



## Work Experience (WE) Program: Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Victory Academy?

Founded in 2009, Victory is a private, non-profit school for children and adolescents with autism. It is the first school of its kind in the Portland area to offer a comprehensive, integrated academic and therapeutic program, with individualized student instruction on a year-round schedule. When Victory opened nine years ago, it served just eight students with autism in Grades K-5. Over the years, the number of students has increased, and today Victory's 71 students range from preschool through Grade 11.

### What is Victory's Work Experience (WE) Program?

Beginning at age thirteen, students gain foundational employment skills through internships in the community through Victory's Work Experience (WE) Program. Students are exposed to a variety of jobs, they receive direct instruction in job-specific tasks and transferable skills, engage in comprehensive preference tracking, and are provided opportunities to increase self-determination and independence. Since January 2016, Victory's WE Program has provided 22 students (aged 13-18) a total of 108 vocational training opportunities in the community.

### What businesses have been involved in the WE Program at Victory?

Since beginning WE in January of 2016, Victory has partnered with 18 employers in the greater Portland metropolitan area. Of those businesses, every single one has asked us back to do more work! Our past and current business partners are the following: Ace Hardware, Old Navy, McDonald's, Willamette Valley Training, Our Table Farm and Co-Op, Horizon Elementary School, Salon Professional Academy, Critter Cabana, World of Speed, Oregon Dog Rescue, Cat Adoption Center, Wow! Burger, Wilsonville Library, Columbia River Knife and Tool (CRKT), Edge Family Fitness, Wilsonville Lanes, Hughes Waters Center, and Paws Animal Shelter.

### How does Victory Academy identify businesses to partner with?

Victory staff and students choose employers based on students' strengths, gifts, and interests. For example, one of our students loves fashion and beauty. Victory reached out to a local salon, built a partnership, and the student interned at the job site for two months. Another student is a talented artist. She completed her internship with an art teacher at Horizon Elementary School.

### How often will students intern at each job site?

We currently offer two rotations throughout the school year, from October to February and March to August. Students intern for 1-2 hours per week at each job site. This is also individualized based on employers and student needs and wants.

### How much does it cost my company?

Absolutely nothing! Victory covers the cost of support and staffing at each job site. Some students require a 1:1 support staff, while others may learn best in a group of 3-4 students, with the help of one Victory staff.

### What would Victory students do at my business?

Depends on the business and the need! To give an idea, at World of Speed, Victory students clean, lead group games for museum-goers, and greet guests. At CRKT, students work in the production side of the office and the customer service end. Victory staff interviews the employer, pinpointing the unmet needs of the business, thus pairing a student at Victory based on interests and strengths.



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### Why did Victory create the WE Program?

The research on the outcomes for adults with autism in regards to employment, independent living, quality of life, and community access is dismal. Howlin, et al (2004) surveyed 68 adults with Autism and found 58% of the adults were rated as having poor or very poor outcomes. Only 11% were considered competitively employed. Cedarlund, et al (2008) followed 140 males with Autism and Asperger Syndrome and found that 26% had a restricted life, with no occupation or activity and zero friends. Other research shows a shocking 86% of adults with autism are unemployed. This staggering, especially considered 500,000 adolescents with autism are aging into adulthood in the next decade. Victory aims to change these statistics.

### What's the "end goal" after an internship?

Would we like one of our students to be considered for competitive employment at one of their WE internships? Of course! We understand that it may not be the best fit for everyone, but it's definitely something to set as the ultimate goal. One of our students completed her WE internship at McDonald's Wilsonville, from January to May 2016. She was then hired as a part-time employee at McDonald's!

### Are the students covered under liability insurance while they are at job sites?

Yes. All Victory students are covered for accidents off school grounds and during regular school hours. We are happy to provide copies of Victory's policy, or we can have your business listed as an additional insured party on our general liability policy as well.

### What's in it for the businesses?

According to research conducted by the Institute for Corporate Productivity and Best Buddies International, there are many, many reasons why it's beneficial for companies to hire adults with disabilities. Some key findings include: 1) *"A worker with (disabilities) reads like that of an ideal employee.* Descriptors of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities include: dependable, engaged, motivated, great attendance, attention to work quality, and high productivity. 2) *Positive reactions from employers abound.* Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed say hiring workers with IDD has been a positive experience, and of those, nearly one-third say the experience has exceeded their expectations. 3) *Challenges are fewer than expected and resources are greater than anticipated.* Employers report minimal difficulty with preconceived challenges, while support resources for a successful placement—like job profile matching and guided onboarding—are readily available." Also, be sure to check out the business testimonials on the following page. These employers have already described many ways our students have benefited their companies in the past.

### Further questions?

Please contact Victory's Director of School, Tricia Hasbrook, at [tricia@victoryacademy.org](mailto:tricia@victoryacademy.org) or Victory's Transition Specialist, Molly Smith, at [molly@victoryacademy.org](mailto:molly@victoryacademy.org)

**Thank you for your interest in Victory Academy's Transition Program!**

### Testimonials of past and current WE Programs business partners:



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*"Our McDonald's team learned to be more understanding of the needs of a new team members. By seeing the hard work and the enormous effort made by the VA students to learn the McDonald's system, motivated our team to try even harder at their own tasks. Working with the VA students gave everyone more empathy and understanding about the complexity of working in the service industry."*

*"This is an amazing program that has truly transformed how we onboard our new hires at McDonald's and keep new hires connected with their restaurant team. Since being involved with the program we've modified our orientation process and created a Corporate Training Department. The students were able to express their feeling about working in a new environment in a way that our general new hires have never been able to communicate. The VA support staff is amazing. My team was never overwhelmed with not having adequate support. The team worked shoulder to shoulder with the student to ensure a smooth learning experience. The student were always eager for their next day at work."*

*"I immediately noticed that our restaurant team was extremely proud of being able to participate in the program. Our customers were also appreciative of the partnership."*

*"We were so impressed by the enthusiasm of our restaurant team towards the VA WE program, we created a New Training Team that specializes in orientation and helping new hires integrate into restaurant teams. This has had a positive impact on our turnover rate and our employee satisfaction."*

*"We are proud to be part of the Victory WE Program. The VA students help us be better business leaders. We are proud to support our community."*

*"Our customers even treated us up differently. When customers learned that we were partnering with Victory Academy's Work Experience Program, they began to give more respect to our team at the restaurant. Thank you for bringing this to our company."*

*"We love having the Victory Students at CRKT. They are so eager to work, and they bring a good atmosphere to the company. Team members that work with them, and others that don't, have commented that they love seeing the students work."*

*"It is amazing to watch the students grow and develop. Yes, I feel it benefits the business. We always have customers asking who they are and what we are doing. Which creates a wonderful opportunity to let customers see the work we do with the community. I would definitely like to continue to program it is always great to have them in the store."*

*"They are always eager to help and looking forward to new tasks. It is great to see the smiles on their faces, and you can tell when they really like what they are doing."*

**Testimonials of past and current WE Programs business partners:**



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*"The tasks that the Victory students help with are tasks that, at least for me, would not get done otherwise. With their help, I was able to complete a task that had been on the back burner for months. Working with these kids and helping them gain life skills in the workplace has been a true blessing to me."*

*"I absolutely do feel like Victory students have impacted our employees in a positive way, our employees have been so helpful with these students and I think it brings a sense of accomplishment to our employees to see the students doing so well."*

*"Yes, we want them back in the future. There is always something for them to help with."*

*"Helping with this program has been a real joy for me. Spending time with these students and seeing the progress they make puts a smile on my face. I am lucky to work for a company that sees the benefit of this program and takes the initiative to help."*

*"We've been able to get a lot of projects completed that we normally would have had to push to a later date. The students help us with repacking product, creating packs for retailers, shred paper, scan documents, and help open boxes."*

*"It's been great having the students here, It's a mutual benefit. CRKT gets extra work done, while being able to teach the students job skills. It so fun to see the students show up in their CRKT shirts ready to work. The students help brighten up the atmosphere, and the students get to learn what the work environment is like."*

*"I personally loved working with the Victory Academy kids. The program helped the VA Students understand the requirements of working in the service industry. It was thrilling to see them apply our training in the restaurant workplace. Additionally our restaurant team was able to learn from the VA students."*