Presidential Pondering by Jennifer McDonough

Happy autumn! I hope you are all enjoying the crisp air of October! We have had a busy fall and it is only October. First I would like to thank Howard Green and everyone who helped to make the 2011 VRA Benjy Burnett Memorial Golf Tournament a success. This event is a great fundraiser for the organization but takes a great deal of work. So we will begin looking for help extra early this year – NOW! If you would like to help with gathering teams, prizes, or hole sponsors, contact Howard Green at greenh@nod.org.

We began October with the 2011 Collaborations Conference - what a wonderful way to start the month. This year we were back at the beach and it felt great to have the ocean at our doorstep. It was wonderful seeing colleagues from across the Commonwealth and sharing stories from the past year. And what a great conference! We had everything from outstanding sessions to a cornhole tournament. I think everyone I spoke with had a great time. If you were unable to make the conference – we missed you! I hope to see you there next year.

I want to personally thank the Collaborations Committee for all they did to make sure everyone’s needs were met, especially Liz Smith and Ned Campbell. This conference is a tremendous amount of work and we all appreciate your hard work. In addition, congratulations to our award winners: Jack Quigley, Alissa Molinelli, Whitney Ham, Kalyn Hutson, Dominique (Nikki) Myers-Griffin, and myself! It is truly an honor to see our colleagues accept these awards for all of the efforts they put forth for individuals with disabilities.

And even better to see our employees with disabilities accept awards for their achievement! That is what it is all about!

While at the conference, we held our Annual Business meeting. We were fortunate to have Tom Wilson, NRA President, join us and he was able to share information about the state of NRA. In addition, Liz Smith shared the results of the 2011 election, VARL and VRCEA announced their award winners – Angela Edmonds and Sherrina Sewell, and Andrew Stowe provided us with an overview of VRA’s activities over the past year.

Our last meeting for 2011 will be on December 9. I hope you will consider joining us!

--Submitted by Jennifer McDonough, VRA President
VRA News

VRA Election Results Are In!

The results of the VRA Election were announced at the VRA Annual Meeting on October 3, 2011. The following are your new officers and board members:

President-Elect – Robert Froehlich
Secretary – Adair Jensen-Smith
Board Members for 2012-2014 – David Gitlin & Antoinette Smith

At the meeting, Jean Steveson and Kelly Hickok were nominated and unanimously voted in to replace two current vacancies on the Board.

Congratulations to all!

When Rob Froehlich assumes his new role as President-Elect in January, 2012, this will create a vacancy on the Board that may be filled by vote of the Board. If you have any interest in serving on the Board, please contact Jennifer McDonough, VRA President.

--Submitted by Liz Smith

2011 Collaborations Conference Update

The 2011 Collaborations Conference “Catch the Wave—The Riding Tide of Opportunity” was held on October 2-4 in Virginia Beach. With support from VRA, VA-APSE, and vaACCSES, the conference was a huge success with about 250 individuals participating. This was the 15th anniversary of the Conference—the only conference in Virginia focusing on the employment of individuals with disabilities! Liz Smith and Ned Campbell served as this year’s VRA representatives to the Collaborations Steering Committee, which was responsible for the planning of the event.

The conference began on Sunday afternoon with three training sessions, followed by the Exhibitors Reception and First Annual Corn Hole Tournament held that evening. Bill Burnside and Roxie Wilkerson provided musical entertainment for the reception, which also served as a fund raiser for the VRA Foundation.

On Monday, concurrent training sessions filled the morning and afternoon with a keynote address in the morning by Michael Gillette on Social Media and Ethics. VRCEA sponsored the training session on “Advanced Counseling: Using Motivational Techniques” presented by Rob Froehlich. VARL sponsored Amy Armstrong’s training session on “Holding Up the Mirror”—Leading with Clarity” and VRA sponsored Becky Bowers-Lanier’s session on “Honing Your Advocacy Skills: Essential for Effective Leadership”.

The VRA Annual Business Meeting was held over lunch with remarks from NRA President Tom Wilson, the announcement of the officer and board election results, and a slideshow presented by Andrew Stowe on the 2011 VRA activities. In addition, VARL presented its Emerging Leader Award to Angela Edmonds and VRCEA presented its two Spirit Awards to Sandy Gerhardt and Sherrina Sewell.
Committee Chair again this year. The evening ended with another “roaring” great time in the Conference Hospitality Suite. Many thanks to Lori Schultz for taking charge of the set up for this year’s Hospitality Suite.

Tuesday started with another set of excellent training sessions, followed by the closing General Session speaker, Nancy Thaler, Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Thaler’s speech was the segway to Virginia’s first Employment First Summit held Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who made this year’s Conference such a huge success. Conference photos can be viewed at: http://picasaweb.google.com/vraorg/2010CollaborationsConference

--Submitted by Liz Smith

VRA Award Results

2011 VIRGINIA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION (VRA) AWARDS
PRESENTED AT THE COLLABORATIONS CONFERENCE AWARDS DINNER
OCTOBER 3, 2011

The Corbett Reedy Award recognizes an individual who has creatively pursued excellence in contributions to the rehabilitation program, projects, issues, publications or a significant rehabilitation cause. This year’s award is presented to **Jack Quigley, Director of Virginia’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant at the Department of Medical Assistance Services**. For almost a decade, Jack has demonstrated a passion to promote the infrastructure necessary to effectively support individuals with disabilities who choose to go to work, especially those who receive Social Security disability benefits. He has insured that Medicaid Works is a robust program in Virginia and helped create the Work Incentive Specialist Advocate program. He has been a tireless advocate for the SSA Work Incentive Training Program and integrating the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant activities into other systems change endeavors, as well as promoting outreach to employers as a strategy to ensure that employment opportunities are available for Virginians with disabilities. One supporter wrote, “He has been such a champion in changing our State’s disability services programming to support the employment of Virginians with disabilities…..that is what Corbett Reedy did!”

The A. R. Dawson Humanitarian Award recognizes a professional person having direct contact with persons with disabilities in the rehabilitation process, and whose efforts have had a significant impact on their lives. This year, two awards are being presented to **Alissa Molinelli and Whitney Ham, rehabilitation professionals with Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center**. Over the last two years, Alissa has served as an employment specialist serving youth with autism spectrum disorder through Project SEARCH. In the last year, Whitney and Alissa joined together to develop a team approach to support 14 youth from Henrico County Public Schools in achieving competitive employment. Together they ignored the unemployment statistics for persons with ASD and diligently worked with each young individual as they moved through multiple internship experiences to determine their personal work preference interests, and desires. In addition to creating outstanding student learning
opportunities, Alissa and Whitney have used their team approach to reach beyond their hospital relationships to create other partnerships within the community.

The **VRA Distinguished Achievement Award** recognizes a person with a disability who has demonstrated imagination, perseverance, resolve, and an indomitable spirit in working to overcome barriers in their lives resulting in a better quality of life for themselves and others. This year’s award is presented to two individuals who have done exactly that.

Dominique (Nikki) Meyers-Griffin is a full-time Certified Nurse’s Aide employed at Our Lady of Peace Nursing and Retirement facility in the Charlottesville area. Nikki’s energy, enthusiasm, persistence, and optimistic outlook as she continued to encounter challenges, impressed everyone. Using her own resources, as well as asking family members, friends, and the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services enabled Nikki to reach her goals. She has been undaunted by various barriers and continued to reach for her objective: a well paying job, her own apartment, and managing her own budget.

Kalyn Hutson is described as a young woman with a bubbling personality and enthusiasm that is palpable. Kalyn has not let her disability hold her back as she participated in Project SEARCH at St. Mary’s Hospital for the entire 2010-2011 school year. At the end of her three 10 week internships, two of her internship supervisors started “fighting” to have Kalyn for their own departments. The Main Operating Room at Bon Secours St. Mary’s won out and hired her as a PRN Surgical Care Technician. Kalyn’s success has not been easy, as she has struggled with days of frustration and tears. But, she did not let anything hold her back and gathered her strength, remembered her goal, and pushed forward. Her positive attitude has been and still is infectious.
The R.N. Anderson Award for Leadership is presented to Jennifer McDonough, M.S., C.R.C., Associate Director of Training, Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center due to the positive impact of her leadership on the vocational rehabilitation community, her participation in leadership activities, and her ability to promote leadership qualities in others. Jennifer is the current President of the VRA and served on the Steering Committee for the 2010 Collaborations Conference. She has provided leadership in the development, implementation, and sustainability of innovative projects and best practices research in the field of disability services. Jennifer is recognized for her leadership with the Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Spectrum Disorders Career Links Grant. In addition, with Jennifer’s leadership as the Project SEARCH Statewide Coordinator, the Commonwealth Virginia has embraced an award winning program, resulting in more young adults with disabilities transitioning from school to work with high quality jobs and wages. Jennifer’s skills in creating excitement and empowering others to think “outside the box” have resulted in the rapid spread of this innovative program throughout the Commonwealth. Jennifer has enhanced the knowledge and skills of hundreds of VR professionals through her exceptional presentations, publications, as well as web course development and instruction.

The Don T. Johnston Presidential Award recipient is chosen by the VRA President and is given to an individual who embodies the spirit of the VRA. The recipient of this year’s award is Elizabeth (Liz) Smith, Policy and Planning Director of the Department of Rehabilitative Services. Liz has served as President and Past-President of VRA, Chair of the VRA Ways & Means Committee, Benjy Burnett Memorial Golf Tournament Committee Member (also a golfer), two time Chair of the Collaborations Conference Speakers Committee, and this year’s Chair of the Collaborations Conference Steering Committee. Oh yeah, let’s not forget her fantastic VRA fund raising yard sales in 2009 in the scorching heat along with her “we can do it” attitude. Liz’s leadership, commitment and mentorship to VRA, its officers, board, and members is so very worthy of this recognition, and embodies the spirit of VRA.

At the VRA Annual Meeting, awards were given out by the Virginia Rehabilitation Leadership Association and the Virginia Counselors and Educators Association. Angela Edmonds, vocational rehabilitation counselor at the Department of Rehabilitation Services’ Farmville Office, received the VARL Emerging Leaders Award. Two VRCEA Spirit Awards were presented to Sandy Gerhardt, vocational rehabilitation counselor at the DRS Portsmouth Office, and Sherrina Sewell, vocational rehabilitation counselor at the DRS Henrico Office.

--Submitted by Eleanor Williams
Benjy Burnett Annual Golf Tournament Update

The 12th Annual VRA Benjy Burnett Golf Tournament was held at Hunting Hawk Golf Course on Tuesday, September 13th, 2011. It was a beautiful day and everyone had a great time. We had 68 golfers (17 teams) and 13 hole sponsors. Several individuals contributed gifts which were given as prizes.

I want to thank my assistant coordinator (Susan Green) for all her work in helping to organize the event and Mary Kaye Johnston who has not missed volunteering for the tournament since it first started and contributes financially. In addition many thanks go to Eleanor Williams, Kristina Blough, and Rhonda Jeter for their help the day of the tournament and donation of goods. Also, thanks to Liz Smith for her work on securing prizes and getting teams and volunteers. Others who contributed through cash donations or supplies for the tournament include Al Dickerson, Bill Brownfield, Jennifer McDonough, Bill Burnside and Lance Elwood. These individuals were most helpful to make the 2011 golf tournament a success. I do not have the final bill from Hunting Hawk but I expect to clear between $2,800 and $3,000.00.

For 2012, I am recommending that the Board create three committees to work with me (the Coordinator) on the tournament with the goal to have this committee structure take over the tournament in 2013. Any VRA members interested in volunteering for a role coordinating the tournament, recruiting players and teams, or securing food, prizes, or hole sponsors are encouraged to contact Howard Green at greenh@nod.org. It is never too early to volunteer, as planning for the 2012 tournament will begin soon.

Additional photos from the event can be found at https://picasaweb.google.com/vraorg/2011VRA12thAnnualBenjyBurnettGolfClassic?feat=email#.

--Submitted by Howard Green

Collaborations Conference’s First Annual Cornhole Competition

Many thanks to Helen Butler for coordinating the highly successful first annual collaborations corn hole tournament at the statewide Collaborations Conference. Twenty seven teams went head to head for the honor of the title (not to mention the cash prize) and it was a very friendly competition right up to the finals (when the teams finally realized they were actually competing for $270 beach bucks). In the final match, pitching Jim Hall (DRS Winchester office) and Doug James (DRS Northern Region) versus Amy Miller and Matthew Deans (DRS Chesterfield office). In an extremely close match it appeared that Amy and Matt were going to win. But in the last moments the sheer determination Jim Hall won the dough with a dizzying display of six net points on the final throw. Congratulations to Doug and Jim, but also to Matt and Amy for a highly entertaining final match.

--Submitted by Ned Campbell

Matthew Deans and Amy Miller (Runners-Up), Doug James and Jim Hall (Winners)
In my position as a state vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor, I have found that when the work is particularly challenging, it can also become isolating. This is especially so if I don’t take conscious measures to stay engaged with colleagues. When I get focused on working to help clients, I sometimes fail to see the need for my own professional connection time. In this age of telecommuting, reduced office space and time, and decreased travel budgets, it is critical to stay in touch with peers. And it is crucial to have time with them in person, so that we can understand and communicate at different levels. VRA provides me with this opportunity at least 6-8 times per year, through Board meetings, trainings, the Collaborations conference, Virginia Association for Rehabilitation Leadership (VARL) Brown Bags, as well as social events like luncheons or an Annual Fish Fry.

As membership chair, VRA also allows me to be in contact with people who are committed and obviously care about the work we do. As such, it exposes me to ideas and interactions that allow me a broader perspective on the world. And I am a firm believer that a wider view allows a greater sense of choices and options, both personal and professional. After all, isolation is really about putting on blinders and being unable to see the choices you have in front, to the side, and behind you. So, time spent with colleagues, can open up the world in new ways.

I spend a lot of time at work either huddled in front of the computer, engaged in electronic case management activities, or in meeting with clients. While much of this is satisfying, it can often take priority over equally valuable time needed to process and reflect with others who understand the unique challenges of our work. As long as we don’t allow those interactions to degenerate into a pity party (and we all need a little time to grouse), it can also stimulate us to find both individual and system-wide solutions to the barriers we face.

In my office and in VRA, there are any number of people I seek out to provide me with renewed energy and a fresh outlook. I am reminded of a recent event where I suddenly found myself with a slew of new clients in a new geographic area. It felt overwhelming at first, but the day I felt a surge of hope was the one where two co-workers (one VRA, the other not), helped me to brainstorm ideas and to find focus. In other words, it was their generosity of spirit and the energy of their specific ideas that helped to inspire me.

For these and other reasons, I encourage you to seek out another VRA member or co-worker, and make a connection. Make the time for yourself today as a counseling or support staff professional to ask and to give the help needed.

--Submitted by Andrew Stowe
**VRA Division and Committee News**

**Communication/Membership Committee Update**

VRA currently has 180 members and saw a 7% increase in membership in 2011 with the addition of 13 new members. To support and enhance the recruitment of new members, the VRA New Member “Friending” Program has continued to provide mentoring matches between veteran and new VRA members. New members will also enjoy one free training opportunity in the first year of membership.

**Congratulations for the new members for 2011:**
- Becky Bowers Lanier - Richmond
- Cathy Cook - Charlottesville
- Liz Crunkilton - Leesburg
- Ruth Fanning - Alexandria
- Reginald Gladney - Arlington
- Sabrina Harmon - Vienna
- A J Hostetler - Richmond
- Alisha Meador - Lynchburg
- Margie Milner - Poquoson
- Shirl Selah - Richmond
- Caroline Stabler - Oakton
- Allon Wright - Suffolk
- Chuck Kelley – Portsmouth
- Jean Steveson – Newport News

---Submitted by Andrew Stowe

**VRA Foundation News**

The VRA Foundation is alive and well. The Foundation only received two applications this year which was a little disappointing. Scholarships were received by Alexa Jordan Painter, senior at JMU, and Jermile Amber Batten, Senior at Elon University. However, our financial situation is very good. Currently we have $25,986.17 in the Foundation account.

Last year we raised $1,247.00 from donations from members and contributions at Collaboration during the exhibit opening. Bill Burnside and Roxie Wilkerson contributed their time and talents again at the 2011 Collaboration Conference and we received donations in excess of $200.00.

The VRA Foundation Board recognized Bernice Chattin, founder and past Board member of the VRA Foundation with a gift card to the Jefferson Hotel and a certificate of achievement. Bernice was the individual who spearheaded the creation of the VRA Foundation and continued to push its funding, creating policies and securing the Foundation’s 501-C-3 funding status. Bernice continues to have some great ideas for the Board which will assist us to grow and raise more funds. Based on a recommendation from Bernice the Board will reach out to our former awardees to request donations from them and see how they may become more involved with the Foundation.

The Foundation Board would like to invite all our members to become more aware of the Foundation and share this with others because it is a nice benefit to each member and their family members for educational opportunities. In addition we would like to seek contributions from our members and it can be a tax deduction for 2011. We invite each member to donate a minimum of $10.00.

---Submitted by Howard Green
Legislative Liaison & Committee Report

Elections
This is election year for all 140 members of the General Assembly. This will also be the first year of the newly redistricted elections.

Members of the House who have announced their retirements/resignations include Delegates Watkins Abbitt (I, 59), Ward Armstrong (D, 10, who was re-districted out of his district and will be running against the incumbent Charles Poin Dexter in his new district), Clay Athey (R, 18), William Cleaveland (R, 17), Adam Ebbin (D, 49, who will be running for Sen Patsy Ticer’s seat), Paula Miller (D, 87), Harvey Morgan, (R, 98), Dave Nutter (R, 7, who will be running against Sen John Edwards), Bud Phillips (D, 2), Albert Pollard (D, 99), Lacey Putney (I, 19), and Jim Shuler (D, 12).

In the Senate, the following have announced their decisions to retire/resign or were re-districted out: Senators Ralph Smith and Fred Quayle (whose districts were eliminated), Patsy Ticer (D-30), Mary Margaret Whipple (D, 31), and William Wampler (R, 40). The two new districts that were created are numbered 13 (west of Richmond, north of Lynchburg), and 22 (Loudoun area).

Some House and Senate districts will be holding primaries August 23, and others with contested intra-party seats may be determined by caucus. Check your areas to see what is happening. You can find this information on the State Board of Elections or the Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) websites. The VPAP site is more interesting, if you are a political junkie and want to see who is receiving campaign contributions from whom.

Now is the time to meet with the candidates. Prepare a 30-second elevator speech for that brief handshake and include the following: who you are, what you do in your day job, where you work, how your work has an impact on people with disabilities, and invite the candidate to come see you work in action. If you have an additional 30 seconds or so, ask the candidate a couple of questions that aim to shed light on important items such as their experience and positions on disability issues or their position on whether they believe the government has a role to play investing public funds to support employment of individuals with disabilities.

If you support a candidate, do so in any number of visible ways, including making campaign donations, working the phones, using yard signs, hosting a reception at your house, and walking the districts. These acts of generosity and kindness go a long way toward cementing a relationship with a candidate, who if elected, may turn out to be a supporter of disability issues!

Disability Commission, September 20th, 2011
The publically Funded Workgroup adopted three recommendations that were later approved by the full Commission. Those recommendations are:

- **Brain Injury**: add language to the budget bill for $6.5 M to stabilize and expand brain injury services.
- **DRS: CRCMS Program**: Recommendation for funding $150,000 to hire two Rehabilitation Specialists for the Community Rehabilitation Case Management program in order to address the current waiting list and a recommendation for $800,000 for the Personal Assistance Services program to address its waiting list.
- **Centers for Independent Living**: $306,000 to restore funding to the 2009 level of funding, $500,000 to bring two satellite CILs up to full CIL status (Petersburg and New River Valley), $160,000 to fund two new satellite offices in Loudon County and Middle Peninsula.
- **Disability Commission**: In addition, the Commission will recommend legislation that would codify the workgroups in the Code of Virginia, and that the sunset provision for the Disability Commission be repealed.
- **Consumer Service Fund**: Provide funding to reestablish the Consumer Services Fund, the fund of last resort for people with disabilities in need of financial assistance with securing assistive technology and related services.
• **DRS Vocational Services:** Recommend appropriation of an additional $10.1 million to ensure that DRS is able to meet federal matching requirements for the vocational rehabilitation program, eliminating the current waiting list for services. If the Governor does not include funding for the Department of Rehabilitative Services to meet federal matching requirements for the vocational rehabilitation program, the Disability Commission should request an amendment to the appropriation act to make such funding available to the Department.

**Government Reform & Restructuring Commission: Creating a New Agency through Consolidation**

Wednesday, August 31, 2011 the Commission met and continued to advance reforms in response to Governor McDonnell’s Executive Order #2. The Commission’s report noted recommendations as offered by Dr. Hazel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources that the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Department for the Aging, and the Adult Services Unit at the Department of Social Services currently serve different but overlapping populations and have many factors in common, and that key staff at VDA, DSS, and DRS work on legislation that would create a new agency around the common core functions cited above. Given the proposed consolidation and potential impact on professional vocational rehabilitation services, the legislative committee will be reviewing the anticipated impact.

**A Value-Able Concept: Return On Investment (ROI)**

At the NRA National Legislative Summit, a national ad hoc committee investigated the work that has evolved to try and communicate the value of vocational services under the federal-state partnership in the language of business. Return on Investment (ROI) does offer some effective means to look at performance in a different way. Recently, in the current publication of the NARL Journal, West Virginia offered their economic projections on ROI based on a well established economic model. Earlier this year vaACCESS used a recently published ROI report on supported employment during the budget debates. DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock presented a review of ROI to the Disability Commission that covered the significant cost/benefit of vocational rehabilitation to the Commonwealth. The full presentation can be found on the Internet at: http://dls.virginia.gov/GROUPS/Disability/meetings/062011/materials.htm.

Sounds like another cliché, but it fits: “WE NEED YOU!!” No matter who you are or where you work, as a professional service provider you are a constituent in your local districts. You have the ability to present the incredible value of VR services and supports and can effectively advocate on behalf of the citizens with disabilities that are served in your areas. Spend some time educating yourself on how to appropriately advocate. Learn who you need to talk with and who can make a difference…..get out there and get active!

**Get Social! Continue the legislative discussion online:**

We had a great turnout at Collaborations for the Legislative Advocacy presentation. You can now join with other members of VRA and VARL via a secure, professional networking site devoted to issues and interests of our members.

**VRA LinkedIn networks:**
VRA: [http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2114298](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2114298)
VARL: [http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2613703](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2613703)

**Facebook sites you can visit:**

---Submitted by Becky Bowers-Lanier & Ned Campbell
Welcome to Fall!

The VARL Board wishes to thank everyone who participated in “Leaving a Leadership Legacy—Improving your Skills Today with a Look to Tomorrow” held in Hampton Roads in August and presented by Shirley Lyons. This training was very well received, and was as fun as it was interactive and gave us all a chance not only to examine our own styles as leaders but also our ideas about how we want to be remembered by examining the legacies of highly effective (or otherwise memorable) historical leaders. Please look for this training to be offered again soon somewhere in your neighborhood.

On Wednesday, November 2, Sabrina Harmon, NISH Senior Training Program Manager will be presenting their highly acclaimed training “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People—Concepts and Skill for High Performance.” This training is co-sponsored by STEPS. It will be held in Roanoke. CRC credits are available. Registrations are currently being accepted by emailing Sharon.Cheek@drs.virginia.gov.

It is election time once again so please be on the lookout for ballots to arrive in your mailboxes soon and to respond as quickly as you can. The results will be announced in early November and new officers and members will be inducted at our next VARL Board Meeting to be held on December 13 in Richmond at the Radford building.

As always the VARL Board invites all of you to actively participate as leaders by joining VARL. Become an active member, take on the opportunity to develop and coordinate exciting programs such as those listed above. We need your energy and expertise by signing on to serve on our Education, Membership or Awards committees. You can make the difference!

--Submitted by Teri Bertsch

VRCEA President’s Update

In 2011, VRCEA made several important steps towards becoming a viable ongoing contributor to the rehabilitation counseling community. First, we drafted our new Bylaws edits. These edits will expand our options for Board Members now and in the future by opening up opportunities to serve on the VRCEA Board to include “Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, Rehabilitation Educators, Licensed Professional Counselors, or a counselor who is eligible to be certified/licensed who is a member of VRCEA”. We will also consider other rehab professionals. These Bylaw changes were sent to the RCEA National Chapter and approved by RCEA. The membership approved the change by unanimous vote at the Annual Meeting.

Second, we have begun the archiving process so that VRCEA can build on his present while preserving the past. Karen Backus was the driving force in purchasing the external hard drives that will enable this process. At our January Board Meeting we conducted a teleconference with Bob Cox, past president of RCEA. We learned a great deal about the history and objectives of the national association and look forward to continuing to build our connection to them.

While we have not met all of our membership goals, 2011 did see several new members join and become involved in training, and board activities. We continue to encourage our members to invite others to join VRCEA.

During the spring, we had a sold-out training at the Department of Rehabilitative Services Central Office on the topic of “Working with Veterans with PTSD and TBI.” We exceeded our attendance and financial goals with this training and we have another training lined up this fall in Southwest Virginia. Additionally, we are in talks with several trainers in planning to host a
Rehabilitation Counselors’ day event on March 22nd, 2012.

The Spirit Awards have expanded this year, as we received an abundance of nominations. We had so many fine nominees that we decided to give two awards this year. Congratulations to Spirit Awards Winners Sherrina Sewell and Sandy Gerhardt who were recognized at the Collaborations VRA Luncheon earlier this month.

And finally, the VRCEA election results are in. Congratulations to Karen Backus (President Elect), Mary Kaye Johnston (Secretary), Kathleen Shiflett & Samantha Loving (Board Members Class of 2014).

--Submitted by Emily West

NRA News

VEWAA Helps Create Registry of Professional Vocational Evaluators

The Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) Division of NRA, which focuses on advancing the field of vocational evaluation and assessment, has teamed with the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) in the creation of a task force to explore credentialing options for vocational evaluators. As a result, the Registry of Professional Vocational Evaluators (RPVE) was created and launched in April 2011. The RPVE consists of vocational evaluators who have demonstrated attainment of acceptable standards of education, experience, and knowledge in the field. Additional information can be found at http://pveregistry.org or by contacting Shawn Zimmerman, NRA Board VEWAA Representative, at Shawn.Zimmerman@drs.virginia.gov.

--Submitted by Shawn Zimmerman

Other News & Notes

Accessible Virginia Expands Web Access and Content

AccessibleVirginia.org, the expanded web version of The Virginia Travel Guide for Persons with Disabilities, has been revamped to increase usability by persons who are blind or have low vision. Also the web site is increasing its coverage to include retail businesses, hospitals, plus state and local government facilities.

Packed with information that persons with disabilities often find difficult to obtain in advance of their outings from home, the site is designed to meet the needs of persons having mobility, visual, cognitive or hearing disabilities. AccessibleVirginia.org contains comprehensive data on attractions, lodging, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, outdoor recreation and shopping facilities, as well as listings of dialysis centers, sources for oxygen, equipment repair locations and even veterinarians for assistance animals. The access information is precise and thorough including locations and measurements of parking spaces, doors, aisles, stairways and bathroom facilities, types of assistive devices available, and specific programs for adults and children with disabilities.

“Our motto is ‘We describe, you decide.’ says Bill Duke, co-Founder of the Opening Door, Inc. “We know from first-hand experience the importance of reliable accessibility information. Our son, Paul, has used a motorized wheelchair for almost 42 years and is ventilator dependent, and I have had significant hearing loss since childhood. The access guide grew out of questions we need to know before we go out to dinner, take an overnight trip, or visit any attraction.”

Cheryl Duke, the organization’s other founder explains, “The disability travel market has a unique dynamic and set of travel needs. We don’t have the luxury of spontaneity or flexibility because of our disabilities. So we have to know before we go. This is why comprehensive and detailed travel information is vital for us.”
Although Virginia is one of only three states having a travel guide or accessibility website specifically for persons with disabilities, AccessibleVirginia.org is the only one providing detailed access information allowing persons with disabilities to determine independently if the facility is accessible for their specific needs.

Contact: The Opening Door, Inc.
Bill and Cheryl Duke, publishers
804-633-6752 or 804-633-7456 (9 AM – 5 PM)
cherylduke@AccessibleVirginia.org
AccessibleVirginia.org

October is Disability History & Awareness Month in Virginia

The history of people with disabilities extends hundreds of years. For example, did you know that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone while trying to develop a mechanical way to make speech visible? These facts (and an interesting timeline) can be found at http://bit.ly/rj7ylP which provides an overview on disability history. In 2006, the first bill requiring that public school students be taught about the disability rights movement was passed in West Virginia, in part due to the efforts of 20 students with disabilities.

Graduates of the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) in Virginia were instrumental in the passage of Senate Joint Resolution 321 establishing the month of October as Disability History and Awareness Month in the Commonwealth.

Resources are available for teachers, parents, and students at http://bit.ly/oxQrK5 from the Partnership for People with Disabilities. Games, links, mentoring ideas, and more for K-12...including some great YouTube videos!

If you’re in Richmond the week of October 24, stop by the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) campus to check out the resources and observances for Disability History Awareness Month. There will be a resource table featuring assistive technology on Monday, October 24 from 3:30-5:30 and 11:00-1:00 on Friday, October 28. An accessible soccer demonstration will occur from 3:15-4:15 on Tuesday, October 25 in the Commons Plaza. On Wednesday, October 26, grab some pizza for lunch and hear a panel discussion with students and experts on the disability experience at the USC Forum Room. Learn about abuse and neglect of people with disabilities on Thursday, October 27 from 9:00-10:00, and hear about promoting an inclusive culture for all from 11:00-12:00. These events are being coordinated by Matthew Shapiro, a graduate of Virginia’s Youth Leadership Forum; for more information, contact matthewshapiro91@yahoo.com.

LinkedIN: Join with other members of VRA and VARL!

Do you have a story to share? Go to the VRA member LinkedIN discussion board. This is a secure, professional networking site devoted to issues and interests of our members. VARL also has a site for leadership topics.

VRA LinkedIN Network: http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2114298
VARL LinkedIN Network: http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2613703

Join the VRA Facebook Group

Network with other members of VRA by joining the VRA Facebook group! Members can discuss VRA issues and upcoming events on this social networking website:

https://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/groups/258928867454860

Please visit VRA.org

Please be sure to visit the VRA website at www.vra.org for important information about NRA and VRA news, updates on trainings and events, access to NewsNotes online, and photos of past VRA events!
The Choice Group

- Independent Living Skills
- Life Skills Training
- Job Seeking Skills Training
- Vocational Assessments
- Situational Assessments
- Job Development
- Job Placement and Training
- Long Term Follow Along
- Job Coach Training Services
- Support Employment
- Placement
- Educational Services
- Individual and Group Counseling
- Therapeutic Consultation
- Career Counseling

We Help People With Disabilities Live Up To Their Abilities

The Choice Group
4807 Radford Avenue, Suite 106 • Richmond, VA 23230
(804) 278-9151 • Toll-free 877-374-5312
E-mail: info@thechoicegroup.com • www.thechoicegroup.com
The ADA National Network provides information, guidance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), tailored to meet the needs of business, government and individuals at local, regional and national levels.

The ADA National Network consists of ten Regional ADA National Network Centers located throughout the United States that provides personalized, local assistance to ensure that the ADA is implemented wherever possible. We are not an enforcement or regulatory agency, but a helpful resource supporting the ADA’s mission to “make it possible for everyone with a disability to live a life of freedom and equality.”

Contact Your Regional ADA Center:

- Confidential ADA Call Center
- Customized and Local Training
- Webinars and Podcasts
- ADA Resources and Documents
- Regional and State Conferences
- Web-based Training & Resources

1-800-949-4232 (V/TTY)  wwwadata.org
VRA Events Calendar
Mark your calendars for these important dates for your state and national associations

Nov 2  “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” training presented by Sabrina Harmon, hosted by NISH and STEPS Inc., Roanoke Workforce Center
Dec 9  VRA Board Meeting, Richmond
Dec 13 VARL Board Meeting, Richmond (Radford Building)
Jan 13 NewsNotes deadline for article submissions
Mar 22 Rehabilitation Counselor’s Day, sponsored by VRCEA
April 13 NewsNotes deadline for article submissions
July 13 NewsNotes deadline for article submissions
Oct 13 NewsNotes deadline for article submissions

Events and training programs also available on the VRA and NRA web sites.

Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is January 13th, 2012.

Send to newsnotes@vra.org
VRA President  Jennifer McDonough
President-Elect  Ned Campbell
Past President  Liz Smith
Treasurer  Eleanor Williams
Secretary  Samantha Ruppert
Board Members  Andrew Stowe, David Gitlin, Doug Eads, Rob Froehlich, Kim Shepard, Kelly Hickok, Naomi Aitken, Sandra Mottesheard, Debbie Veale

VRCEA President  Emily West
VARL President  Teri Bertsch
NewsNotes Editor  Kristina Blough

Run An Ad in the VRA NEW NOTES

1/4 PAGE  $15 / issue : $50 / year
1/2 PAGE  $24 / issue : $90 / year
Full Page  $50 / issue : $175 / year

Next Deadline for NewsNotes: Jan. 13th.
Please Submit NewsNotes articles to Kristina Blough by Email at:
newsnotes@vra.org

Or send by US Mail to:
VRA NewsNotes c/o Mary Kaye Johnston
4612 Kingsrow Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23060
804-965-0514