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Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment honors employers who hire people with disabilities

OLYMPIA – Washington state’s [Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues & Employment](#) (GCDE) hosted the 29th annual Governor’s Employer Awards Program on October 26, 2021 recognizing employers and individuals in a virtual ceremony. Five public and private employers were honored for their exemplary work recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing workers with disabilities. Two individuals were recognized for their commitment and dedication to improve the lives of those with disabilities.

The Committee presented a top award commemorating Toby Olson, the former Executive Secretary for GCDE. The Toby Olson Lifetime Impact award honors a person’s body of work, vision, dedication, and determination which continues to significantly impact the disability community. David Lord of Seattle is this year’s recipient. He was celebrated for his unfaltering efforts to impact change in equity, inclusion, and full participation for individuals with disabilities mirroring Toby Olson’s life accomplishments.

Recipients of the 2021 GCDE Employer Awards are:

Toby Olson Lifetime Impact Award – David Lord, Seattle

Youth Employer – King County Wastewater Treatment, Seattle

Small Non-Profit Employer of the Year Award – DeafBlind Service Center (DBSC), Seattle

Small Private Employer of the Year Award – Bean Box, Seattle

Medium Private Employer of the Year Award – Tomlinson Linens, Tacoma

Large Private Employer of the Year Award – Amazon, Seattle

“This year, Washingtonians nominated 17 employers and 4 individuals for these esteemed awards,” said Janet Bruckshen, chairperson of the GCDE Employer Awards Subcommittee. “The success of our ceremony highlights how hiring a diverse workforce leads to innovations that can be leveraged within a business, bringing about company-wide benefits and improving work processes for everyone!”

Washington businesses, agencies, organizations and individuals submitted the nominations. A panel of GCDE members, business representatives and previous award recipients selected this year’s honorees.

The Direct Support Professional Award went to Cathy Eylar with Ability Employment Services. Nominated by Ty Lingo from Ability Employment Services, Cathy Eylar has over ten years of direct client services working with individuals with disabilities to gain and retain employment in Spokane County. She “changes hats effortlessly” going from a mentor, to a coach, to a motherly figure, to a

friend, to a colleague, to a leader, to a shoulder to cry on or an ear to just listen, and back again. Cathy just doesn't show up, she immerses herself into the work that needs done to move folks toward their dreams and desires.

The GCDE advises the governor, legislature, state agencies and other policy makers on issues important to people with disabilities.

For interviews with the award winners contact Ryan Bondroff.

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