

2025

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Winter 2025

A Message from Steve and Sheila

As we approach the close of another year, we want to take a moment to reflect on our journey together and express our sincere gratitude for your continued support and dedication. This year has been one of significant milestones and, like any year, its share of challenges, all of which we've navigated through our collective strength and resilience.

To our incredible team, it is your passion, hard work, and unwavering commitment that drive our success. Each of you has played a vital role in propelling LifeSkills forward, and your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

To our valued customers, partners, and community, thank you for your trust and business this past year. Your ongoing support is the reason we do what we do, and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve you.

In 2026, we look forward to continuing this journey with you. Your feedback and loyalty inspire us to continuously improve. We wish you and your families a joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year.



Cascades Job Corps Named Large Business of the Year

LifeSkills is excited to announce that Cascades JCC was nominated by the local community and won Large Business of the Year in the Best of Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce annual awards. Congratulations to the staff and students at the Cascades Center.



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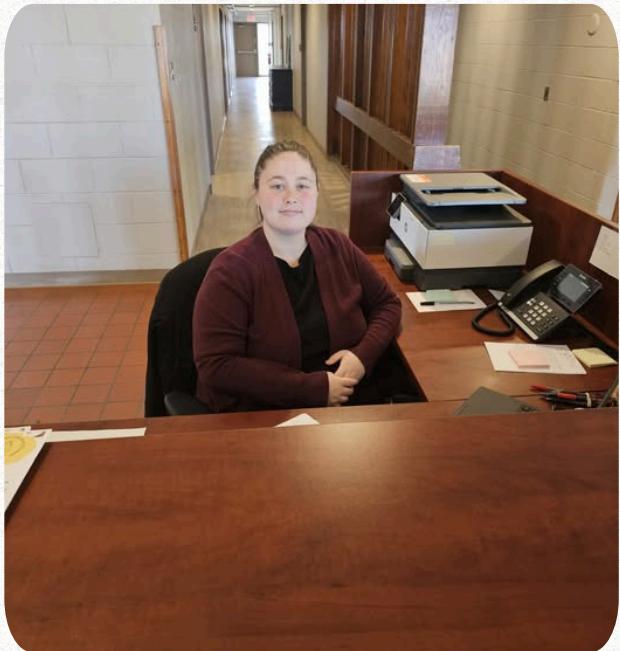
Iowa Plains One Stop Operator Update

In November, our Title I Career Planners and Business Engagement Consultants in the Iowa Plains region participated in a two-day training facilitated by Cassandra Halls at the Denison One-Stop Center. The training focused on team collaboration and supporting customers throughout the enrollment process. It brought both teams together and encouraged new ideas on how to collaborate more effectively to better serve our customers across Iowa Plains.

From St. Louis to the Frontlines: Jeremiah Watkins' Wildland Firefighting Journey



Jeremiah Watkins is from the St Louis area originally. He enrolled at the Mingo Job Corps Center in January 2023. Jeremiah initially took up the painting trade so that he could become an Industrial Painter on bridges. That was his goal. Soon after his enrollment, he signed up for the wildland fire program and started going out on fire duty. He soon realized this was what he wanted his career to be—a wildland firefighter. Jeremiah was the dorm President as well as the SGA. He was always helping new students adjust to the program, and staff could always depend on him. Jeremiah decided to apply for fire positions on the West Coast even though he was afraid he would be homesick. At the time, the process of getting a position took several months. Jeremiah decided to accept an apprentice painting position in the St Louis area while waiting to hear about the acceptance and start date for the fire positions. This was in October of 2023. Jeremiah was patient, and he finally started his position as a forestry aid in Oregon. Jeremiah had worked on this same crew while a student at Mingo, going out on fires. He worked on wilderness fires and prescribed burns as a crew member. Jeremiah returned to Mingo this December to speak to the students about his journey as a student and as a forest service employee. He received a 33% raise since he started this journey and is at around \$51,000/year. He recently accepted a new position as a Type 3 Fire Engine Apprentice in Utah. Jeremiah's end goal is to return to his home state of Missouri to work in the Mark Twain Forest. We are so very proud of him and look forward to his continued service in the Forest Service Wildland fire.



Student Spotlight-- Crystal R.

"Connect has helped me to further my education with an Allied Health Professional program that will allow me to have the skills necessary to find employment. This will allow me to provide a better life for my family. I could not be more grateful for the support Connect has provided for our family's future. " Crystal is pictured at her work experience site, Netera Healthcare in Atchison, KS. She is also working on her medical certifications class in allied health through the Connect program.



Meet Jo'Vaughn. Jo'Vaughn enrolled in March of 2025. He encountered some setbacks initially, but then was able to start a WBL at the Gil Carter Initiative in July of 2025.

Under the supervision of GCI President Erma Forbes, Jo'Vaughn performed diverse responsibilities, including general maintenance, food preparation and service, greenhouse operations, and groundskeeping.

As the WBL assignment concluded, Jo'Vaughn collaborated with his Youth Connector, Jamie, to explore career options and training opportunities. He chose to pursue a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) through Washburn Tech and began the CDL program on October 27. He successfully completed and graduated from Washburn Tech on November 21 with a CDL. Congratulations to Jo'Vaughn!

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."



Cascades Job Corps Center Student Spotlight

Meet Julian Rodriguez

Julian Rodriguez, a current student at the Cascades Job Corps Center, is turning sparks into success—literally. As an ACT student enrolled in the Welding program at Skagit Valley Community

College (SVCC), Julian has been making remarkable progress both in his technical skills and in his confidence as a tradesman.

Julian joined Job Corps with a clear goal: to gain hands-on experience and build a career that would allow him to work with his hands, create tangible results, and contribute to the workforce in a meaningful way. From the very beginning, his focus and dedication stood out. Whether it's mastering the perfect bead pattern or learning to handle industrial-grade equipment safely, Julian approaches every challenge with determination and pride.

In the welding shop, Julian's work speaks for itself. His most recent welds show steady improvement—each pass cleaner and more precise than the last. Julian is also known for encouraging others in his cohort at SVCC, often offering tips and sharing what he's learned about electrode angles, amperage settings, and metal preparation.

Outside the classroom, Julian's journey is just as inspiring. Balancing college coursework with his responsibilities as an ACT student requires strong time management and resilience, but he continues to show up ready to learn every day. He's eager to complete his certifications and begin a career in welding—potentially in fabrication or structural work—and he's already exploring internship opportunities through Job Corps' Work-Based Learning program. Julian says the support from the Cascades Job Corps team and the partnership with SVCC has been life-changing. "Before coming here, I didn't have a clear direction. Now I'm building skills that will last a lifetime," he shared.

From his steady hands in the welding booth to his growing confidence as a future tradesman, Julian Rodriguez exemplifies what Job Corps is all about—hard work, perseverance, and turning opportunity into success. His journey reminds us that with the right training and support, every student can forge their own path to a bright and sustainable future.



Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible.

Employee Spotlight



**Jodi Miller,
Corporate HR Manager
LifeSkills Employee since
June 2024**



Favorite Pet
Dog-Stella



Favorite Holiday
Christmas



Favorite Food
Pizza

What's your role at LifeSkills? *I do a wide variety of HR tasks including compliance, safety, discipline, recruiting and assisting the HR manager at Cascades JCC.*

What three words describe LifeSkills? *We live our mission to build, inspire, and grow every day.*

Which LifeSkills value resonates with you the most? *Inspire*



Dream
Childhood Job
Astronaut



Favorite Hobby
Reading



Favorite Holiday
Christmas



**Jessica Darrow,
Director of Health,
Wellness, and Disability
LifeSkills Employee since
December 2024**

What's your role at LifeSkills? *Provide technical support to the wellness department at our Job Corps centers.*

What three words describe LifeSkills? *Empowering, Supportive, and Collaborative*

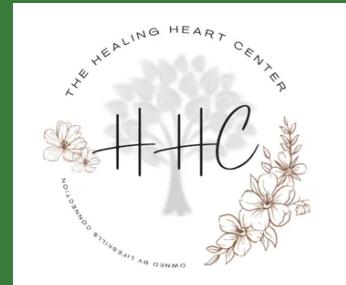
Which LifeSkills value resonates with you the most?
Inspire



Options Ink has had a busy year. The team has expanded their services to include DTF printing. This has allowed our customers to order items such as personalized apparel, tablecloths, hats, and koozies. They also had a successful implementation of holiday prints that could be heat pressed on shirts as the customer waits! They have also expanded our line of banner and vinyl printing to include garage door graphics, floor graphics, mailbox wraps, and mesh window coverings. Check out Options Ink at www.optionsinkiowa.com

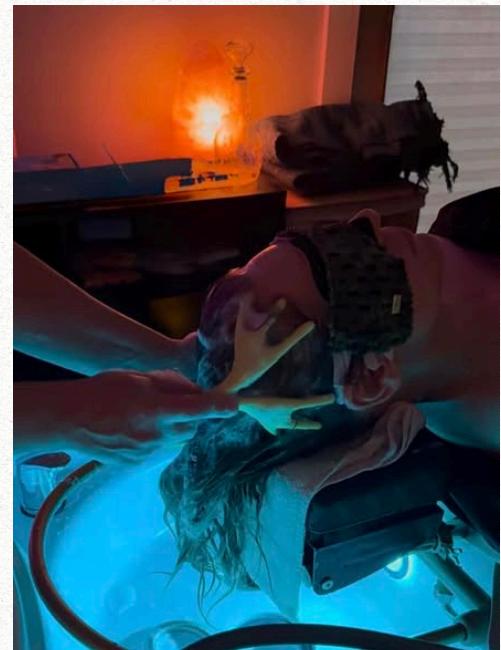
The Healing Heart Center, located in Bettendorf, Iowa provides multiple options for customers to meet their self-care needs.

The team at the HHC provides counseling and coaching services to customers in the local area. In addition to these services red light healing, reflexology, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic, and reiki services are available.



The season gets busy, but your nervous system still needs rest. As the holidays fill with plans, expectations, and extra to-dos, self-care becomes more important than ever! Don't forget to pause to breathe, reset, and stay grounded through it all.

Check out some of the services Holistic Health has to offer below.



Workplace injuries increase when reaction time, coordination, judgement, and awareness are impaired by fatigue.

While there is not a single solution to fit everyone's needs, fatigue can be prevented, and there are some general strategies that workers can use to manage fatigue so they can continue to work safely.

Signs and symptoms of fatigue that can become evident at work:

- Feeling tired, weary, or sleepy
- Yawning continuously, difficulty keeping your eyes open
- Feeling physically or mentally exhausted
- Memory lapses or confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Impaired focus, slower reaction times
- Increased errors in judgement, flawed logic
- Emotional instability or irritability



By building resilience, managing stress, and developing a consistent daily routine with good sleep habits, workers can reduce the risks associated with fatigue.

- **Get adequate sleep.** Ideally between 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep per night.
- **Communicate** regularly with team members about job stress. Identify things that cause stress and fatigue and work together to identify solutions.
- **Don't skip your work breaks.** Use your breaks to mentally and physically recharge.
- **Reduce dependency on coffee and energy drinks.** Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. The effect of caffeine is only temporary and the only real cure for fatigue is adequate quality sleep.
- **Protect your mental health.** Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing. Do things you enjoy during non-work hours.
- **Seek help when needed.** If you feel you may be misusing alcohol, illicit or prescription drugs as a means of coping with fatigue, reach out for help.

Discussion

What are your best tips for preventing fatigue on the job?

What should you do if a co-worker seems to be impaired by fatigue?

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