

Supported Living Program Merger



I am excited to inform you of the organizational changes we are making to improve the services Cascade Connections provides. Last spring, we looked at our current organizational structures and spoke with our staff about how we could ensure that we were supporting them and our clients in a sustainable way. With the rate of growth our programs have been experiencing, we saw a need to evaluate our own performance and identify areas where we could improve.

After months of brainstorming, we decided that the best way forward was to consolidate our two Supported Living programs under one director and move to a “cluster site” model. The idea behind this model is to have smaller clusters of sites with a limited number of clientele being served more or less exclusively by its own group of floor staff and supervisors. A manager would be accountable for overseeing the day to day functions of that cluster and directly supervise the staff who are assigned to work there. With this model, our staff will be able to form deeper relationships, with both clients and

coworkers as they will not be asked to divide their time between a large number of sites and clients. The cluster model will offer greater stability for both our clients and staff.

Over the past few months, we have been taking steps toward integration. In October 2018, the Cascade Supported Living program left their office in Lynden to join Bellingham Supported Living in our administrative office in Ferndale. We began identifying site clusters and set up dedicated teams to serve each cluster. As of March 1, 2019, Cascade Connections Supported Living is now one program under one director.

We are pleased to announce that Nikki Kilmer has stepped up to serve as the Director of Cascade Connections Supported Living. Nikki has extensive experience working in our residential programs and she possesses great familiarity with clients and staff. Most recently, she served as the Director of Bellingham Supported Living, where she spearheaded the implementation of the cluster site model with great success. Nikki will be working closely with Mary Nestle-Klyn, our Residential Administrator, and myself to carry out these changes and bring our vision to fruition.

Thank you for your support of Cascade Connections as we move into this new, exciting chapter.

Sincerely,

George Beanblossom, Executive Director



Direct Support Professional Crisis



Serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their home community is a long-standing top priority for Washington State. Supported Living providers, such as Cascade Connections, are the primary provider of these services in our state. We all expect adequate care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their home community. But adequate means that direct care staff are paid a living wage and are given the resources to do the job.



Over the past five years, turnover has dramatically increased by 54%. Turnover in essential Direct Support Professional positions has been around 50% for the

last three years. This turnover rate is disruptive to our clients and does not allow relationships to form or quality supports to be maintained. Providers are losing valued employees to state operated programs and other industries that can pay a living wage. Employees who want to stay on in a meaningful job serving people they care about often leave, because they can't afford to support their families with the wage they are being paid.

Over the last decade, providers have gone from being funded almost 24% above minimum wage to now only 6% above minimum wage. Without the necessary increases, providers will be funded well below minimum wage by the end of the biennium. Because of these challenges, providers are not able to serve new clients being referred for services. DDA has continuously reduced the number of clients to be served in Supported Living since 2015.



In order to reduce the turnover rate, improve the quality of care, and be able to provide services to more individuals, direct support staff need to be paid a living wage.

The new Legislative session has just begun, and we need your help. We need you to contact your legislators today and ask them to support funding for supported living programs. If you are a Direct Support Professional, or if you or a family member is supported by one, please consider contacting your legislators and telling them that funding Supported Living programs in Washington State is a priority for you.

Thank You For Your Donation

Donations from Businesses: Harbor Lands Company, Kroger, 2Roofs, Eaglemill Farms, Saturna Capital

Memorial Donations for Mark LeLacheur: LeLacheur Living Trust

Churches and Foundations: Lynden Lions Club, Network for Good, Sonlight Community Church, Third Christian Reformed Church, Bethel Christian Reformed Church, First Christian Reformed Church – Lynden, Hope in Christ Church, Netherlands Reformed Church, Nooksack Valley Reformed Church

2018 Hamster Ball Recap



On November 9th, 2018, Haggen Food & Pharmacy and 92.9 KISM presented the Fourth Annual Hamster Ball. Guests enjoyed a delicious dinner provided by Haggen Market Street Catering, wine from Haggen Food & Pharmacy and Masquerade Winery, beer from Kulshan Brewing, and cider from Bellingham Cider Company.

Local band, The Penny Stinkers returned again this year, and they were quite a hit. Guests spent the evening enjoying the food and drinks, dancing and listening to music, participating in the silent auction, and supporting a great cause.



Thank you so much to all of the local businesses who made the Hamster Ball possible through their sponsorships. We would also like to thank all of the individuals and businesses who donated items for our silent auction. Thanks to the support of all of our sponsors, donors, and event attendees, we raised over \$30,000! That will go a long way towards ensuring that we are able to keep providing services to individuals with disabilities throughout Whatcom County for many years to come.

Thank you to our sponsors!



Meeting Rooms for Rent in Ferndale



Cascade Connections now offers meeting rooms for rent at our office in Ferndale. We have space available for staff meetings, committee meetings, agency meetings, board meetings, presentations, or trainings for your company.

We have three rooms available with the following

equipment: white board, projector, DVD/VHS player, TV, computer, all props and equipment for caregiving skills, and coffee cart.

For more information and to reserve a room, please go to: <http://cascadeconnections.org/room-rental>

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Spring 2019 Newsletter

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4th Annual Hamster Crawl

We are excited to announce that Cascade Connections has partnered with Haggen Food & Pharmacy and KISM 92.9 to bring you the Fourth Annual Hamster Crawl! The event will be taking place on **Saturday, June 1st, 2019.**



The Hamster Crawl is a walking tour of eateries, bars, and breweries in downtown Bellingham, WA. During the Crawl, participating businesses will offer food and drink specials to individuals wearing our signature T-shirts/sweatshirts or lanyards. All proceeds will benefit Cascade Connections.

Tickets are on sale now! They are \$15 until 3/25, then will be \$20 from 3/26 to 4/30, and after 5/1 will be \$25. The ticket includes a lanyard and T-shirt. Tickets with a sweatshirt instead of a T-shirt will be \$35.



For more information, or to buy tickets, visit our website at events.cascadeconnections.org, or check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/hamsterevents](https://www.facebook.com/hamsterevents).