



NewsNotes

A Quarterly Publication of the Virginia Rehabilitation Association
2003 Third Quarter, July-Sept. No. 11

Presidential Pondering

It is hard to believe that it is June and the year is half over. VRA has accomplished a lot over the past 6 months and we have a lot to do in the next several months. Let me say as President that I have received wonderful support and assistance from the Board as well as many VRA members. VRA cannot be effective without active Officers and Board members.

First of all, we had a great legislative session and we thank David Williams for his hard work. VRA is being recognized as a leader on many disability issues. Our Legislative Committee, plus other board members have been actively involved at the state and federal levels. Several legislative items are presenting themselves that may have an impact on Virginia's delivery of rehabilitative services. These are moving forward in Congress and we need to stay active in our advocacy to educate our legislators. You can read more about these in David's legislative update.

Second, the Education and Training Committee has established a training calendar. Please visit our web site (www.vra.org) to review the planned training events for the future. VRA sponsored training on Personality Disorders in May, a successful and well attended event. We hope that our members will take advantage of the training events since this is way to grow professionally. Also, please let the committee know what topics you would like to see on the training calendar.

Third, our Membership and Communication Committee has been extremely active. This committee works on many areas that include membership, awards, newsletter, and the VRA web site.

Presidential Pondering (Continued on page 2)

VRA Legislative Update David Williams – VRA Legislative Liaison

Change Agents: WIA and Workforce Development Reform in Virginia

Two powerful forces are currently at work that have the potential of changing the way people with disabilities will be served for the foreseeable future. At the national level, H.R. 1261, or Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization (WIA), incorporates funding for programs and services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Why is this important? Because although the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program today is only able to meet the needs of one in 20 individuals with disabilities, H.R. 1261 not only does not increase funding for VR grants, it likely reduces funding by encouraging the diversion of funds to One-Stop Centers that serve as a clearing house for all workforce related services in the community. Most advocates are rightfully concerned that VR's funding stream will be diminished by its mandated partnership under the One-Stop infrastructure. It's too soon to know for sure since details under the Senate version are not public at this time. You may recall the House passed H.R. 1261 in May on a vote of 220 to 204.

With the ball now in the Senate's court, we need to contact Senators Warner and Allen and share our concerns. Talking points include the following:

- 1) VR funding needs to be increased, not decreased. Funds should not be diverted from VR to support the One-Stop infrastructures.
- 2) VR programs are authorized to provide far

VRA Legislative Update (Continued on page 3)

The next VRA Board Meeting is Sept. 17, 2003. It will be held at Hermitage Enterprises, Richmond.



Presidential Pondering...

(continued from page 1)

This committee has initiated a recruitment campaign. The member who recruits the most new members by the Collaboration Conference will win a very nice prize. The presentation will be made at the Business meeting during Collaboration 2003. The web site has been redesigned and has frequent information updates. It looks GREAT! Many thanks to our Web designer and those of you that contribute to information postings.

We are doing a lot but in order to continue we need more resources. The areas we are focusing our efforts cost both money and time. So, it is important that we raise additional funds to carry out our mission and the planned activities of the Board. Additionally, we need more members, and more involvement from the membership. So, here is your chance to help. Please get involved in some way. Your HELP is needed!!!

Working together we can achieve a lot. VRA is in a unique position at a time when we can grow and become a stronger voice for the needs of both Virginians with disabilities and rehabilitation professionals, the providers of quality services.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you over the next six months.

Howard Green
President

U.S. Department of Transportation's Hotline for Air Travelers with Disabilities is

1-800-778-4838 (Voice)
1-800-455-9880 (TTY)

Call the Toll Free Hotline 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
EST

Stipends for Collaboration

This is to inform the VRA membership that the VRA Board has set aside some funds to assist with the Collaborations conference. If you are thinking about attending the conference and do not have sponsorship from other sources, you may submit a request to VRA. The VRA officers and Board will review the request and make the decisions. Please send your request to Howard Green by September 12th, 2003. You can e-mail the request at jgreen18@aol.com or call (804-379-1286) if you need more information.

Submitted by Howard Green, President

Important Dates for Board Members and General Membership

MARK YOUR CALENDAR---

The next VRA Board Meeting has been scheduled for **Wednesday, September 17th, 2003 at Hermitage Enterprises**. You will get additional information in a few weeks.

VRA will hold its **Annual Business Meeting** on Monday at noon on **September 29th at the 2003 Collaboration Conference**. The meeting room has not yet been determined. Please register for the conference and make plans to attend the business meeting. The various committees will share updates on their activities for 2003 and we will vote on the revised constitution and by-laws.

Submitted by Howard Green, President



What does it mean to be a NRA/VRA Member???

I would like to share with you some very important information. The following statement should appear on your membership card you received when you join NRA/VRA. It is important that we all live up to these standards as we go about our daily activities as a professional working in the rehabilitation field. Also, this would include attending conferences, workshops and other events you may attend as a NRA/VRA member. We need to remember that we are a reflection of VRA and keep in mind that our actions could lead to potential action against VRA.

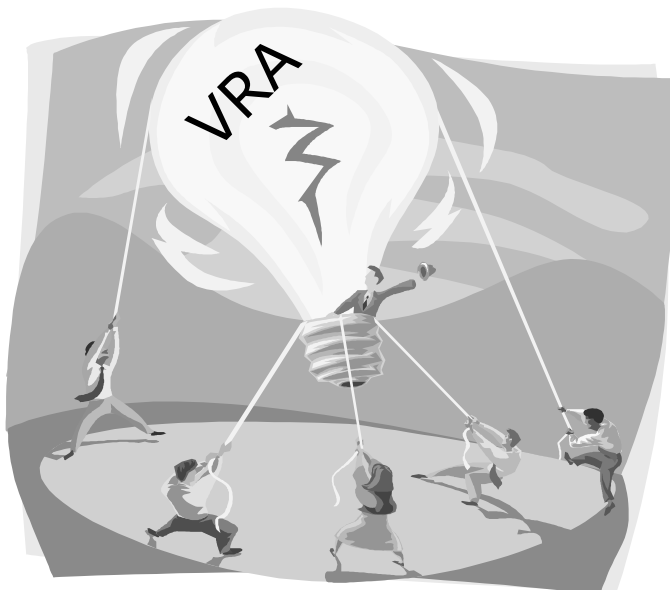
- Aspire to eliminate attitudinal barriers including stereotyping and discrimination toward people with disabilities.
- Foster cultural diversity and treat all people with dignity and respect.
- Act with Integrity in their relationships with colleagues, other organizations, agencies, institutions, referral sources and other professionals.
- Support individuals and public efforts to advance services and quality of life for persons with disabilities through legislation, personal commitment, and improved organizational policies and procedures.
- Behave in a legal and ethical manner with truthfulness.

Be a credit to the profession in the field of rehabilitation by their public demeanor and maintain the honor of their profession.

Submitted by Howard Green, President



Collaborations 2003



VRA Legislative Update (Continued from page 1)

broader services and supports to persons with disabilities than One-Stop Centers, e.g. many people with disabilities would never be served if it weren't for the outreach efforts of Rehabilitation Counselors working with people with disabilities in their homes or institutions where they reside.

3) People with disabilities, particularly those with severe disabilities, require the services of a qualified Rehabilitation Counselor to effectively identify, sequence and manage a complex array of medical, psychological, vocational, rehabilitation engineering, independent living, transportation, benefit planning, educational, and many other services to enter the world of work.

4) Funding for the transition needs of students with disabilities needs to be increased. Youth with disabilities represent the single largest category of those children and youth that do not complete school. Four out of every ten high school dropouts are youth with disabilities. Funding needs to be increased in this particular area so youth with disabilities will not be left behind. Currently Rehabilitation Counselors work with school professionals in local schools to develop

VRA Legislative Update (Continued on page 4)



VRA Legislative Update (Continued from page 3)

and implement transition plans that build on individualized education plans (IEP). We feel strongly that this link needs to be strengthened.

To e-mail **Senator Warner** use the following link:<http://congress.org/congressorg/mail/compose/?opt-out=0&target=NS&state=VA&qstate=VA&id=595&mailid=custom>

To e-mail **Senator Allen**: <http://congress.org/congressorg/mail/compose/?opt-out=0&target=NS&state=VA&qstate=VA&id=10919&mailid=custom>

Workforce Development Reform: In the state arena, Workforce Development Reform under Governor Warner is moving forward. In a press release last December, the Governor announced his initiative to build a world class workforce in Virginia to meet the requirements of the 21st Century. Key to this initiative is the improvement of the state's One-Stop Workforce Development Centers created under the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) whereby all the key public and private resources that employers and employees need for workforce services are brought together under one roof. VRA is on record supporting Governor Warner's initiative, but we want to make sure services for people with disabilities are enhanced, not unintentionally harmed when the final product comes on line. What to do? E-mail Governor Warner and affirm your support for workforce development reform while noting the special needs of people with disabilities and the success of the federal/state VR program in meeting those needs over the 83 year old history of the program. Please share personal experiences that you feel support the efficacy of the VR program and/or use any of the talking points provided earlier for e-mails to Senators Warner and Allen.

Olmstead Taskforce: The draft report for public comment has been completed and can be viewed at: <http://www.olmsteadva.com/>

Election Time: This fall elections will held in Virginia for both the House and Senate seats in General Assembly. If you really want to see change in Virginia – change that you believe in – get involved and support a candidate of your choosing that reflects your views on issues you deem important. To look-up or contact your current Delegate or Senator, click-on: <http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy/constinput.asp>.

Submitted by David Williams

Check out this site today on your computer!!

www.vra.org





Education



A training was offered by Dan Dougherty, LCSW on 05/19/03 in Richmond on the topic of Personality Disorders. This was an excellent training that provided attendees with information and strategies to use in our daily work with consumers. Thank you to everyone who participated.

VRA will be sponsoring several upcoming training opportunities. The next training event will be held in the Roanoke area on September 9, 2003 on the topic of Substance Abuse, and Shannon Peters from GWU will be the presenter. Please refer to the enclosed flyer for additional information and to find out how to register to attend.

Dr. Churchill from the University of Richmond will be VRA's speaker at the upcoming Collaborations Conference in Portsmouth, Virginia on September 29, 2003. Her topic will be Diversity and Rehabilitation - Dealing with Your Background.

VRA is also offering another educational opportunity in the Tidewater area. Terry Gingras, Ph.D. will be speaking, and the training location will be at the main Newport News library, 110 Main Street, Newport News, from 9:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. Additional information on this event can be found on our website at www.vra.org and will also be supplied in the next NewsNotes.

The VRA Education Committee is working hard to develop a one-year rolling training calendar. A tentative schedule has been posted to our website. Please refer to www.vra.org on a regular basis as this information will be updated frequently.

If you have ideas about training topics you would like to see offered at an upcoming training, please contact a VRA Education Committee member. Members include: Marie Worley, Margaret Gillespie, Annette Pope, Mark Fletcher, Sharon Barton and Howard Green. We hope to see you at a training event very soon.

Submitted by Sharon Barton

Interesting Membership News

I wanted to pass along some interesting & good news. Even though we are down in membership, I wanted you to know that compared to other states around the country we are doing ok. However, I would like to set an example and add to our numbers by the end of the year. Even with our small numbers we are very involved in our active divisions. Below are some figures for your review. In total enrollment, **Virginia is 9th in the country.** State membership rankings are as follows:

Ohio-495, GA- 330, Kentucky - 302
Michigan - 267, Arkansas - 237
Illinois - 231, North Carolina - 203
Alabama - 193, Virginia 177

With our divisions we are in great shape.

NARL- VA is 2nd.

Georgia - 43, Virginia 24
Alabama -23, Kentucky - 23
Illinois -22

NRCA - VA is 7th.

Ohio - 108
Michigan - 98
California-South - 88
Kentucky - 74
Illinois - 73
Pennsylvania - 72
Virginia - 69

We may not have a lot of members but I would say we are staying active.

Submitted by Howard Green

Membership to Vote on VRA Constitution and By-law Changes

At the Annual Business Meeting in September, in accordance with NRA restructuring process that began in 2000, we are required to re-write/amend our Constitution and By-laws. Some of the changes are a direct result of the restructuring and in turn changes to NRA's Constitution and By-laws while others were the outcome of recommendations received by the Committee from membership. The Committee also reviewed recommendations made by Evan T. Jones who did an exhaustive review of our Constitution and Bylaws and many of these were incorporated in the proposed draft. The Committee would like to commend Evan for his efforts in this endeavor. The VRA Constitution and By-laws Committee has now completed a review of VRA's Constitution and By-laws. Our recommendations and proposed changes were submitted to the VRA Board for discussion and their approval. The Board agreed to the proposed changes, which now has been forwarded to the NRA Constitution and By-law committee for their review and final approval.

The proposed changes can be accessed on VRA's Web Site. If you have any comments you can contact me at 703-335-5550, Ext. 110 or e-mail me at fletchmc@drs.state.va.us.

The proposed changes will be presented to the Membership at the VRA Annual Business Meeting, September 29th in conjunction with the Collaborations 2003 Conference in Portsmouth for approval and ratification.

Some of the changes include:

- Revamping of our mission statement.*
- Clarification of Board Membership criteria and limitations, for example, contract employees of VRA are not eligible for election to the VRA Board of Directors during their period of compensation.*
- Restructuring of the duties and responsibilities of the Board Officers and Members.*
- Addition of an indemnification clause.*

Submitted by Mark Fletcher

Conserve Mailing Costs by Using the Web for VRA Updates

In an effort to conserve mailing costs (printing and postage), the VRA Board would like to encourage you to access NewsNotes, Education Announcements, Legislative News, and other updates via the VRA website at www.vra.org rather than receiving hard copy mailings. If you are willing to receive communications in this way, please let us know. You can submit a notification at www.vra.org. Provide your email address so that a notice will be sent to you automatically. Your favorable response to receiving communications electronically will be very much appreciated.

Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnston

Interesting Note: Did you know that the U.S. Government spends approximately \$200 billion a year on public assistance for persons with disabilities, yet this year, only \$2.45 billion in federal money was invested in helping these consumers get jobs. Did you also know that the Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA)/U.S. Department of Education just completed a 10-year longitudinal study to assess the performance of the 82-year old state-federal vocational rehabilitation services program? The results of this study clearly demonstrate that eligible individuals with disabilities, or consumers find good jobs, pay taxes, and eventually get off public assistance, resulting in a dollar-for-dollar return on investment. Submitted by David Williams

DRS Seeks Partner Counsel

The Department of Rehabilitative Services works very close with many community partners. With the 80 plus Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) around the State DRS, has maintained an advisory group since 1991 know as the Employment Services Organizations Advisory Committee. In 2002, the activity of the Long Term Employment Support Services (LTESS) Steering

DRS Seeks Partner Counsel (continued on page 7)

VRA Foundation Call for Applications

The Foundation was created by VRA members and their families. The Foundation is self-supporting and grants are based on income from the endowment. Contributions to the endowment are tax deductible and donations of honor and memorial are acknowledged as requested. Grant amounts are not always large; as the endowment grows so does the grants.

Each year the Foundation Board accepts applications from qualified persons. Criteria includes:

No major course of study is required for a child or spouse. If applicant is a VRA member, preference will be given to requests related to the field of rehabilitation.

Applicant must show evidence of acceptance by an instruction of higher learning approved by the Association of Colleges and Schools.

Preference will be given to applicants attending Virginia schools.

Applicant may apply annually and must maintain a "C" average or better in undergraduate programs to be eligible for reapplication.

Applicant must complete the application provided by the Foundation.

The application can be found at the VRA website: www.vra.org. Please complete and send it to: Eleanor Williams, 2516 Arrington Road, Richmond, VA 23294.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS AUGUST 22, 2003.

Submitted by Eleanor Williams

Calling Members for VRA Leadership Nominations

VRA is looking for a few good members....who want to make a difference in VRA. Are you interested in getting more involved in VRA? Do you want to make an impact in the Rehabilitation Community? Looking for a place to apply your leadership skills? Look no further... opportunities for all of the above exist in the following Officer and Board positions. Nominations are now being accepted for the following:

- * President Elect
- * Secretary
- * Board Member (three positions)

If you are interested or know someone who is, please contact:

Bonnie Hawley
703-335-5550 x108 or email to:

hawleybs@drs.state.va.us
Please have nominations for all positions to Bonnie no later than July 30th. Thanks to everyone for their interest.

Submitted by Bonnie Hawley

Nominations Please! 

DRS Seeks Partner Counsel (continued from page 6)

Committee was combined with the ESOAC to achieve administrative efficiencies. Now, known as the ESOAC/LTESS Steering Committee, the ESOAC is an advisory group that is charged with providing the Commissioner of DRS counsel on issues facing DRS, ESOs and consumers. The LTESS Steering Committee is charged with providing the Commissioner of DRS counsel on a mechanism to allocate the LTESS funds to Employment Services Organizations. Committee members serve 3-year terms and are appointed by the DRS Commissioner. To view the Committee membership and minutes of their quarterly meetings, visit the DRS Website at <http://www.vadrs.org/essp/> and click on either the ESOAC or the LTESS Steering Committee.

Submitted by Jack Hayek

VRA Calendar for 2003

July

8 – VRA Ballot to Membership

August

September

12—VRA Golf Tournament

15 - Deadline for October issue of NewsNotes

17- VRA Board Meeting at Hermitage Enterprises

29- **VRA Annual Business Meeting**

28-30 - Collaborations Conference

October

December

Annual report due to NRA

5 - **VRA Annual Retreat**

15 – Deadline for January 2004 NewsNotes

Your calendars, workshops, legislative insights, and professional insights are needed for the Oct 2003 issue by 9/15/03.

Those items sent by way of the US Postage Service, should be sent to Steven Sommer, DRS Henrico Office, 1601 Willow Lawn Drive, Suite 370-A, Richmond, VA. 23230. If at all possible, I would prefer that that the articles be sent by email to Steven Sommer at SommerSA@drs.state.va.us. It is great to have VRCA helping us to get the word out.

Please check out www.vra.org !



Come Join Us!!!!

It is only 3 months away. The 4th Annual VRA Golf Tournament is scheduled for Friday, September 12, 2003, at the Highland Springs Golf Course. Please sign up immediately. You can register on line by going to www.vra.org and register your team. Don't wait - get a foursome together now. Plan to come have fun and support VRA.

We need corporate sponsors so if you have a friend, family member, or associate who would like to advertise their business, please have them contact me at 804-379-1286 or email at jgreen18@aol.com

Thanks and I look to see you and your foursome on the course! Please call Howard Green at 804-379-1286(h) or 804-828-9548(w) and let him know if you can play or help with donations. The golf is \$65.00 per person which includes lunch and lots of prizes.

Look forward to seeing you there!

Submitted by Howard Green



Run An Ad in the VRA NEWNOTES

1/4 PAGE

\$ 15 / issue : \$ 50 / year

1/2 PAGE

\$ 24 / issue : \$ 90 / year

Full Page

\$ 50 / issue : \$ 175 / year

This Ad Space Could Be Yours

Call Steve Sommer at 804-662-7159, and your ad will be seen by 250 leaders in the field of Rehabilitation, starting April 2003. Tell a friend!



VARL News!!—Ethical Considerations for Leaders

The Virginia Association for Rehabilitation Leadership is planning a session for the Collaborations Conference in September. "Ethical Consideration for Leaders" will be presented by Dr. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, Assistant Director of the George Washington University RRCEP. Dr. McGuire-Kuletz has worked extensively on research and published articles on ethics for rehabilitation professionals. Situations specific to cultural differences, dual relationships, and conflict of interest will be explored. We hope you will look for our session and join us at Collaborations.

By the time this article goes to print, the "Leaders Emerge!" workshop VARL sponsored for June 19 will have come and gone. The response to this topic was amazing! The space available filled up in no time and there is a stand by list of over 35 other interested individuals! It is obvious there is a great interest in the topic of leadership and VARL intends to continue to sponsor workshops to meet that need. Future VARL workshops will be offered at a minimal cost to division members, so join us now!!!

Our Board had its first brown bag leadership chat on the topic of traits of self-leaders that came from a short article that we read. Since we want to begin these chats statewide, we thought we should try it among ourselves. What ensued was a lively discussion on things such as roving leadership, whether leaders are extroverts, and how we could impart to our consumers how they can be leaders as well. VARL plans to have these chats around the state but needs people willing to find a place to have others gather for lunch and facilitate the discussion. You don't have to be an expert - just able to keep the discussion flowing. If you are interested, contact Susan Green at 804-674-2326.

We want to hear from you! We want to tell you about the benefits of membership in VARL! If you would like to contact a member about anything related to VARL or ideas you have for our workshops, chats, or other activities, please give us a call. In Northern Virginia contact Marshall Smith at 703-277-3516. In Central Virginia, contact Susan Green at 804-674-2326. In Tidewater, contact Janet Davies at 757-253-4340. In Southwest, contact Margaret Gillispie at 540-776-2740. Help us make our division grow! The more members we have, the more we can accomplish for the benefit and leadership development of all.

Speaking of new members, VARL is excited to have had the following leaders join our division since January 2003: Alice Berman, Jayne Crawford, Marie Gibson, Howard Green, Jim Hall, Bonnie Hawley, Alison Mundy, Mark Peterson, and Michael Tomsey.

Submitted by Susan Green and Janet Davies

The Collaborations 2003

The Collaborations 2003 Committee has been meeting monthly to plan another exciting Conference...

This year's conference "Navigating New Horizons", will be held in Portsmouth, Virginia, on September 28-30 at the Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel and Waterfront Conference Center. Watch your mailbox for conference registration material and information. If you are interested in volunteering as a session monitor or in some other capacity, please complete the Volunteer Information Sheet enclosed in this edition of NewsNotes and return to Naomi Aitken. Elections will be at the conference if you wish to cast your vote at that time. If you have any questions regarding Collaborations, please contact your VRA representatives to Collaborations, Eleanor Williams 804-662-7075 or Bonnie Hawley 703-335-5550 x108.



SUBSTANCE ABUSE

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

This training is targeted for the rehabilitation professional and will be a source of innovative ideas to assist individuals with substance abuse issues so that they can be successful in employment. Topics of discussion will include early identification, barriers to employment, working with referral sources regarding treatment options and how the diagnosis and treatment affects success in employment.

Presented by Shannon Peters
Human Resource Development Specialist
Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program
George Washington University

Sponsored by the
Virginia Rehabilitation Association

Tuesday, September 9, 2003
9:00 - 1:00
Registration - 8:30 - 9:00

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
Regional Office Conference Room
3433 Brambleton Ave., SW
Roanoke, VA 24018

RSVP to make your reservation and to request your accommodation needs to Margaret Gillispie at gillismt@drs.state.va.us or call (540) 776-2740.

VRA Members - FREE Non Members \$15.00 Make checks payable to VRA
CRC Credit Available

Independent Living Notes

For the first time in over ten years, Virginia has received notification that the federal funds for the development of new Centers for Independent Living will be available. In Virginia, 1.3 million dollars in federal funding has been available with 5 existing centers funded with federal funds. The Rehabilitation Services Administration has notified Virginia that an additional \$110,000 will be available through Title VII Part C. Approximately \$26,000 will be used to give the federally funded CILs a cost of living increase. The Statewide Independent Living Council, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, and the Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired have determined that the Harrisonburg and surrounding areas will be targeted to apply for the remainder of the funds (approximately \$84,000). We hope that these new funds will increase funding for the Valley Associates for Independent Living and allow them to serve more consumers.

The Community Action Specialist Project funded by Title VII Part B of the Rehabilitation Act is moving forward and increasing advocacy efforts in the Planning Districts served by the 16 Centers for Independent Living. This project is a collaborative effort on the part of the Statewide Independent Living Council, the two state rehabilitation agencies, and the network of Centers for Independent Living. Local and statewide advocacy efforts include those within the area of transportation, housing, and Medicaid Waiver Reform. For more information about this exciting project, please contact Fritz Knapp at (804) 353-6503 or Eleanor Williams at (804) 662-7075.

Over the past year several of the Centers for Independent Living across the Commonwealth have provided Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO). Each center involved in the project, funded by the Social Security Administration, provides confidential services to persons with disabilities who are receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and/ or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). For more information on this valuable resource, please contact Kim Shick at Access Independence 540-662-4452 , Sam Smith at Junction Center for Independent Living 276-679-5988 , Karen Michalski-Karney at Blue Ridge Independent Living Center (540) 342-1231, or Steve Johnson at Endependence Center, Inc. 757-461-8007.

Last fall the Endependence Center, Inc., (Center for Independent Living located in Tidewater) was the recipient of a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Education and Outreach Grant. As a part of this grant proposal, the Department of Rehabilitative Services agreed to inform all local Rehabilitative Services offices of the Fair Housing Complaint process through local Centers for Independent Living. For more information about this project, you can call Vantoria Clay at Endependence Center, Inc. 757-461-8007.

The Statewide Independent Living Council will be meeting in Richmond on July 8, 2003. The Council, along with the two state rehabilitation agencies, will begin the planning process and development for the next Three Year State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The SPIL is the blueprint for the use of Title VII Part B funds and is a planning document for independent living services in the Commonwealth. Stay posted for information on how you can provide input into this plan. For more information call Lisa Grubb at 804-897-8088.

Submitted by Theresa Preda

One-Stop Centers – A Vocational Rehabilitation Partner

With the unemployment rate at an all-time high, job seekers will be utilizing local One-Stop Centers to access employment and training services. Among this group of job seekers will be people with disabilities, eager and interested in finding services that may help them successfully compete in today's job market. But what if, when they arrived at the One-Stop Center, the entrance wasn't physically accessible? What if the job seeker had a visual impairment and required screen-reader software to use the computer? Moreover, how can we ensure that customers with disabilities receive the services they really need and want?

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) set the stage for addressing such disability and accessibility issues in the One-Stop service delivery system. Based on the belief that people with disabilities have the right to receive core services from One-Stops, and that they are entitled to reasonable accommodations when accessing these services, WIA mandated that all programs and services under the One-Stop system be "universally accessible" - meaning that every individual going through the employment process would have access to the same quality services as everyone else.

As a key partner in the One-Stop system, the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) has played an integral role in assuring that One-Stop services and facilities in Virginia are fully accessible – both programmatically and physically. Under the Virginia's One-Stop Accessibility Project (VOSAP), a collaborative project funded by a Department of Labor Work Incentive Grant, DRS partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University-RRTC, the Department of the Blind and Vision Impaired, and the Department of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to launch a series of disability etiquette training for staff and other community partners serving the 92 One-Stops across the state. These trainings provide staff basic skills for communicating with customers with disabilities; methods for establishing accessible One-Stop sites and programs; and information on disability resources available in the community. To date, One-Stop Centers in the Tidewater, Central, and Southwest Regions have already received disability training and plans for Northern Virginia Centers are underway for September. A 'Bridges to Practice' training series is scheduled for One-Stop staff to train them for working specifically with customers with learning disabilities.

In addition to the training program, VOSAP provided Accessibility Surveys to One-Stops around the state to assist them in targeting their universal accessibility requirements. The grant also provided funding for special positions, 'Disability Resource Specialists,' at One-Stop Centers in six core WIB areas -- Charlottesville, Henrico, Rockingham, Richmond, Greater Peninsula and Hampton Roads. The Resource Specialists serve as technical support for staff on disability matters, as well as assist in referring customers to VR services (if eligible) or connect to other non-VR services within the One-Stops such as resume development or skills training.

By meeting the objectives of this program, it is evident that the relationship between VR and the One-Stops can and will be beneficial to all those involved. It opens opportunities for VR to form solid relationships with One-Stop staff and share resources. In turn, One-Stop partners can utilize the expertise of VR to meet customer needs, and refer individuals to VR who could benefit from their services. For customers with disabilities, it is one step further to "leveling the playing field" in the area of employment because it gives people with disabilities choices in the services they receive, without being automatically referred VR services. The end result is a seamless delivery of service tailored to meet the specific needs of each customer.

Submitted by Aileen Colorado



2003 NRA Annual Conference Update

The 2003 NRA Annual Training Conference is coming to Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee, October 2-5, 2003.

The early bird registration rate for members is \$195 postmarked before August 5, 2003. Opryland hotel rates are \$119 single/double and apply three days prior to and following the conference.

The cutoff date for reservations is Friday, August 29, 2003.

The phone number for making group reservations is: 615-883-2211 and their fax is 615-871-5728.

Make sure you mention the NRA Training Conference when making reservations.

Visit www.opryland.com for more information, including driving directions.

RECENT UPDATES:

A listing of accepted programs is now posted and Exhibitor registration information is now available for download.

<http://www.nationalrehab.org/website/events/index.html>

Online secure registration is now available:

<http://www.nationalrehab.org/secure/events/register-atc.shtml>

For updates and other educational opportunities visit the Training Page of the NRA website at: <http://www.nationalrehab.org/website/events/index.html>

Jon D'Angelo
Director of Operations

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<http://www.nationalrehab.org>

Dr. Richard Luck/Named New WWRC Administrator

Over the last few months, WWRC has undergone a comprehensive administrative study that rendered a solid report on recommendations to place WWRC at the forefront of our state's rehab system. I am naming Dr. Richard S. Luck as the "WWRC Administrator" effective August 1st. Dick brings us an unparalleled package of knowledge, skills, and abilities. He began his career, in the late 60's as a VR counselor in the Alexandria office. In 1971 he was promoted to the Program Supervisor position in the Charlottesville-Albermarle Cooperative School Program, attended UVA to gain his doctorate, and subsequently became the Director of the VCU Regional Counselor Training Program. After leaving the VCU Fishersville Campus, he was promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling and moved to the Richmond Campus of VCU/MCV where he broadened his career to include public administration and leadership. He co-edited a textbook on Rehabilitation Administration and Supervision and served as Director of the Ph.D. program in Public Administration. Additionally, he is a clinical Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine serving as a consultant and rehabilitation psychologist in traumatic brain and spinal cord injury at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veteran Administration Medical Center in Richmond. Recently, Dick took an early retirement from his academic position as Vice Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling and is looking for a new challenge. WWRC, the site of where much of his early career was spent is a unique place for him to continue his rehabilitation career. Much of his responsibility will be to develop and initiate new partnerships with organizations such as the VA, MCV, the newly formed Rehabilitation Institute of Virginia (RIVA) and other potential community partners.

I hope you will welcome him "home" and I know you will enjoy working with him!

Jim Rothrock, Commissioner of the VA.
Department of Rehabilitative Services