

FULL AHEAD

Inspiring Personal Independence

Stories celebrating triumph, independence, and collaboration.

SUMMER WORK WORKS: Success for Students Across Southeast



In Sitka, Zen returned for her second year in SAIL's Summer Work Program - this year to work in her dream field at a coffee shop learning how to become a barista! Zen wanted to learn food service and customer service skills, and especially how to create drinks for her friends and customers. Zen has made drinks of all kinds, helped stock the coffee shop, clean and close out every day, and had fun too!

Summer youth employment programs have been around for decades, but what makes SAIL's Summer Work Programs unique is how they reflect SAIL's Core Values: Accessibility, Collaboration, Empowerment, Inclusion, and Integrity.

SAIL's Summer Work Programs are **6 to 8-week paid work experiences for youth and young adults ages 14-21 who experience a disability**. The supportive design empowers youth by allowing students to choose whether they would like to be placed in a group or individual work experience. Group work experiences typically involve trail and public works projects. Individual placements run the gamut from local hardware stores, to coffee shops, bookstores, and construction companies.

Group work experiences build camaraderie and people skills, and also include recreation activities like kayaking and team building on the SAIL Challenge Course. Students are paired with a Peer Mentor and Site Coordinator. The Peer Mentor is tasked with setting the tone, and leading by example. The Peer Mentor gives feedback to the group while encouraging and

supporting the students in their daily tasks at the job site. Often it is the first leadership role a Peer Mentor has experienced, which builds confidence and new skills they take with them to their next position.

This summer SAIL supported 25 students across Southeast to gain employment and life skills. In Ketchikan, the crew cleaned up beaches and tackled projects at the local ballfield park. Sitka students worked on hiking trails, and partnered with Sitka Cycling Club to maintain popular bike trails. Juneau's Youth Employment in the Parks (YEP) program, a partnership between the Zach Gordon Youth Center and Trail Mix, combined hard work with skills building like CPR/First Aid certification.

WORK AS PLAY: Pairing Recreation With Employment Training

Does pitching a tent with your campmates make you a better employee? How about balancing on a log with your friends to keep from falling in the "lava"? While they may seem disconnected, **accessible recreation can be a powerful catalyst for increasing employment success.** SAIL pairs our traditional employment supports for people with disabilities with our much-loved accessible recreation program (ORCA) to empower individuals to realize their full potential, enhance their quality of life, and create a more inclusive society.



Accessible recreation activities combine cooperation, goal setting, and teamwork, which develop essential skills sought after by employers. **Whether it's communication, adaptability, time management, or leadership, these transferable skills are right at home in the workplace.** In fact, several students are making plans to keep working at their summer placement this fall - showing that not only did they have fun, but they are truly valuable to their employers.



SAIL's activities are designed to **accommodate individuals of all abilities to boost confidence, self-esteem, and social skills**, while also fostering a sense of belonging. Activities like overnight camping trips or paddling a multi-person kayak requires teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability and communication skills. **SAIL's specially trained experts are skilled at building inclusion into every activity**, so participants with varying abilities are able to excel and demonstrate their strengths to their peers.



Inclusion was at the core of SAIL's Southeast Summer Camps this year. In Sitka, Juneau, and Ketchikan, participants with and without disabilities learned, laughed, explored, and played together at camps designed to make a difference.

A summer highlight for our team was a collaborative summer camp with Discovery Southeast - *Hike, Bike, and Explore Camp* for youth entering grades six through nine. Throughout the week, campers played Scatter along beach trails, biked, cooked donuts over a campfire, and pushed themselves on the SAIL Challenge Course. In Sitka, four consumers teamed up with six campers from the community's 4-H club and learned water safety, kayaking, and team building. Ketchikan's *Adventure Camp* was centered around SAIL's portable Challenge Course curriculum, and included overnight camping, swimming (thanks to the hot weather), and kayaking. In all our camps this summer, participants formed meaningful friendships and made unforgettable memories!



UNMASKING DISABILITY

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Nominations Now Open**

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disability or senior advocate!

Honorees will be celebrated October
21st at SAIL's Juneau Gala & Auction

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PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS: MEET MICHAEL & LEXI

Michael joined Ketchikan's Summer Work Program thanks to a recommendation from our partners at the Division of Rehabilitation (DVR). He was placed at a local automechanic shop, where he flourished. Within the program's umbrella, Michael was able to work 25 hours a week, which gave him time to finish up his schoolwork and define career goals after graduation. He now sees a path to aspire for: working as a mechanic, moving out on his own, and eventually returning to live near his birth family in Missouri. **A hardworking and motivated employee, Michael has learned about the ins and outs of the trade, and has set his goals to become a certified auto mechanic and welder.** An added bonus: Michael has become such a valued employee that he was offered a permanent position at the shop. According to Michael, "My job at Westside has taught me everything I have wanted to learn and do!"



We had the pleasure of having **Lexi**, a longtime ORCA program participant, on the Youth Employment in the Parks crew. Lexi is 21 years old and this was her first experience with paid employment. Lexi initially struggled with the long working days and the nature of manual labor, but through the 8 weeks of the season she demonstrated vast improvements in her capabilities and demeanor. **Lexi saw this growth in herself, sharing in her exit interview, "I feel stronger both physically, mentally, and emotionally."** Throughout the season she got certified in CPR/First aid, and learned to operate a variety of equipment, including a canny-com, plate compactor, and weed whip.

While this isn't necessarily the kind of work that Lexi would like to pursue longterm, she also shared, **"I feel accomplished because I did something that would normally be really difficult for me or I would refuse to do."** Lexi's hard work and perseverance will serve her well into the future. Nice job, Lexi!