

The Victory Voice

The Victory Academy Newsletter

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

Edition IV · Spring 2019



Dear Victory Academy Supporters—

It has been another year of growth and progress at Victory Academy! In the fall, we welcomed 16 new students and their families and added new staff, new programs, and even a new addition to the building! Thanks to the generosity of our supporters we added a brand new art room! The former shared art and music room was rededicated to music, and these additional spaces have been transformative for our art and music classes. It is a joy to see our students spread out and create!

We have also expanded our after-school classes, added curriculum to focus on independent living skills, and grown our financial aid fund. In four years, we have given over \$320,000 in tuition support to families in need.

And, we have more to accomplish! Our oldest students will be ready to graduate from high school in a year.

To support them, we are expanding our Transition Program, which includes providing our students with work experiences in local businesses. We are also focused on developing a post-graduate program that will continue to support these students in their early adulthood.

When I am at Victory, I feel comfortable.

— Spencer, 18

In October 2018, we celebrated ten years of Victory!! I am overwhelmed knowing that we could not be here without you – our incredible supporters who continue to step forward and support our school and our

amazing, talented students with autism. Read along to learn more about what we are up to at Victory and please know that you make our progress and our students' successes possible!

With gratitude,

Tricia Hasbrook
Director of School



SAVE the DATE



VICTORY'S ANNUAL AUCTION
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19
PORTLAND HILTON

Please join us for dinner, silent and live auctions, and an inspiring program celebrating learning, growth and achievement at Victory Academy!

When I am at Victory, I feel happy!

— James, 8

Thank You To Our Art Room Capital Campaign Donors!

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A New Day for Art & Music

Victory students were abuzz with excitement when they returned from break last September. They all wanted to see the brand-new art room! Measuring 1,200 square feet, the art room features a magnetic wall that allows students of differing heights to stand and paint, an outdoor art patio, cabinets overflowing with materials, and most importantly, room to create.

Art teacher Mary Ellen Anderson reports that **the room has had a dramatic impact on art education and therapy at Victory**. She now offers a variety of classes, longer activities, additional art therapy, and increased 1-to-1 sessions as a result of the new dedicated space. The new space also accommodates the high energy levels of some Victory students and allows them to spread out.

The room has also broadened the range of art activities Victory students can explore. Students can do more large-scale projects, like murals and set designs for the Victory musical. They also have room for paper-mache, clay, and ceramic work. High school students feel more independence and ownership of their art now that they are in charge of their own space and materials. However, if you ask Mary Ellen to name her favorite feature, she mentions the two extra large sinks. "They're pretty special," she observes. Anyone who has done art with children knows how true this is.

Mary Ellen is not the only teacher at Victory whose educational options have exploded since the art room addition. With a dedicated music room instead of a shared space, Magen Dignan, Victory's music teacher, is able to include larger instruments like a marimba, electronic drumming set, and large table drum. One-on-one and class times have been extended, and if an activity needs to be changed on the fly, Magen can access the entire room to find a solution. As she reports, **"The music room is now a space where the kids can explore, create, express, and develop their musical side with joy, excitement, and love."**

None of this would be possible without the help of some incredible Victory supporters. The VC Fund and Betty and Wally Preble each donated \$100,000 to launch Victory's art room capital campaign. Three other supporters made significant in-kind donations. Architect James Meyer donated countless hours to design and project management. Kathy and Roy Moore donated all the earth and excavation work through their company, MEI Group, and Michele and Brad Hart donated all the windows and doors through their company, OrePac Building Products. Finally, the rest of the Victory community came together to raise \$250,000 in additional funding to complete the expansion. The end result has been more art and music, for which Victory students are joyously grateful!

The Joy of Summer Camp!

Summer camp: very few children with autism have the opportunity to experience this formative tradition. That all changed for Victory middle and high school students last summer, as **we held our first overnight summer camp**. And, we are busy planning for an expanded version this summer!



Last summer, 23 students experienced a magical day and overnight at Magness Tree Farm in Sherwood. Supported by 12 Victory staff members, activities included hiking, art, music, badminton and ladder ball, roasting marshmallows, and bunking together in cabins at night. This summer, camp will expand to two nights in a new location that will allow for fishing, boating, and more hiking.

When I am at Victory, I feel safe.

— Gabe, 15

Cora Templeton leads the Recreational Education and Fitness programs at Victory, and she advocated for the camp and managed all the details. Combining her love of the outdoors with her passion for teaching Victory students, Cora explains, **"I live for those opportunities where I introduce a new experience to a student – like when a kid catches a fish for the first time – and to see the excitement on their face. It is life giving."**

Cora's perspective, one fully supported by Victory, is that students with autism thrive in outdoor experiential education. It is hands-on, accessible learning, and being outside is often regulating for kids with autism. Students also spend leisure time together growing their peer and staff relationships. **The goal of Victory's Recreation Education program – which includes swimming, rock climbing, kayaking, and more – is to introduce our students to different experiences so that they can identify passions, develop skills, and hopefully discover lifelong pursuits that bring them joy and community.**

Campers took pride in their accomplishments: I slept overnight away from home! I won the game! I did it and had fun! The key to this success is preparing students in advance and providing enough structure to be confident, but enough independence to experience the joy of accomplishment.

There is no better example than last summer's game of Capture The Flag. The game was set up, the rules were explained, and the students were allowed to play it on their own. One student, who uses an augmentative communication device to communicate and typically works in small groups or 1-to-1, snuck around the other team all on his own and stole the flag, winning the game. The student was so proud he carried the flag with him for the rest of the camp!

Cora reflects, **"You set the structure but allow them to succeed, and it's just like BAM! I find that when I set the bar high and support them, they always blow my expectations out of the water."**

Accreditation

At Victory, we take our accreditation seriously! We value exceeding nationally set educational standards, and we are committed to continuously improving our curriculum, culture, and the teaching of our students.

To that end, we just completed an exhaustive review conducted by AdvancED, the national accreditation organization for all public and private schools on the west coast. AdvancED reviews each school every year and follows up with a more in-depth review every five years. Victory was first accredited in 2011, and we just completed our five-year review. The review covers everything from curriculum standards and student progress to professional development, leadership, board of director participation, financial status and sustainability, school philosophy and culture, technology use, and much more. AdvancED also reviews our five-year strategic plan, conducts a two-day site visit, and surveys students, staff, and parents. Over 500 pages of reporting were submitted as part of the review.

Why undergo such a pain-staking process? As Tricia Hasbrook explains, "The review provides feedback on our strengths and weaknesses allowing us to improve everything we do. It also communicates to our parents, community, and fellow schools that the systems, policies, and procedures we have at Victory are meeting or exceeding nationally set standards." On May 7th, we received the great news that Victory had been successfully re-accredited. Hooray!

Staff Profiles

KRISTINA MONTGOMERY

Kristina Montgomery has been with Victory Academy for ten years and is one of the school's founding team members. She graduated from the University of Oregon and earned her MA in Applied Behavior Analysis from Teachers College at Columbia University. She is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) as well as a Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA). Fall 2014, Kristina launched the Victory Prep Program for students aged 4-7 and continues to direct the program today. She is co-lead teacher in Victory's Elm classroom and provides behavioral supervision and guidance school-wide. Kristina loves the individualized learning plans she can implement at Victory, and the students have had a huge impact on her. "I've learned a lot more about what really matters in life."



EMMA AGLIPAY

Emma Aglipay relocated to Portland specifically to teach at Victory nine years ago. She is the lead teacher in the Spruce classroom. Originally from Northern California, Emma attended California State University, Chico and graduated with a BA in Liberal Studies and an Elementary Teaching Credential. She is also a Registered Behavior Technician.



Emma tries to grab every teachable moment, be it academic, social, or behavioral. As she points out, "...these moments cannot always be planned, but when they occur, it is important to allow them to happen in order for our students to learn from them."

KELLY AND GRANT SHARLOW

Brother-sister duo Grant and Kelly Sharlow bring a family dynamic to Victory. Originally from the Northeast, Kelly graduated with a degree in Sociology from University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Grant completed his degree in Childhood Education from Potsdam State College. Both are support teachers at Victory, and both were inspired to enter the field by their mother, an adapted physical education teacher. Kelly and Grant appreciate the professional support they receive at Victory and the relationships they have made with families. As Grant explains, "Victory is always looking to improve the lives of its students, staff, and families."



For the Future

As our oldest high school students get ready to graduate from Victory in August of 2020, we are gearing up to develop plans for life after Victory.

VICTORY POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM

Starting this fall, a group of Victory teachers and Tricia Hasbrook, our Director of School, will focus on developing a Post-Graduate Program for students after they finish five years of high school at Victory. Services for adults with autism in Oregon are much less developed than K-12 school programs. As Tricia explains, "We do not want our students to hit the 'services cliff' once they leave. We want to avoid having them have so much support at Victory and then have so little."

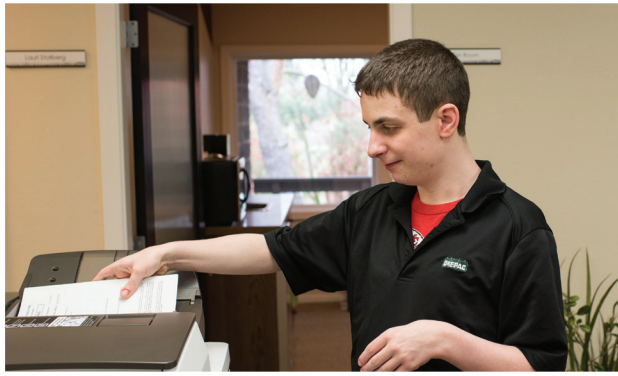


This next year will be spent researching programs around the country, establishing partnerships within the community for work and continuing education, and identifying opportunities for community, recreation, and independent living. The goal is to have a pilot program up and running by the following year – Fall of 2020 – a program able to meet the needs of our first high school graduates.

VICTORY FARMS

Longer-term, Victory hopes to open an education center for adults with autism grounded in the same philosophy as Victory Academy – believing in the full potential of those with autism and providing the supportive and integrated educational and therapeutic environment to unlock it. Ideally, this center would include continuing education with a focus on life skills; art, music, and recreation classes; opportunities for socializing; and opportunities for meaningful work through community partnerships. We believe we have identified the perfect location for such a community center – the 12-acre horse farm across the street from Victory. Please stay tuned as we embark on the next phase of the dream of giving those with autism every chance for a fulfilling life complete with ongoing learning and community.





Thank You, Work Experience Partners

The Value of a Job

A huge concern of parents who have a child with autism is, **"What happens when high school is over?"** Nationally, 86% of adults with autism are unemployed, yet research demonstrates that community involvement, vocational training, and paid employment all lead to greater outcomes for people with autism.

Because of this, Victory Academy created a Transition Program in 2016 to prepare our students for life after Victory. Students, age 13 and older, spend one to three afternoons a week in work internships with local businesses, typically with a Victory teacher for support, and rotate work experiences twice a year.

Since the inaugural year, **the program has grown to include 35 students, 26 community partners, almost 400 unique work experiences, and nine students in paid positions.**

This has been possible through the vision and guidance of Molly Smith and Sula Willson, leaders of Victory's Transition Program. They assess a partner organization's needs and provide training for the businesses – educating them about autism and how to best communicate and support our students. As Molly explains, "Many businesses don't understand our students' strengths or how they could fulfill a need the business has."

For example, one Victory student with incredible attention to detail worked at

the Wilsonville Library alphabetizing books. Another student who loves to sort and recycle is thriving at James Recycling. Yet another student who is interested in sales is training with Wilsonville Subaru in their sales associate program.

The biggest reason for the success is our amazing community partners, recently honored at Victory's first Work Experience (WE) Appreciation night.

The evening featured speeches from Victory students and two business partners: Dick Spence, Community Advocate and

Guest Relations of Wilsonville Subaru and Brad Hart, President and CEO of OrePac Building Products. Victory students spoke about what they learned through work and what receiving a paycheck means to them.

The benefits flow in both directions. As Brad Hart explained, "It is important to

us to give back to the local community, not just as employers but as citizens. It makes you feel good to support these students. These students brighten our day and help us with our mission of making the complicated, simple. I couldn't be more honored, more proud to be a part of Victory Academy."

Thank you, WE Partners, for joining us to train and empower a group of capable individuals. Thank you for providing them with the skills and confidence to pursue their dreams.

When I am at Victory, I feel normal.

—Katie J, 18

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Victory Is Grateful To Our 2018 Donors

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

\$100,000+

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What's New

PROM NIGHT REDUX

Once again, prom night was a roaring success. **Twenty-seven students aged 14 and older attended the Tim Tebow Foundation's Night to Shine Prom.** They rented tuxes and spent the afternoon getting hair, nails, and make-up done, then piled into a limo-style party bus generously donated by Victory grandparents, Roy and Kathy Moore. Once Victory students arrived at the dance, they were feted with a red-carpet arrival complete with tiaras and crowns. Students took advantage of the karaoke machine and quiet room, and everyone danced, danced, danced!

VICTORY'S FUNNY FARM MUSICAL

Victory students are excited about this year's school musical, Funny Farm. Written and directed by Victory speech pathologist, Chris Yensan, this musical comedy follows a group of farm animals as they explore who they are and how they fit in. Songs were put to music by teachers Magen Dignan and Michael Allard; ten students across six classrooms have parts in the play; and art teacher Mary Ellen Anderson's Set Design class created the backdrops for the production. **Most exciting of all, the play will be performed at the Sherwood Center for the Arts, Victory's first foray into performing in a professional venue. Bravo!**

NEXT FOR AUTISM GRANT

In December 2018, NEXT for Autism awarded Victory Academy a \$45,000 grant from the proceeds of Night of Too Many Stars. The grant focuses on innovative programming and supports for transition students using augmentative communication (AAC) devices. With these grant dollars, Victory has begun training its Work Experience partners so that students using these devices can communicate directly with employers and customers. **This grant bolsters Victory's goal to shift community understanding of teens using AAC devices in the workplace,** as well as our commitment to demonstrating that students using AAC devices can overcome barriers to be successful employees and community members.



WELCOME TILLIE!

Tillie came to Victory in January 2019 and joins Haley as one of two autism service dogs. **Trained specifically to work with children on the autism spectrum, Tillie has training in deep pressure and detecting when a student is upset or dysregulated.** She spends most of her day in the Redwood classroom, but also provides support to students in Victory's fitness classes, attends art with Victory Prep, and goes off campus for CBI, recreation activities, Edge Fitness visits, and transportation lessons. Hooray for Tillie!



P.O. Box 428 · Tualatin, OR 97062

Thank you for supporting
Victory Academy!

www.VictoryAcademy.org

Important Dates

JULY 17

Summer Sing and Art
Walk 9:15 am

**JULY 31 –
AUGUST 2**

Victory Summer Camp

SEPTEMBER 3

First Day of New
School Year

OCTOBER 19

Victory Academy
Auction – All for One!

DECEMBER

Winter Program

**FEBRUARY 19,
2020**

Portland Auto Show
Sneak Peek Charity
Night

AUGUST 2, 2020

Victory Academy's First
High School Graduation



Sneak Peek Charity Night

Thank you to all who attended the Metro Portland New Car Dealers Association's (MPNCDA) Sneak Peek Charity Preview Party on behalf of Victory Academy! **We raised \$180,000 because of your support!**

For the last five years, Victory has been fortunate to be selected as one of the charity beneficiaries of this fun night of giving. Held every January, the event kicks off the Portland International Auto Show, and this year, the event raised \$674,000 for local non-profit organizations. Sneak Peek guests are treated to complimentary hors d'oeuvres and cocktails while enjoying a crowd-free look at all the new cars and trucks. Ticket sales benefit the charity of your choice, and MPNCDA often matches those sales.

This year, Victory supporters bought 977 tickets to Sneak Peek – more than we have ever sold!

We are grateful to everyone who attended and made this donation possible. The funds will be used to support the specialized academic programming so vital to our students' success. Thank you!

*When I am at
Victory, I feel
awesome.*

—Hank, 13