

The Victory Voice

The Victory Academy Newsletter



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

Edition VIII · Summer 2023

Dear Victory Academy Supporters—

As we ease into summer and bid farewell to Victory's 14th school year, we celebrate some extraordinary community and school-wide accomplishments.

At this year's annual auction, our community enthusiastically raised their paddles, resulting in over \$900,000 to support Victory's specialized programs and therapeutic services. A banner year!!! In addition, the Victory Community continues to bolster the school's financial aid fund through our Week of Victory giving campaign and individual donations. Since 2015, YOUR collective generosity has generated over \$800,000 (a total of 65 awards) to support families in need. Thank you, Victory, for coming together and making a lasting difference in the lives of children, teens, and young adults with Autism and related learning differences.

This year, we also hit a record high in admissions applicants, including families who will relocate from South Carolina, California, and from various locations in the Pacific Northwest. As a result of this spike in enrollment, we have re-imagined our current elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. For the next school year, we will open a fourth early skills elementary classroom, while maintaining three middle and three high school classes. In addition, we are thrilled to announce the opening of Compass, Victory's first full-day, dedicated post-graduate program.

Victory truly is a treasure, a place we are honored to call our home away from home—where every day is different, silly, quirky, love-filled, and REAL. We all belong at Victory.

Tricia Hasbrook + Thea Schreiber
Co-Founders and Directors



SAVE THE DATE!
V15TORY



VICTORY'S ANNUAL AUCTION

OCTOBER 14, 2023

Celebrate 15 Years of Victory!

Food Trucks!
Wheel of Victory!
Wine Wall!
Live Auction!
Special Appeal!
AND MORE!

Graduation Profiles 2023



MILES POLLOCK

Miles has been at Victory since 2009. He is “kind of happy and kind of sad” to leave. He is excited about graduation but will miss his friends and his school. The good news is that next year, Miles plans

to enroll in Victory’s post-graduate program, Compass, so he won’t have to “move all his things” very far. At graduation, Miles is looking forward to wearing a cap and gown and seeing his diploma, but he is most excited “about thanking as many people as I can—all the people who helped me.” He would also like to have a slide show so he can remember his friends and all the fun times he had at Victory. Longer term, Miles would like to be a teacher. He certainly has the heart for it.



KAMRYN WALTER

Kamryn is very excited about graduation and wants everyone to cheer for her. After working hard at Victory for six years, she feels proud of herself, saying “I did a great job.” Kamryn will miss all her

friends in the Hickory classroom; she will miss gym with Adapted Physical Education (APE) Teacher, Shannon Miller Drake, and art with Art Specialist, Sarah Slegers. Like Miles, Kamryn is excited to attend Victory’s Compass program next year, where she will continue her paid job at Wilsonville McDonald’s. She likes “all the work” at McDonald’s and loves her uniform and name tag. Kamryn definitely plans to come back to Victory for dances and choir concerts so she can see her friends.



PRASHANT KHARE

Prashant has been at Victory Academy for nine years. He has participated in choir, drama, art shows, after-school classes, Special Olympics—just about everything Victory has to offer. Prashant says

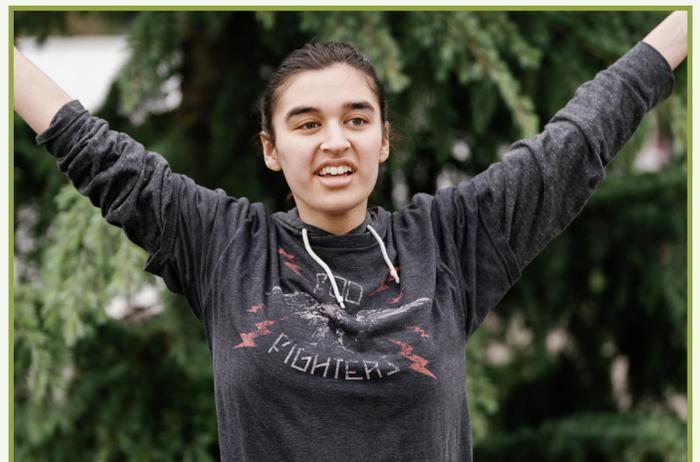
he will miss his friends and Community-Based Instruction (CBI) the most when he leaves. At graduation, he is most looking forward to getting his diploma because “It makes me proud.” He is also hoping for a classroom celebration. Post-graduation, Prashant is looking forward to going to college and meeting some new friends. He is evaluating an inclusive program at PSU, classes at PCC, and Victory’s Compass program. He is definitely going to come back to Victory for alumni events, especially, “prom, Winter Program, Summer Sing, and any other party they invite me to.”



MALACHI DOLSMAN

Malachi arrived at Victory in fall 2018 and says he has enjoyed “a lot of things at the school the past five years, but he loves the therapy dogs the most—especially Sanders.” Malachi also likes

hanging out with his friends, playing card and board games with them. Other highlights for Malachi include having Cindy Hutchison and Greg Macke as his teachers because they have been “so nice and supportive” and his one-to-one sessions with Magen Dignan, Music Therapist and Teacher. While Malachi is still undecided about life after graduation, he really hopes to keep his job at CRKT, his most recent Work Experience placement. Malachi says the people and work at CRKT make “him feel good.”



Which Way, Now?



If you ask any parent of a high schooler with Autism what they worry about, you will inevitably hear about their child's transition to adulthood and the "services cliff" that comes with it. Victory knew that it could help with that cliff, so the school set about designing a post-graduate program to provide much needed services and to fill in critical gaps. Dubbed "Compass," the program launches in fall 2023 and welcomes Victory graduates from the classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. **Based on the concepts of Connections, Communities, and Continuations**, Compass includes opportunities for paid employment, volunteer and service work, job internships, recreation, life skills, and general education courses.



Two full-time teachers will guide the program in its first year: **Donna Brague and Eric Panigada**. Donna most recently headed Victory's Work Experience program, and Eric has taught in a variety of Victory's high school classes. Together, they hope to create a program that helps young adults with Autism build a full, happy, and diverse life. Donna expressed it best when she said, **"Everybody in the world needs to have a meaningful, dignified life. They also need to have meaningful days."**

Victory understands that life beyond high school most often includes employment of some sort. Victory has partnered with long-time supporter, **Caruso Produce**, to

launch a Compass participant-run business, one that offers paid employment for everyone. Specifically, Compass will be responsible for a custom produce box business: Participants will take and process custom box orders, pack the boxes, handle delivery, and perform all the administrative tasks that go along with each order. The Compass Team will also help each participant find an additional long-term job or volunteer opportunity in their own local community.

Beyond employment, Compass includes a myriad of other elements. Participants will develop household independence through shopping and cooking. Cohorts will sample recreation activities in their home communities to build leisure skills. Education will focus on personal finance, relationships, and understanding current events. Other activities will include Book Club, art classes, and for those interested, building musical instruments. Families will have monthly meetings to develop individualized plans and goals. Most importantly, the Compass Team will help families hire and train direct support workers (DSWs) for their Compass participant—a critical and missing piece of the services "gap." DSWs act as long-term respite care providers, job coaches, and mentors to individuals with Autism.

Because Compass is a post-graduate program, **Victory's Co-Founders and Directors, Tricia Hasbrook and Thea Schreiber**, believe there must be a clear physical distinction between Victory Academy as a school and Compass as a young adult program. To that end, Victory plans to launch a **one million dollar capital campaign** to construct a new building for the Compass program. Victory has partnered once again with **James Meyer, original Victory architect and acting Victory Board Member, Opsis Architecture, and Precision Construction**. One of James's primary goals is to support the independence and identity of Compass while maintaining a cohesive Victory campus. To that end, the new Compass building will maintain Victory's rural 'feel' while having its own footprint on the campus—a footprint totaling almost 2,000 square feet.

Making the leap from school to young adulthood is a difficult and stressful time for families who have children with Autism. The process is confusing; the resources are inadequate; and yet the stakes are high. Compass offers a sturdy bridge to get there, and it is one of the most significant undertakings Victory has shouldered to date. Compass is entirely different from "school," and **James Meyer** understands the significance. He says, **"This is not just a campus improvement. Compass is groundbreaking."** Victory families would agree.

Life Makes The Best Learning

At Victory, project-based learning is wildly popular with students and teachers alike. In short, when students learn by actually engaging in real life activities and settings, they have the opportunity to fully test and apply their knowledge and skills. From science and math to gardening and chickens, Victory's teachers purposefully blend academics with real world experiences, resulting in both fun and long-term understandings.



Math and Science

Jonathan (aka Johnny) Holliday, Victory's Math and Science Specialist, purposely practices math in context. For example, two of his classes this year honed in on fractions, decimals, and percentages by applying these math concepts to baking (one-half cup of sugar), taxes (carrying over decimals), and sales prices (50% off). Johnny shares, "I've learned that giving the students the opportunity to engage in fun projects and approaching math from different angles has been super beneficial for engagement; fosters self-confidence; and encourages a positive relationship with math, which is often regarded as a hard academic subject."

In science, Johnny teaches students about the Scientific Method through forensic science and crime investigation. Recently, middle schoolers put the Scientific Method into action when a precious class item mysteriously went missing. The students hypothesized, dusted for fingerprints, interrogated staff with a lie detector, took data, and formed a conclusion about the responsible party. Was it Johnny?

Johnny also loves to take students outdoors to learn in a real-world context. In September, Johnny and a group of students observed the Swifts migrating South, and in March, they harvested maple syrup at the Oregon Maple



Project. Johnny remarks, "One can literally see the children transform during these activities; they break out of their shell and develop a natural curiosity for what is happening."

Gardens

Victory's largest outdoor project to date is gardening, an activity where everyone gets their hands dirty while learning. The gardens have spread out across a good portion of Victory's empty grass areas. What began last year with one raised bed and some in-ground gardening, has exploded into multiple flower beds, designated vegetable gardens, compost areas, and more.

Lead Teacher, Jade Rey, comments, "Gardening provides varied opportunities for students to practice a wide range of math, literacy and physical skills, such as measuring the radius of plants, reading seed packets, actively pushing a wheelbarrow, or building a trellis."



Moreover, two classrooms of elementary students pulled out some old plants in the large playground and created a touch, sensory garden where students can feel the different types of grasses and plants. Plans to create a larger garden space with ten raised beds of different heights and shapes are in the works, adjacent to Victory's new feathered friends, the chickens.



Chickens

Since Victory opened its new campus in 2015, teachers, students, and parents have all dreamed of chickens. Their dream will finally be realized in fall 2023! In April, the chicken egg incubation started, and many Victory students tended to the eggs, observed the embryos, and documented development. Other students shopped for items to build a brooder for the chicks to move into once they are born. Once the chicks are old enough, they will move outside to a newly built chicken coop, generously constructed by volunteers who worked tirelessly during our very rainy spring.

"My hope for the Chicken Program is that there will be some aspect that every student can find engaging and exciting," says **Drew Keller, Lead Teacher and Chicken Whisperer.**

During the 2023-2024 school year, Drew plans to host "Chicken Club" every day, where students who are interested (and those who may be working on stepping outside of their comfort zone) will learn how to feed and water, clean the coop, provide enrichment for the chickens, collect eggs, budget for chicken supplies, prepare eggs for sale, and engage with the chickens. Another goal for the program is to teach students about

food waste. Each classroom will collect chicken-safe food scraps, while learning about reducing food waste and composting.

Drew believes that animals are an incredibly useful therapeutic tool. She shares, "It is my hope and goal that these chickens will benefit the students of Victory by teaching new skills, animal husbandry, problem solving, budgeting, and social skills. I am so excited to watch the students engage with these feathery critters in a variety of ways!"

The Victory Community is invited to stop by anytime to help solve a crime, to plant flowers in the gardens, or to gather eggs from Victory's own chickens.





A Lifetime of Wellness

Tucked down one of Victory's smaller hallways, several students sit in a makeshift waiting room—reading magazines, playing with a favorite toy, and chatting with friends while waiting for their wellness appointment. This waiting room area is just one important aspect of Victory's innovative Wellness Program, officially launched in September 2022. **The primary goal is to provide a safe, stress-free environment for students to develop the skills and confidence they need to support their lifelong physical health, wellness, and personal hygiene.**

By directly teaching a wide range of skills, Victory's Wellness Program prepares all students—elementary through high school—to participate successfully in medical, dental, and salon appointments for the rest of their lives. The two Wellness Rooms are specially designed for mock experiences, complete with real-life equipment, such as a medical table, dental chair, phlebotomy chair, blood pressure cuffs, salon chair, hair washing sink, and more! Every student has a customized plan, with input from the student, parents, and Victory

teachers. Goals range from learning to stand still on a scale to identifying medications and understanding health insurance plans. No individual plan is alike!

Leading this school-wide program is **Emily Beal Wilkinson**, who has been involved in every step of its development and implementation. Emily helps identify the skills each student needs to practice and then breaks them down into small, manageable parts. Students can learn at their own pace and practice self-advocacy skills, all while being encouraged to leave their comfort zone in Victory's "known" and familiar environment. For example, Emily tests out whether students can swallow pills—a skill necessary in life (antibiotics, pain relief, seizure medications, etc.). Emily teaches pill swallowing through a systematic process, beginning with a small grain of rice or tic tac-like substance. Emily also collaborates with Victory's occupational therapist for sensory components and speech and language for swallowing aspects. It is incredible to witness students, once fearful, successfully swallowing faux pills (of all sizes) and transferring this skill to their home environments.



There are many Wellness celebration stories. One centers around a middle school student who once experienced severe anxiety prior to regular blood draws. Now, after practicing different types of calming techniques in the Wellness room, this student can now confidently have his blood drawn without panicking. And recently, one elementary student had a successful EEG after several practice sessions where he rested on the medical table, remained still for several minutes, and allowed Emily to place mock EEG pads on his skin. Finally, these skills also transfer to novel, unexpected medical situations. For instance, one child was injured and needed stitches; he was able to use breathing techniques he learned at Victory to remain calm during this painful procedure.

While there have been many medical triumphs since the implementation of this program, the hygiene

component of the Wellness Program has its share of accomplishments, too. Many individuals with autism need additional support and practice with regular hygiene tasks that are uncomfortable and stressful for them, including nail cutting, hair brushing, hair washing—and even regular haircuts. In Victory's fully equipped salon, complete with shampoo bowl and cozy salon chair, many student "clients" now request to have their hair washed and even enjoy this process. Victory families also report their students are far more tolerant and participate with less anxiety in their home hygiene practices, which has increased family harmony and resulted in higher self-esteem and confidence.

Looking ahead, Victory's Wellness Program will continue to evolve and expand to follow the needs of the students, for they continue to show us that there are no limits to what they can achieve! Manicure, anyone?

Staff Profiles



TIAYA BRODY

Tiaya originally worked for Victory in 2016–2017 as a substitute teacher and later joined the Victory Team in August 2021 as a full-time Support Teacher. Her current role is Co-Lead Teacher in a middle

school classroom. However, Tiaya is best known on campus as Jack's Mom. Now a high schooler, Jack enrolled in Victory in 2016, and according to Tiaya, it was a match made in heaven! "His teachers truly wanted to learn about him and understand him," she says. "There was an authentic desire to help him reach goals."

As a Victory mom, Tiaya could see the hard work and dedication of the Victory staff immediately. As a Victory teacher, she is truly inspired to see the "inner workings" of the staff and students. Tiaya shares, "I learn something new nearly every day, which I love and consider a gift."

Tiaya is a highly organized and process-oriented person, which helps her when implementing behavioral and academic strategies or modifying lessons to accommodate different types of learners. She strives to always make her students feel safe, accepted, nurtured, and understood. As a result, Tiaya's students love her—and so do their families.

When Tiaya and Jack are not at Victory, they enjoy spending their time playing legos and watching movies, especially Disney and Pixar. Tiaya also has a true love of learning, traveling, running, reading, listening to podcasts, and practicing daily meditation. Victory is lucky to have Tiaya on the team, approaching her work as both a teacher and an Autism parent.



NIKKI TIMM

Nikki joined the Victory Team in 2021 as a Lead Teacher and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). She began working with children affected by Autism in 2008 and quickly discovered she had found

her "match." After working in a variety of settings, including clinics, homes, and schools, she was drawn to the collaborative work environment at Victory and loves spending time with staff from a wide variety of professions (art, counseling, special education, and speech and language—to name a few).

Nikki says, "Being able to witness the daily progress each student makes is what brings me to Victory every day." Nikki's primary goal is for her students to have the best day that they can, ensuring each student is getting their needs met, all while learning and having fun. She loves finding creative ways to engage with her students, such as building an entire camp site in her classroom, complete with tent and supplies.

Affectionately called Goldilocks by a few students, Nikki looks forward to taking on a new role in the 2023–2024 school year. She will act as the Work Experience Coordinator, engaging with the middle and high school students and Victory's amazing Work Experience partners. Nikki is excited for the challenge to expand her skills and support middle and high school students at their job sites.

On her days off, you will find Nikki mucking about with her husband and two young children at the family farm in Wilsonville.





Spotlight on Victory's Community Partners

WILSONVILLE SUBARU & SHARE THE LOVE

In 2018, Victory forged a partnership with **Wilsonville Subaru**, sending over a small group of Work Experience students to learn more about vehicle production, maintenance, mechanics, sales, care, and storage. The Work Experience partnership continues to flourish and blossom; to date, over 20 Victory students have learned from the Wilsonville Subaru Team, growing and improving their job skills via "all things cars."

In 2020, Wilsonville Subaru selected Victory as its local charity for Subaru's national Share the Love event. Victory is humbled by Wilsonville Subaru's extraordinary efforts on our behalf and incredibly grateful to be a four-time recipient of Share the Love! **This year, Wilsonville Subaru raised over \$48,000 for Victory, providing critical funds for Victory's financial aid fund and specialized programs. Incredible!!!** Thank you to all our friends at Wilsonville Subaru for their generosity and belief in Victory.

MEI GROUP (MOORE EXCAVATION INC.)

Kathy and Roy Moore, Owners of MEI Group, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to their local communities, always stepping up when asked for support. As grandparents to children with special needs, they just "get it" and sincerely want to help. Since 2014, Kathy and Roy have acted behind the scenes as devoted angels to Victory. The list of their good deeds is long, but highlights include donating all excavation and site work for Victory's art room expansion, music room construction, and playground renovation. Recently, MEI Group came to Victory and shared their time, equipment, and expertise to prepare the school's new garden beds, chicken coop space, and storage shed area. Thank you to our generous, kind friends at MEI Group. We love and appreciate you Kathy and Roy!



OUR INCREDIBLE 2022-2023 WORK EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

- Abode Modern
- CRKT
- Frog Pond Farm
- Graham & Tooze
- Hughes Water Garden
- Killer Burger (Wilsonville)
- New Seasons (Tualatin)
- 1800 Water Damage
- OrePac Building Products
- Our Table
- Wilsonville Library
- Wilsonville McDonald's
- Wilsonville Parks & Recreation Department
- Wilsonville Subaru

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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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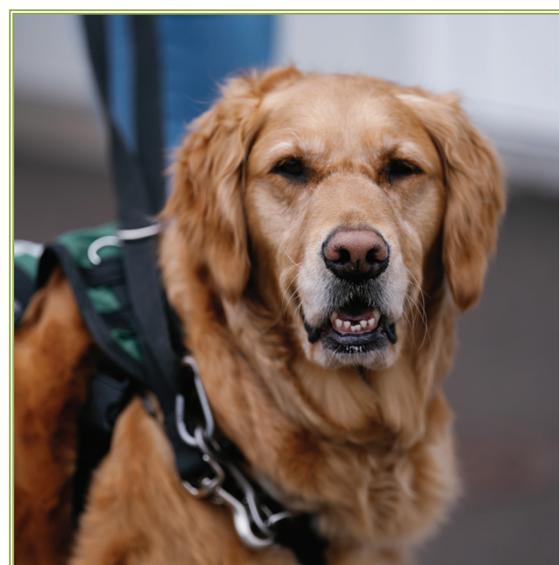
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Thank you for supporting
Victory Academy!

www.VictoryAcademy.org

Important Dates

JULY 6

Victory Summer Session Begins

JULY 17–18

Elementary Day Camp:
Frog Pond Farm

JULY 24, 26, 28

Middle School Day Camp:
Camp Collins

AUGUST 6

Victory's Fourth
High School Graduation

AUGUST 10

Last Day of
2022-2023 School Year

SEPTEMBER 6

First Day of
2023-2024 School Year

SEPTEMBER 12–14

High School Overnight Camp:
Mt. Hood Camp Kiwanis

OCTOBER 14

Victory's Annual Auction:
15 Years of Victory!

**NOVEMBER 2023–
JANUARY 2024**

Share the Love Event
(Wilsonville Subaru)

DECEMBER 15

Winter Program

APRIL 22–26, 2024

A Week of Victory!/
Online Fundraiser
**April is Autism Awareness Month*

MAY 19, 2024

Food Truck Party

