
VRA NewsNotes

April/May/June 2nd Quarter

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION ([HTTP://WWW.VRA.ORG](http://www.vra.org))

Presidential Pondering

Maureen McGuire-Kuletz

The first part of this year has been a very busy one for our association. Members traveled to the Virginia General Assembly in January and met with our House and Senate representatives in Washington, D.C. in February. Our membership has been working with our partners on the Collaborations Conference in Alexandria and we are focused on a new fund raising effort with a Golf Tournament in the fall.

During this year we will also have our delegates voting on the NRA restructuring. Please let them know how you feel about the proposed changes. If you have any questions, contact our delegates or visit our web site. VRA members who are registered delegates are:

Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, William Burnside, Mark Fletcher and Nancy Scott.

Please support VRA activities and volunteer to assist with the activities of your association. We look forward to meeting with you on the Sunday prior to the Conference at the VRA Membership Forum.

It's™ not too early to begin thinking about nominations for the VRA and Division awards for 2000. The ceremony will take place during a reception at Collaborations 2000. Contact Naomi Aitken for more information at

804-296-5621 or aitken.ssr@prodigy.net

Collaborations Information!

Mark your calendars and watch your mail. The registration packages for Collaborations 2000 will be arriving within the next several weeks in the mail.

Making It Happen In The New Millenium will take place at the Holiday Inn in Old Town Alexandria from August 7-9, 2000. Additional information will also be posted on the VRA website at <http://www.vra.org>. Please check it out. Your VRA Board will meet on Sunday prior to the conference and we hope you will be able to join us.

If you want additional information, please contact Mark Fletcher who is the VRA Representative to the Collaborations Steering Committee. Mark can be reached at 703-313-4408.

See you there!

Help Wanted!

VRA News notes needs a new editor! If you are interested in contributing to your association and feel that your talents are in this area, please contact Maureen McGuire-Kuletz (mkuletz@gwu.edu).

The next VRA Board Meeting is scheduled for the Sunday prior to the Collaborations Conference in Alexandria.

GRANT APPLICATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED BY THE VIRGINIA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION, INC.

When the Foundation was incorporated in 1992, the Board of Trustees accepted the mission of providing excellence through educational assistance to members of VRA (in good standing) a child, or the spouse of a member.

Applications are accepted May through July and the award/awards are announced in August or early September for the current academic year.

Criteria for applicants:

1. No major course of study is required for a child or spouse. If the applicant is a VRA member, the request must be for studies related to the field of rehabilitation.
2. Applicant must show evidence of acceptance by an institution of higher learning approved by the Association of Colleges and Schools. Preference will be given to applicants attending Virginia schools.
3. Applicant must apply annually and maintain a "C" average or better to be eligible for reapplication.
4. Applicants must complete an application form obtained from a Board member.
5. Applications are due before June 30.

Mail applications to: Virginia Rehabilitation Association Foundation, Inc.

C/o Bernice Chattin

8603 Freestone Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23462

The Board of Trustees of the Foundation invites all VRA members to participate in the Foundation. It is self-supporting and awards are based on income from the endowment. All contributions are added to the endowment.

Donations of honor and memorial gifts are acknowledged as requested.

Division Updates:

VEWAA:

VEWAA members participated and presented at the recent Transitions 2000 Forum in Williamsburg.

A training workshop is planned for May. VEWAA members are considering the proposed changes to the NRA by-laws.

VRCA:

VRCA celebrated Rehabilitation Counselor Day on May 5th at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. A training/meeting is scheduled for June 2nd at the Fairfax DRS Office.

VRAA:

NRAA is sponsoring their annual training in Baltimore, Maryland on Friday, May 18, 2000. The topic is Social Security.

VRA Call for Nominations!

Mary Kaye Johnston

Are you interested in becoming more involved in the leadership of VRA by serving as an Officer or on the Board? Do you know of someone whom that would offer good leadership? **NOW** is your opportunity to identify future leaders of your professional organization! The following positions are open for nominations for the year 2000 election:

President Elect (3 year term)

Treasurer (2 year term)

Secretary (1 year term)

2 Board Members at Large (3 year term)

1 Board Member representing VRA Region III, SW Special Election required (3-year term)

Duties and Responsibilities information is available by contacting any Officer or Board member. Please submit your nominations, written or verbal, to Mary Kaye Johnston, c/o VRA, PO Box K-166, Richmond, VA 23288, 804.662.9968, or email: mkaye1@erols.com by **June 9, 2000**.

*****ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF ADVOCACY IN VIRGINIA*****

Jim Rothrock, VRA Legislative Advocate

As the New Millennium began, VRA members were zealous in their advocacy efforts featuring for the second straight year a "VRA GA DAY".

On January 17th, VRA President, Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, convened a training session to overview the upcoming session of the Virginia General Assembly. Prior to this date, VRA Board members led by Howard Green and Benjy Burnette, Legislative Committee Co-Chairs, had identified key issues for the VRA Agenda 2000 which included the following:

• a budget amendment in the amount of \$3.9m for Long Term Employment Support Services

• recreation of Specialized Transportation Council and fund the Specialized Transportation Incentive Fund at \$500,000

• support for HJR 225 recommendations on the "Medicaid carve-out", new role of the CSB's, and increase the funding for community based programs

• support for Governor Gilmore's "Developmental Disabilities" Medicaid Waiver

• support legislation to continue the work of the Disability Commission

Now that the session is over, we can review the bills and see that again VRA achieved success in the legislative area in Virginia.

â€¢EMPLOYMENT: LTESS was funded at \$650,000 per year and with this increase several hundred Virginians with disabilities will be supported to enter and stay in our stateâ€™s workforce.

â€¢TRANSPORTATION: A new transportation plan surfaced every few days and VRA advocated to be sure that persons with disabilities needs were met in any plan that was discussed. The final plan funnels 2.6 billion into all transportation needs. More than 50 million will go to the purchase of transit vehicles, which should help numerous Virginians with disabilities.

MHMRSAS System: VRA had supported recommended changes from the HJR 225 Services Boards (CSB's) with less conflict of interest and increased consumer

COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES: This year saw an infusion of more than 30 million dollars.

It has been again a pleasure to represent VRA. I will be employed by VRA for the â€œoff sessionâ€ months this year and will let you know of other opportunities for VRA to expand its role and impact on disability services In the Commonwealth.

If you have any questions or ideas, do not hesitate to contact me.

Jim Rothrock, VRA Legislative Advocate

Phone: (804) 673-0119

Fax: (804) 282-7118

Email: (jarothroek@aol.com)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW----SEPTEMBER 15, 2000

Howard Green

1ST ANNUAL VRA GOLF TOURNAMENT!

"SHOOTOUT AT THE HOLLOWES"

The Virginia Rehabilitation Association (VRA) will host its first annual golf tournament on Friday, September 15, 2000 at The Hollows Golf Club in Montpelier, Virginia. The Hollows is located between Richmond and Ashland. This will be an 18 hole, 4 man team Captain's Choice event. The tournament will begin at 9:00 a.m. with lunch and prizes immediately afterward. We want to have at least 25 foursomes for the tournament and more would be great.

We need your HELP! - The planning group has at least 5 subcommittees and we need volunteers. The committees are: (1) Marketing--getting the players, (2) Sponsorships--soliciting corporate sponsors @ \$100.00 each, (3) Gift--securing prizes for the winners, longest drive, closest to the pin, and (4) Registration/working during the tournament. If you would like to be on a committee please call or e-mail Howard Green at (804-379-1286) or (jhgreem18@aol.com)

Please help make this a BIG SUCCESS and have some fun with your colleagues. Be prepared because you WILL get a call from the Golf Tournament Planning Committee.

WHAT'S UP WITH WELFARE REFORM & REHABILITATION??

WELFARE REFORM PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR REHABILITATION

As anticipated, welfare reform has begun to have an impact on the rehabilitation field. With the 1996 passage of the Public Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the Department of Social Services (DSS) and vocational rehabilitation organizations have begun to collaborate in novel and creative ways. PRWORA eliminated the AFDC program and replaced it with block grants to states under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. There are two major differences in this program from AFDC: 1) TANF has specific work requirements for individuals who receive financial assistance and 2) a recipient is limited to 60 months of benefits during her lifetime.

In the meantime, Virginia passed its own version of welfare reform known as the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW). The VIEW program requirements are generally more strict than the federal ones. As an example, Virginia limits money benefits initially to 24 months. If an individual has not found employment after that period, she cannot receive a TANF check unless she meets certain specific requirements or has an exemption from VIEW. Exemptions can be granted for pregnancy, having a young child or being aged, but the exemption for disability has tightened up as of July 1, 1999. Now, you can only be exempt from VIEW for disability if you have a physician sign a form every 30 days. Even then, you have to participate in employment activities to the extent possible.

Given all these changes in the last 5 years, there have been numerous collaborative initiatives to assist TANF recipients find employment among DSS, rehabilitation organizations, mental health, and adult literacy. One example is a pilot effort between DRS, DSS, and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) in nine different areas across the state. These initiatives, funded with TANF block grant money and administered by DRS, began March 1, 1999 for an 18 month period.

The result of all this collaborative activity is that rehabilitation and social services organizations have had to work together more closely than ever before. Challenges have included learning about each other's respective systems, understanding each other's goals, and finding ways to accommodate each other when the goals diverge. As a result, DSS is in the process of implementing a state-wide staff education series in disability issues, including identification, impact on function, and accommodation strategies. In the meantime, DRS has been challenged to find ways to provide

quicker assessments and services, given the TANF and VIEW time constraints.

As individuals with disabilities may make up as much as 70% of the remaining TANF caseloads, there is still much work to do. As Virginia and the rest of the country enter another phase of welfare reform, it is expected that working together will become more essential than ever.

For further information regarding some of the current initiatives, please contact either Mary Kaye Johnston (804-662-9968), Christy Cavataio (703-277-3567) or Andrew Stowe (540-332-7475) at DRS.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Rhythms of Hope Event (Dance Recital). The Lee Center, Alexandria, Virginia. Friday, May 12, 2000 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets available at the door or call Marianne Talbot at 703-522-6964.

Update SSA: Ticket to Work, Retention of Benefits and other Work Incentives. Spring Seminar 2000.
Sponsor: NRAA. May 19, 2000.

VATS Conference. May 25-26, 2000. George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. "Assistive Technology, Advocacy & Employment: Preparing the Person, Preparing the Workplace". For more information call 1-800-435-8490.

2000 Not Just Responding to Change, But Leading It: A Celebration. July 24-30, 2000. Washington, D.C.

Sponsor: Natâ€™ Council on Independent Living.

Contact: 1-800-833-2420.

Collaborations 2000. The Holiday Inn, Alexandria, Virginia. August 6-8, 2000. Sponsors: VRA, vaACCES, and VaAPSE.

Disability and Employment 2000: Investing in Effective Strategies for Employing Individuals with Disabilities.

National Employment Conference. The Loews Philadelphia Hotel. Sponsor: RSA and CSA VR. September 11-13, 2000.

Virginia Rehabilitation Association

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<http://www.vra.org/>