The VRA Officers and Board members from 1997 and 1998 met at the Confederate Hills Recreation Center in Henrico County, Virginia to plan for the year. Many things were openly discussed and some interesting twists and turns were taken in an attempt to get more involvement from members, who may find the thought of some leadership positions daunting. Here are some of the highlights from the day:

A. John Luckey was elected by the Board to fill a vacant Board position. He will be serving for 1 year.
B. The slate of committee chairpersons was approved (see page 8).
C. The budget is in very good shape, with VRA receiving a profit of approximately $1,700.00 from last year's Collaborations workshop.
D. The audit for the 1995 and 1996 books was completed, with no problems noted.
E. The Duties and Responsibilities Manual was reviewed in detail and many sections were revised. The most notable change was for the President, President-elect and Past-President.

- It was agreed that the Past-President would be an integral part of the Workshop planning committee, in a co-chairmen role. This will eliminate the sole responsibility of the Workshop for the President-elect.
- It was agreed that the Past-President and President-elect would provide more assistance to the President by splitting the committees among the three of them, and adding the responsibility of being a support and contact for those committee chairpersons to whom they are assigned.
- This would provide more support to the chairpersons, while spreading the labor to more individuals. The division of committees is as follows:
  - President: Audit/Budget, Legislative, Membership, NewsNotes and Resolutions.
  - President-Elect: Program co-chair, Community Alliance, Education, Historian, and Awards.
  - Past-President: Program co-chair, By-laws, Nominations, Public Information, Ways & Means.

F. Meeting dates for the year were set. Members are welcome. Planned dates are: March 6, June 12 and Sept. 18. The annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the workshop. The Board and Officers retreat tentative date is January 8 and 9, 1999. All Board meetings are expected to be from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the Richmond area to accommodate those traveling. Please contact Shirley Lyons for exact locations.
FROM OUTGOING PRESIDENT LINDA WHEATLEY

As outgoing President of VARS, I had a wonderful year with the help of all the VARS members. I also am very honored to have received the Don T. Johnston, Presidents Award at the Conference. VARS had a productive year and brought in one new member Glenna Cason from WWRC. Every year we are available to help VRA with the conference wherever we are needed, and this year it was to help w/exhibits. Working with the exhibitors was a great learning experience, and what fellowship we had in the exhibit hall as we all had our displays for raffles and materials for our individual groups. We are looking forward to 1998 with our new name and new leadership.«

FROM INCOMING PRESIDENT BERNICE CHATTIN

NEW NAME FOR SUPPORT STAFF DIVISION

At the 1998 annual meeting of the National Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries (NARS), the membership accepted a recommendation to change the Division’s name. As of January 1, 1998, the Division became the National Association of Rehabilitation Support Staff (NARSS).

The Virginia Chapter supported this change and applauded the action of the National Division. It is now possible for all support staff to enjoy the membership and privileges of the Chapter.

Any new support staff member who joins NRA/VRA in 1998 may qualify for a free membership in VARS the first year. Information regarding membership may be obtained by contacting any current member or the President, Bernice Chattin at 804.273.0939 or BerChat@aol.com.«

1998 NEW OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF VARS:

PRESIDENT: Bernice Chattin
PRESIDENT-ELECT: Gloria O’Neal
PAST PRESIDENT: Linda Wheatley
SECRETARY: Betty Hale
TREASURER: Diane Hinch

BOARD MEMBERS:
Jayne Crawford
Phillippa Holley
Glenna Cason
Janet Simmons

VIRGINIA VIEW
VITAL INFORMATION FOR EDUCATION AND WORK
Virginia’s Career Information Delivery System

World Wide Web Address: http://www.nrvcom.com/business/vaview/
SUCCESS STORIES:

GEORGE C. BELL

BELLS SADDLERY AND WESTERN WEAR is a lively business and is known throughout North America.

George Bell "rode" into the Culpeper DRS office in his wheelchair on the afternoon of April 29, 1991. He had formerly worked as a deputy for the Fairfax County Sheriff’s Department, herded horses, performed horse dentistry and was a champion rodeo steer roper and wrestler. He had been referred to DRS by the University Hospital Rehabilitation Center, Elizabethown, Pennsylvania after experiencing a spinal cord injury when he was involved in an auto accident in January 1991. George knew his life had suddenly been turned around and stated, "it is not going to keep me down. I want to make saddles."

He has been an active participant through the entire rehabilitation process. He began researching training possibilities, business prospects, developing an amazing network, spent endless hours in contacting persons and resources in striving to meet his goal. Utilization was made of the SBA (SCORE), WWRC, DRS, SEE, University Hospital Rehabilitation Center, Rehabilitation Engineering, Training, Assistive Technology, SSA-PASS, Cowboy Association, local civic organizations, numerous individuals throughout the United States, and the support and encouragement of his wife, Tony and other family members.

When George met obstacles with Fauquier County Government related to a business at his home-site, he was persistent in contending, "you cannot deny my right to work and make a living for myself and my family." He knew persistence would pay off and it did.

George faced many discouragements. Many returns to the hospital were required due to recurring kidney infections. This problem has been reduced through the use of a stand-up wheelchair which also improved circulation and muscle strength. When it came to adapting or modifying machinery to perform his work, George was eager to utilize rehabilitative engineering as well as being creative himself with design and modifications.

George is functioning in many advisory capacities. He has also been willing to meet with various persons with disabilities to enable them to be accepting of the reality of disability and develop the willingness to move on with their life to be able to work. He has no place in his thinking for the victim role or a "poor me" concept.

He has been able to design and build special types of saddles for persons with disabilities and is very involved with a local therapeutic riding program. He has plans to expand his business by developing a mobile tack shop to do repairs and make sales at the horseracing tracks. He currently has approximately a four month backlog of orders for new saddles.

George Bell has taught me much and I am a better person because he "rode into my office." He can best be described by the words of Edward Hale, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can."«

(Continued from page 2)

As you go about your day to day activities, remember that you are a member of a professional association. Just as it is important to discuss disability issues with the public to educate them, it is important to discuss professional issues with your colleagues.

Make VRA a part of that discussion and encourage membership......the more members we have, the stronger and more effective we can be.

Thanks to you all for doing your "part."

SHIRLEY «

The Virginia Rehabilitation Society's cookbook entitled Virginia Regional Appetites includes recipes from around the state, offered by 58 contributors from all over Virginia and more than 300 pages of delicious, mouth-watering recipes.

Copies are available for $15.00 plus shipping and handling.

Write Mary Kaye Johnston of the Ways and Means Committee at 4612 Kingsrow Drive, Glen Allen, Virginia, 23060 or call (804) 965-0514.

mkyei1@erols.com

from the nomination letter of George C. Bell for the DRS Northern Region Rehabilitation of the Year Award
WARM FUZZIES
TERESA WINGOLD, VRA AWARDS CHAIRPERSON

You know how good it feels when you are recognized for doing something good or exceptional.

Now is the time to start thinking about that special business (Hammond), doctor (Hoover), or professional (Dawson) you want to nominate for an award. Do you know a leader in removal of barriers (Stillfried), or excellence in rehabilitation (Reedy), or a fellow VRA member who has demonstrated excellence in rehabilitation (Anderson)?...and, of course a person with a disability you would like to honor (Distinguished Achievement)?

In the next NewsNotes, you will find a complete description of each of these VRA awards and the nomination form. However, if you want to make a nomination today, contact Teresa Wingold, VRA Awards Chairperson at 804.662.7128 (w), 804.672.647 (h), or twingold@juno.com. I will be glad to send you the form.

This is your opportunity to share and show not only VRA members, but the collaboration associations, a person with excellence, leadership, or perseverance with whom you have the pleasure of knowing. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ask your colleagues to join you in VRA MEMBERSHIP.
It gives us a greater voice

GOING ONCE, TWICE....SHHHH!

SILENT AUCTION SCHEDULED FOR THE FALL VRA COLLABORATIONS WORKSHOP

A special thanks goes to all who donated items and products to our Silent Auction last year. VRA will hold another silent auction at the Collaborations Workshop to be held later this year.

In addition to products, we would like to add services to our list of items to be auctioned off. Do you have a talent, service, hobby, skill, weekend escape, etc., that might be marketable? Please consider donating to the Silent Auction. All proceeds go to VRA for general operating and special projects budgets.
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The National Rehabilitation Association 1998 Government Affairs Workshop was held in Washington, D.C. the last week of February. The following issue statements were approved by the N.R.A. Governmental Affairs Committee. If you would like a copy of the complete position paper please contact either Maureen McGuire-Kuletz or Benly Burnett of the VRA Legislative Committee.

If you have an opportunity to speak to your Congressman or Senator, please let them know that you support the following positions. Let your elected representative know your feelings on legislation affecting vocational rehabilitation services. If you are interested in becoming more involved VRA's Legislative Committee please call Maureen McGuire-Kuletz at 703.914.7022.

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE REHABILITATION ACT:

The National Rehabilitation Association strongly supports the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The NRA believes that to fully serve individuals with disabilities, the Rehabilitation Act MUST be reauthorized for a minimum of five years to allow full implementation of the changes in the Act.

The N.R.A. strongly supports the dedicated funding stream which provides comprehensive services to persons with disabilities. The NRA vigorously urges the President of the United States, the Congress of the United States and all State Legislatures to provide all necessary funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

SOCIAL SECURITY WORK INCENTIVE IMPROVEMENTS:

The National Rehabilitation Association supports the concept of rehabilitation and the efforts to return to work of individuals receiving Social Security disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits.

The NRA believes that in order to foster successful transition from dependence on benefits to independence in a working environment there are several factors which need to be addressed by the Social Security Administration. These include: adequate health insurance coverage, appropriate safeguards for those who are not successful in their attempts to transition off Social Security benefits beyond a trial work period, payment of partial or total Social Security benefits during a set transition period to provide an incentive and to help ease the transition to a working environment and a presumptive initial eligibility to Social Security disability benefits.

REHABILITATION ACT WAIVERS

The NRA strongly opposes the granting of any waivers by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, of the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act or its subsequent amendments.

WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT

(Continued on page 6)
(Continued from page 5)

cently revised the draft guidelines for vocational rehabilitation. Anyone interested in a copy or additional information should contact the VWC, 1000 DMV Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23220.

LEGISLATION HB428
INFORMATION RESOURCES ON-LINE:

The summary of HB428, "Community Services Boards; Comprehensive State Plan" is available online at:

http://legis.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp5047ses=981&type=bill&val=hb428

The full text is at:

http://legis.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp5047ses=981+full+HB42

To search for any bill:

http://legis.state.va.us/981/bill.htm

The top-level page for Information from the General Assembly's Legislative Information Service is at:

http://legis.state.va.us/lis.htm

(Continued from page 5)

The National Rehabilitation Association urges Congress to renew and make permanent the WOTC program.

COMMUNITY ATTENDANT SERVICES

The NRA supports legislation (e.g. HR 2020) which would move federal health care funding (i.e. Medicaid) toward more consumer choice in obtaining personal assistance services.

LEMON LAW

BETH GILSON

The Virginia Assistive Technology Device Warranties Act was approved by the 1998 General Assembly during the last week of February and is awaiting Governor Gilmore's signature. This consumer sponsored legislation requires a minimum one year warranty on devices purchased by people with disabilities which assist with mobility, hearing, and communication. It provides for either a replacement or refund when a device with a nonconformity has been subject to repair three or more times by the manufacturer, or when the assistive device has been out of service, with no comparable loaner available, for a cumulative total of at least thirty days. The passage of what is commonly referred to as the assistive technology lemon law was possible by the grass roots effort of the disability community, allies of the community, and advocates. The Virginia Assistive Technology System is pleased to have been a part of this important systems change initiative which will affect the lives of a number of customers of DRS. «
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1998 PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, and the Statewide Independent Living Council will hold six public hearings throughout the state to provide the public with opportunity to comment on vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, and independent living services. Public comments shall be considered in the Department of Rehabilitative Services' policy formation, and in the development of the FY 1999 State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment and the FY 1999-2002 State Plan for Independent Living. DRS also will be looking for public comment on accreditation standards for community-based service organizations. Interpreter services shall be available. Other accommodations may be requested through Gloria O'Neal.

If members of the public are unable to attend a public hearing, comments may be received by (1) notifying Gloria O'Neal by March 1, 1998 that you wish to be contacted by telephone during the public hearing to provide a comment or (2) submitting a comment to Gloria O'Neal in writing by telephone, fax or Internet mail by April 1, 1998.

Contact Information:

Gloria O'Neal, Department of Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA 23229  
804.662.7611 or 1.800.552.5019, ext. 7611 (toll free within the state)  
TTY 1.800.464.9950, ext. 7611  
FAX 804.662.7696  
email: onealg@drsmail.state.va.us

THE SIXTH ANNUAL INDEPENDENT LIVING CONFERENCE

May 4th & 5th,  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Staff from all 10 CILs and 7 Satellite CILs are expected to attend.  
The Focus will be on the use of enabling legislation, such as the ADA,  
The Rehabilitation Act & IDEA, to change the "status quo" and empower individuals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES  
PLEASE CALL Theresa Preda at 804.662.7078 or 1.800.552.5019

8TH ANNUAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE  
"HAVING FUN AND MAKING CHOICES: A CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION"

for additional information, call Jeanne Roberts at 804.828.1851 or TTY 804.828.2494
1998 VRA COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

**ANNUAL PROGRAM**
1. To co-sponsor the annual Collaborations Training, to be held November 12-14, 1998 at the Sheraton in Fredericksburg, Virginia (date to be announced).

**AWARDS**
1. To generate interest in the awards by submitting an article to the NewsNotes and Division newsletters prior to the call for nominations. 2. To advertise and recruit for nominations from VRA members as well as the two other Collaborations associations.

**COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**
1. Identify a list of Community Advocacy groups and organizations. 2. Contact representatives from each of those groups to a) establish a relationship and b) educate them about VRA. 3. Identify 3 committee members.

**CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS**
1. To review and update VRA’s Constitution and By-Laws, ensuring they are in compliance with the NRA Constitution and By-Laws.

**EDUCATION**
1. To collaboratively co-sponsor a major educational event. 2. To survey VRA Divisions, other associations and other agencies to determine training needs, as well as possible collaborative efforts.

**HISTORIAN**
1. To find a permanent home for VRA records. 2. Identify a person who would be willing to help this year and chair this committee next year.

**INVESTIGATIVE**
1. To establish a more formal legislative network in Virginia. 2. To investigate and make recommendations regarding the hiring of a legislative aide for 1999. 3. Hold a legislative workshop prior to the spring session of the Virginia General Assembly.

**MEMBERSHIP**
1. To retain members we have. 2. To gain more members. 3. To have a committee, possibly utilizing Division membership chairs, to contact members and potential members about joining and renewing their memberships.

**NEWSNOTES**
1. To publish a newsletter at least one time per quarter with the first issue in March, 1998. 2. To gather articles, news and information from a variety of sources to enhance the value of the newsletter for our members. 3. To identify a person or group of persons willing to assist with selection and gathering of information. 4. To explore and develop an interactive VRA Web page on the Internet, with assistance from the membership.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**
1. Try to publish a news release to appropriate local media. 2. Access Internet media connections. 3. To establish relationships and work with the DRS marketing Specialists in various regions.

**WAYS AND MEANS**
1. To look at the needs of the association and develop a ways & means revenue objective to meet those needs.«
STATE PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is in the process of formulating a new 3 Year State Plan for Independent Living, required by the Federal Government.

The SILC will conduct public hearings in tandem with VRA public hearings on the plan, during the months of March and April. Consumer and public input/guidance is important in establishing the focus of independent living activities for Virginia, over the next 3 years, into THE 21ST CENTURY.

ADDRESS UPDATES

Please help us update our mailing lists. If you know current addresses for the following individuals, please send them to the address listed below.

- John E. Bryant
- L.T. Reid
- Matthew D. Luther
- Davis Martin
- George E. Meeks
- Raymond Adams
- Jan Hensel-Smith
- Raymond Adams
- Phillip A. Black
- Marcia A. Hoexter
- Tiffany Snidow

VRA UPDATES c/o NewsNotes
14114 Deer Creek Road
Ashland, Virginia 23005

email to: nowakowf@earthlink.net

MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

The 10 Centers for Independent Living and the 7 CIL Satellites have been working with local DRS Field offices to establish Memorandums of Understanding for the use of I&E Funds. The purpose of this is to create good working relationships between local offices and CILs which in turn can assist consumers with community integration.
WRITING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Depending on timing and the particular issue, telephone calls, mailgrams, postcards, and petitions are all appropriate methods of communicating with legislators. But in general, the most effective way to get your legislator’s attention, convince him/her of your concern and get his/her vote is through timely, thoughtful, well-written letters.

You don’t need to be an expert on an issue either. Thoughtfully expressing your views as a concerned citizen and constituent can have and impact. Even a handful of letters can win the support of a senator or representative waver ing on crucial legislation.

A FEW TIPS ON WRITING EFFECTIVE LETTERS:

• The following forms should be used for communicating with officials:

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

UNITED STATES SENATORS

The Honorable (name)
United States Senator
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

UNITED STATES CONGRESSMEN

The Honorable (name)
House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressperson (last name):

CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

The Honorable (name)
Chairman, The (committee name) Committee
Senate (or House) Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 (Senate) or 20515 (House)

Dear Congressperson (last name):

• If you’re not sure who your Senator or Representative is, call the League of Women Voters toll free at 1.800.692.7281 or call your County Bureau of Elections. Your voter registration card will tell you your “ward” number and “district” number.

MAKE SURE YOUR LETTER COUNTS:

• Write about one issue only. If you’re writing about a specific bill, try to give the bill number or the name the bill is known by.
• Write on your own personal stationary, unless you’ve been asked to write a letter as the spokesperson for your organization. If you are the spokesperson, write on the organization’s letterhead and try to give an approximate number of people in the organization.
• Make your letter brief and easy to read. It should almost never be more than two pages. One page is best. Stick to the main points.
• Tell your position on the issue and why you hold that position. Your reasons are very important.
• Share your personal experiences. Tell how the bill or the action will affect you, your relatives, friends and neighbors.
• Ask for the legislator’s position on the issue in addition to urging specific action. Ask for a commitment.
• Be as positive as you can. If you disagree, make constructive suggestions on how the bill or problem can be improved or eliminated.
• Write follow-up letters if necessary: to confirm the legislator’s position, to ask questions if his/her letter was unclear, etc.
• Always write thank you letters when your legislator has taken the right position or done something you appreciate.

Provided to HandiNet-VA-L for informational purposes by Warren King, should not be construed to be taken as advice or legal statement or even my opinion. Reply to HandiNet-VA-L@working.livenet.net.
HOW CAN I BE A LOBBYIST?

You don’t need to have lots of money or a political action committee behind to to be an effective lobbyist. You have other things that your legislator needs. Things like:

- Information
- Praise and constructive criticism
- A sense of community sentiment
- Identification of special community groups
- Votes

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOBBY?

All of us lobby every day when we try to influence other people’s decisions. Some people are paid to try and influence legislative decisions. But there are lots of others who at one time or another have a need to lobby for or against a bill for themselves or for the groups they represent.

Just as not all of those who lobby are paid, so not all lobbying happens in the Offices of Hearing Rooms on Capitol Hill. It happens in local offices, in peoples’ living rooms, through phone calls, letters, and telegrams, at social events and at community meetings.

WHAT ARE THE LOBBYING GROUND RULES?

Paid lobbyists and those who spend money on lobbying must follow specific legal requirements. The rest of us need to use our knowledge and concern about “our” issues, our common sense and our courtesy. Some basic rules to follow are:

- Never give bad information. If you lose your credibility, you lose your power. If someone asks a question and you don’t know the answer, tell them you’ll find out and get back to them by a specific time. (This goes hand in hand with “Don’t make promises you can’t keep.”)
- Plan in advance and be concise. Legislators are very busy people. Whenever possible, schedule meetings in advance and be on time. Plan in advance to: Introduce yourself, describe the group (if any) that you’re representing and tell how many members there are, explain very clearly what your issue is and why think she/he should support you, tell exactly what you want her/him to do. Arrange for a follow-up with the legislator or with a specific staff member. Leave your name, address, phone number and any written information that you have on the issue.
- Do your homework. Remember that legislators review thousands of bills each session, you are more than likely more of an expert on the issue than she/he is. Make sure you’ve thought about arguments against your position and are prepared to respond to them. Learn more about the legislator (his other profession, business interests, legislative and community committees, voting record on related issues, etc.).
- Develop working relationships with staff members including secretaries. Don’t make the mistake of ignoring people who can be very helpful.
- Be positive. Confrontations aren’t usually useful, except as a last resort. It’s best to find some point of agreement. If she/he won’t support your position entirely, would she/he be willing to go part of the way? Think through in advance how far you and your group might be willing to compromise and be prepared to give a little.
- Get supportive legislators to talk to other legislators for you.
- Don’t always call just when you need something. As often as possible, call just to say hello or say thanks.
- If you’re doing media work or community meetings, offer to include supportive legislators.
- Develop both quantity and quality of contacts. Some legislators value 100 postcards on the issue. Others prefer one or two well written letters. The key is to generate both.
- Get involved in the political process. As an individual (or if possible, as a group) work for the re-election of your legislative supporters.
- If you feel that your interests are underrepresented, get involved in party policy committees and even consider running for office yourself.

(prepared by Terry Roth)
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Virginia Rehabilitation Association