



Laura Smit Emerald

Chaz Nebergall (left), assistant director of Lane ShelterCare and supervisor of the education grant program, and Susan Ban, executive director, talk about the education grant that will help people with mental disabilities find jobs.

'Successful Transitions' makes finding jobs easier

■ The Successful Transitions to Employment Program helps people with mental disabilities find work

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

Finding a job can be challenging for most, and for those with mental disabilities, it can be even more difficult. But University education professors Andrew Halpern and Michael Bullis are working with several local groups to make entering the work force easier.

The professors teamed up to create the Successful Transitions to Employment Program three years ago, and last fall they received the money to launch the program, which will work with community organizations such as Lane ShelterCare, Laurel Hill Center and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Division. The groups identify clients' needs and then assist them with services such as on-the-job training, counseling and any medical services they may need. Group members also inform employers how to best meet the needs of people with mental disabilities in the workplace.

Halpern and Bullis received the money to start their program through a five-year grant from the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Ad-

ministration, beating out more than 200 other applicants to win the funding.

Bullis said the grant aids people with illnesses such as brain injuries and psychiatric problems. He said he expects to help about 35 people each year.

"It's unfair if these people's illnesses get in the way of working, but the reality is they are in need of some kind of support," he said.

Halpern said the biggest problem for people with mental disabilities is trying to find work. He said employers can be reluctant to hire someone with a mental disability.

"Because of their mental illness, they often don't have a good history or previous work experience," he said. "Finding work becomes a fairly serious problem for those with mental disabilities, but it's not a lost cause."

Halpern said he and Bullis work closely with the community groups to assess a client's individual needs and determine what kind of job he or she wants. He said the program is still in its early stages.

"We then work very individually to help them find those goals," he said. "We start with what a person really wants, and help that person get there."

He said one factor that made the professors want to work with the other community groups was that

they were already doing work to help the mentally disabled, so it seemed to be a good opportunity to do even more.

"The collaborating agencies are already doing work in this area, so they provide a terrific foundation to expand this work," he said.

Chaz Nebergall, the assistant director of Lane ShelterCare, said the center was able to hire three new staff members to work as vocational specialists with the grant money.

"I'm very excited," he said. "It's giving us resources that we didn't have to help people achieve a higher level of independence, and that's a great opportunity."

Lane ShelterCare is a residential treatment provider for people with mental disabilities. The center could not offer job training before the grant.

Nebergall said Halpern and Bullis visit regularly and they are all willing to help the clients on an individual basis, but the clients have to want to be helped.

"They have to be motivated," he said. "They have to want to work."

Nebergall said Lane ShelterCare is currently working with 19 clients, but they are allowed to work with a maximum of 20 at a time.

"I'm confident by the end of the month we'll be working with 20," he said.

Four corrections officers fired

PORTLAND—Four Multnomah County corrections officers were fired Thursday as a result of the in-custody beating of a man held on assault and domestic violence charges, Undersheriff Mel Hedgpeth said.

"Four members of our agency seriously violated your trust. We will work hard to never repeat the mistakes that were made," Hedgpeth said at a news conference.

Dennis L. Poe was arrested by Portland police last July 11 and booked into the Multnomah County Detention Center.

Poe told a grand jury that in the booking center he was slammed against a wall, hand-cuffed and hobbled, strapped to a restraining board and struck by deputies.

Sgt. Jeffrey Ristvet, one of the four dismissed, has been charged with

assault, harassment and official misconduct after a criminal investigation by detectives. His trial is pending.

Ristvet and the three others were the targets of an internal investigation that had nothing to do with the criminal charges, Hedgpeth said.

The results said Ristvet used unnecessary force, did not report the use of force and was untruthful when questioned about it.

The probe concluded that Rodger Cross used excessive force to take Poe down to the ground to attach plastic restraints and intentionally struck him in the head with his elbow, according to Hedgpeth. He said Cross acted alone in taking down Poe even though there were deputies there who could have assisted, and that Cross was untruthful when questioned about the use

of force.

Hedgpeth said force used by Deputy James Borja was determined not to be excessive but that he failed to report it and was untruthful when asked about it.

Deputy Wallace Montoya was accused of not reporting the force he saw or heard about used by Cross and Ristvet. The investigation said Montoya was evasive and untruthful when questioned about use of force against Poe.

Deputies Borja and Montoya recently had acquired tattoos depicting the "Brotherhood of the Strong."

"We looked very carefully at this time to determine if there was any connection with the tattoos and the jail incident. We could find no connection," Hedgpeth said.

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