



## Cascade Christian Home Receives an Update Inside and Out



It has been a season of growth and change at Cascade Christian Home (CCH). Over the course of 2024, CCH was a construction zone, a volunteer hub, and a film set. They also hosted the best Halloween Party in Whatcom County!



and new members have joined the household. Several current residents use wheelchairs exclusively, and in order to meet their needs and prioritize their independence, the home required renovations.

Cascade Christian Home was Cascade Connections' first program. Built in 1980, it was designed to serve up to twelve residents. Back then, none of the residents used wheelchairs. However, over the years, many of the home's original residents have aged

Cascade Connections' Board of Directors determined that the upgrades, focused on the bathrooms and laundry room, would cost approximately \$120,000. Cascade Connections prioritized fundraising for this project for the 2024 fiscal year.

In order to highlight the need for the improvements and raise funds, a short video was made to demonstrate just how the existing layout was impacting the residents of CCH. "With the current bathrooms and laundry rooms, individuals can't be independent even if they want to because of the physical barriers that are there," said Cascade Connections' Executive Director Allison Hill during the filming.

In the bathrooms, individuals in wheelchairs were not



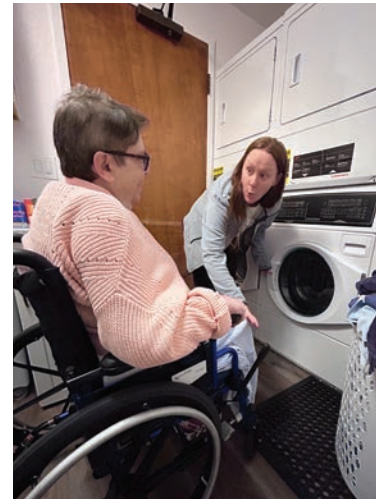


able to fully wheel themselves under the sink to perform personal care tasks independently. According to CCH Assistant Site Manager, Katie Buckley, “Even simple tasks were difficult because of our previous set-up.” The new sinks and counters allow individuals in wheelchairs to wheel completely under the counter and fully access the sink. The new mirrors are placed at a lower height so that seated individuals are able to see themselves while performing personal care tasks.

The laundry facilities were also completely inaccessible to residents in wheelchairs, so the layout needed to be reconfigured to allow entry. This required replacing the existing washers and dryers with stackable units to free up additional floor space. A new stainless steel utility sink

with sprayer was installed as well as a folding counter that allows residents to fully roll up and fold their clothes independently.

“The renovations have made daily tasks very successful, especially with one-on-one care,” said Amanda, a Direct Support Professional who has worked in the group home for many years. She went on to say, “It’s a joy to see the residents have a safe space to go about their daily routines.”



## This Is What Community Looks Like



In addition to the interior renovations, volunteers from CTK Bellingham transformed the property of Cascade Christian Home into an accessible paradise, complete with an ADA path, a brand-new gazebo and some fresh landscaping.

Each year, volunteers from CTK Bellingham reach out to Cascade Christian Home to see what kinds of projects need to be completed around the group home. Last year, they asked CCH Area Manager, Tara Boeckholt, “If you had a dream, what would it look like?” Luckily Tara had something in mind! “My dream would be to have a gazebo for the clients to sit under in the backyard and then a wheelchair path that accesses the gazebo and goes around the house to another patio area.”

More than 20 volunteers from CTK Bellingham worked hard to make that dream a reality. Over the month of September, they graded and installed a new ADA path, built a new patio, and installed a new gazebo. They



**Thank You to the CTK Bellingham Volunteers!**

also gave the exterior of the CCH a complete overhaul: removing overgrown shrubbery, mulching the garden beds and doing some serious weeding. “Thanks to their efforts, everyone – regardless of mobility – can enjoy the backyard and shade of the gazebo,” said Katie Buckley, Assistant Site Manager.

According to Tara Boeckholt, it was a joy to have the volunteers working at CCH. “They’re wonderful people to have around and many of the volunteers come back year after year.” In addition to their hard work, CTK Bellingham also made a generous financial contribution toward the project.

The generosity of our broader community also helped to make this project a reality.

Many businesses and community members made generous contributions to this project. This work could not have been completed without donations from Stremmer Gravel, Van Loo’s Auto Service, Lynden Lions Club, Lynden Service Center, Haggen, Baker Silo and Microsoft’s Employee

Giving Program.

In addition to financial contributions, a few local businesses donated materials and labor. Rachel and Austin Harris from North Cascade Interiors and North Cascade Builders provided the cabinetry at cost and coordinated all of the bathroom renovations. Stone Pros, LLC donated and installed the new countertops and Vander Griend Lumber donated and installed the new mirrors.

Scott Duffey (Cascade Connections Board President) helped to coordinate with contractors and other vendors to keep costs down, and Tara Boeckholt acted as the project manager during the interior renovations, ensuring accessibility at each stage of the process.

“With heartfelt gratitude, we thank our incredible community for their unwavering support in transforming spaces that empower our clients. Your dedication has helped enhance their quality of life, providing them with the dignity, freedom, and independence they deserve,” said Katie Buckley.

## Thank You to Our Donors

### Donations from Churches:

First CRC - Lynden, Nooksack Valley Reformed Church, Third CRC

### Donations from Foundations:

Cascade Connections Foundation, Lairmont Foundation, UK Online Giving Foundation, Whatcom Community Foundation

### Donations From Businesses:

Benevity (Microsoft Giving), Eaglemill Farms, Kroger (Fred Meyer), Van's Plumbing and Electric, Western Concrete Pumping INC

### Memorial Donation in Memory of Mark Hildebrand:

Lynden Lions Club

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

## We Are Looking For New Board Members



The Cascade Connections Board of Directors currently seeks new Board members! Our volunteer Board supports and guides our organization and our work in the community. The Board helps to ensure that Cascade Connections delivers results, meets high ethical standards, and appropriately responds to change.

Those interested in being considered for our board should read the Statement of Faith and Board of Directors Requirements. Please contact our Board of Directors at [board@ccsite.org](mailto:board@ccsite.org).



## Meet Betty



Meet Betty McInturff, a recent client of Cascade Connections' Home Care. Betty began services in June of 2023. And while Betty recently transitioned to a more supportive environment, she and her family had kind words to share about their experience

utilizing Cascade Connections' Home Care. When asked how Home Care services had improved her life, Betty said, "it opened up the whole world for me." Betty shared that she relied on her Home Care staff, or as she said, "my kids with angel wings," to help her with daily tasks from household cleaning to transporting her to various scheduled appointments.

Standing powerfully at 90 years old, Betty has lived across the Pacific Northwest from, originally, Vancouver, British Columbia, to Spokane, WA, to Seattle, WA, and settling in Bellingham, where she currently resides. Betty is known as an icon, a mother, a grandmother, a renowned artist, a collector of art, and a compelling advocate for many marginalized communities.

Throughout Betty's life, she has been a shining example of empathy, kindness, creativity, and Christian ideologies. In 1975, Betty collaborated with the President of the YMCA and started a transportation service for elderly people. Betty hired, trained, and established an organization that provided pick-up and drop-off services throughout eastern



Washington. "It was the 3rd largest transportation service in the state of Washington at the time," Betty said. This service was later adopted in cities across Washington including Bellingham, known locally as WTA. (Whatcom Transportation Authority). Betty will be remembered as a trailblazer in improving accessibility for all people in the state of Washington.

In the 1980s, Betty kept up with her passion for advocacy by becoming involved in the early gay liberation movement. While



living in Spokane, Betty participated in activism and spoke out against violence inflicted upon LGBTQ+ peoples, including the youth. "I held a sign with a wooden handle on a park bench after the Pride march with Spokane's Mayor, Sherri Barnard, that said, 'we love our gay kids,' ... and why wouldn't I?" Betty said. Betty continued to show her compassion and empathy for people by using her voice and platform as a community organizer and local advocate.

Like many of Home Care's clients, Betty was referred to Cascade Connections by her independent provider. From showering to meal preparation, Home Care staff assisted Betty in all of her day-to-day functions. Due to Betty's arthritis, certain personal care tasks could be challenging for her. A Home Care staff supported Betty's independence by assisting her in choosing and accessorizing her outfits. Staff would ask what she would like to wear and then help her dress and put on jewelry. "I was able to live a normal life because of you," Betty said.

Home Care Program Coordinator, River Pieper, enjoyed helping with Betty's routine hair appointments. River assisted with transportation and ensured Betty arrived at her appointments on time. These shifts were typically about 30 minutes long and involved conversation and mobile support. Thanks to River's support, she was able

to get her hair done without worries of physical labor or travel. Home Care staff also helped Betty with personal and household tasks such as organizing holiday decorations, accessorizing, personal care, shopping, cleaning, cooking, and transferring.

During Betty's time with Cascade Connections, Betty experienced relief of everyday stresses and challenges.

Betty utilized her home care aides to not only ensure her health and safety but support her happiness and enjoyment of life. "Betty is incredibly kind and consistently praised her staff, expressing gratitude during every shift...I enjoyed working with her very much and I know all her staff feel the same," said Home Care Aide, Lexi Machado. Betty's team is grateful they were able to facilitate Betty's independence for as long as possible.

### **If you or your loved ones are looking for ways to "age in place" consider Cascade Connections Home Care services.**

Cascade Connections provides Home Care services to children and adults with development disabilities and seniors throughout Whatcom County. The Home Care management team strategically pairs clients with caregivers whose skillset aligns with the clients' needs. Clients may have a variety of professional and personal preferences: qualifications, experience level, gender, age, etc. Home Care accommodates these preferences to ensure the client is receiving the highest quality of care. Home Care staff perform a variety of tasks based on a client's needs and preferences, these including personal care, housekeeping, meal preparation, driving, administrative tasks, story-telling, playing board games, and even accompanying an individual on a vacation. Each client's care plan is tailored to their individual needs, but all Home Care staff are trained and equipped for any task requested by a client.

For more information about our home care, please call us at: 360-594-4216

## **Hilary Graduates with an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education**



Meet Hilary! Hilary is fun-loving and quick to smile. She enjoys video games, spending time with friends and playing sports. In the summer of 2024, after over a decade of hard work and commitment, Hilary accomplished a life-long goal by graduating from Whatcom Community College with an Associate's Degree in Early

Childhood Education. Hilary was determined to complete her degree, even after landing her "dream job" at a local early learning center in 2022. Luckily, she had support

from both Cascade Connections' Vocational Services and Supported Living while she pursued her education.

Hilary began working toward her Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education in 2010. Then, in 2011, she began services with Cascade Connections through a Community Based Assessment contract with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. She began working at Fred Meyer, and according to Vocational Services Program Director, Carrie Carron, "Hilary really grew a lot during her years at Fred Meyer." Her first responsibilities were wiping tables and emptying the food court trash cans, but over the years she grew into completing all duties of the customer service position, including using the register. "She really learned to advocate for herself while she worked at Fred Meyer," said Carrie.

Because of her success with her vocational services, Hilary decided to transition to Cascade Connections' Supported Living Program in 2015. Hilary really enjoys the trust and rapport she's developed with her Supported Living team.



And though she had already begun her journey with higher education before beginning services with Cascade Connections, Hilary expressed gratitude to her support



teams in both the Vocational Services and Supported Living Departments for all their support while she pursued her degree.

Hilary's job coaches helped her maintain

her eligibility for school, supported her in navigating the bureaucracy of higher education and helped coordinate her practicum through the same early learning center where she currently works. Hilary's Supported Living team helped her finish school by providing an extra layer of accountability for her homework. There were several meetings with Hilary and staff from both departments where plans were made for supports needed as she pursued the next step of her degree process.

We recently caught up with Hilary to chat about her college experience. Hilary started out a little reserved, but opened up as she began to answer more questions. When asked about her favorite part of college, she said she "really liked doing something new." Hilary said she has, "always known that she wanted to work with children, especially little kids."

While she really enjoyed college overall, she did experience some challenges. According to Hilary, "the evening and

early morning classes were the hardest part and English was the hardest class." She ended up taking English more than once because she "hated all the reading." She also took a few semesters off while she worked out her financial aid. But in the end, she



completed all of her coursework and finished her final class in December of 2023. She was excited to walk the stage in the summer of 2024 with the rest of her class. Hilary's mother and aunt joined her at the graduation ceremony.

Now that she's completed her Associate's degree, Hilary is weighing the pros and cons of returning to school. She's thinking about taking some additional classes, maybe even at Western Washington University. She might like to take ASL (American Sign Language) classes, or even go back to school to become a para-educator. While she's considering her next step, Cascade Connections will continue to offer support, at work, at home, and in the community.

In Hilary's free time she enjoys attending the weekend programming at the Max Higbee Center, making arts and crafts, and participating in Special Olympics (she even went to State in 2024 for Track and Field!). She also loves to take care of her two bunnies, Jelly Bean and Midnight. Next time you see Hilary, make sure to congratulate her on her remarkable achievement! Congratulations Hilary!

## Lynden Safeway Named Employer of the Quarter for Winter 2024



Congratulations are in order for Cascade Connections' newest Employer of the Quarter, Lynden Safeway! Safeway first opened its doors in Lynden back in 2002, and shortly thereafter, in 2005, they began partnering with Cascade Connections to create inclusive employment opportunities. Over the years, Lynden Safeway has demonstrated their commitment to inclusive employment time and

again, hiring many employees who receive vocational supports through Cascade Connections. Because of this commitment, Lynden Safeway is the very first employer to be recognized as Cascade Connections' Employer of the Quarter for a second time.

Allen Harris, the Store Director had this to say about Safeway's inclusive practices, "I have always been deeply involved with supporting people with disabilities working in our stores. The store should reflect the diversity of our community. Working alongside Cascade Connections

has made it an easy choice. They work with their clients throughout the entire hiring and training process.”

Cascade Connections currently supports four Lynden Safeway employees.

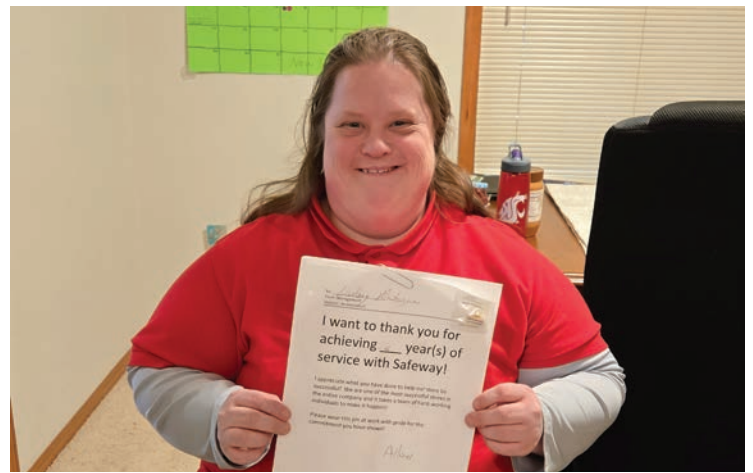


Max is the newest Cascade Connections customer to join the Safeway team. Beyond some seasonal work he performed while he was still in school, this is his first job! Max works as an in-store shopper for about 22-30 hours per week. As an In-Store Shopper, he collects items for online orders and ensures online shoppers receive the best products available. Max is currently working toward an ambitious goal of having an average “pick time” of one item per minute. Cascade Connections supports Max with completing his required in-store trainings and understanding company policies. According to Max, “I love working at Safeway because it’s a loving and supporting company that respects me for who I am.” The Drive Up and Go Manager, Kelly, said “It’s been an absolute pleasure working with Max, he brightens my day every time I see him. You can tell he’s passionate about what he does here at Safeway.”

Annemarie, a Courtesy Clerk, will be celebrating her one-year anniversary with Safeway this April. She currently works on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday evenings, sometimes late into night. Her job involves greeting customers, assisting cashiers, and bagging groceries. Annemarie has a goal of working toward running the self-checkout kiosks. She and her job coach are working with her supervisor to determine the next steps, so that she can continue with her professional development. When asked about her favorite part of her job at Safeway, Annemarie

offered, “A couple of my favorite things at work are the community of people who are very supportive and caring. I love working with my co-workers, they are easy to get along with and work with. Safeway is a great job for me and I would recommend it to anyone who needs a first job.”

Lindsey recently celebrated 4 years of employment with Lynden Safeway, and she wears her 4-year pin with pride. She currently works on Wednesdays and Thursdays for two hours each day bagging groceries. Her smile and helpful attitude are appreciated by customers and teammates alike. She has weekly check-ins with her job coach, Abi, who also provides support to Lindsey with completing online trainings and understanding company procedures.



When asked about her favorite part of her job, Lindsey said, “Everything’s my favorite, community, especially with my coworkers,” she went on to say, “I like it when my coworkers help me.” Lindsey’s coworker, Kelly, shares Lindsey’s positivity about her work, “Lindsey does a great job, I’ve never seen her happier, lots of smiles and talking with customers.”

And finally, Kasey, who has been an employee of Lynden Safeway since 2017. He currently works on Monday and Tuesday mornings as a courtesy clerk and bagger. When he first starts his shift, he typically gathers carts for the first hour or so before completing his other duties. Cascade Connections supports him with trainings, weather-related safety, and reminders of company policies and procedures. For Kasey, his favorite part of his job at Safeway is his co-workers. Kasey’s mother shares that Safeway is a great place for him to work because of his, “amazing coworkers who embrace all of the Cascade Connections customers and treat them as part of the team, supporting them to be successful at their jobs.”

*Return Service Requested*

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



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### Spring 2025 Newsletter

#### Cascade Connections

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**[cascadeconnections.org](http://cascadeconnections.org)**

#### Board of Directors

Scott Duffey, *President*  
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## We Are Hiring!

View our current openings here:  
**[bit.ly/cascadejobs](http://bit.ly/cascadejobs)**

## Mission Fest 2025



shared information about the many ways Cascade Connections serves our community.

Cascade Connections has deep roots in the Christian Reformed Church and several attendees were already familiar with our organization. Allison enjoyed sharing details about our growth and expansion over the years. She is looking forward to continuing to build connections within the community.

Our Executive Director, Allison Hill, recently represented Cascade Connections at First Christian Reformed Mission Fest, 2025. The event, "Missions Around the World and Across the Street," featured representatives from local, national, and international organizations. Allison tabled during the event and



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