

# The Victory Voice

The Victory Academy Newsletter

Oregon's only year-round, accredited school for children affected by Autism

Edition II • Spring 2017



## Dear Victory Academy Supporters—

We are now in our second year at the new Victory Academy Campus, and our student population has blossomed to 71 students from seven different counties around the greater Portland area. The past 12 months have seen so many positive moments, additions, and improvements, and we are thrilled to give you a glimpse of Victory through this newsletter.

We have hired additional highly skilled teachers that have enhanced our programs in areas like science and technology, adapted PE, real-world work experience, and many others. Our high school program is expanding to grow with our students. After school, we continue to offer engaging classes including basketball, dramatic movement, robotics, and farm management – programs now available to students beyond Victory.



In addition to academics, we remain focused on building communication, social, and life skills so that our students can be as successful as possible when they graduate from Victory.

*When I grow up, I want to be a writer so I can tell my story.*

—AJ, 16

The demand for schools that support students with Autism remains unabated. Families continue to move to Portland specifically for Victory, and we receive 2-3 calls a week from around the country – and world – asking for assistance in creating a Victory in their area.

We are grateful to you, our incredible community of supporters. You have given students with Autism their own school and a chance to receive the specialized education they need to develop, discover, and thrive. On behalf of everyone at Victory Academy, thank you so much for your support!

**Tricia Hasbrook**  
Director of School



## Victory Food Truck Party!

Please join us the evening of June 10th to support Victory Academy and celebrate the end of another incredible school year! Enjoy fun, food truck fare, delicious drinks and dessert, and mingling with friends and supporters of Victory – all on the playground of Victory's beautiful campus. Tickets are \$100. Victory families are sponsoring the event so 100% of the ticket purchase will go to support Victory's programs. Come enjoy tacos, crepes, burgers, ice cream, and more! Fun for the whole family!

**SATURDAY, JUNE 10**  
**6:30 – 9:30 PM**

**VICTORY**  
**PLAYGROUND**



Michael, age 11 (second from left), and Miles, age 11 (right), play games and enjoy time spent with new Best Buddies from Sherwood Middle School.



Cadel, age 8, works with Teacher Emma Aglipay on math via an interactive program that includes an embedded tracking and assessment system.



Redwood students, ages 14 - 17, exercising on the treadmill during their weekly visit to Edge Family Fitness.

# What's New?

Victory is constantly expanding and improving its programs, and this year has been exceptional in that regard. Come on a quick tour of What's New in Victory classrooms!

**Best Buddies:** Victory Academy and Sherwood Middle School have forged a Best Buddies alliance. The Best Buddies program offers peer-to-peer mentoring and friendship. Buddies visit each other's schools, exchange e-mails and texts, and build invaluable relationships.

**STEM Classes:** Victory welcomed its first Intel Fellow, Frank Joyce, to the school this year. Frank is teaching advanced math, science, and technology classes. Algebra has been taught. Rockets have been made. Circuits have been built. And the students have loved it all!

**Junior Achievement Biz Town:** Cypress middle school students participated in Junior Achievement's Biz Town program this year. Combining in-class learning with real-life experience, Biz Town gives students the opportunity to be consumers and business owners in a fully functional, simulated town. Students learn about citizenship, finance, careers, how goods and services flow in an economy, and importantly, good decision-making.

**Student Assessment Tools:** Victory Academy provides individualized instruction to each of its 71 students and making sure they all progress is both complicated and crucial. This year Victory hired Emily Beal Wilkinson to take on this full-time job. Teachers now have the tools and support they need to better measure student progress and quickly adapt approaches for better learning.

**Fitness:** Physical activity is important for our students and enhances focus in the classroom. This year, Victory hired long-time teaching assistant Damian Melnicove as its full-time Adapted PE teacher. Additionally, our high school students now visit Edge Family Fitness once a week to work on strength, fitness, and flexibility. Learning how to safely exercise at a local gym and care for their physical health is an important life skill for our students!

**All-School Musical:** Victory students from elementary age through high school are working together to put on "The Mysterious Garden," Victory's spring musical. Overseen by speech pathologist Chris Yensan and music teacher Magen Dignan, the play helps build communication skills, perspective taking, musical education, and friendships across classes. It's also a lot of fun!

*When I grow up, I want to be a teacher and help people.*

—Shalin, 9



# WE Program Success

Victory Academy has continued to support and grow its Work Experience Program (WE). **Beginning at age thirteen, students gain employment skills through rotating internships.** Since January 2016, Victory has placed over 25 students in a total of 131 three-to-eight month vocational training assignments. Currently, Victory partners with 13 employers in the greater Portland area, and this summer will add partnerships with Al's Garden Center, The Original WOW! Burger, and World of Speed.

## Meet Lily

Lily is in her first year of high school and is also a gifted artist. This past fall, Lily worked at Horizon Elementary under the guidance of Horizon's art teacher, Lanette Smith. At the end of Lily's time at Horizon, Lanette wrote to Victory, "I wish the entire school could have witnessed first grade art yesterday. Lily taught such a stellar lesson to go along with the unit we are doing. She was ultra-prepared, professional, and would make a great art teacher. She will go on to do great things!" Experiencing such success at Horizon has confirmed for Lily that she wants to be an art teacher when she graduates from Victory!



## Meet Spencer

Spencer, a second-year high school student, is passionate about sports. Spencer also spent time at Horizon Elementary working as an assistant to the PE teacher. He set up equipment, helped clean up, and refereed games. However, his favorite activity was coaching basketball. In fact, Spencer now wants to pursue a career in basketball and dreams of one day having his own team to coach. The confidence Spencer gained through his work experience will be invaluable to his success after Victory.



## Meet Ata

Congratulations to Ata, a second-year high school student, who was offered a job at the Wilsonville McDonald's after spending just ten weeks working there! Ata says her favorite tasks are taking customers' orders, saying "hello" and "thank you", and working the register. Ata wants to pursue a career in customer service, as she loves people, and McDonald's has given her the chance to practice her skills. Transition Specialist, Molly Smith, says, "Ata is one of the hardest working people I know. She tries her best at everything she does, and future employers will be lucky to have her." We are very proud of you, Ata!



## Sneak Peek Charity Night

For the third year in a row, the Metro Portland New Car Dealers Association ("MPNCDA") selected Victory Academy to be one of the featured beneficiaries of its Sneak Peek Charity Night. Held in January, the event kicks off the Portland International Auto Show and raises over \$600,000 for Portland area non-profit organizations. Sneak Peek is a fun-filled evening that gives attendees the chance to tour the Auto Show before the weekend crowds arrive, while also supporting local non-profit organizations. Supporters of our school purchased more than 900 tickets on Victory Academy's behalf! In exchange for so many attending, MPNCDA presented Victory with a **donation of \$183,000!**

Thank you to those who attended Sneak Peek on behalf of Victory Academy and made this possible! The donation supports Victory's innovative curriculum. We know that in the right educational environment students with Autism not only learn, they thrive. Thank you for helping our students thrive!



# Self-Expression Through Art

Self-expression through art – painting, sculpting, drawing – can transcend any barrier. **At Victory, art is an essential part of each student's education, and Mary Ellen Anderson, who heads the art program at Victory, passionately believes that every student is an artist.** As she says, "Everyone has a point of view in art, and it is all about discovering and nurturing it."

Mary Ellen structures her curriculum to follow the elements of design by starting with colors and then exploring lines, shapes, and textures. She weaves in famous artists, like painter Jackson Pollock and sculptor Louise Nevelson, as jumping off points. Lower school students take art class once a week, while middle and high school students attend twice a week.

Mary Ellen also teaches after school courses like printmaking and sculpture. This semester, she introduced "Art in Action" which has students combining physical movement with large canvases to create their works – think splatter, smash, and using the whole body to paint!

**Every student at Victory has a unique set of challenges when it comes to creating art.**

Some students have fine motor difficulties, and thick-handled brushes make painting more accessible. Another student might need to bounce on a ball while painting on a canvas secured to the wall. For students who really love art, it is about exploring how art can become a vocation. To that end, Mary Ellen has recently added both digital art and photo-shopping opportunities. For one gifted artist, Mary Ellen says, "finding projects that stretch her is my biggest challenge!"

Mary Ellen earned her degree in Art Education from the University of Georgia and is now in her 5th year at Victory, working as both a classroom teaching assistant and the head of Victory's art education. As director Tricia Hasbrook explains, "Mary Ellen brings warmth, patience, calm, and

always a plan! The students love her, and she deeply, deeply loves the kids and what she is doing at Victory."

It was while working as an assistant in an art class for adults with Autism that Mary Ellen discovered her passion. "I was so moved by these adults with Autism. Their art was so pure. These artists were just working out how they felt, not thinking about it, just creating. I knew from then on that I wanted to somehow be a part of this process."

For students with Autism, art classes provide an opportunity to grow and develop on many levels. With art, Victory students have the chance to:

- Practice executive functioning skills such as planning, selecting materials, and problem-solving (how do I stop my sculpture from falling down?)
- Explore materials such as plaster or clay that may present sensory challenges
- Build confidence in navigating open-ended assignments that can be scary (a blank piece of paper!)

- Process and express emotions in a safe way
- Share their creations with others – a great confidence boost and gift for all family members
- And, perhaps most importantly, discover a means of expressing themselves despite any communication or physical challenge while shining and succeeding in a new area

In July, Victory will host its first annual Art Show & Social displaying the works of all its remarkable artists. Students will also be on hand to discuss their creations. As Mary Ellen says, "The best part of my job is seeing how proud my students are of their art." Stay tuned for details!

*“When I grow up, I want to be a painter so I can paint everything my favorite color, green!”*

– Aidan, 13



# High School Program Thriving

When Victory Academy began, high school seemed a long way off for our students. Soon enough, those students reached eighth grade, and rather than sending them off, Victory decided to grow along with them.



Victory launched its high school program with 8 students. **Now in its second year, the program has grown to 10. Families can choose between full or modified diploma tracks,** and Victory made a conscious decision to make both tracks five years. The extra year allows Victory to meet Oregon state education standards while continuing to offer students social and life skills training, community-based instruction, work experience opportunities, and other supportive therapies.

The year 2020 will mark Victory's first graduating high school class. By then, the school expects its high school program to include almost 30 students. Each student will have a "homeroom" teacher but will spend much of his or her day in smaller, subject-specific classes. Students will take individualized courses in language arts, math, science, social studies, health/PE, and the arts. As they near graduation, high school students will also become more involved in Victory's Transition Program to prepare them for either employment or higher education after graduation. **The goal is for all of our students to graduate with a high school diploma and be as prepared as possible for a successful and fulfilling life after Victory!**



## Leaving Victory and Finding Success!

Victory Academy creates a customized education plan for each student – one that includes short and long-term goals that are "just right" for each child. **For some students and their families, preparing their child to attend a mainstream school is a goal.** Each year, a handful of families and their students feel ready to do just that.

Last year, Luke was one of those students. Many of you may remember Luke from choir performances at our Auction and Winter Programs. He is a charismatic, smart, and inquisitive young man who worked diligently during his three years at Victory. Luke particularly focused on the areas of executive functioning and organization, social skills, and conflict resolution. He made tremendous progress!

Last spring, Luke's parents approached Victory wondering if Luke might be ready to transfer to a charter school near his home to begin 6th grade. While it is always hard to say goodbye to a beloved Victory student, everyone agreed that Luke was ready, and we worked on preparing him for his new school!

Now eight months into his big move, Luke's Mom sent Victory an update that Luke is doing fantastic! He is getting all A's and B's and little by little, is integrating into the friendship circles at his new school. His biggest accomplishment? Luke just returned from a successful five days and four nights of outdoor school, independently making the right choices for his specialized diet, sleeping in a cabin with five other boys and a counselor, and participating in an all-school dance!

As Luke's mom expressed, "I want to thank all of you at Victory for helping Luke get to this point where he can be successful and step out into situations that are very scary for him. **He would not have the self-confidence or the tools for this success if Victory Academy had not been so supportive of him and challenged him in your safe, warm, accepting environment.**"

# Victory Is Grateful To Our 2016 Donors

*Your generosity in supporting Victory Academy is changing the lives of our students, their families, and other families affected by Autism throughout the Northwest and beyond. Thank you very much!*

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## Expanding... Again!

Victory Academy's Board of Directors recently began discussions regarding the possibility of expanding our school's facilities. **The catalyst for this exploration is the generosity of Victory supporters Bettsy and Wally Preble and the VC Fund.** The Prebles' gift was specifically directed toward a long-term project or as seed funds for a facilities expansion.

Although Victory has added 40 new families over the last two years and will add another 12 in September, Victory once again finds itself with a growing waitlist.

**There are two critical facility needs. One is to create a dedicated art classroom.** Currently, music and art share a classroom, and with the growing student population, the single room is straining the school's ability to accommodate all classes.

**A second need is to accommodate our expanding high school population.** With the move to the larger campus, Victory was able to offer a high school program for the first time. Those students are now in year one or two of high school, and many more students are right behind them. Additional classroom space is needed to support our growing high school population while continuing to teach our students in grades Pre K – 8.

The architect and builder of the new campus have both agreed to join the expansion project. James Meyer and Alec Holser of Opsis Architecture have agreed to help Victory on a pro-bono basis, and Kurt Bruun of Lorentz Bruun Construction would return to build the addition. Stay tuned for more details. Thank you Prebles, VC Fund, James Meyer, Opsis Architecture, and Lorentz Bruun for supporting Victory Academy as we grow!



P.O. Box 428 · Tualatin, OR 97062

Thank you for supporting  
Victory Academy!

www.VictoryAcademy.org  
503-570-0147

## Important Dates

### JUNE 7

The Mysterious Garden  
Musical  
1:30 – 2:30 pm

### JUNE 10

Food Truck Party  
6:30 – 9:30 pm

### JULY 7-9

Special Olympics State  
Track Meet

### JULY 20

Art Show & Social  
2:30 – 4 pm

### JULY 27

Summer Sing!  
9:15 am

### SEPTEMBER 6

First Day of New  
School Year

### OCTOBER 14

Victory Academy  
Auction

### DECEMBER TBA

Victory Winter Program

### JANUARY 24, 2018

Portland Auto Show  
Sneak Peek Charity  
Night



## Work Hard, Play Hard

**The After School Program at Victory is only two years old, but most families can't remember life before it.** On-site after school therapies include physical, occupational, speech, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) along with before and after school care. These offerings provide families valuable 1-1 therapy for their children and much needed flexibility for their busy lives.

Specialized therapy is important, but it is the after school classes that get students most excited. Thea Schreiber, head of our After School Program, estimates that 70% of Victory students participate in at least one after school activity every quarter. Students can choose classes in sports, art, drama, outdoor activities, Legos – you name it! **For many of our students, it is the first chance they have had to participate in extra-curricular activities and explore new interests.** In addition to Victory staff, community partners like Young Audiences and The Other Side of Basketball teach classes, bringing popular programs to our students. All Victory after school classes are also open to the wider community, bringing new friends to Victory and new opportunities to children with Autism in Portland.

*When I grow  
up, I want to be  
a firefighter.*

*—Lucy, 10*