Les Schwab Giving Program Supports Behavioral Health Treatment in Crook County

Lutheran Community Services (LCS) received $5,000 from the Les Schwab Giving Program to help persons seeking behavioral health services.

This grant will connect Crook County residents with crucial resources and mental health services provided by their Crook County Community Health Provider, LCS.

“Les Schwab is committed to serving our local communities. We are honored to be their community partner, addressing the behavioral health needs of Crook County,” Michelle Duff, LCS Communications Specialist.

Les Schwab has been serving Prineville since 1952. The company believes in giving back to the community where they live and work. They sponsor activities large and small, support youth programs, help families in need and raise funds for good causes.

Breaking the Silence
Public Speech Helps LCS Employee Overcome Her Anxiety

She faced her fears and delivered.

“My legs are shaking but here I go,” said Jennifer Kerber to the approximately 250-person audience at the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence.

Jennifer is a Supported Employment Specialist at LCS. Supported Employment is our service that helps people with a mental health diagnosis gain employment. She can relate to her clients, as she has been diagnosed with anxiety, depression and panic disorders. Jennifer graduated with honors from Wilmington University with a BA in Behavioral Science. She is credentialed in Peer Delivered Support and Collaborative Problem Solving, Tier 1.

In July, she was one of five people selected to speak at the state conference held at Welches, OR in early October. The invitation was a special but intimidating honor.

“When I was asked to speak I immediately thought, can I really do this?” she said. “Am I ready to be that vulnerable?”

Jennifer was able to rise above her fears and deliver a moving five-minute speech. She talked about her bouts with mental illness and how she overcomes them so can work with clients.

“I was the final speaker and after the speech I felt a great sense of gratification. People had tears in their eyes as they gave myself and the other four speakers a standing ovation,” she said. “I knew that by speaking, I was empowering my colleagues and giving my clients a voice and a face.”

Jennifer made it through the speech using coping techniques that she learned as an LCS client including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR). She has also learned the importance of proactively managing her mental health.

“I know that to overcome my diagnosis, I need to continue my therapy, medication management and most importantly, self-care,” she said.

A big reason Jennifer chose to do the speech was for her family. Including her two-year-old son, Ben. (continued on pg. 2)
“My family was extremely proud of me when I was selected to speak,” Jennifer said. “They walked with me through my anxiety and panic disorders. They knew that if I’d been asked to speak a year ago, I couldn’t do it.”

The Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence (OSECE) is an annual statewide conference. People involved with supported employment services learn about updates in practices, laws and policies. They participate in workshops to improve their services.

Jennifer’s favorite workshop was motivational interviewing where she learned new techniques that will help her clients.

“It is nice to be included as part of the solution,” she said. “I spent decades hiding my struggles. I always had to keep my mental illness silent. It was something not to talk about. It’s hard to believe that now I can get up in front of a large group of people and share my story.”