

NEBRASKA VR

Making It Work

Department of Education

A Student's Story *A Quiet Leader*

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Bright, caring, hard working, mature, self-advocate, and quiet leader. These are all terms that people use to describe Haley Waggoner. This may be surprising, given that Haley was born with Trisomy 47, a syndrome that can cause learning disabilities, delayed speech and language skills, and social anxiety. While Haley says that her disability makes some things harder for her, such as learning and talking to people she doesn't know, she has certainly not let that get in the way of her success.

While in the Lincoln Public Schools VOICE program, Haley participated in a work experience program at a Hy-Vee bakery. VOICE provides students, ages 18 – 21, with community

experiences to gain the skills and connections they need to transition into adult living and employment. This experience through VOICE ultimately led to Haley being hired in the bakery, where she has now worked for over 3 years.

Haley's world doesn't just revolve around work, however. She is an active member of the Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). (See the article on page 3 for more information about the Council.) Haley first joined the Eastern Regional Council in 2010 and was elected to the State Advisory Council in 2011. Through the Council, Haley has gained many experiences that she would have never believed possible. This includes making presentations to the State Board of Education, State Rehabilitation Council, and at a national conference.

Kristi Berst, NYLC Facilitator, says, "Haley is tremendous to work with. Even though I get the impression she doesn't think so, she is one of the best self-advocates I know. She seems to regularly step outside of her comfort zone to work toward a goal she believes in."

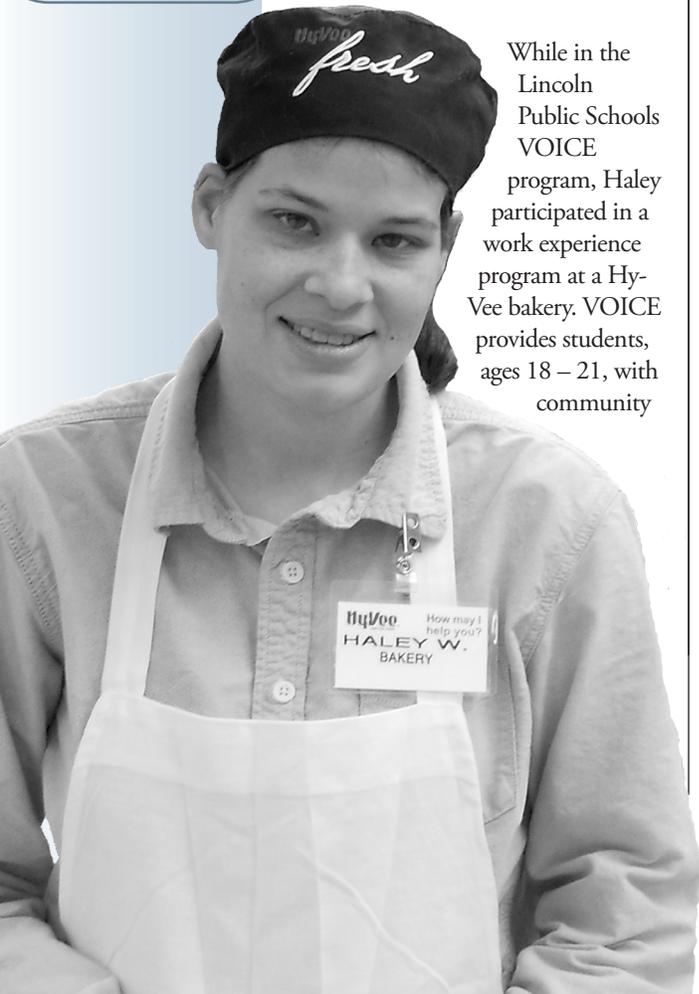
Illustrating her commitment to goals, Haley is helping lead a group of NYLC members in a campaign to "Spread the Word to End the Word." The word referred to here

is "retarded", also known as the "r-word." The mission of the group is to educate the community that all people, regardless of their ability or disability, should be treated with respect and equality. The r-word is viewed as degrading and in the same classification as every other minority slur. The group's plan is to educate

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others, while obtaining a commitment to end the use of the word in speech and in print. The "Spread the Word" group has planned a special event to be held at the State Capitol building on March 6th to bring attention to their cause.

Haley's involvement in this campaign should come as no surprise to Dr. Teri Ourada, Special Education Coordinator for Lincoln Public Schools. Dr. Ourada worked with Haley in high school and could see



Haley Waggoner

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Nebraska VR and Transition

Nebraska VR transition services primarily focus on students in their junior and senior years of high school.

Nebraska VR and Transition

Since 1921, Nebraska VR has helped people with disabilities join the workforce. Their team of experts provides direct services for employers and people with disabilities that lead to employment. But, did you know that Nebraska VR also provides transition services for students with disabilities to assist them in transitioning from high school to the adult world?

What are Nebraska VR Transition Services?

Nebraska VR, in partnership with schools, provides a variety of services to assist students with disabilities in preparing for employment after high school. As a part of transition services, Nebraska VR staff may:

- Provide materials and information to students and parents regarding the transition process;
- Help guide students toward appropriate employment goals;
- Consult with educators on individual students; and/or
- Collaborate with schools to provide vocational services.

Who is eligible?

Students with a disability who are capable of future employment in the community may be eligible for Nebraska VR services. While there is no specific age requirement, Nebraska VR transition services primarily focus on students in their junior and senior years of high school. Younger students may participate when appropriate.

How are students referred?

Anyone can make a referral to Nebraska VR. Family members, educators, guidance counselors, school nurses, or others may contact Nebraska VR to start the referral process. At that time, they will be asked to complete a simple, one page referral form. Once a referral is received, Nebraska VR staff will meet with the student (and the family, if possible) to explain transition services. The process has changed slightly from signing a consent form to completion of a referral form as the result of feedback received from Nebraska VR's federal partner, the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Each Nebraska VR office uses the same form, with contact information specific to the local VR office on each form.

How do you contact Nebraska VR?

If you or someone you know is interested in Nebraska VR services, you may call the office in your area:

Columbus	877-505-0866
Fremont	888-585-5439
Grand Island	800-862-3382
Kearney	800-262-3382
Lincoln	800-472-3382
Norfolk	800-442-3382
North Platte	800-272-3382
Omaha	800-554-3382
Omaha West	877-240-4445
Scottsbluff	800-292-3382
South Sioux City	877-659-7899
Administrative Office	877-637-3422

For additional information about the Nebraska VR office in your area, visit the website at: <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/offices/index.html>



Focus on Employment

Employers Speak

Who knows better than employers what it takes to be successful on the job? Representatives from Nebraska employers have shared their tips for success and we are passing them on to you. Check out the advice this employer has for you when applying for a job.

1. Employers who use online applications will usually require an e-mail address from the applicant. Your e-mail address can make a good or bad first impression. Use a professional sounding e-mail address, even if you need to set up an additional e-mail account through a free service such as Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.

It does not look professional, even for entry level jobs, to use an e-mail address such as cutiepiekatie@email.com or hotcameroguy@email.com. And, remember to check that e-mail address often. Prospective employers will send you e-mails and it is important that you read and respond to them.

2. Make sure you have voicemail or an answering machine available for you to use if you are applying for jobs. An employer wants to leave a message if you don't answer the phone. Check the voicemail often and call prospective employers back as soon as possible. If you do not return their calls in a

timely manner, they will move on to the next candidate. Also, make sure the message you set up on your voicemail makes a good first impression. If your current message talks about how you can't answer the phone because you're out partying, the employer might not bother to leave you a message and call someone else instead.

This excellent advice was provided by:
Amy Phelps, PHR
Human Resources
Saint Francis Medical Center
Grand Island, Nebraska

Connections: A Look at Resources

Nebraska Youth Leadership Council

There is a dynamic group of young leaders from all across Nebraska who want to make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities. This group believes that young people should have a voice in the things that affect them and hope to better the existing services provided to young people through their outreach efforts. Who is this group, you ask? It is the Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC).

The NYLC is an organization of Nebraska youth with disabilities, ages 14-21. First formed in 2009, the group is the result of an initiative of the Nebraska Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Nebraska VR. It is unique in that it is Nebraska's first statewide leadership council for young people with disabilities. It is also unique in the opportunities it provides for members to advocate for themselves and other students with disabilities.

Purpose

The NYLC is organized to provide its members with opportunities to learn and practice leadership and advocacy skills. In addition, members share their life experiences with other young people with disabilities to assist them in gaining these skills, as well.

An important role of the NYLC is providing a youth perspective on disability issues. By serving on boards and advisory committees and making presentations to a variety of groups, members are able to provide direction and insight from their viewpoint.

The group's bylaws, written by the members in their own language, sum it up clearly in stating: "NYLC gets together to share our stories about being young in Nebraska and having disabilities. We learn from each other and share what we learn with people outside



our group. Being a part of the group has helped us become more confident and better leaders. Most importantly, though, we HAVE FUN!"

Structure

The NYLC initially began as a single State Council, but has since expanded to include regional councils in the East, Central, and Northeast areas of the state. Plans are currently in the works for starting a council in Western Nebraska. The councils meet regularly to discuss issues important to Nebraska youth with disabilities and to plan their activities.

NYLC Activities

NYLC members are busy! They make presentations to a variety of organizations across the state including high school students and teachers, Educational Service Units, community colleges, and other professionals. They have also presented to the State Board of Education, providing important information to our state's policy makers.

Other roles of NYLC members include serving on groups such as the Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, Parent Training and Information Center, Nebraska Special Education Advisory Council, and various grant advisory committees.

Membership

Nebraska youth with a disability, ages 14-21, may complete a membership application form at any time. Additionally, young adults may serve in an advisory capacity through age 24.

The application form is posted on the NYLC website (see For More Information).

Applicants must also provide two letters of recommendation from people who are not members of their family. This may include teachers, employers, youth group leaders, or other adults familiar with them.

For More Information

Visit the NYLC website at: <http://nylc.nebraska.gov/NYLC/Welcome.html> or contact Kristi Berst, NYLC Facilitator via e-mail: kristi.berst@nebraska.gov or by phone: 402.670.1437

An important role of the NYLC is providing a youth perspective on disability issues.

A Quiet Leader... continued

then that she had the ability to be a leader. She notes that Haley “worked very hard, almost appeared to silently prove to people she wouldn’t allow what society referred to as a ‘disability’ to limit her from reaching her hopes, dreams and goals in life. When asked, she shared innovative ideas that would make a situation better for others. In a sense, she had always been a behind the scenes leader.”

Haley continues to explore new opportunities and make plans for the future. She began working with Nebraska VR while in high school to prepare for employment. Haley is currently working with Laurie Colburn, VR Employment Specialist, to explore additional training to expand her job skills. This should work well for Haley, as Laurie says that she is very eager to learn and has a great reputation with her

co-workers and supervisors. Eventually, Haley would like to move out of her parents’ home and into an apartment with a roommate. Given her drive and determination, this is likely to be one of many goals she will achieve!

Nebraska VR

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For More Information:

Contact the State VR Office in Lincoln at 1-402-471-3644 or toll free at 1-877-637-3422.

You may obtain information on the VR Service Office in your area by calling these numbers or accessing the Service Office listing on the web at: <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/offices/index.html>

About this Publication

This publication, produced by Nebraska VR, is intended for students with disabilities and their families.

Please contact us if you:

- Would like additional copies of this publication.
- Have questions or would like more details about any of the information contained in this issue.
- Have a success story you'd like to share with us.
- Have suggestions for topics for future issues.
- Wish to be removed from the mailing list for this publication.

To view previous issues of this or other VR publications, or to receive a free subscription to these publications, go to: <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov:4000/subscribe>

You may also contact the Nebraska VR State Office toll free at 1-877-NE-REHAB (1-877-637-3422) to receive these publications.

Additional Resources

If you have questions or concerns about services from Nebraska VR or are looking for additional disability resources, contact the Hotline for Disability Services/ Client Assistance Program at 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at 402-471-0801 or e-mail Victoria at: victoria.rasmussen@nebraska.gov.