

10-10-14

To: Employment First stakeholders
From: Mike Maley
Re: Employment First: Jeff's Employment Story
(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

Jeff Keeler is an integral part of his community, which includes his job at Ray's Food Place in Roseburg.

The 31-year-old has worked at Ray's for 10 years, and currently works Thursday through Saturday as a courtesy clerk. He works on the job with natural supports

from his manager and coworkers.



Jeff Keeler works for Ray's Food Place in Roseburg.

Photo: Lightflies

Jeff's duties include bagging groceries, picking up carts from the parking lot, stocking, and greeting customers and helping them with their groceries.

"I keep a list with me of what I need from the back of the store and I

take items to Jane in the bakery," Jeff said, smiling proudly. "If I can help a customer, show them the product they need, that's a great day."

A naturally social and outgoing guy, Jeff occasionally has to be reminded that he can't let socializing get in the way of his duties, according to store manager Scott Daniels.

"The customers really look forward to seeing him," Scott said. "He brings a good attitude to the workplace, and it's a good influence on everyone."

Jeff lives a little more than a mile away from the store. He rides a gas-powered golf cart to work, which has become an icon in the store's parking lot.



Jeff Keeler with coworker Susan Sandoval at Ray's Food Place in Roseburg.

Photo: Lightflies

His father, Stan Keeler, said Jeff has always been independent and the golf cart allows him to get to work in a safer, more efficient manner. He lives with his family, but in his own apartment above the garage that his father converted for him.

“All through school, Jeff was always very well-liked and got along with everyone,” Stan said. “We’ve always been extremely proud of him.”

Jeff experiences Down syndrome, and has worked his way up to more job duties over time. He tends to think in a concrete, literal way, so job tasks must be clearly outlined.

Stan said his son did a few work study experiences in high school, and they took a tour of a sheltered workshop. But that wasn't the right choice for Jeff or the family.

“For us, Ray's is a safer place than a workshop so we never really seriously considered that,” Stan said. “This is a small store in our neighborhood, where everyone knows him. Not just his coworkers, but the customers, also look out for him and care about him.”

Stan added that the community interaction is integral to Jeff's happiness with his job.

“He always comes home and talks about who he saw at the store that day and the latest news,” he said.

Elissa Burrows is Jeff’s Personal Agent with the Southern Oregon Regional Brokerage (SORB). Elissa checks in with Jeff, and talks with the store manager if any of his job duties change. She said the family support has also been important to Jeff’s job success.

“This family has been awesome,” she said. “They really care about facilitating independence and encouraging Jeff to do his best and strive for more.”

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike

A slideshow of Jeff at work can be viewed at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dhsoregon/sets/72157648328875052/>