

Partners for Employment News & Updates

September 2020 | UNM Center for Development and Disability

Dear Colleagues, Partners and Friends,
In this edition of our monthly newsletter we are excited to share a very special interview with an everyday hero in our community. She works diligently to make a difference in the lives of those she serves and does so with a warm-hearted smile for all. Olga Alvara takes time out of her day to answer a few questions and share some of her valuable insight with us. Please enjoy.

School-to-Work Transition Headlines & Announcements

Community Spotlight: Everyday Heroes



Olga Alvara, Impacting Lives

**Transition Specialist - Gadsden Independent Schools (5 years),
previously DVR Counselor (16 years)**

When you were a young adult, what made you want to enter the field of Vocational Rehabilitation?

I had just come back from Mexico and was working at an insurance company when I ran into a friend who was working with a program that supported migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities and their families. I had worked with migrant farm workers in the past, so I applied to become a peer mentor. I then started working on my M.A. in Counseling and Educational Psychology and began working with DVR. During that time, I became more and more involved in the support of the transition-age students in these same families.

How did your work as a DVR counselor translate into your work as a school-based Transition Specialist?

Knowing the program and people at DVR has been tremendously helpful because I can collaborate with them and connect them with our school staff, parents, and

students. Besides DVR, the relationships with DDSD, long term service providers, and PFE have helped our transition program with the schools. Teachers, students, and parents have a much better understanding of what DVR and other programs can do.

[Read the full interview with Olga](#)

WISE Trainings

Creating a Person Centered Life, Tools & Truth

Thursday, 09/24/20 at 1:00 PM

This webinar will be split up into two sections. Tools and Truth. In the first part of the webinar Emily Harris of Wise will provide “virtual” hands on tools to support getting to know people, looking at their strengths and strategies, and considering what a thriving full life would look like. In the second part of the webinar, co trainers, Beth McKenney, Wise and Sam McKenney, Intel & Wise associate, will highlight a piece of their family’s Person-Centered story. Sam and Beth will show first hand what thriving looks like when a person the person the right has the supports to succeed, and people around them uphold high expectations, belief, and love.



With this training, you will:

- Have a greater understanding of person-centered tools that help get to know people’s strengths, gifts, and capacities, and strategies for support.
- Have an idea of how to connect a person’s skills to opportunities that enhance their life.
- Gain a firsthand sense of what thriving can look like, when these tools are in place.

[Register Today!](#)

Meet the Presenter:



Emily Harris, Senior Program Manager
WISE

Emily has had the good fortune to be affiliated with people with disabilities throughout her life. She has 12+ years’ experience doing work related to equitable employment. She has worked as an employment consultant and as a Positive Behavior Support consultant with individuals, families, and employment agencies in the Pacific Northwest. She also has international consulting experience with employment agencies across New Zealand.

[Read Emily's Full Bio](#)

Featuring Co-Presenters:



Sam McKenney is a 28 year-old native Oregonian who experiences I/DD. He is gainfully employed in supported employment at Intel's Aloha Oregon campus, working in their food services division. Sam also lives independently in a condo with his roommate of five years. He enjoys music, concerts, and DJing events as well as the Portland beer scene. He also enjoys exploring new cities and spending time boating with his family.



Beth McKenney provides administrative support at WISE and works in the Portland office. An Oregon native, she received a Bachelor of Science in Communication from Portland State University. Beth is passionate about creating socioeconomic equity for all; and has seen firsthand how equitable employment for people experiencing I/DD builds community and a whole life.

More of WISE to come

Thurs. Oct. 22nd 1:00-3:00 PM - [Discovery](#)

Thurs. Nov. 19th 1:00-3:00 PM - [Job Development and Marketing](#)

Thurs. Dec. 3rd 1:00-3:00 PM - [Video Resumes/ Video Story Telling](#)

Thurs. Jan. 21st 1:00-3:00 PM - [Systematic Instruction \(Covid Specific supports\)](#)

Online Trainings Now Available!

Partners for Employment (PFE) at UNM/CDD has created three new online on-demand training options. You can access the videos at your convenience, 24/7! Registration is required to access the skills check and to receive a certificate of completion. The videos can also be accessed through the [PFE website](#).

- **Employment First in New Mexico:** This course provides an overview of DDSD's Employment First policy in New Mexico. [Register here for the skill check.](#)
- **DDSD and DVR Working Together:** This course provides an overview of accessing supported employment services through the NM Department of

Health/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division and the NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Register here. [Register here for the skill check.](#)

- **What Do You Mean I Can Work and Still Be on Disability?!**: This course provides an overview of the differences between Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). It also explains how work incentives and safety nets can benefit people who are employed. [Register here for the skill check.](#)

What do mean I can work and still be on Disability?!

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Social Security Income Training by Kyle Henderson

Registration is necessary to receive a certificate of Completion.

Wednesday 10/14/20 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM -[Register here](#)

[View Full Calendar](#)



Partners for Employment is a program at the University of New Mexico's Center for Development and Disability. We provide training and resources to advance promising practices for inclusive employment in New Mexico. Our partners include Department of Health/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division and Department of Education/Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

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