

## Oregon Commission for the Blind

### *Summer Work Experience Program 2019*

In 2019, we welcomed the 45<sup>th</sup> cohort of students into OCB's Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP)! And just like each of those forty-five previous years of SWEP's existence... we had our best summer yet! Read on to learn more about the amazing work our staff and students were up to this year as well as all of the exciting changes we brought to the program!



### **What is SWEP?**

SWEP is a program that gives youth in Oregon between the ages of 16-20 who experience vision loss the opportunity to engage in meaningful community-based work experiences carefully designed to be relevant to their individual career goals, personal strengths, and identified areas of growth. Students in both the Portland and Salem programs live together in dormitory settings where they develop independent living skills from laundry to cooking and budgeting.

Prior to beginning their work experiences, students complete a multitude of orientation and job preparation activities including:

- Preparing and refining their resumes
- Practicing their 60-second "elevator pitch"
- Engaging in mock interviews
- Learning about and discussing disability disclosure
- Honing their professional communication strategies
- Learning budgeting and independent living skills
- Discussing ADA guidelines
- Even showing off their professional attire in the annual SWEP fashion show!

Throughout the entire Prep Week, students are also engaged in intensive Orientation and Mobility training, where they learn to safely navigate to and from their work sites using cane skills, mobility technology, and public transportation systems. Finally, the students are interviewed at their SWEP worksites and begin work the following week.



## Work Experiences



Between our Salem, Portland, and Third Track SWEP programs, we placed 26 youth at worksites throughout the Salem and Portland Metro areas for a total of nearly 2000 combined work hours! Students typically work between 25-30 hours per week while also participating in college and career prep activities and countless social and recreational activities from hiking at Silver Falls to bowling alongside puppies from Guide Dogs for the Blind!

Students are supported throughout the program by job coaches, dorm staff, and counselors and these staff members are also responsible for assessing the students' skill levels and progress over the same period. Upon graduation, students and their families are provided with summary reports highlighting their measurable gains in

employment, travel, and independent living skills, their work achievements, and their progress in career exploration that can help guide the students and their support network in planning for their immediate and long-term future.

## New in 2019

This year brought many exciting changes to the program.

### Expansion to include a Third Track

As an effort to expand the impact and benefits of SWEP, this year saw the inclusion of a Third Track of community-based work experiences for students who are not able to attend either our Portland or Salem programs.

### Third Year Pilot

One student in Salem and one student in Portland were provided with the opportunity to attend SWEP for a third year in each program to allow for continued growth. This piloted exception was provided with careful consideration regarding student's needs and the capability of SWEP to continue to offer new experiences.



## So Extras!

So Extras are additional career exploration activities that are created with each individual student and their evolving career goals and interests in mind. These are real-life experiences typically occurring outside of their SWEP worksite and include things such as informational interviews, job shadows, auditions, public performances, career assessment, and job tours. A few examples from this year include:



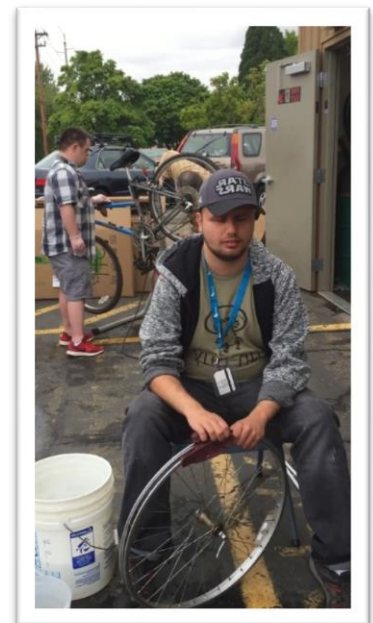
- Informational Interviews with a Butterfly Scientist at the Oregon Zoo, an Adaptive Physical Education Specialist at NWABA, and a member of the Design Team at Weiden and Kennedy!
- A consultation with the director of the Oregon Small Business Development Center at PCC for some of our aspiring entrepreneurs!
- A multi-student musical showcase at the Portland Art Museum as a part of the Piano.Push.Play. Summer Concert Series!

## Increased Emphasis on Peer Mentoring

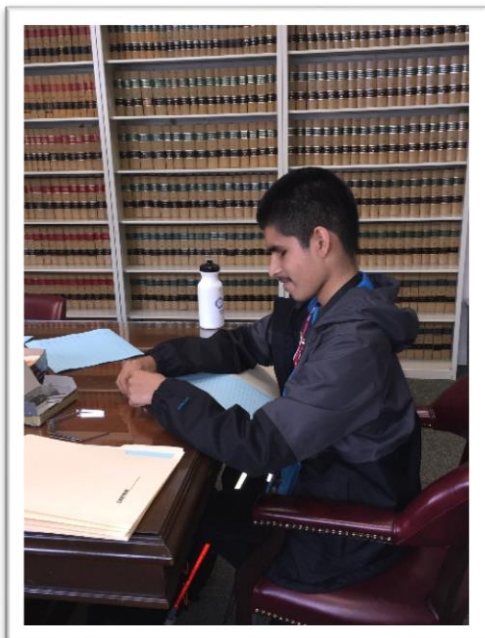
Because we believe in the efficacy and impact of strategic peer mentoring, SWEP students who are new to the program are matched with others who have previously participated. This gives the newer students a much richer and supportive experience and provides opportunities for leadership among our more seasoned SWEPIes.

## Active Learning Strategies

At every level of the SWEP experience, our staff has carefully integrated active learning strategies, which increase student participation, enthusiasm, and retention of valuable career-related knowledge. Whether it's a new and improved college campus scavenger hunt, a mock career fair, or a STEAM informational interviewing event, these activities engage students in the process of building knowledge and skills relevant to their career goals.







## New and Returning Community Business Partners

Several of our students this year had the opportunity to work with brand new partners such as Classic Pianos, Legal Aid of Oregon, Boys & Girls Club of Portland, Community Vision Assistive Technology Lab, Planned Parenthood, and Portland Center Stage! Students were involved in marketing, branding, community outreach, research, education, customer service, research, and many other varied, substantial work tasks. We look forward to continuing to develop these amazing new partnerships alongside many of our incredible long-time business partners such as New Seasons Market, Independent Living Resources, and OMSI!

***We want to sincerely thank all of the community partners involved in making SWEP 2019 another successful and life-changing experience for our students. We truly couldn't do it without you!***

### PORTLAND

[Boys & Girls Club](#)

[Classic Pianos](#)

[Community Vision](#)

[Habitat for Humanity Restore](#)

[Independent Living Resources](#)

[New Seasons Market](#)

[Oregon National Primate Research](#)

[Center/OHSU](#)

[Planned Parenthood Health Center](#)

[Portland Center Stage](#)

[Portland Children's Museum](#)

[Portland State University Rec Center](#)

[Self Enhancement Inc.](#)

[Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District](#)

[Wilsonville Child Development Center](#)



## SALEM

[Create a Memory](#)

[Grocery Outlet](#)

[Hidden Lakes](#)

[Legal Aid Services of Oregon](#)

[Loren Collins Law Office](#)

[Salem Child Development Center](#)

[Tap Root Lounge and Café](#)

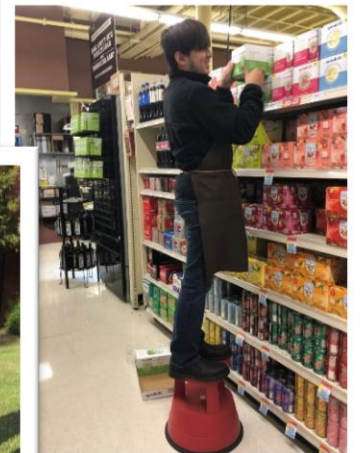
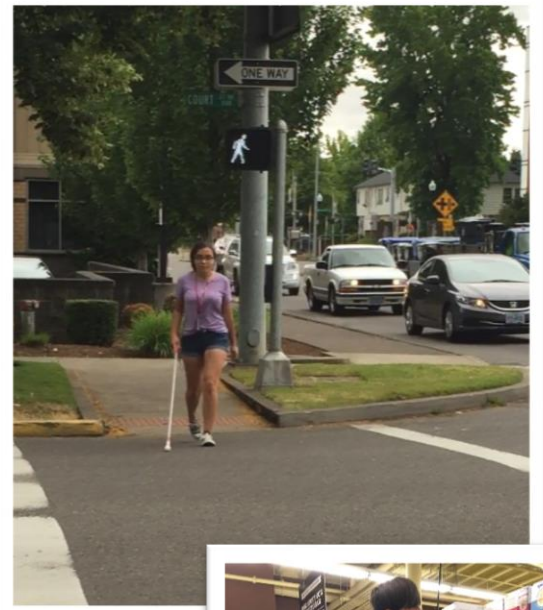
[The Grand Hotel](#)

[The Northwest Hub](#)

[Uptown Music](#)

[Valley Bistro at Oregon Dept. of Revenue](#)

[Whole Latte Love](#)







Loren Collins  
Law Office





Wilsonville  
Child  
Development  
Center