

10-23-15

**To: Employment First stakeholders**

**From: Mike Maley, Statewide Employment First Coordinator**

**Re: Employment First: Employer Awards at ORA Conference**

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

[Like Us](#) on Facebook!

\*\* Hear speakers, visit informational tables, eat cake and celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month today, Oct. 23, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will be in the lobby of the Barbara Roberts Human Services Building. The theme for this year — which marks 70 years since the first observance — is “My Disability is One Part of Who I Am.”



Employment specialists with McKenzie Personnel (first three on left) with Trader Joe's employees accepting an award. (Photo: Cassy McCartney)

The Oregon Rehabilitation Association held its annual conference Oct. 21-22 in Eugene. More than 350 attendees attended multiple sessions in both new and traditional offerings, including an employment panel featuring leadership from Employment First, Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of Developmental Disability Services and the Oregon Department of

Education.

New to this year to the conference was an Employer Award Breakfast. More than 40 employers from Lane County, along with job developers and providers, gathered to recognize the many contributions that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are making to the local workforce. This also was a special way to recognize the critical importance that local employers have in the making the Employment First initiative a reality all over the state.

Cedric Rudd with the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce served as emcee for the event. The award for Rookie of the Year, which recognized an employer that had hired an individual with I/DD within the past six months, was presented to Killer Burger. Waterford Grand was also recognized in this category.

The 2015 ORA Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award went to Trader Joe's for hiring multiple employees with disabilities, and being an employer that values diversity in the workplace.



Employment specialists with Lane Community College and a manager with Eugene business Killer Burger at the 2015 ORA Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award breakfast. (Photo: Cassy McCartney)

Other nominees in this category included Churchhill Estates, Rebbot Computers, Hop Valley and Ninkasi Brewing Company.

Videos shown throughout the breakfast featured employees who experience I/DD working in the community. At the end, a video resume portraying one individual who is currently looking for work was shown. By the time breakfast was over,

he had two job offers from local employers.

The momentum in engaging local businesses and capitalizing on the energy and enthusiasm that comes when a business finds a great employee cannot be overestimated. I was thrilled to be part of this event, and to see the connections that happen when local employers and providers come together. A job is a life-changing event for many individuals, and their families. And the stories of people with significant disabilities thriving in the workforce can create a ripple effect that makes positive change possible.

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](mailto:employment.first@state.or.us).

~ Mike