



Quality Inn and Suites at Olympic National Park wins the 2019 Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment Medium Private Employer of Year Award

Wirta Hospitality Worldwide owns Quality Inn and Suites at Olympic National Park and is a family owned company that designs, builds, owns, and operates value-driven hotels and restaurants. Besides Quality Inn and Suites they also own the Holiday Inn Express and Black Bear Diner properties in Sequim, Washington. All three properties are award winning and are fulfilling Brett Wirta, CEO's vision and mission "to be a source of joy for our guests, growth for our employees, wealth for our investors and inspiration for the communities in which we serve."



(L-R) Pat Bauccio, Vice chair GCDE; Nick Merrigan, Brett Wirta (owner Quality Inn) Nancy and Kevin Merrigan, managers

Nancy Merrigan began working for WIRTA Hospitality in 2012 as the housekeeping manager at Holiday Inn at the same time that Brett Wirta gave his stamp of approval for diversity hiring. Soon Nancy began collaborating with Morningside to provide employment opportunities to individuals with barriers to employment by hiring a Morningside job seeker as a laundry assistant. In 2015 Nancy was offered the position of general manager at Quality Inn and in her move to the new hotel she brought her laundry assistant with her. Right away, she again collaborated with Morningside to hire additional staff. Nancy sees potential in each individual she meets. She has provided a welcoming, supportive, fun, and safe environment for all of her employees. Currently, Quality Inn is employing eight individuals with disabilities, six of them receiving long-term support services. Nancy also welcomes the transition students from the local high school weekly to work on new skills throughout the hotel. This provides a foundation to develop skills they need to obtain employment in their future. Many times Nancy has provided the opportunity for interested parties to "try out" different areas of the hotel to find what best suits their interest, employment goal, and skills while meeting the needs of the hotel. During this process, it can be difficult but Nancy has always provided a kind-empowering demeanor when helping each person succeed.

Due to the nature of the hospitality field, it is typically seasonal work. Nancy has exceeded expectations in order to keep all of her employees working year round. She has offered employees the opportunity to train in other areas of the hotel to maintain their hours and learn new skills. Each individual takes pride in the work and feels a part of a team. Through her ability to build trusting relationships, she has established rapport with each person encouraging them to use their skills in ways many others would never consider. Among the challenges that come, Nancy is always ready and willing to overcome any obstacle with an innovative, positive attitude. The Quality Inn received the prestigious 2019 Platinum Award from Choice Hotels International, Inc. This is the third consecutive year in a row The Quality Inn Suites has received Platinum status. When this award is celebrated, Nancy includes everyone she has on her staff to share in this achievement. Nancy continuously expresses her appreciation to employees for their dedicated contributions and role in achieving numerous awards over the years. For housekeeping week, she put together a "housekeeper survival kit" personalized for each person. She also treats each employee to lunch at a place of their choosing to show her deep appreciation for all their hard work. Nancy presents an Employee of the Month award each month. In the month of September, 2019, an employee who experiences a disability was the award recipient. This is the third recipient with disabilities to receive this award under Nancy's management.

Nancy leads by example. She has created an inclusive environment, which many employees say feels like "family". She encourages all employees to work together as a team to achieve the highest potential in everyone. Five of the long-term supported employees have the ability to work without a job coach utilizing their natural supports; this would not be possible if it were not for Nancy's timeless effort of creating a culture of inclusion. Nancy is receptive to employees being able to utilize accommodations that will help them be successful at their jobs in the hospitality industry. For example, she is open to job coaches being on hand, to help train and support individuals as needed. She understands the importance of modifying work hours and task lists to accommodate persons with differing abilities. Every employee is treated with respect by Nancy, on an individual basis.



(L-R) Leanne Trump, Michael Rief, Shaun Garr, Nancy Merrigan, Theresa Taylor and Danny Smith

Nancy is deeply committed to her community. She is always seeking out ways to help. From The WAG program for animals to serving on the Chamber of Commerce board, assisting with homelessness, to participating in Job Club mock interviews which resulted in Nancy hiring several individuals. Nancy is the Chair of the Sequim Chamber Ambassadors with the Sequim Chamber of Commerce and Nancy won the Board Member of the Year award for 2018. At Chamber meetings, Nancy advocates for people with disabilities especially in relation to supporting them in employment.

Morningside is privileged to have such an incredible partnership with Nancy and Brett and offer our heartfelt congratulations for a well-deserved Governor's Award.

Club Demonstration Services Honored with State Wide Community Employment Award

Club Demonstration Services (CDS) is a preferred in-house marketing provider to Costco. The people performing this demonstration work are friendly people who will explain the product to you. Members of Costco can sample a food or beverage while learning about the health benefits.

Bobbi Harrison is the manager for the Tumwater CDS location in Costco. She has worked with CDS for over 10 years. Bobbi's first assignment with CDS was product demonstration. Because of Bobbi's strong leadership, forward thinking and dynamic personality, she was promoted to management. Bobbi has been the manager for five years and during that time she has employed 15 sales associates with disabilities. When you ask Bobbi why she has embraced the inclusion of people with disabilities, her answer is, "because everyone should be included, everyone should be able to work." She is quick to point out that her mother and brother both experience a disability, so having grown up with that experience and having



(L-R) Steven Hughes, Morningside Job Developer;
Linda Cosgrove, Sales Adviser CDS;
Jonathan Pleger, CEO Morningside;
Bobbi Harrison, Manager CDS Tumwater Store

employees with disabilities came easy for her... it was second nature. She points out that "everyone is different and everyone needs a certain kind of approach and attention." Bobbi says, "the people I employ who have disabilities are really hard workers. They have great attendance and are always here ready to work and take instruction well. I have an opportunity and the ability to change someone's life." When Bobbi has a new hire she really gets to know the person. She sits down with them and just talks. She wants them to feel welcomed and that they are now a part of a family. Even though Bobbi has a job to do, she goes the extra mile to accommodate everyone. Because of this leadership style one can see very quickly that her employees really embrace Bobbi. They want to please her and do their very best for her. In Bobbi's five years of management, she has built a strong dynamic team that leads the region. Bobbi is not just a manager, she is a leader and a community leader. Bobbi's team thrives because of the climate and culture she has created. Bobbi's vision is total inclusion for all.

Clallam County Office Gets Much Needed Repairs

Over the past several months we have made quite a few maintenance repairs and cosmetic improvements on our Clallam County Office building in Port Angeles, Washington. Some of these repairs were planned, but one big one was not.

We painted the steel girders and trim and remediated the rust that was beginning to appear due to the building's close proximity to the waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. We also replaced the front entryway deck, which was when we discovered major wood rot damage up the front column and side of the building. There was similar damage to the column in the rear of the building. We discovered that the cause of the damage was due to an issue with the old siding and flashing at the top and bottom of the building.

Estimates to fix both sides of the building, including replacement and repair of the damaged wood and siding, were very high and much more than we could afford, especially after all our other repairs. We asked for assistance from several local foundations and were fortunate to receive support from two – the Ben B. Cheney Foundation and the First Federal Community Foundation, both long-time supporters of many non-profit organizations in Clallam County. Without their financial assistance, it would have been a major challenge to complete the necessary repairs.

Our building is now safe and weather tight and in great shape for our clients and staff. Even though our staff are often out supporting our clients at their jobs throughout the community, our office remains an important hub for meetings, trainings, and support of our clients, for our client job club, and other staff work. Thank you to both the Ben B. Cheney Foundation and the First Federal Community Foundation for helping us be able to continue providing great service to individuals with disabilities in Clallam County!



New paint and siding looks great!