

'Everyone deserves a fair chance'

Created on Tuesday, 04 November 2014 07:38 | Written by [Jules Rogers](#) | 

Night for Networking matches employers with people with disabilities



Photo Credit: PHOTOS COURTESY: MAILEEN HAMTO - In its fifth year, the Night for Networking attracted nearly 500 people eager to make business connections between employers and people with disabilities.

Job descriptions outline specific specialities, and as job searchers know, it's difficult to sift through the options to find a job matching individual professional capabilities.

Fortunately, networking events help highlight specialities for both aspiring careerists and hopeful employers. On Oct. 22, Night for Networking (N4N) attendees gathered to connect at the event's fifth year connecting business and talent, highlighting people with disabilities.

At the new Collaborative Life Sciences building on the south waterfront, a reception featuring live musician Ian James harbored 480 attendees including

employers, sponsors and facilitators mingled, refreshing themselves with guacamole, smoked salmon and wine catered by Verde Cocina.

In its first year, the event drew 150 participants according to Michael Tom, founder and chair of Night for Networking and OHSU Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Director.

"Coming together and doing an event that had never been done before took a lot of courage," says Tom. "The important thing about the first year ... (is to) see how it works, lining up for next year."

Tom founded N4N by meandering through the halls of OHSU collecting support. This year, N4N has 12 executive sponsors, five associate sponsors and 18 partners in the community.

At the Collaborative Life Sciences Building, a projector displaying a transcript of the speakers' words and an ASL translator help everyone understand. Steve Hanamura of Hanamura Consulting Inc. kicked off the speeches as the master of ceremonies.

"October is Oregon disabilities month where we celebrate all of our capabilities," says Hanamura. "Create an environment where people with disabilities can connect with one another, have fun, exchange business cards and learn a lot from the employment sector."

Ian Jaquiss is an OHSU Disability Trainer and Community Outreach Specialist and former paralympic swimmer. He spoke at an N4N event a few years ago and this year returned as a co-chair.

"The trick is to network not professionally, but socially — build friends," says Jaquiss.

Steve Novick, City of Portland Commissioner, was the highlighted speaker of the evening.

"Something I noticed myself, as a one-handed person ... people with disabilities experience a lot of annoyances, some small and some major," says Novick.