her.

Fortunately, Meleah's and her family's years of effort paid off, and she has come a long way since her difficult teen years. Her mental health has stabilized significantly and her verbal communication has increased. She is quick to laugh these days, and has greater flexibility and ability to problem-solve. In her free time, Meleah likes to grocery shop at Fred Meyer and go out to eat with friends. Meleah also loves searching Value Village for Baby Yoda and Barney stuffed animals to add to her impressive collection.

Home life is also going well for Meleah in her new Cascade Connections Supported Living environment. She lives with Kevin and Heather in East Lynden, and she and Heather have bonded over their shared love of *Full House*. On Heather's birthday in October, Meleah joined in singing

Cascade Connections' East Lynden Supported Living team is excited to introduce Meleah, a vibrant 42-year-old woman who began receiving services from us in August of this year. Meleah loves to dance, socialize, and shop. Despite having been through a lot in her 42

her Happy Birthday, which brought Heather much joy! Meanwhile, Kevin has been leading the household in karaoke nights with Meleah's karaoke machine, and this activity has evoked a lot of laughter. Very social by nature, Meleah loves having roommates and staff around. She likes using clever sayings, mannerisms, and funny nicknames to elicit responses from staff. She also likes to invite staff to come sit with her, and she often surprises them with new sentences, slang words and phrases, or spontaneous singing. Meleah's mother emphasizes how important staff are to Meleah's life: "They give her life structure, meaning, safety, comfort, friendship and much more [...] The value of that continuity of care is immeasurable."

Although she has lived independently from her family for many years now, Meleah makes a weekly visit to their home on Camano Island. On Sundays, the family enjoys pasta dinner and ice cream, after which Meleah cheerfully announces that she's ready to head home. As she has aptly stated on more than one occasion: "I am an independent lady!"

Meleah's mother told Cascade Connections: "We are amazed at Meleah, her ability to continue to show up and to spread her special life energy and endearing ways." We are grateful to Meleah's mother for providing context and insight into Meleah's life, and we look forward to learning more about Meleah in the days to come.



## E-Newsletter

You can get this newsletter in your email!

To sign up, go to:

[cascadeconnections.org/newsletters](https://cascadeconnections.org/newsletters)



## West Lynden Supported Living Community Enjoys October

Several individuals we serve in East Lynden participated in some new activities and events this fall. Eric visited “Are You My Human? Dog Rescue & Lounge”, a Bellingham lounge where people can visit with dogs and puppies who need loving attention and adoption. Eric didn’t hesitate to help out by snuggling with a pile of adorable puppies!



During the same month, Larry attended Buddy Fest, where he received a medal for completing the Buddy Walk. Larry also got a glitter tattoo, made some wonderful masks, and dropped by the Cascade Connections table to say hello. Later in October, our Supported Living team in West Lynden gathered for a Halloween costume party, which was attended by a distinguished series of guests including



a gingerbread man, a queen, a dinosaur, and Mark in his “2022 edition of my costume of sweet lovable me.”

We look forward to an equally fun and active holiday season in West Lynden this winter!

## Halloween at Cascade Connections!



# Types of Jobs Acquired by People We Serve Since 2020

Vocational Services works with Whatcom County businesses to find creative solutions that increase diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. We do this by providing employment services to people with disabilities in our community. We believe in creating opportunities for everyone. The following list is just a sampling of the 76 jobs acquired by those we serve during the last three years.

## Thank you to the businesses who have employed someone through Cascade Connections!

Industry	Employer	Job Title	Industry	Employer	Job Title
Administration	Hoagland Long Term Care Pharmacy	Office Assistant	Production	Lynden Hardware Company	Hardware Packager
Animals	Cat Nap Inn	Cat Care Assistant		Manpower	Laborer
Food Service	Café 544	Dishwasher		Northwest Health Care Linen	Production Worker
	Five Guys	Crew Member		Sourcing Northwest	Assembler
	The Newsroom Pub	Restaurant Worker		Ultimate Baker	Production Assistant
	Westside Pizza	Food Prep Worker	Retail	Burlington	Retail Associate
	Woods Coffee	Cafe Attendant		Dollar Tree	Cashier
Grocery	Fred Meyer	Courtesy Clerk; Overnight Stocker		JOANN Fabric and Crafts	Retail Associate
	Grocery Outlet	Cashier		Lowe's	Garden Department Associate
	Safeway	Courtesy Clerk		Marshalls	Greeter
Maintenance/Security	Elenbaas Country Store	Maintenance Worker		Rite Aid	Retail Associate
	Fitness Evolution	Custodian		Ross Dress For Less	Retail Associate
	Holiday Inn and Suites	Housekeeper		Tangled Threads Quilt Store	Retail Associate
	Pacific Security	Security Guard		Tractor Supply Co.	Retail Associate
	Ruckus Room	Custodian	Social Services	Adult Care Lynden	Activities Leader
	Semiahmoo Resort	Ground Crew		Mt. Baker Care Center	Dishwasher
Production	Bellinghome Builders, LLC	Carpenter Assistant		Orchard Park Assisted Living	Activities Assistant
	FastCap	Production Worker		The Seedlings Early Learning Center	Teacher Assistant; Kitchen Assistant
	Justesen Industries, inc.	Production Worker	Sports	Meridian High School	Assistant to Athletic Director
	Lithtex NW	Assembler		Park Bowl & Splitz Grille	Lane Attendant

## Classes for Caregivers, Home Care Aides, and Families

The Cascade Connections Training Center offers interactive, up-to-date online and in-person Home Care Aide (HCA) certification and Continuing Education (CE) training for caregivers, home care aides, and families. Our instructors are knowledgeable, experienced, and passionate about caregiving. Some of the courses available are:



- 75-Hour Home Care Aide (HCA) Certification Classes
- CPR/First Aid/AED (lead by American Red Cross Certified Instructors)
- Dementia Specialty Training
- Diabetes Specialty Training
- Mental Health Specialty Training
- Many Continuing Education (CE) Classes

To see the list of classes and register, go to: [cascadecconnections.org/training](https://cascadecconnections.org/training)



# Thank You for Supporting Our 2022 Wheelchair Van Fundraiser



We are thrilled to announce that we have reached our fundraising goal for the new wheelchair van, mostly thanks to a huge donation from **Haggen**! By donating \$42,750, Haggen single-handedly has supplied over 90% of the funds needed to purchase a wheelchair van. This is not the first time that Haggen has come through for Cascade Connections. Far from it! Haggen has donated toward our fundraisers for years. In fact, Haggen also made a huge donation toward the last wheelchair van we bought! Words cannot fully express what this kind of support means to us. THANK YOU, Haggen, for supporting Cascade Connections as we work to improve quality of life and community belonging for those we serve. Our community is so fortunate to have your generous support. We are looking forward to posting pictures together with the new van! More details about Haggen's donation and partnership will appear in our next newsletter.

We would also like to thank the following businesses, all of which also made donations during our 2022 Wheelchair Van Fundraiser: **Bellingham Community Food Co-Op, First Fed, Harbor Lands Company, HUB International, Rusty Wagon Old Tyme Food, Scholten's Equipment, Van Loo's Auto Service, Van's Plumbing and Electric, Inc., and WECU.** Many thanks to these businesses and to all individuals who have donated toward the new wheelchair van!

**Thank you, Haggen for Huge Support!**



**Thank you to these business that contributed to the wheelchair van fundraiser!**



**...and, thank you to all individuals who have donated for the wheelchair van!**

If you did not have a chance to donate during this fundraiser, don't worry: We still welcome your donations this holiday season! There's still time to **make general or specific donations** to support the Cascade Connections community. General donations really help our agency to function smoothly because they can be applied to our greatest needs of the moment. Or, if you prefer, you can designate your donation for a particular area or fund of your choice.

If you would like to meet specific, tangible needs of individuals we serve, consider purchasing something from the **Cascade Connections Wish-List**! Many of the people we serve are on a fixed income and a tight budget, which can make it difficult to afford some needed items. Our loyal community partner **CTK Bellingham** inspired us to create an **Amazon wish list** to make donating easier!

**Donate Here:** [cascadeconnections.org/donate](https://cascadeconnections.org/donate)  
**Our Wish-List:** [cascadeconnections.org/wish-list](https://cascadeconnections.org/wish-list)

Thank you for your generosity and support!

Please visit us on the web at  
[cascadeconnections.org](https://cascadeconnections.org)  
to learn more.



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#### Fall 2022 Newsletter

#### Cascade Connections

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## We Are Hiring!

View our current openings here:

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## Cascade Connections Achieves Top-Rated Nonprofit Status



Thanks to your reviews, Cascade Connections made it onto GreatNonprofits' Top-Rated Nonprofit List for 2022! Having Top-Rated status increases our exposure to donors, improves community loyalty, and provides us with powerful stories that we can use to gain support for our work. Thank you for empowering us to make a greater impact in our community!

If you missed a chance to write a review, you can still do so here:

<https://greatnonprofits.org/reviews/write/cascade-connections>



## Come Work with Us!

We have full-time and part-time jobs available, and we offer competitive wages, benefits, and flexible scheduling. Our new hires receive \$1,000 hiring bonuses (more details on our website)! Join our team and make a difference by empowering individuals with disabilities to enhance their quality of life!

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