

12-19-14

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First: Happy holidays and looking ahead

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

As we bid farewell to 2014 and look forward to a New Year, I just wanted to take a moment to wish you all a peaceful and joyous holiday season from the DHS Employment First team. We have gone through a tremendous amount of change in the past year as we strive to improve community employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The next year will no doubt bring more challenges and opportunities as we strengthen our system even further.

One of the most rewarding parts of being part of the Employment First initiative has been to meet the many people in the field who work hard every single day to improve employment services for those with I/DD. In addition, meeting the many people with I/DD who are working successfully in community jobs has been inspiring. Traveling around the state and meeting people who are successfully working, even when faced with low expectations in the past, reminds us of why we must continue our Employment First initiative.

We met people like [Natascha](#) in Roseburg, who got her first paid job working with children at the YMCA and found her career passion, and [Sam](#), whose daytime behavioral support needs disappeared once found a job he loves with RideSource in Eugene. These are Oregonians who are contributing to their community and to the economy, and who tell us that working has changed their lives.

Please take the time to read their stories, and others' stories, on our [website](#). We will continue to bring you more of these job success stories, along with the news of the progression of the Employment First initiative, in 2015.

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 questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike