

all the views that
are fit to print.

Real Street Times EXTRA

...another fine serving from Reality Kitchen.

www.realitykitchen.org

“one creative community”

REALITY KITCHEN IS COOKIN'!

So What's Cookin' at RK?

We hear that question a lot, and the truth is we're a lot more than a café and bakery. Even though we seem to be open only Thursdays and Fridays, 10 am-6 pm, and now Saturdays 9 am-2 pm, we're busy, seven days a week producing baked goods for your favorite restaurants and food service businesses in the community.

But that's not all, by a long shot!

Reality Kitchen is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our Mission: “To offer employment path experiences designed to nourish and inspire all learners, with and without disabilities, to thrive personally and professionally with supports and resources in a community inclusive setting.”

We are licensed to deliver Employment Path Services (and very soon to offer Day Support Activities) to individuals in our community who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. (I/DD). We offer in-person job-skills training opportunities in a fully integrated workplace setting where individuals of all abilities work and learn together.



Jim Evangelista (Executive Director), David Sloan, Joe DeAngelo and Baldo Hernandez making calzones sold at UO Ducks football game in Autzen Stadium.

Our educational program is why we operate a wholesale bakery and retail café so we can provide real life employment based experiences to fulfill these individual's goals for independence, self-confidence and success.

Reality Kitchen offers a supportive, genuine workplace environment that daily is changing the perceptions of our community around the employment options available to individuals with I/DD.

We offer a sixteen-week pro-

gram where Participants learn how to safely use the equipment in a commercial kitchen, from mixers and ovens to the dish pit and mop sink. They learn the necessary rules and procedures for safe food holding and handling, explore international cuisines and how to conduct and discuss taste assessments of a wide range of foods, cooking and baking methods and techniques.

Participants learn the benefits of mise-en-place, time management, food presentation and recipe development. Barista skills and working with co-workers and supervisors

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GENERAL STORE Eugene, Oregon

Opening in 2025

December of 2024 marks 12 years of Reality Kitchen on River Road. We've heard your requests and done our best to develop the Neighborhood / Community Center you've wanted and needed.

Now, in the same spot where McKay's Grocers and Solstice Bakery were anchors for the River Rd. Neighborhood, Reality Kitchen presents The General Store, offering locally-sourced products, all Made In Lane County, opening in 2025.

Within easy walking distance, neighbors will find a large selection of organic, affordable bulk food choices, area-raised beef and chicken, RK's entire selection of breads, and other baked goods and treats.

We'll offer growlers of local beers, ciders and kombucha and sell regionally-produced wines and locally-distilled liquors, too.

You'll find lots of grab and go meals with vegetarian and vegan options, crafts and preserves, pickled items, our famous pretzels, and yes, there will be a chess set and checkerboard in place waiting for you,

And what's a General Store

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Capacity Building Campaign

This past year, a generous member of the Jules E.F. Kessler Community Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation approached Reality Kitchen to ask how she could help us expand our organizational capacity and increase the number of sustaining donors we have currently. Her suggestion was to offer a “dollar for dollar” matching donation up to \$55,000.

We met and surpassed our goal, raising over \$110,000. Combined with her matching donation we raised a total of \$165,000! Our ability to grow Reality Kitchen in 2024 was possible thanks to your kind financial support and with the generosity of so many community-involved individuals, groups and organizations who believe in our vision of building community here on River Road.

Your sustaining donations helped us add the needed staff to ex-

tend our café hours of operation to Saturdays, increase our baking and food production, and schedule new classes bringing on additional Program Participants. Moreover, there's more to come.

We expanded our footprint to an adjacent location with frontage on River Road where we are serving food from our Pretzel Wagon and opening our General Store to serve the neighborhood (see the article on this page)

With your financial donations we will continue to develop our in person program and deliver our unique approach to offering job skills training activities and services in a fully integrated workplace setting where individuals of all abilities work and learn together!

We ask you to become a Sustaining Member today and support us in building our capacity to grow.



The Eugene 100 Women That Care put Reality Kitchen's recent fundraiser over the top to meet our goal, and we're asking your help again today to remain strong in 2025.

Meet Our Program Director Reality's Rural Initiative



Kaylee Figura, David Iverson, Tessa Cooney, RK Program Director Catherine Pickup and Emily Horton are all smiles and look forward to seeing you at the Cafe soon

When Reality Kitchen Non-profit was founded in 2010 with the mission of creating opportunities for individuals of all abilities to come together to build community, this was already the lifelong commitment and vision of Catherine Pickup, our Co-Founder and Program Director.

When you come to visit the Café, you have likely met Catherine and seen how she supports and guides our Program Participants through their customer service skills training, navigating the barista machine, making change at the register and plate those delicious sandwiches you enjoy so much.

She's responsible for most all of the soups we serve, from the Smoked Salmon Chowder and Dahl soups to our African Peanut, her special Thai soup and other vegetarian and vegan meal specialties like the Goat Guru and Beet Reuben she serves up.

Catherine's warm and lively personality is always welcoming, and she remains adept attending to the complex responsibilities and obligations overseeing our Employment Path Program. Her work with families and Services Coordinators

in developing and delivering the curriculum that sets our program apart from others makes a difference in the outcomes our Program Participants achieve.

It was in Vancouver, B.C., working with young children in the Squamish Nation program where Catherine began her journey supporting individuals experiencing disabilities.

She has benefited from years supporting students with extreme behaviors and disabilities in outdoor programs, through her work in group homes, and leading addiction outreach programs in Surrey, B.C.

Since moving to Oregon, Catherine has worked for Autism Support Services and for years in the classrooms of Lane ESD, supporting individuals with the most challenging behaviors. Sharing the same vision and commitment to this work with Jim Evangelista, the co-founders of the Reality Kitchen Nonprofit, her work continues.

Stop by to eat lunch and notice the person standing beside who's taking your order at the front counter – it's probably Catherine.

Informed by COVID-19 and inspired by learning how Zoom could be used as a teaching tool, Reality Kitchen developed The Rural Initiative as a pilot project to adapt and expand our ongoing in-person curriculum with an online emphasis.

Our goal is to increase learning opportunities for traditionally under-served individuals living in rural communities in Lane and Douglas Counties who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).

Across the State of Oregon, individuals from diverse, rural communities share a desire to have access to activities designed to offer carefully structured learning experiences with each of their particular learning styles in mind.

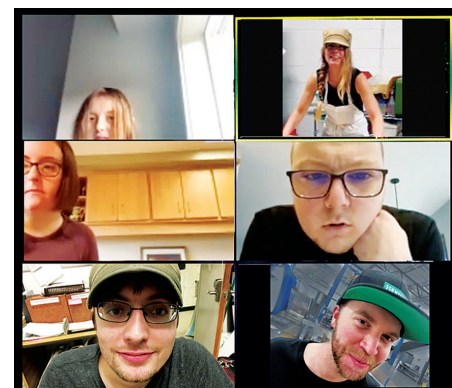
We recognized that online learning could help these under-served individuals overcome transportation and distance barriers, make connections and peer-to-peer relationships, and build their tech skills.

Offering this hybrid approach to learning is designed to begin building self-confidence and skills individuals with I/DD need to prepare for opportunities in their local community food service businesses, as well as employment in other settings of their own choosing.

There are a growing number of employment opportunities available for individuals with the skills and self-confidence to access the internet. It is important to prepare for the shift and change in the perspectives of community and global employers who are considering employing individuals experiencing I/DD.

We are aware that many people had challenges with feeling distant and isolated in their learning during COVID. We believe our plan will lead to significantly different positive experiences and outcomes.

To accomplish this, we have received funding from both Business Oregon and Oregon Dept. of Human Services/Oregon Dept. of Disabilities Services. We have partnered with other Provider Agencies, Services Coordinators and Case Managers in Lane and Douglas Counties



to pilot and deliver our introductory course, Reality Kitchen Introduction to Food Service Program to online, distant learners.

Once we successfully pilot the Rural Initiative, Reality Kitchen will be positioned to develop and deliver additional content and courses.

We will we build this unique platform to offer diverse options ranging from the basics like short story writing, community journalism, geography, history and civics, to public speaking, critical thinking and debate, and so much more, for so many previously under-served individuals across the State of Oregon

So What's Cookin'...

From Page 1

is included and, of course, how to problem solve and practice hospitality and courtesy while working with you, our very favorite customers!

And that's where you come in.

At the beginning of the week, our Participants are preparing and making baked goods, doing prep work to be ready to make the soups and salads and sandwiches and meals we serve in our café. They make the pies and our cakes, pretzels and fruit bars, cookies and turnovers. They help in the baking, packing and delivering of our breads and baked goods we wholesale in the community and retail sell in our café. They do this with professional supports as part of the certified skills training activities we offer.

We offer a sixteen-week program where each Participant learns how to safely use all the equipment in a commercial kitchen, from mixers and ovens to the dish pit and mop sink. They learn all the necessary rules and procedures for safe

food holding and handling, and explore international cuisines and how to conduct and discuss taste assessments of a wide range of foods, cooking and baking methods and techniques.

Thursdays and Fridays are when Program Participants put into practice the things they learn those other days, and you are the most important part of the equation because you are the "Community" in "Community Inclusion." They learn so much when you come visit to enjoy a meal, a piece of pie and a cup of tea or coffee and purchase baked goods. They learn to work the register and practice "customer service skills" and we are so grateful for your participation!

We appreciate the confidence and trust you place in us when you are able to make a kind and generous donation to our nonprofit to sustain us and our Mission as we grow into the future.



RK Executive Director Jim Evangelista presents Kevin Jones, owner of Eugene Sign and Awning with The Pretzel Award in appreciation for Kevin's generous support of his community.

Pretzelpalooza is Coming to Town

Coming in April 2025, Reality Kitchen brings its own brand of “community inclusive fun-raising” to Eugene by presenting its First Annual **Pretzelpalooza**.

Many of your favorite area restaurants and food service businesses will participate in this event and RK’s very popular pretzel will be at the center of it all.

Each participating business will develop their own unique presentation of our pretzel for you to enjoy. You get to be the judge of who has the best way to serve up our signature product.

To make it a fun-for-all event, customers receive specials at participating locations and prizes for taking part in visiting and voting for their favorite version of pretzel served at different locations around town.

The business with the most votes gets an award for having the best pretzel recipe. You’ll be helping support Reality Kitchen’s fundraising cause just by having fun check-



ing out new and favorite places and finding out what kind of twist each place has on Lane County’s favorite pretzel.

The full details are all on our website.

Become a Reality Kitchen Ambassador!

Wondering about ways you can be part of making a difference in the lives of individuals who experience I/DD? Consider becoming a Reality Kitchen Ambassador.

To ensure that young adults in our community, and beyond, have access to opportunities to build self confidence and increased independence in their lives, Reality Kitchen is looking for advocates to spread the word to others about our work in the community. As an Ambassador, you can help fulfill our Mission, develop our programs, and help identify individuals and other organizations who can contribute to our efforts..

A Reality Kitchen Ambassador is someone who knows about our program and is a customer and community member who passionately supports RK and the work we do.

We are looking for positive voices in our community who are “connectors,” open to inviting others who have similar interests and abilities, to learn more about us and contribute to our growth into the future.

Of course, we hope you will be interested in financially supporting RK at a level of your own choosing and capacity, and that you’re comfortable with encouraging others to

do the same.

Your ideas and skills, imagination, empathy, and vision as an Ambassador helps us grow our organization and community donor base. Provide at least three new connections from families and friends, business associates and leaders so we can invite them to bring their experiences and commitment and ensure Reality Kitchen is relevant and thriving into the future.

As Ambassador, you’ll help plan, attend and participate in at least two RK events in a year including fundraisers, socials and group activities. You’ll promote us on social media, write letters of support on our behalf, and consider hosting a gathering at your home or inviting us to make presentations to groups and organizations you belong to.

Ambassadors are volunteers and commit as much or as little time as needed. We would be grateful for your vision and willingness to take part making this a more successful organization.

To take the first step in becoming an Ambassador, contact our Executive Director, Jim Evangelista, at 541.337.1323 or by emailing jim.evangelista@realitykitchen.org.

The General Store

From Page 1

without a place to enjoy local performances in an intimate atmosphere where favorite local artists raise their voices to help us make sense in this often senseless world?

In this expanded new space, adjacent to Reality Kitchen, we will offer classes and use our demonstration kitchen to produce videos to be used

in our online program.

We will also host classes and workshops for the community, teaching canning, food preservation, drawing and painting classes, book club meetings and, yes, there will be a chess set and checkerboard in place waiting for you. More information coming soon. Visit our website.

Partnerships and Our Food Insecurity Initiative

We have partnered with Carry It Forward, another local nonprofit organization serving the needs of Lane County residents and neighbors who experience homelessness and food insecurity.

Together we wrote a successful \$70,000 grant and received generous support from Trillium to produce mobile food service vehicles to assist Carry It Forward in its mission to support those in our community.



David Strahan of Carry It Forward / Hope on Wheels, receives the first completed mobile kitchen from RK Executive Director, Jim Evangelista



dividuals will be given supports and learning opportunities to safely and regularly prepare meals for themselves and others, as well as receive instruction on healthy eating habits and workforce development activities.

We are redesigning a repurposed Seattle Dart system 20-person shuttle bus (right) to deliver and serve prepared hot and cold meals at homeless campsites so residents can learn how to obtain their Lane Food Handler’s card and become part of food service activities.

To learn more about this project and partnership, visit the Food Insecurity Initiative on our website.



Cole Peterman begins a new adventure in independent living as his friend, Tessa Cooney cheers him on. Both are RK Program Participants.

Funding and Sustaining Success: RK's Scholarship Program

As an Oregon licensed Provider Organization, Reality Kitchen bills for each hour of our time delivering our curriculum and supports of the learning experiences and employment goals of Individuals with I/DD.

This income supports the wages of our Supported Staff, the costs for administration and a portion of the cost of delivery of those services. Income we realize from the wholesale and retail business of the organization covers some of the rest of those costs. Your generous and unrestricted donations that sustain our program cover the remainder.

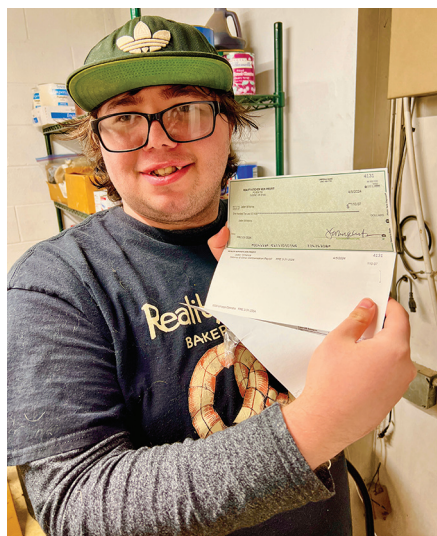
Many individuals who seek these services already receive Medicaid funded services and Social Security benefits, and are on OHP. All these programs come with guidelines and requirements with an endless array of gateways and hurdles for someone to have the financial safety net they need to lead successful and meaningful lives. We are just one part of that experience they live with.



Lead Baker Eddie Foresberg teaches Krystel Pennington to braid challah

There are many individuals who come to us who are not part of that established safety net.

These are folks who have not been "identified" or "diagnosed." They may have recently moved into the state, or they suffer from schizophrenia or other disability that does not fit into the criteria that permit funding.



Jayden Wiltshire and his paycheck

Yet, these individuals present all the symptoms, manifestations, discreet and more pronounced and always impactful behaviors that create ongoing barriers and these are present and ongoing barriers to them receiving State of Oregon, Medicaid funded services.

Reality Kitchen knows that we can still make a difference in the lives of individuals who do not fit into the guidelines and check all the boxes. That's why we are asking you to consider supporting The Reality Kitchen Scholarship Fund.

Each year we set a goal to offer scholarships to three individuals who would not otherwise be able to access the unique services we provide. Considering the billable hours we would charge for a Medicaid recipient, the costs for staffing to support that individual and the administration of those services, a funded scholarship for an individual not receiving Medicaid benefits would be \$5000.

Consider contributing to partially or fully fund a \$5000 scholarship. Go to "Get Involved" on our website and search for the Reality Kitchen Scholarship Fund.



When you make room in your kitchen to welcome new friends, like RK Scholarship recipients Helen Anderson and Donnie Thomas, it's a great recipe for learning and fun – the main course!



The Community Circle welcomes you!

During development of a community inclusive component for The Rural Initiative Project, we recognized that for the same reasons many groups and organizations increasingly rely on Zoom and similar applications to exchange information, conduct business and nurture relationships.

Convening an online conversation on topics of interest would be an activity that is timely and particularly important for us all to participate in.

As we reflect on all that brings us together rather than divides us, we are inviting community leaders, representatives of business, government, social services, transportation, civics, education, sports, technology, the arts and other related fields, to join with neighbors and friends from all parts of our vibrant community to participate in a weekly "Community Circle."

Our purpose is to stimulate and engage each other in conversations that attempt to answer the questions we are asking in an effort at finding common ground and increased understanding from shared concerns and perspectives.

"Community Circle" will be promoted through our website, print, and shared broadly on social media to encourage and invite a wide range of community participants as we authentically build community.



Each week we will:

- Offer an informed sense of local engagement, civic participation and self-actualization.

- Provide access to a full range of community subjects and perspectives in a forum not previously available, to dispel confusion, remove stigmas and misunderstandings, promote respect and thoughtful discussion and, hopefully, kindle moments of discovery, learning, and appreciation for our shared experiences.

- Promote social inclusion and inquiry with friends, peers, colleagues and community members meant for us to learn from each other, express and share our concerns, reflections and observations in a supportive and mindful way.

- Develop opportunities for us all to learn and model appropriate social behaviors, be part of planning topics for future discussions and have fun as we build citizenship skills in a safe, moderated community-based online setting.

We will practice the art of holding space with each other while building the community we live in.

Community Solidarity

BY ZAC BAKKE, LOCAL 280



Recently, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 280 received a call for help from Reality Kitchen Executive Director Jim Evangelista. He explained an electrical contractor not affiliated with us had left him high and dry at a critical point of expansion and growth in an adjacent location.

It was disheartening to hear the circumstance Jim found himself in, and, as the Leadership of Local 280 learned more about the important mission and work Reality Kitchen does in our community, we knew it was important for us to do all we could to lend a hand.

Our Administrative team reached out to the Local membership to ask for a crew to take on this project and Aaron, with City and Suburban from Lebanon, was the first to answer the call. His team got to work immediately.

As the project moved forward, I had a few conversations with Jim and learned more about the Reality Kitchen job skills training program supporting individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The more I learned about their organization and goals, the more I began to understand that this was our opportunity to help Reality Kitchen make a difference in the lives of so many in the community. I proposed to Local 280 Leadership and our members that we should cover the electrical needs that Reality Kitchen had for their expansion of classroom space and the development of the General Store and Pretzel Wagon as part of the Program growth.

We here at the IBEW are a community-based electrical group that regularly strives to support our local communities through sponsorships, community support, and consistently raising the bar for the working class when it comes to wages, hours and working conditions.

Like Reality Kitchen, IBEW Local 280 is committed to lift up the community around us by teaching people skills they will carry with them for the rest of their life.