The Victory Academy Newsletter

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

Victory Voice

Edition VII · Summer 2022

# Dear Victory Academy Supporters—

The last few years have forever changed us all, as we collectively navigated through one of the most tricky and dynamic times in our nation's history. Through it all, we have remained true to our commitment to safe, in-person learning for Victory's students. In September 2021, we started the year masked-up, but by April 2022, we were able to ease into a world of mask-free faces. It's a glorious thing to see facial expressions again—everything from sassy smirks to sweet smiles. We might be biased, but Victory's students possess some of the most award-winning grins in town!

I have a lot of favorite things about school, like talking to Sam and playing baseball in PE

– Liam, 10

Victory's students never cease to amaze. This year, they have dived deep into existing and new programs, embracing challenges with determination and grace. For example, we added an Orton Gillingham Reading Specialist, and many of our struggling readers tackled the written word for the first time, finally finding joy and adventure in reading. Our middle and high school students re-opened Bloom (Victory's Coffee Shop and Café) and danced the night way at their Spring Prom. All classrooms participated in Victory's school-wide winter and spring Pop-Up Shops, creating and selling their own products.

Through it all, we have been encouraged and uplifted by our community's dedication to forging ahead with us. As I reflect upon Victory's achievements this year, none of them would have been possible without your heartfelt support and kindness. Thank you for believing in Victory!

### Tricia Hasbrook

Founder and Director of School









## OCTOBER 29, 2022

Please join us for an inspiring and celebratory evening at the Victory Campus. Food Trucks! Live Auction! Wheel of Victory! Special Appeal! Loads of Fun!

My favorite thing about school is all my friends – Miles, 18

# Diploma Matters

One of the biggest questions every Victory family must eventually consider is "What type of high school diploma is right for our child?" In order to meet the needs of all students and families, Victory offers two types of diplomas: modified and regular. Both diplomas meet Oregon Department of Education standards and require 24 credits to graduate. However, in a modified diploma, students complete fewer core courses (like math and science) and more electives (such as music and art). If they want to pursue further study, modified diploma recipients must complete community college first before moving on to a four-year institution. At Victory, both diploma programs are designed to be five years long in order to accommodate students' special learning needs and to give them varied opportunities in work experience, recreation, transition, and other community-based programs.

Victory's regular diploma curriculum meets every requirement, except one. Students on a regular diploma must complete two credits of lab science, but Victory does not have an on-site lab. Intent on providing this coursework, Thea Schreiber, Victory's Founder and Director of Operations, approached nearby Horizon Christian High School about a partnership in 2017.

Victory's partnership with Horizon has flourished over the years. Victory teachers set their students up for success at Horizon by teaching them to take notes, helping them make calendars to track due dates, and reviewing materials as needed. As Victory students become more accustomed to their Horizon classes, these supports are gradually faded until the students operate independently. Current Victory students Max Jetton and Leo Gonzalez are both taking Chemistry at Horizon. They report that the class is hard but that they really like seeing what a "big high school" is like. Max says that even though the class has a lot of homework, it "pushes me to be better". Leo feels the Horizon teachers do a good job answering his questions.

Regardless of the diploma they earn, Victory's past 2020 and 2021 graduates are finding their places in the community. A 2020 Graduate is pursuing a cosmetology license and just earned her driving permit. A 2021 Graduate now attends Victory's post-graduate SOAR! Program and helps to teach a Victory art class to youngerage students. Another 2020 Graduate is a founding artist at a Portland-area art studio for adults with autism and disabilities. It's certainly not easy to build a life after high school, but Victory Grads are successfully moving forward!



# Recreation For Life...Reimagined!

**Shannon Miller Drake**, Victory's new Recreation Specialist, has spent the last year rethinking Victory's Recreation (Rec) Program. Shannon focuses on activities Victory's middle and high school students can participate in during after school hours: bowling, hiking, swimming, and more! Shannon believes that finding joy in leisure activities is something all people need to feel more connected to their communities and fulfilled in life. She has created a Rec program that is fun, spirited, and life-enhancing.

Each week, Shannon puts to use her 20 years of experience leading Rec activities for students with learning differences and her three years as a Victory staff member. When asked what her goals are for her students in this program, Shannon answered, "Many of our student goals in Rec center around social interactions. For example, some students are learning how to just hang out around an activity so they can tag along with their family on a weekend outing. Other students are being exposed to an activity for the first time, like disc golf, and not only need to learn all the rules of play, but the skills to successfully participate in a game, too. Throwing the frisbee, walking on uneven ground on the disc golf course, and finding the frisbee on the course are just some of the skills that need to be taught in just this one game." Every student can have their own set of personal goals within a game, activity, or the Rec program itself. However, an overarching goal for all students is participating with their classmates at

# Victory's First Ever Gamified Classroom

Only just a few years ago, games like Sorry!, Monopoly, and Life, dominated the market and oftentimes found their way into America's classrooms during break times or rainy day recesses. Fast forward to 2022 and into Victory's own Birch middle school classroom, and you will see that a different kind of gameplay permeates almost every aspect of teaching and learning. The Birch Team of **Greg Macke** and **Jordan Olsen** have "gamified" almost every aspect of the school day to instruct and support their students. From lessons in math and financial literacy to dealing with disappointment and monitoring their emotions, it's all games in Birch. Greg comes to the gaming table with a teaching and behavior background, while Jordan is well-versed in the creative crafting side. Their goals are to make learning engaging, interactive, and FUN.

Each day, Greg and Jordan walk into Victory and put on their "gamification hats", creating experiences that target specific student goals, constantly adjusting based on student progress. One of the most popular activities with students is LARPing (Live Action Role Play), where students play a role (or create a specific character in a larger group game) and act out fictional adventures. LARPing allows students to practice working together as a group to solve problems, to make choices, and to experience the natural consequences of their decisions along the way—all within a game format. Another game Birch students love is Critical Core, a tabletop role playing game with a Dungeons and Dragons feel. Critical Core is a game developed specifically for students with Autism. It helps the Birch kids learn communication and

their own level and then transferring newly-learned skills to their own homes and communities—both now and long after they leave Victory.

As restrictions have eased during the school year, Rec outings in the community have increased. Students leave campus in the Victory Vans to go swimming at the

My favorite thing about school is riding my bike – Juno, 9 Sherwood YMCA, play field-type games indoors at The Field House (because it's rainy in Portland!), or engage in baseball at a local park. They return triumphant, confident, and tired. Rec can



collaboration skills, build empathy for others, and develop emotional resilience—all while fighting monsters in a cave.

The ever-creative Jordan believes the middle school age group succeeds in a gamified classroom because they are highly invested in the outcomes of the varied and dynamic games. Plus, Jordan and Greg adapt the reward systems as the interests of the students shift throughout the school year. In short, the students thrive within "the game", navigating through challenges and failures together while learning everything from current events to health and wellness. Talk about the ultimate win!!!



be challenging physically, but Victory students are constantly encouraged to do their personal version of "best" and make their own progress. When asked what has surprised her this year in Rec, Shannon responded, "Watching students enjoy an activity that we never expected they would." And this is exactly the reason why Recreation at Victory was reimagined.

# Changing Lives, One Reader at a Time



**Sandy Haynes** came to Victory in January 2021. It was a dark time—the middle of winter and the tenth month of the pandemic—but Sandy herself was a ray of light and hope, as she dived into the hard work of teaching struggling readers to read. Sandy is a trained Orton-Gillingham Reading Specialist and believes all children—no matter their age or circumstance—should have the opportunity to read. It is a matter of safety, independence, and joy.

Orton-Gillingham is an explicit, multi-sensory, sequential approach to teaching literacy to students who struggle with reading, writing, or spelling. In one-to-one, individualized lessons, Orton-Gillingham uses phonics and word patterns to teach decoding. Instructors take a multi-sensory approach to teaching letters, sounds, and words, often having students say, sing, trace, or draw letters and words.

Sandy customizes every lesson she leads. She changes her approach based on whether a child has difficulty hearing the differences between sounds or seeing the differences between letters. For students just learning their letters and beginning words, Sandy has a stack of brightly colored, multi-sensory cards that she wields like a veteran blackjack dealer. C-a-t becomes R-a-t becomes R-a-t-e becomes D-a-t-e. If it helps, she lets the child move and select the cards. Students are also free to move around, stand, or sing or say the words as loudly as they want.

Sandy covers up pictures in early readers, changes font sizes, gets a new book—anything to unlock the reader within.

Sandy and her students have been rewarded by tremendous success at Victory. One student who began with sentences like, "The dog is on the box", progressed to reading at the fourth-grade level in less than a year. Sandy says, "This is a world of delayed gratification. It takes a long time to master the building blocks, but once they've done that, the joy is tremendous for both the teacher and the students."

Sandy will retire at the end of the 2021–2022 school year, but Orton-Gillingham will live on at Victory. Four classroom teachers will participate in an intensive Orton Gillingham training this summer, and Sandy will actively help with the certification process. At Victory, every student will have the chance to learn how to read.

Sandy leaves quite a legacy.



# Health for Life

Two years ago, Victory lead teacher, **Emily Beal Wilkinson**, was shocked to hear that every student in her class had to be sedated for routine shots and blood draws. Determined to make a lasting change, Emily and Tricia Hasbrook, Victory's Founder and Director, set out to design a school-wide health initiative.

The program's goal is to help students become more comfortable and confident during routine medical and dental procedures like pill swallowing, shots, blood draws, Covid tests, taking blood pressures, wearing nitrous oxide masks, etc. While not considered a 'big deal' as far as medical procedures go, for many people with autism, these procedures can impede (sometimes stop cold) medical or dental care. When care must be given, families plan for days and oftentimes endure tremendous anxiety to get through 'routine' visits.

Emily has structured her classroom to mirror real-life situations. During their Health and Hygiene block, students wait in a mock waiting room and listen for their names to be called. They then practice different simulations. Teachers track their tolerance levels and move a child to a new skill once they have mastered a skill throughout the practice session. Some Victory students were understandably wary when the program began, but seeing their peers deal with the same issues successfully provided a real sense of relief and calm. One middle school student who used to be anesthetized for blood draws has made tremendous progress; he has made it through two all on his own!

In the future, Tricia and Emily have big plans for Victory's health program. Tricia is currently working on a grant to convert a space at school into a medical area with an exam table, dentist's chair, and other medical equipment so students can practice, practice, practice. The ultimate test is then for students to take their learned skills into real world settings. Teaching kids to accept basic medical and dental care is obviously imperative to their wellbeing. Given the challenges most families face in this area, it's safe to say Victory's new program will generate sighs of relief.



Wilson, 8

# **StaffProfiles**



### **ERIC PANIGADA**

Eric Panigada has worked in the world of autism for seventeen years, beginning his career as a behavior therapist and instructional assistant. A native of San Francisco, Eric came to Victory five years ago and is now a support teacher in one of Victory's

middle/high school classes. Eric was originally drawn to Victory because of the way the school pairs academics with work experience and community involvement. He loves that Victory gives him the opportunity to be involved in many layers of a student's journey. Eric's goal as a teacher is to make learning fun and engaging for his students. He prides himself on making his lessons tangible and interactive, constantly finding links between what a student is doing in the moment with what they have learned in class. Eric loves to see students find the strength within themselves to try new things, such as horseback riding at summer camp or bravely collecting chicken eggs. He feels one of the most rewarding elements of being at Victory is the collaboration amongst staff members. Eric shared that "the effort that the entire staff puts into the school to ensure the activities for the students remain relevant is really impressive." Eric says Victory has taught him that "a school can be so much MORE than just a school."



### VICTORIA POARCH

Victoria came to Victory in January 2018. She may hold the prize for most roles at the school, as she has acted as a teaching assistant, support teacher, temporary lead teacher, and now, Art Specialist. Victoria loves the community at

Victory and relishes watching her students learn and grow. Last week, she said, "One of my student's called me 'Victorious' today. How can you beat that?" Victoria feels the greatest lesson she has learned at Victory is that we all think and learn differently and should embrace the people around us for who they are. She believes that is a big part of life's journey, that "each of us [needs to] learn to accept and love ourselves, our shortcomings, and our strengths." For Victoria, teaching is all about connection. She wants her students to know she cares about them, respects them, and wants the best for them each and every day. Victoria will be retiring at the end of this year, and when asked what she would miss most about Victory, she said, "the love, the laughter, the community of people, and knowing that I can make a difference in someone's life, most days." It's safe to say that Victoria has indeed been 'victorious' at Victory.

# Victory Is Grateful To Our 2021 Donors

Your generous support makes a difference in the lives of our students, their families, and others affected by autism throughout the Northwest—and Beyond!

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### Canine

Volunteers Tillie Brague

Theo Caruso Haley Hasbrook Sanders Poarch

# Spotlight on Victory's Community Partners

#### METRO PORTLAND NEW CAR DEALERS ASSOCIATION (MPNCDA)

Victory is thrilled to announce the return of the Sneak Peek Charity Party on Wednesday, February 1, 2023. Guests will be treated to an incredible evening of delicious food, beverages, live music, and fun—all while getting a first look at the Portland International Auto Show the night before the event opens.

In 2015, MPNCDA selected Victory as one of its recipient charities. For a total of six years (2015–2020), Sneak Peek provided Victory with critical funding (over one million dollars to date) for our capital campaign to build a new campus and to support our specialized programs and therapies. ONE MILLION DOLLARS!!! We are grateful to our friends at MPNCDA and excited for the return of this awesome event.



### WILSONVILLE SUBARU & SHARE THE LOVE

For the past three years, Wilsonville Subaru has chosen Victory as its hometown charity for Subaru's national Share The Love event. Car shoppers choose between Victory and one other local charity, and then Wilsonville Subaru donates \$250 for every vehicle sold. In April 2022, Wilsonville Subaru gifted Victory \$27,000, designated for the school's financial aid/tuition assistance fund. Over the past three years, Wilsonville Subaru has generously given a total of \$86,000 to support innovation of programs and activities at Victory. Thank you to our friends at Wilsonville Subaru!



### **GRAHAM & TOOZE FARM**

In August 2015, Victory moved into its just-built campus and quickly settled into our country life. In the fall of 2019, the farm adjacent to Victory was sold, and we anxiously awaited the arrival of our new neighbors. The owners of this property, renamed "Graham & Tooze", immediately reached out, introduced themselves, and asked, "How can we help?" That one question has led to many enthusiastic conversations, shared interests, and a lasting friendship.

Our kind friends at Graham & Tooze built a pathway between the two properties, with an open invitation for Victory's students to access the farm. The students have picnicked on the grass, painted in the gardens, and spent hours observing the animals. In summer 2021, Graham & Tooze offered to reignite our Work Experience Program (on hold due to the pandemic) and employed students to collect chicken eggs, clean them for sale, and package them for final distribution. We are grateful for these caring, accepting, and forward-thinking individuals.



### Thank you for supporting Victory Academy!

www.VictoryAcademy.org

## Important Dates

JUNE 3 Victory Prom

JULY 6 Victory Summer Session Begins

JULY 18-22 Day Camp: YMCA's Camp Collins (Select Classes)

JULY 25-26 Day Camp: Frog Pond Farm (Select Classes)

AUGUST 7 Victory's Third High School Graduation

AUGUST 10 Summer Showcase (art, music, and other talents,

SEPTEMBER 6 First Day of New School Year

My favorite things about school are Victory Academy and Garden Club

OCTOBER 29 Victory's Annual Auction: Heroes All Around Us!

NOVEMBER 2022 -JANUARY 2023 Share the Love Event (Wilsonville Subaru)

DECEMBER 16 Winter Program

FEBRUARY 1, 2023 Portland Auto Show · Sneak Peek Charity Night

APRIL 24-28, 2023 A Week of Victory!/Online Fundraiser \*April is Autism Awareness Month

MAY 21, 2023 Food Truck Party





