



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.

What is Victory Academy's Transition Program?

Victory Academy offers a robust transition program beginning at age thirteen. The Victory Transition Program has two main components, Transition classes and Work Experience. Beginning with life after Victory in mind students receive targeted learning to prepare our students to move from secondary school to adult life. Students participating in Transition receive comprehensive planning and education that creates individualized opportunities, services and support to help students achieve their post- school goals in the areas of education/training, employment, and adult living(life skills, community involvement, physical and emotional health). Transition is both woven into the fabric of all Victory's programs, and is explicitly taught through a variety of topics and lessons designed with specific skills in mind.

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

Victory's Work Experience(WE) is the complementary program to Transition. The Work Experience program offers the opportunity for students to practice a variety of skills including but not limited to: advocacy, communication, endurance, equitability, independence, self management. Students participate in two, sixteen week rotations each school year.

Victory's middle school students navigate the ins and outs of managing Victory's on-site cafe, Bloom. Students in Bloom gain experience in aspects of running the business such as: cooking, cleaning, customer service,accounting, provisioning, and marketing.

High school and Compass students leave campus for internships ranging from 1-4 hours per week. Students work with a select community partner, who serves as their supervisor and facilitates individual tasks tailored to the particular student. 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. Victory staff is present to support students with negotiating the supervisor/intern relationship and strengthening their individual skill sets.

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 is staggering, especially considering 500,000 adolescents with autism are aging into adulthood in the next decade. Victory aims to change these statistics.

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

Since beginning WE in January of 2016, Victory has partnered with 32 employers in the greater Portland metropolitan area. Of those businesses, multiple Victory students have been offered paid positions. Our past and current business partners are the following:

Ace Hardware	Wilsonville McDonald's	Old Navy	Willamette Valley Training
Our Table Farm	CRKT	Critter Cabana	Wilsonville Library
Cat Adoption Team	Edge Fitness	WOW Burger	Horizon Christian School
World of Speed	Salon Professional	Wilsonville Lanes	Hughes Water Garden
OrePac	FJ Designs	Wilsonville Subaru	New Seasons
James Recycling	Game Stop	Do or Dye	Killer Burger
Graham & Tooze Farm	Tigard Music	Langdon Farms	Adobe Modern
Frog Pond Farm	Wilsonville Parks & Recreation		

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.

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.

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

Would we like 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. Victory students have shown their readiness to engage in meaningful employment and many have been hired by our community partners.

Please contact Victory's Director of School, Tricia Hasbrook, at tricia@victoryacademy.org or Victory's Transition Specialist, Melissa Winter, at melissa@victoryacademy.org.

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

Testimonials of past and current WE Programs business partners:

“Our McDonald’s team learned to be more understanding of the needs of new team members. 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 feelings 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 students 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 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 the 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.”

“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 products, 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 is 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.”

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