
Staff Connections Spring 2020 Newsletter

Fresh Thoughts

What's new at WOU from the Staff Connections Committee?



The WOU Staff Connections Committee looks for ways to connect our staff and create a friendly and enjoyable work environment. Through this quarterly newsletter, we hope to create a resource where staff can share and gain information.

Staff Senate's Goals for the Upcoming Year

- Internal communication of information
- Professional development and mandatory training
- Employee evaluations

Staff Connections Events

This term the Staff Connections Committee coordinated a few fun gatherings:

We coordinated a **bowling event** on **February 18th**. We had a small group of employees and their families “strike” up conversation, and a good time was had by all.

On **February 24th**, Alexis Larson scheduled a tour of the most confusing building on campus. Representatives from the departments in the **Academic Programs and Support Services (APSC)** were extremely welcoming and were able to share information about their services.

We also held our second **Wine Down Wednesday - Game Night** on **March 11th** right before the COVID-19 craziness hit. It was fantastic to see about 20 people show up for the free appetizers, drinks, and games. Some employees brought their families, as well, and we had such a great time connecting with each other. This is an event we plan to bring back once social distancing guidelines are lifted. We hope you'll join us!

On **April 24th**, we held our first virtual **Friday Festivities** event: **Pets on Parade**. We were able to connect over lunch with other WOU employees and their furry friends. We were fortunate to meet cats, dogs, goats, and a very special hen. This was a fun hour, and we hope you'll join us for the next **Friday Festivities: Does WOU Haiku? Poetry Reading** on **May 9th**.



Staying Connected

Now more than ever, we need to feel connected. If you are interested in sharing and receiving good news, articles, quotes, videos, free virtual activities, and more, please complete the following Google Form, and we will send you an invite to our chat room, “WOU-Hoo”. <https://forms.gle/d2UU8p71NCv8avww6>

Department in the Spotlight:



Human Resources American Sign Language Interpreting Team

Left: An artistic variation on the ASL sign for “Interpret”

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters have a strong presence at WOU, including staff employees with Human Resources (HR), the Office of Disability Services (ODS), and a number of hourly interpreters who work in both areas. You may see interpreters at any number of meetings or events on campus; and although our newsletter is about staff connections, you probably shouldn’t say “hello” to interpreters while they are working (but a friendly “thank you” after the meeting has ended can be appropriate)!

This quarter, the Staff Connections Committee met with the HR Staff Interpreting Team to learn about their work. Though the team maintain low profiles due to the nature of their work, the HR Staff Interpreters include: Chys Burcham, Ben Cavaletto, Emily Herb, and Peter Flora. This small team, with support from part-time interpreters and ODS staff interpreters, provides access for both Deaf and hearing folks, serving over 200 WOU faculty and staff. “We are everyone’s interpreters,” one of the staff told Staff Connections, “because a lot of people don’t know ASL or don’t use spoken English.”

HR Staff Interpreting has only been around for a few years, however. Prior to that, ODS managed the (much smaller) need for interpreting services. As the need for ASL interpreting grew, faculty expressed that they wanted to work with interpreters who were familiar with their profession. Developing a separate HR Interpreting team would also mitigate any potential conflict of interest for interpreters (who worked with both students and staff) and create clear ethical boundaries. Chrys Burcham was hired to coordinate Staff Interpreting a little under 3 years ago and the HR Staff Interpreting Team was formed.

Staff and faculty requesting ASL interpreting services can simply contact Chrys in her role as coordinator (as early as possible) and she will get your details. A big piece of coordinating services is knowing the fit of the interpreter for the person or situation. HR interpreters can also provide protactile American Sign Language which is common in the DeafBlind community. One of our HR Interpreting staff has

attended DeafBlind camps, conferences, and has general experience working with the DeafBlind community. Another has attended the DeafBlind Interpreting Institute; this institute is highly competitive and all of the HR interpreters are interested in participating in the program should the opportunity present itself.

Western Oregon provides interpreters at various stages in their career with a supported and unique work environment (and, quite frankly, Western attracts really good interpreters). Some other things that the HR Interpreting Team love about WOU include: being part of a campus community, the strong interpreting community, respect and value for interpreters within those communities, friendly faces and collaboration. Additionally, the team prizes familiarity of staff and faculty they interact with, routines, tradition, and opportunity to hone one’s skills and grow together.

I asked if any of the HR Staff Interpreting Team would be comfortable sharing something about themselves. Unfortunately, it’s hard to get to know an interpreter because they are generally not present as themselves. It also turns out that the team is “crazy interesting, so if we give you one interesting fact, it’s over!” If folks see the staff interpreters while they’re working and want to start a conversation, they will quickly learn that interpreters can’t do so most of the time.

The HR Interpreting team would like WOU to know that they are here to serve the campus community. All of the HR Interpreting staff has worked in higher education for a long time and consider themselves specialists in the field. Furthermore, everyone on the team has previously worked in Video Relay Service (VRS), which has prepared them to work confidently in our currently remote environment. Each member of the HR Interpreting team holds National Certification in ASL Interpreting and has experience mentoring the next generation of ASL Interpreters; sometimes working with interns or newer interpreters to discuss the field, conduct job shadowing, and so on.

If you’d like more information about ASL Interpreting, please keep an eye out for future training around working with interpreters!

Have You Met _____?

As always, we want to take a moment to introduce some of the staff at WOU! If you are interested in being a part of the Staff Connections committee, please reach out to one of our members: [Kathy Bolen](#), [Tony Manso](#), or [Alexis Larson](#). No matter how involved you'd like to be, the Staff Connections Committee is a great opportunity to share your ideas, have fun, and meet people.

Trina Horsey

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Department and position: I work as the Coordinator for Conference and Event Services on campus, which happens to be a one-person department.

Started at WOU: I started in 2016 as a temporary, part-time assistant in the Housing Department, helping them get ready for their Summer conference season and plan their annual assessment. I was moved to my coordinator position in July of 2017.

Favorite Movie/Genre: I've been reliving some of my old favorites with my children since the Oregon Governor's Stay Home, Save Lives orders was put in place. Star Wars, Big, White Fang, and others have been on the list. Overall, I like funny movies that can make you forget you are an adult for a while.

What is your favorite food: There isn't much food out there I don't like, if I'm being honest. But if I had to choose, I would say Middle Eastern food. It's so fresh and colorful and delicious. There is an herby spice mix called Za'atar that you mix with olive oil and I love smearing that on pita bread for a favorite snack.

Why do you love WOU?: I love the passion WOU has for its students. I am in awe of the unwavering support and that every single decision that is made is made with students in mind.

Do you have any talents?: My kiddos would say that I can do "funny voices." I like doing accents and their favorites might be me playing a French chef or British detective. I spoke fluent Russian at one time in my life, but я все забыл (I forgot everything).

What is one thing that no one would guess about you?:

My parents worked their entire careers for the CIA. My younger brother and I were both born and raised overseas. My dad liked working "hardship posts" which is State Department terminology for non-first world nations, so we lived in places like Yemen, the Soviet Union and the Philippines growing up. It was a fantastic way to see the world and develop a profound appreciation for what we have as a country

Leslie Lloyd

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Department and position: Financial Aid; Assistant Director

Started at WOU: November, 2019

Favorite Movie/Genre: Not a big movie person, but I LOVE The Office!

What is your favorite food: Indian food

Why do you love WOU?: The people I work with and the beautiful campus grounds

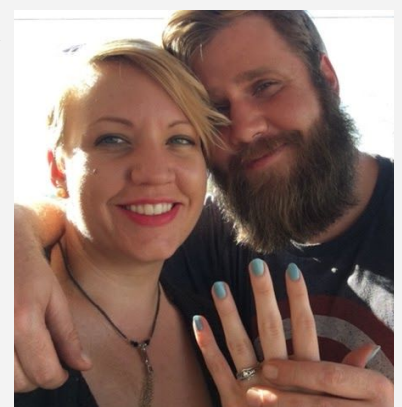
What is one thing that no one would guess about you?:

Before having my beautiful daughters, I used to be a cyclist and a runner. I have biked across the state of Iowa twice and have run in a few half marathons as well as other smaller races.

Announcements

This term, there has been a lot of excitement for the crew at the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Rian Gayle has a new baby boy as of 7:41pm on March 31, 2020; Little Ielan (pronounced like "Island") was born at Salem Hospital, weighing 9 lbs 12 oz at 21 inches long! Ielan, and both parents, are doing well; and big sister RiLanna is loving her new role. Another ODS celebration is a small wedding for Staff Connections own Alexis Larson. Alexis and her fiancé, Jeffery, moved to Monmouth for her position with ODS in September and they have been planning their SoCal wedding for nearly four years. Though current events made their plans impossible, Alexis in particular was committed to their wedding date: May the fourth, 2020. (Do you get it? They're nerds!)

If you have any announcements you'd like included in our newsletter, don't hesitate to reach out to one of the Staff Connections team!

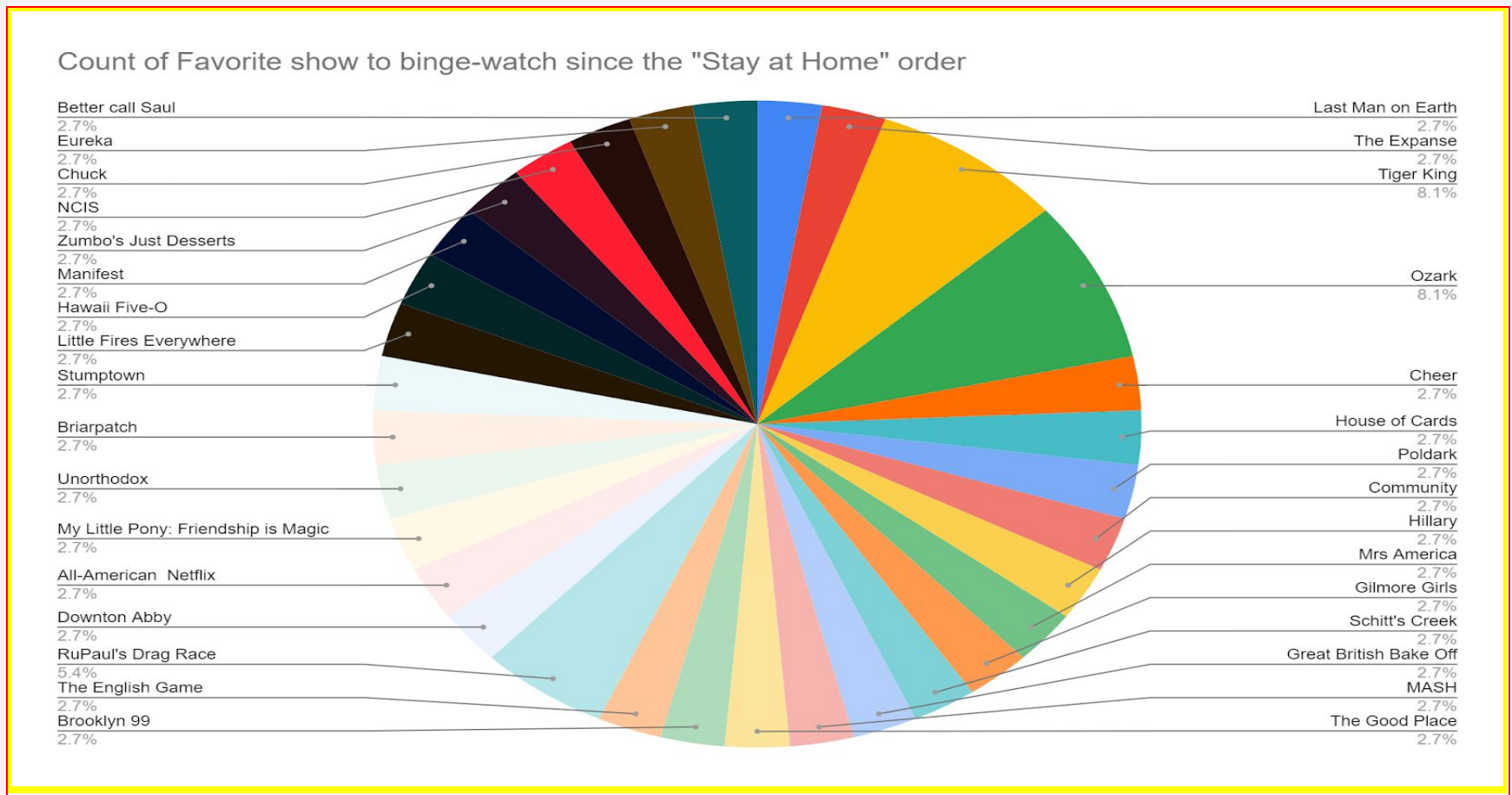


Above: Alexis and Jeffery, 2016

Getting to Know WOU

“Hey all you cool cats and kittens.” This term we posed the question below to campus. We received so many responses and what we’ve found is that you all have a wide variety of interests. Only a couple of shows stood out as the front-runners, so if you want to venture out and watch something new, here’s your list. Thanks for participating! ([Click here to access a list of the shows and their percentages.](#))

What are your favorite shows to binge watch during the “Stay at Home” order?



Community Service and Acts of Kindness

Being on the front line as Grounds we are pulled to clean buildings every day for the Covid 19 virus around campus. But, one un-recognized person is **Amanda Bales** in WOU Mail Services. With classes going online and every teacher mailing supplies and books, her work load has gone up. Not to mention other projects like 2000 plus boxes going out for our graduates. She is one person with minimal student labor. Without amazing Amanda, WOU would not operate so smoothly and efficiently. Tons of paychecks get out on time and she prides herself to make everyone's life easier. (**Randy Bales**, Grounds Maintenance Worker, Facilities Services)

I want to promote **Jeanne Rockwell-Kincannon**. For several weeks, she has been regularly adding shopping for others to her runs to the stores. This includes her friends as well as her neighbors. She's like, pay me later, venmo, or we will settle up because I know where you live. Even to the point of neighbors that she doesn't know very well. Very thoughtful, very generous. (**Paula Baldwin**, Assoc. Professor/Division Chair, Communication Studies)

This isn't about me, although our family is doing our part to maintain safe, social distancing. This is about our **neighbor**, how she leaves a basket full of masks, homemade with care in individual baggies, for anyone passing by to take. My kids made cards for her which we placed in her basket and addressed, "Dear Neighbor." Their art, homemade with care, contained a simple message, thanking her on behalf of her community. We plan to order sewing supplies this weekend, and hopefully, add a few masks to the basket soon. The kindness of strangers is one of the greatest gifts a person can receive. :) (**Becki Gann**, Payroll Technician, Human Resources)

I've continued my existing volunteer work, as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for foster children. This is a very difficult time for foster kids especially, since their in-person visits with their parents have been suspended for a month now, along with their therapy and other services. We also expect a huge spike in new cases whenever children return to in-person school activities. Folks are welcome to contact me if they would like info about how they can help these local children. (**Bev West**, Project Manager, Academic Affairs)

For a couple of weeks, a WOU **student employee** and I exchanged emails. Our correspondence started with a general request and evolved into an amiable (and welcomed) exchange. In her emails, she repeatedly offered encouragement and appreciation for our staff. I shared her kind words with my teammates. On Thursday, she hand-delivered four masks, sown by her grandmother, and a box of chocolates. We all thank her very much! (**Becki Gann**, Payroll Technician, Human Resources)

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome." ~ Anne Bradstreet

We're in this together!