



Jim Thrives in East Lynden Supported Living



Meet Jim, a thriving member of our Supported Living community in East Lynden! Jim has a great sense of humor and a zest for meeting new people. Cascade Connections marketing staff recently interviewed Jim and his care team to hear about his progress since joining Supported Living. Jim's proud team assisted him

in discussing his many successes, which include getting out in the community, meeting new people, job hunting, exercising, and gaining independence in various daily living activities.

During the two years prior to receiving Supported Living services, Jim was living a less social life due to the pandemic. He lived with his parents and received Home Care services before making the switch to Supported Living and moving in with his housemates, Kevin and Corey, in November of 2022.



As pandemic restrictions continued to lift, Jim's supported living staff began encouraging Jim to participate in community activities. At first, going out into the community was challenging for Jim. He had gotten used to his at-home routines and activities such as watching sports, eating his favorite foods, looking at comic books, and listening to Western musicians like Johnny Cash and Keith Urban.



However, although Jim dislikes the cold and can be a homebody at times, he also has a really fun, social side. His Supported Living care team has been assisting him in getting out and about and meeting new people. Over the last year or so, Jim has gone bowling, gone out to watch his roommates' band, and participated in various outings with friends at the Max Higbee Center. Additionally, Jim has taken many excursions to his favorite places, such as Dollar Tree and the Ruckus Room, where he loves to play Dance Dance Revolution!

Jim has also been exploring possible employment options with his Work Opportunities job coach, Thomas. On Saturdays, Jim and Thomas often walk around downtown Lynden looking for fun things to do and cool places to work. Jim already volunteers in the late afternoon on Mondays at the Lynden Museum, where he greets museum

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

patrons and points them in the right direction.

Jim has talked about also pursuing employment at places like Reset Games or the Arcade because he loves video games (especially Sonic & Knuckles and Dragon Ball II!). Jim and Thomas usually make a stop at the Lynden Library, another favorite spot of Jim's, during their Saturday forays into downtown Lynden.

These walks around town help Jim with his exercise goals as well. He also goes for walks at local parks, and last year, Jim, his roommate Kevin, and his neighbor Kem did some bike riding around their neighborhood in East Lynden. Some evenings, Jim, Kevin, and their neighbor James head over to Bender Fields with staff to shoot some hoops. On unfavorable weather days, Jim sometimes walks at the mall because he dislikes rain and snow.



Jim has really bonded with his care team, which includes Rita, Michael, Zack, Cheryl, and Senna. Jim likes drawing pictures with his staff, and many of them hang on his wall. Jim is very curious about other people and their families, and he loves hanging out with Rita's partner, Joe, whenever Joe stops by to fix something! Jim also relishes playing video games with staff. When Jim caught COVID back in 2022, he spent 60 straight hours with his staff! During Jim's recent interview, a caregiver commented, "Jim and I got to know each other really well – didn't we Jim?"

Jim also has gained more skills and independence around the house during his time in Supported Living. The stairs used to be a challenge for Jim, but he now navigates them

confidently. Jim picks out his clothes, opens doors for himself, and makes sure car doors are locked for safety! He has been working on his meal-prep skills as well. At meal times, he sets the table, gets food out of the fridge, and puts it on a plate.



Jim's family is pleased to see him flourishing in a Supported Living environment. Jim is very beloved by his parents, Maureen and Robert, his sisters, Katie and Erin, and his nephew and niece, and he always looks forward to visits with his family.

Maureen tells us that Jim's story has been a unique one from the beginning, since he has a rare chromosome-related disability. Jim received a lifesaving liver transplant at Children's Hospital in Seattle at age three, and various other physical issues appeared as time went on. However, it wasn't until twenty years later that Jim finally got a clear diagnosis: Smith-Magenis Syndrome, a developmental disability associated with the 17th chromosome.

Jim's mother, Maureen, says that "the most difficult part of Jim's early life was not knowing what he had" and that "learning about what my son lives with was enlightening!" She is grateful to Jim's magnificent medical team, as well as to Cascade Connections. Our East Lynden team told us that Maureen sometimes even bakes muffins for staff



Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

to show her appreciation for their support of Jim!

Maureen observes that “Jim is aware that he’s an adult, with loving adults to care for him. He loves his peers and is absolutely escalated with meeting new staff!” She adds, “I feel incredibly thankful for each staff person that works with my son. We’ve worked so hard to find a good fit for him. His needs are challenging at times. It takes time to learn how he will communicate with you.” Smith-Magenis Syndrome comes with anxiety, but Maureen reports: “Jim’s staff are learning to redirect and offer choice when those moments arrive. After our visits to Jim’s home, or when we see him in town with his friends at Max Higbee, I do feel comforted knowing he is being cared for.”

Maureen and Robert are glad to have Jim nearby while he grows in independence and they enjoy their new stage of life as grandparents to his sisters’ children. According to Maureen, “Our family remains grateful for knowing that

Jim lives close to us, that he is cared for and becoming the best that he can be. He loves where he is, and when we say goodbye after a visit, he is ready for me to go home, too.” When asked about her hopes for Jim’s future, Maureen replied: “I am hopeful that he will be with Cascade as long as he can.”

Needless to say, Cascade Connections is, in turn, very grateful that we get to support Jim! We look forward to watching him continue to pursue his goals, develop new skills, and build relationships for many years to come.



Cascade Connections Annual Picnic

Many of our staff, the individuals we serve, and their families attended our annual Cascade Connections Picnic at Pioneer Park in Ferndale in August! We were grateful for the relatively mild temperatures this year as our community spent three lovely hours connecting with one another, playing lawn games, tie-dying T-shirts, and eating BBQ and dessert from Ferndale businesses Tradewinds Catering and Sugar Shack Ice Cream. Many attendees walked away with raffle prizes, and lots of fun photos were

snapped! Out of the Ashes were booked elsewhere this year, but musical Cascade Connections staff member Scott T. (known as “DJ WeForgot” in his other professional life) provided great music – including a few sing-along songs!

Many thanks to our team of picnic volunteers – you all did such an amazing job making this a fun event for our community and helping everything run smoothly!



Introducing Lindsey



"I want people to know I am kind and gentle," Lindsey says, as she sits on her couch surrounded by her new housemates and staff. As the newest addition to the West Lynden Supported Living program, there is a lot Lindsey would like people to know about her – most importantly, that she is proud of who she is. "I have Down Syndrome," she says, "21 chromosomes, which makes me rare and special. So every March 21st, my mom and I get ice cream to celebrate my 21 chromosomes."

Lindsey also wants people to know that communication and connection mean a lot to her. She has been using American Sign Language since she was three years old and combines it with written and spoken words to connect with those around her. Lindsey's family is important to her, and Sunday morning church with her parents and weekend sleepovers at her sister's are some of her favorite activities. When asked how it's been to move out of her family's home and into a new place, Lindsey replied: "At first, it was hard, but my family helped a lot!"

Lindsey also really values community. She enjoys volunteering at her church and interacting with customers at her job at the Lynden Safeway. In her free time, Lindsey often meets people and makes friends while playing on the Special Olympics bowling and basketball teams and attending the Max Higbee Center.



Since moving into her new house in June of 2024, Lindsey has been building friendships with her housemates. One of the first things Lindsey wanted to add to the house

was a bigger dining room table so that everyone could eat together. She and her housemates also decided to get patio chairs so they can sit outside on the porch and enjoy the warm weather. Lindsey has bonded with one of her housemates over their shared interest in creating artwork. Lindsey also enjoys singing and Disney movies, and every Friday night is now movie night for the housemates, who meet up in one of their bedrooms and watch one of Lindsey's many movies.



Lindsey has bonded with our staff as well, especially while participating in community activities together. On her birthday in June, Lindsey attended a Bellingham Bells game and got to throw the first pitch! Other fun summer excursions included a couple of West Lynden Supported Living BBQs, the Cascade Connections annual picnic, and the Northwest Washington Fair where she donned a cowboy hat and participated in the Rascal Rodeo.



Lindsey's goals for this fall include creating more relationships in the community and learning more about baking and cooking. A fan of the fall and cooler weather, Lindsey likes to go to harvest festivals and do crafts, and she's thinking of joining a bowling league. Lindsey's Cascade Connections team is very excited to witness and support Lindsey as she pursues all these goals and more. Welcome, Lindsey!

Pickford Film Center Wins Employer of the Quarter for Summer 2024



Cascade Connections is pleased to announce Pickford Film Center in Bellingham as the chosen recipient of our Employer of the Quarter for Summer 2024! The Pickford has been a Bellingham staple for nearly three decades and offers independent, international, and documentary film, plus related special events throughout the year. The Pickford's mission is to provide a forum and resource for independent cinema, strengthening community through education, dialogue, and the celebration of film. True to their values, the film center is also an inclusive employer of Cascade Connections' customer Matthew, who joined the Pickford team in January of 2024.

Currently a weekend janitor at the Pickford, Matthew has dreams of eventually becoming a movie-screen cleaner who cleans and maintains film projectors. Matthew hopes that working at the Pickford will bring him closer to reaching this goal some day, but in the meantime, he is focused on excelling in his current role. He told us: "My favorite part of my job at the Pickford is that it doesn't involve any customer service, so I can stay focused on my work and have minimal disruptions."

The Pickford has proven a great work environment for Matthew so far, and he is flourishing there. Matthew's Cascade Connections job coach Kate observes that "it has been incredible to see Matthew's work continue to improve each week. He has taken on this new role with

confidence and determination, and I have no doubt that he will continue to grow in his role."

The Pickford's Staff & Projection Manager, Skyler Hunt, echoes Kate's praise: "Matthew picked up the job quickly (no small feat in this space), and he clearly takes pride in and ownership over what he does. He's also easy to talk to and has a great sense of humor – he said something about "choosing not to make [himself] a road hazard" during our last meeting that had the table breathless for a solid minute! Matthew also has a sense of clarity and focus that I wish I could channel on hectic days. We're happy to have him on the team."

The Pickford's Assistant Manager, Jason Walker, says: "Matthew is a pleasure to work with here at the theater. I enjoy talking with him whenever I get the opportunity, he is always trying to find ways to improve his work. He is very clear about wanting to meet expectations and is seeking clarity on expectations in return. He has a very unique style and I am glad he is here on Sunday morning when I come in. I do wish he could make it in to see more movies!"



Matthew's job coach Kate appreciates that "The Pickford has been very supportive and encourages Matthew to continue to take ownership of his job. His supervisors check in with him frequently to discuss how he is doing and always have great feedback." Kate is grateful that they can always count on clear and concise communication from The Pickford: "I am met with a smile and warm welcome each time I have a chance to meet a new employee/volunteer. They seem to have a pretty incredible team of people." Kate adds: "Skyler and Jason are consistently offering opportunities to help Matthew grow in his role, whether that be through coverage shifts or alternate tasks. Their dedication has not gone unnoticed."

Continued on page 6

Tanya Tjoelker, an Assistant Program Coordinator for our Vocational team, shares that “The Pickford has been a great community partner to work with in support of Cascade’s mission of opportunities for all. Not only did they take the leap to hire Matthew this year, but they also hosted a work experience for a student exploring career options last fall, and welcomed a weekly volunteer supported by Cascade from 2012-2023. Skyler, Jason, Lesley, and everyone else at the Pickford have embraced our customers for who they are and shown incredible encouragement, flexibility, and support.”

The Pickford staff have expressed mutual enthusiasm about partnering with Cascade Connections. Skyler told us: “I’d like to shout out Matthew’s job coaches, Kate, Julie, and Tanya, all of whom have been delightful to work with. They’ve gone above and beyond working with Matthew on (sometimes very) early weekend days, helping him best utilize his resources, and facilitating clear communication. They’re also just so dang friendly. This is my first experience employing a Cascade Connections client – the Pickford has worked with clients as volunteers since long before my time – and I wouldn’t hesitate to do so again were the right opportunity to arise.”

Our Vocational Services

Since 1992, Cascade Connections has created more than 1,070 employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Whatcom County.

Join other employers who value respect and inclusion! All services are at no cost to a business.

**For more details, please
call us at: 360-647-9087**



You can sign up to receive this newsletter in your inbox!

cascadeconnections.org/newsletters



Paul volunteered with Pickford Film Center through Cascade Connections Community Inclusion Program for several years.

Support a Business That Support Cascade Connections!

Did you know that Pickford Film Center is known for showing the best independent, foreign, and documentary films including movies about disabilities? We encourage you to visit their website and check out what’s showing this month at:

<https://www.pickfordfilmcenter.org>

Thank You to Our Donors!

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Special thanks to the dozens of individuals who have donated since June 2024!

Major Technology Upgrades Happening at Cascade Connections!



Through the advocacy of our Cascade Connections Board of Directors President, Scott Duffey, and the technical assistance of our tech team, Cascade Connections got an amazing deal on a large batch of new Dell computers, thin clients, monitors, and laptops this year! This computer upgrade has been a long

time in coming and will create more ease and efficiency in essential agency functions.

The new computers have Windows 11, the most accessible and inclusive version of all Windows operating systems. Windows 11 accessibility features are easier to locate and set up than previous operating systems were. Designed to support productivity, creativity, and ease-of-use for people

with disabilities, these accessibility features include vision, hearing, and interaction accessibility.

In addition, we have implemented new phone systems and upgraded our Internet service. The new phone systems come with accessibility features such as larger fonts and text-to-speech options. Each phone also comes with a direct number, making it easier and more efficient for clients and guardians to contact staff members. Fiber Optic Internet is much faster and will greatly increase the reliability of accessing web-based applications that our staff use to support clients.

These technology upgrades are an important step in making our agency more accessible and inclusive. Many, many thanks to Scott, our amazing Technical Support Specialist, Michael, and our contract Network Engineer, Doug, who have been working patiently and tirelessly to setup, install, and maintain all the new equipment!

Training Team Visits Local Assistive Technology Resource Center



Earlier this year, Cascade Connections Training Center staff visited WWU Woodring College of Education's Ershig Assistive Technology Resource Center (EATRC), which houses well over a thousand low-tech to high-tech support tools for students and community members to try out!

Anyone can drop into the EATRC during their open hours to ask questions, try out various technologies, borrow an item for a month (with the option to renew), or get help with using individuals' own assistive devices or features. You can search the EATRC's Lending Library ahead of time by following the instructions on the website, where you

can also find their open hours* and contact information: <https://wce.wvu.edu/e-atrc>

*Note that the EATRC is closed during summer and all other WWU-recognized holidays and breaks.



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Fall 2024 Newsletter

Cascade Connections

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We Are Hiring!

View our current openings here:
bit.ly/cascadejobs

Help Us Reach Our Fundraising Goals!

This year, we are raising funds to renovate our group home, Cascade Christian Home (CCH). We have asked for our community's support in raising \$120,000 to improve accessibility for CCH. So far, we have raised nearly \$95,000! Thank you!

Some CCH residents — particularly those in wheelchairs — require more accessible accommodations, and the current bathrooms and laundry room layout has limited their independence. Personal tasks, like washing their hands or folding their laundry, currently require support from staff. With increased accessibility, these tasks could be completed without assistance.

The proposed improvements include: installing new sinks, mirrors, cabinets, and countertops in the bathrooms as well as installing new counters, a new sink and new washer/dryer sets in the laundry room. These renovations will greatly enhance the quality of life for individuals in our group home.



We are so close to our goal — Please consider contributing to help us raise the remaining \$25,000!

♥ **DONATE** ♥

<https://cascadeconnections.org/donate>