I feel optimistic about 2013 and the opportunities we all have to make an enduring impact on the world around us. While watching President Obama’s second inaugural speech I was struck by one of his closing statements. He said, “You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country’s course.” This statement resonated with me as I am a firm believer in the power of small and in the impact one person can have on the outcomes of an organization. I believe the Virginia Rehabilitation Association is one of the strongest chapters of the National Rehabilitation Association. With that said, I challenge the VRA membership, myself included, to realize that we each have the power to set the course for VRA this year and to make an already strong professional organization even stronger.

In starting off this pondering (which I hope does not turn into rambling!) I’d like to thank you all for electing me and allowing me to be the VRA President this year. For those of you who don’t yet know me, the rehabilitation counseling field has been home for me for going on 20 years now. I’ve had the opportunity to work in community mental health, state vocational rehabilitation, private sector rehabilitation, and for more than 10 years now in the rehabilitation education arena. I’m the assistant director for The George Washington University Region 3 TACE (Technical Assistance and Continuing Education) Center. I call Richmond home, along with my wife Helen and my two boys Cole (age 14) and Robbie (age 12). The boys are involved in multiple sports and in scouting, so any free time Helen and I have is generally spent driving from activity to activity... I’m sure many of you parents can relate to this.

First, I want to work collectively on a ‘VRA Elevator Speech.’ The concept of an elevator speech is basically about a 30 second sound bit in which you describe a topic to someone unfamiliar with that topic. The VRA elevator speech should be an answer to, “Why are you a VRA member?” We’ve had wonderful articles in the past in NewsNotes addressing this question, but I’d like for us to be able to have a succinct and persuasive message each of us can deliver when asked this question. I’d like anyone who reads this pondering who has a good elevator speech addressing this topic to send it to me (rfro@gwu.edu). We’ll be discussing this concept further during our March Board Meeting.

Next, I want to begin thinking about and implementing outreach efforts to additional groups of professionals who may be interested in VRA membership. There are many groups of professionals in rehabilitation settings in VA and in bordering states with disbanded chapters who may be able to help us and who we may be able to help.

Third, I’d like to continue the great work of the Education Committee in bringing high quality,
affordable continuing education events to the VRA membership in multiple venues. We’ve talked in the past about collaborating among VRA and the Divisions to most effectively meet the needs of all members while not duplicating efforts. I’d like us to investigate themes that can support and build upon each other in terms of planning.

Next, I’d like for us to focus on enhancing our Board Member and VRA Member knowledge of and understanding of the VRA Committee Structure. I’d like for folks to understand what the roles of the various committees and positions are within VRA and to streamline those roles and functions to best meet the needs of VRA at this time. This enhanced understanding, in combination with a focus on increased understanding of the organizational structure/operations of VRA will allow for committee work to be completed within the committees and will help to streamline board meetings.

Finally, I’d like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone who has always thought about becoming more active with VRA in some capacity to contact me (rfro@gwu.edu or 804-794-6667) or to reach out to any of my esteemed fellow VRA Board Members. Becoming more involved doesn’t mean you have to assume a very labor-intensive role. I know our VRA membership is comprised of individuals with many talents and we’d love to be able to benefit and become a stronger organization as a result of those talents.

I wish you all a Happy New Year! I am very much looking forward to getting to know many of you much better over the course of this year.

--Submitted by Rob Froehlich

VRA News

Call for 2013 VRA Award Nominations!

It is that time again to recognize your colleagues and businesses for award winning EXCELLENCE! The Virginia Rehabilitation Association is seeking nominations for each of its association awards. The award categories and descriptions of each can be found on the VRA website. **Nominations will be accepted through August 30, 2013** and can be submitted by email/fax/mail to:

Eleanor Williams

c/o DARS/CBS Division

8004 Franklin Farms Drive

Richmond, Virginia 23229

Phone: 804-662-7075

Fax: 804-662-7663

Email: Eleanor.Williams@dars.virginia.gov

The 2013 VRA Awards celebration will be held in conjunction with the Collaborations Conference again this year in Virginia Beach. Be sure to take time **NOW** to acknowledge outstanding individuals and businesses!

--Submitted by Eleanor Williams
Golf Tournament Update

The 14th Annual VRA Benjy Burnett Golf Tournament is scheduled for September 10th at the Hunting Hawk Golf Course. The tournament will start with registration at 7:45 and a shotgun start at 8:30. We are looking for volunteers to help generate hole sponsors as well as prizes and other items for the tournament. If you can help VRA with this fund raising activity please call or email Howard Green at (804-305-3999) or jgreen1949@verizon.net.

Thanks and please mark your calendars!

--Submitted by Howard Green

2013 Collaborations Conference

Save the Date!

2013 Collaborations Conference
September 29 - October 1, 2013
Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront

For more information, please visit:
http://www.vaaccses.org/collaborations_conference/information/

--Submitted by Ned Campbell

Treasurer’s Report

The treasurer’s report is included to update the membership on how VRA stands financially. On January 1st, 2012, the VRA had a balance of $7,957.21. With income of $26,903.27 and spending of $20,290.93 in 2012, the VRA’s balance as of December 31st, 2012 was $14,569.55 to finish the year in a better financial position than when it started.

The VRA currently has investment in an Oppenheimer limited term municipal fund, which was purchased in November 2005 at $16,000. The value of this investment as of January 1st, 2012 was $19,076.55, and it matured to $20,501.85 by the end of 2012.

As of December 31st, 2012, the VRA current assets, between investments and income, are $35,071.40. Bank statements for the period January 1- December 31, 2012 have been received and reconciled.

--Submitted by Eleanor Williams

VRA Division and Committee News

Legislative Liaison & Committee Report

The General Assembly began its 2013 session January 9th. This is a “short” session, and while the official dates are not known, most likely they will be leaving town Saturday, March 2nd. This is also the Governor’s last year, so we will probably witness some political tactics executed with that understanding—he’ll be gone in January 2014, and most of the legislators will remain.
That said, 2013 is a statewide election year, and we now know that Ken Cuccinelli and Terry McAuliffe are the presumed gubernatorial nominees. A whole cast of characters is vying for both Republican and Democrat positions for Lt Gov. And the Attorney General race, while not as lively as the LG race in terms of potential candidates, looms as well. We will also elect all 100 members of the House of Delegates. The Senate gets a break in 2013.

I write about this because both issues—the Governor’s being a lame duck and the looming elections—will have an impact on what bills and budget amendments survive the sausage-making process. “Interesting” is an adjective that comes to mind.

I would like to see a more robust gathering of our members for advocacy efforts. At some point, we should discuss this in a Board meeting—maybe in the spring.

Here’s what I know so far about the 2013 session:

- The Governor asked each state agency to propose a 4% budget reduction. State agencies are accustomed to this sort of exercise, and the proposed reductions make sense if state revenues do not keep pace with revenue projections upon which the biennial budget was developed.
- We will most likely search for a patron to carry an amendment requesting more general funds for voc rehab. How successful we’ll be remains to be seen, but the request keeps our issues out front.
- Pre-filing of bills began in the summer, and to date, I have found two bills that may be of interest to us.
  - HB 1304 (Habeeb) would establishes a corporate income tax credit beginning January 1, 2013, for federal contractors with at least 250 full-time employees that subcontract with small or minority-owned, veteran-owned, or women-owned businesses to perform federal government contract work. I list this bill because last year ESOs were added to the list to be considered as from the Administrative Process Act. While there are some implementation issues related to this, we may be able to advocate for ESOs to be included in this bill. However, the chances of success for this tax credit may be slim, since there is little appetite to add to the list of tax credits.
  - HB 1306 (Landes) would create a Commission on Federal Oversight, consisting of eight legislative members representing the House of Delegates and the Senate, to meet twice a year with the United States Senate members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation, and to communicate with Virginia’s members of the United States House of Representatives, to address public policy issues for which both federal and state policy makers have responsibility. Again, as with HB 1304, I’m not sure how successful this measure will be, because rarely does our General Assembly pass measures that attempt to affect federal policy. I include it because I’m not sure of the unintended consequences.

Finally, we are working with other organizations that are also developing their legislative agendas and the interests of which intersect with ours. These include APSE and the Coalition for Virginians with Mental Disabilities.

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me (becky@b2lconsulting.com or 804-382-0991).

--Submitted by Becky Bowers-Lanier

Membership Committee Update

I wanted to give everyone a brief national and state membership update as we enter the 2013 calendar year. As we often have to read on the run, I will bullet point the relevant information with details added where necessary.

- As you might read elsewhere, NRA has gone to a virtual office. Very recently, they hired a new Membership Coordinator, so we await further developments on that score. However, in the meantime;
• NRA seems to be increasingly responsive to membership committee requests for information about their own state’s member status. This makes it much easier for those on the Virginia membership committee to welcome new members, to remind lapsed ones, and to acknowledge transitions and bid farewell to those who have moved away from the field professionally.

• There is increased communication amongst many NRA state affiliates via newly inaugurated quarterly teleconferences. In the most recent one in December, we learned how the Utah association (URA) increased membership and energized its members with a vibrant and well-planned annual conference. Four major points were highlighted:
  o They included a service project that allowed people to give back to others while there. This helped to promote mixing amongst people who might not otherwise have met;
  o They used their connections to attract high profile speakers that generated a lot of interest;
  o They incorporated a great deal of media before, during, and after the conference (e.g. scrolling Powerpoint of everyone in attendance at the conference with bios);
  o They put on different mixers and even had a Zumba dance on the final evening.

We look to the new year to continue to expand membership, keep current members informed and invigorated, and we are open to your ideas and suggestions. Please contact any of us on the Membership Committee, which includes Mary Kaye Johnston, Kristina Derderian, Kim Shepard, Susan Green, Marie Worley, and yours truly!

I would also like to welcome new members! The following new members have joined VRA in December 2012:

Terry Seward, Fishersville, VA
Katy MacTweedy, Portsmouth, VA

--Submitted by Andrew Stowe

VRA Education Committee Update

A VRA Workshop on Emotional Intelligence with Susan Green, rescheduled for 12/4/12 in Portsmouth, was held with 21 in attendance. After expenses, a net profit of $418.87 was made from the workshop. This was a joint sponsored workshop with VARL. A third EI Workshop is scheduled for January 31 in Fairfax with 18 registered to date.
Newer VRA members Nora Tucker (DRS Counselor in Christiansburg) and Ray Williams (DRS/DBVI Placement Counselor in Roanoke) have committed to working on the Education Committee and will help to insure that educational opportunities are equally afforded to the Southwest Region of the state, previously under-represented. Michelle Montecalvo (DRS Counselor in Manassas) has also expressed interest in working with this committee.

--Submitted by Susan Gaillard

VRA Foundation Update

It is my honor to serve as the Chairman of the VRA Foundation this year. This Foundation is YOUR Foundation; it is a benefit of membership in the Virginia Rehabilitation Association. It is the goal of the Foundation to each year provide a scholarship towards the education needs of a VRA Member or a family member. This past year, it was a pleasure to assist Ms. Erica Stowe, daughter of Andrew Stowe, with a scholarship towards her academic pursuits. Our online application is available on the VRA website! Follow this link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/iframe.php?key=dG9ZeHlnMjBydncxMmxzX3pNQmpraEE6MQ

The criteria for the VRA Foundation Scholarship can be found at the following link:


In the past year, we have received donations from the following: Margaret Gillispie, Howard Green, Bill Burnside, Mary Kaye Johnston, Dale Batten, Keith Wright, Al Dickerson, Lynn Kushner, Larry Overby, Robert Froelich, RSVP, Becky Bowers-Lanier, Charlie and Theresa Wingold, David Williams, Rhonda Chandler, Bernice Chattin, Teri Bertsch, Ellen Braswell and Bonnie Hawley for a total of $1142.25. Our Oppenheimer account currently has $30,528.53. The VRA Foundation receives a percentage of proceeds from the Collaborations Conference (this year, $650.00). Including donations from individuals, Collaborations proceeds and Interest on our account, a total of $2785.10 has been received this past year. A sincere thank you to all who have contributed towards the Foundation.

The Foundation Scholarship is based upon how much our Oppenheimer account receives in interest income...the more contributions towards the principle, the greater the interest income and thus, the more we are able to grant yearly. All donations towards the VRA Foundation are tax deductible! You may make your donation in memory of someone or to honor someone special!

This year, the goal of the VRA Foundation is to raise $2400.00 in individual donations to continue our investment in our membership and their families in their pursuit of higher education.

--Submitted by Bonnie Hawley

VARL Division Update

Greetings!

During our 2012, I was please to serve as VARL president. As I step aside for a new group of leader, please join me in welcoming VARL 2013 board of directors:

**Executive Committee:**
- President – Jim Hall
- President-Elect – Shirley Lyons
- Past-President – Ralph Figaro
- Education – Vacant

**Membership – David Gitlin**
**Treasurer – Eleana Boyer**
**Secretary – Kellie D Tucker**
**Awards – Doug James**

**Board of Directors:**
- Student Member – Danjuma Cooper
- Members At Large:
  - David Gitlin
  - Cindy Roberts
  - Michelle Howard-Herbein
  - Roxanne Slaughter
Mark Hawkins  
Angela Edmonds  

Mark your calendars! The following is the 2013 VARL Board Meetings scheduled: (The time for all the Board meetings is 10 AM to 12 PM) February 12th: Richmond (live).  At each of these meetings, a board member will facilitate a Leadership “Board Chat.” When appropriate, we will post these chats and other Leadership topics on our VARL LinkedIn page to enable our members and our community of practice to participate in our discussions, and to provide feedback, suggestion and pearls of wisdom. Let me know if you need an invitation to our page. We also are scheduling a minimum of four (4) training sessions this year with one scheduled for our June board meeting. We will send information as the details are known.

Let me close by wishing everyone a prosperous new year.  VARL is actively recruiting new leaders to join our executive committee in the following capacities: Education Coordinator, Award Coordinator, and Treasurer.  Come Lead with us!

--Submitted by Ralph Figaro

VRCEA Division Update  

The Virginia Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Association (VRCEA) is currently seeking new members. We currently have approximately 30 members from the professional and student field and would like to invite you to join. We are looking for individuals that are looking to further the field of rehabilitation, that would like to assist in legislative tasks to assist in the field of rehabilitation, and that would like to assist or participate in trainings to further the field of rehabilitation. Family and professionals in the field that are interested in networking and resources are encouraged to join as well. We are also looking for individuals that would be interested in an opportunity for leadership in a great organization. If you have any questions about the opportunities available or what you may be able to do to help please contact one of the following individuals:

Karen Backus (President):
karen.backus@dars.virginia.gov  
Sandy Mottsheard (Past President):
SandyMotts@yahoo.com  
Bonnie Hawley: Bonnie.Hawley@dars.virginia.gov.

--Submitted by Karen Backus

NRA News  
Mid Atlantic Regional Election Update  

Many thanks and congratulations to Stephanie T. Pranes, President Elect, and Deborah Bradl, Secretary!

--Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnston
32nd Annual Government Affairs Summit

As you know, the National Rehabilitation Association’s 32nd Annual Government Affairs Summit will be held this year in Washington, D.C. at the Washington Marriott hotel. The Summit begins on Sunday March 17, continues on Monday, March 18, and culminates on Tuesday, March 19, 2013, with NRA’s Day on the Hill.

On Sunday, March 17, we will begin with a presentation on Capitol Hill 101: The People’s House and Senate and a discussion of the NRA Issues Statements which will be posted on the website soon. While this session is targeted toward our first-timers, all attendees are welcome.

Kathy West-Evans, founder and director of the National Employment Team of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) will host a panel of businesses which appreciate the many benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Following the business panel, lunch will be served at the hotel at which time we will hear from our Keynote Luncheon Speaker. The later afternoon session will be devoted for the most part to the National Rehabilitation Association’s Position Papers on issues of great importance to our membership.

On Monday, March 18, we will begin with a Congressional Panel which will be comprised of the movers and makers on Capitol Hill on disability policy from both the Senate and House. This important Panel will be followed by a presentation from our partners at the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education. The Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has been invited to present on Monday morning, as well.

Representatives from veterans’ organizations have been invited to present on Monday afternoon and, as we have done over the past few years, we will adjourn to permit our attendees additional time to meet with their Members of Congress. Although we will adjourn Monday’s session following this last presentation of the day, Patricia Leahy and the Co-Chairs of the Government Affairs Committee will remain in the room to answer any questions or provide additional information that you may need.

On Tuesday, March 19, the National Rehabilitation Association will host its Congressional Luncheon and Annual LEAD-ON Awards Ceremony in the Banquet Rooms (B-339 and B-340) of Rayburn House Office Building. The Luncheon Speaker will be announced soon. Following the Luncheon and Lead-On Awards' presentation, attendees will resume their Hill visits. From 3:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m., 121 Cannon House Office Building will be available to our Members and a wrap-up session will occur in this same room at 5:00 p.m.

We want to reiterate how important it is for you to contact your Members of Congress over the next several weeks to advise them how the programs under the Rehabilitation Act (VR) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other important programs have benefitted children and adults with disabilities. You may recall, we sent a Washington Wire to you last month with talking points that you may want to use when contacting your Members of Congress.

To register for the Government Affairs Summit, please go to our website at www.nationalrehab.org; Look for an updated Program on the Summit soon and for additional Washington Wires on sequestration. Thank you and I look forward to being with you in March.

--Submitted from an excerpt of the NRA Washington Wire by Patricia Leahy

Other News & Notes

DARS Order “Cold Case” Special Assignment

On July 1, 2012, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) piloted a project entitled “The Cold Case Special Assignment” based on a model being used by the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program in Oklahoma. Dr. Joe Ashley and Al Jones held several telephone conversations with Oklahoma staff and found that they utilized a unit of 5
staff to carry out their client search activities which involved some neighborhood searches by staff. Their Cold Case Unit had been highly successful in locating and reconnecting clients to VR services or closing out the clients that were not seeking services at this time. DARS staff streamlined the Oklahoma Cold Case process to reflect the needs and geography of Virginia. DARS Cold Case Special Assignment staff were extremely careful to insure that our clients’ confidentiality was protected as we researched numerous internet search sites before selecting the ones that met our needs and approved by DARS’ staff in Policy and Planning, IT, and Purchasing.

The Cold Case Special Assignment staff consist of a VR Counselor in each of the four regions that have access to a variety ways to locate individuals ranging from VEC wage checks to internet search sites that locate people. The project is designed to be counselor driven as DARS counselor refers the name of an individual to the Cold Case staff in their region and a thorough search is completed and the referring counselor is provided with the search results. The Cold Case staff reports on whether the individual has been located, if located are they still in need of services and need to be reconnected to the counselor, are they working and the case could be closed, or they do not need services at this time. Since its inception the Cold Case staff have received 166 referrals; of that number 35 have been closed as successfully employed and 10 have been reconnected to their VR counselors for services. The remaining 91 referrals have not had a final outcome as the vast majority of these referrals have been listed by Cold Case staff as unable to locate or no longer needing services.

As this pilot continues to evolve, we are finding it very important to act quickly when the Cold Case search is complete as client circumstances change rapidly. All DARS Counselors are encouraged to utilize the Cold Case Special Assignment staff to assist in locating clients that have stop making appointments and attempts have been made to contact client. It’s possible the client might be working a job with hours that don’t coincide with DARS’ office hours making it difficult to communicate with the counselor. It’s important that we show due diligence and exhaust all resources before closing a client’s case as unable to locate.

If you have any questions about the Cold Case Special Assignment please contact the staff listed below.

David Leon, GS&P, David.Leon@dars.virginia.gov
Delores Heisler, Central Region, Delores.Heisler@dars.virginia.gov
John Halpin, Northern Region, John.Halpin@dars.virginia.gov
Nick Whited, Southwest Region, Nicolas.Whited@dars.virginia.gov
Al Jones, DRS-ST, Al.Jones@dars.virginia.gov

--Submitted by Liz Smith

Resources for Independent Living to Host Art Show

Resources for Independent, Inc. is diligently working on our 10th Annual Art Show which will be held in a NEW LOCATION this year.

The show will take place on Friday, April 26, 2013 from 5:00-9:00 p.m. and on Saturday, April 27, 2013 from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at Hope Church (12445 Patterson Avenue, Richmond, Va. 23238).

We are excited about this new experience and are always looking for new artisans with disabilities to join the show. This is a juried show, so, If you know of artisans who might be interested in participating please have them contact: Freida Woodson at 804-353-6503, ext. 111 or woodsonf@ril-va.org. Please contact Ms. Woodson before the end of February for further details.

We look forward to seeing you at this awesome event!

--Submitted by Kelly Hickok
Updates from Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center

**WWRC Hosts Assistive Technology Training**
On Wednesday, December 12, 2012, WWRC hosted an Agency Assistive Technology (AT) Training. Twenty-two DRS VR Counselors from various regions of the Commonwealth participated in a series of hands-on workshops to learn more about WWRC AT resources including: augmentative and alternative communication (AAC); hearing aids and assistive listening devices; wheelchair and seating clinics; adaptive driving; cognitive AT; Assistive Computer Technology (ACT) Lab, and hand-held technologies. The goal of this day-long training, in combination with online modules that were available to participants through collaboration with George Washington University’s Technical Assistance Continuing Education Center and a community-based (local) Agency AT workshop, was to increase VR Counselor knowledge about assistive technology devices and services in Virginia. Our very own CARDIN was the featured lunch “speaker.”

**WWRC Approved as WIB Training Provider for 2013**
WWRC has been one of the WIB’s approved training providers for many years, but gaining re-certification is not automatic. It requires that a lengthy annual report be completed. Kerry Krause, Accreditation and Licensure Specialist, completed this year’s WIB Annual Report. The Annual Report tells the WIB the job placement rate, length of training, and student costs for each of WWRC’s training programs. Student costs include tuition, room and board, books, tools and any other fee. The Annual Report answers the WIB’s questions regarding the completion rate, average number of hours the graduates work each week, and the average amount the graduates earn. WWRC also reports the types and number of Industry Certifications the graduates earned while at WWRC. After studying WWRC’s Annual Report, the WIB voted in November 2012 to certify WWRC as an “Approved WIB Training Provider for 2013.”

**Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center Receives Community Partner Award**
WWRC was recognized on January 3, 2013, as the 2012 Community Partner by the Virginia Regional Transit (VRT), a not for profit 501(c)3 multifaceted organization. VRT provides access to affordable transportation through passenger service, transit system management, and other transit related services. VRT is comprised of smaller operations serving counties in Northern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, Central Virginia, and the Eastern Shore. The Coordinated Area Transportation Services (CATS) transit system is the operation within VRT that serves the Shenandoah Valley and provides WWRC a programmatic use of the transit system to teach students essential life skills in utilizing public transportation along with riding the CATS buses to training worksites located along the routes. The WWRC Foundation was a vital part of why WWRC received the award as the Foundation stepped in to offset a financial shortfall when a local partner withdrew funding support that would have caused CATS to curtail services in the valley. WWRC is one of the local partners with CATS. The award was received by Russ Neyman, WWRC Deputy Director, who serves on the Board of Directors for both VRT and CATS.

**WWRC Foundation Receives Quality of Life Grant**
The Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Foundation has received a $34,460 Quality of Life Grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation. This grant will help expand the Driving Program for individuals with spinal cord injuries and other mobility-limiting disabilities at WWRC by providing a new training vehicle equipped with hand controls. In addition, the grant will provide a temporary instructor to help address the waiting list for the Center’s Driving Program. The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation is a private foundation located in Encino, California, that is dedicated to supporting cutting-edge research and life-enhancing programs for individuals with spinal cord injuries. Their Quality of Life Grants support innovative rehabilitation and recreational programs, as well as independent living and educational opportunities that improve the life of people living with spinal cord injuries throughout the United States and Canada. The WWRC Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1960 to provide funds and resources that support vocational rehabilitation at WWRC. In addition to this, WWRC is receiving two additional forklifts through the Foundation from Dominion Power. These will have a very positive effect on the demand for this training option.
2012 Continuity Plan Assessment Report
The 2012 Continuity Plan Assessment Report for the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services was received from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management with a perfect score of 100%. The plan was submitted by Mr. Chip Stratton, DARS Emergency Coordination Officer.

Larry Soper Received the Wayne E. Heatwole Vocational Services Excellence Award
In 2010, the FRS placement counselors in the Fishersville Department of Rehabilitative Services Office partnered with WWRC and developed the Shared Employment Network Group (SENG). This partnership was rooted in the desire to get people energized about "finding and reporting" job leads in the Staunton, Waynesboro, and the Augusta regional area. Last year, this effort was paired with the Wayne E. Heatwole Vocational Services Excellence Award, which recognized the SENG staff member (open to any WWRC /FRS staff) who identified the most job leads. The first Heatwole award was presented to Wayne posthumously, with his wife accepting in December 2011. Mrs. Heatwole then awarded a second Heatwole award to Pat Rexrode, last year’s winner. The 2012 award was presented to Larry Soper in WWRC’s Physical Plant Services. Larry provided a job lead for his own department that resulted in a DARS consumer being hired by WWRC in the Housekeeping department. The field counselor had been working with a consumer at that time that had years of cleaning experience, but she had been struggling to find employment. They quickly got her application completed and with the help of the WWRC HR department, she was interviewed and hired immediately.

Meet a VRA Board Member: Margie Millner
Margie Millner holds a Master’s Degree in Social Work, and has over twenty years of experience in the delivery of psychiatric and vocational rehabilitation. Margie started her career off as a Counselor for the Deaf. Over her tenure, Ms. Millner has held management positions in a variety of settings, including Employment Service Organizations, a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program, a Partial Hospitalization program, and a Day Program for persons with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues. Margie is currently serving as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services.

For fun Margie enjoys spending time at her family beach cottage in rural Bavon, Virginia sitting in the sun with her toes in the sand. Margie also cherishes time spent with her precious 2 year old granddaughter, Emma Quinn.

Margie has been elected to serve as a VRA Board Member at large, a three year term. Please welcome Margie to the VRA Board!

disAbility Resource Center assists consumer access public transportation
The Beatles “With A Little Help from My Friends,” might be a tune George Lewis, a Fredericksburg wheelchair user, is humming after recently receiving advocacy help from the disAbility Resource Center, the Center for Independent Living in Fredericksburg.

Lewis is a large man who uses a large wheelchair with heavy batteries. Together, Lewis and his chair weigh 704 pounds. Because of an old ADA statute, Fredericksburg Regional Transit, FRED, would not allow Lewis to ride its buses because he weighed over 600 pounds with his chair. After working with advocates at the dRC, Lewis sent a
letter to FRED informing them of the October 2011 ADA regulations that said buses had to transport passengers in wheelchairs of any size—as long as the combined weight doesn't exceed 800 pounds and the bus lifts could handle them. The dRC researched the type of lifts on FRED buses and found that FRED could, indeed, lift Mr. Lewis. FRED was appreciative of the new information provided by Lewis and his dRC advocates and provided Lewis with 17 free bus passes.

In a comment to the Free Lance Star newspaper, dRC advocate, Shawn Lawrence, said, "He (Lewis) was denied, but he didn't give up, he fought through it. And because he did, this will make a difference, not only for him, but for somebody else down the road."

The ability to have transportation is a big deal to all people with disabilities but particularly to Lewis who has been a driving force for his independence. After his mother died in 2002 and he moved into an assisted-living facility, he insisted on moving into a living situation where he could be more independent. He now lives in a group home with three other men where he can access a few stores near his home, but he has to cross a major road to shop. Now, thanks to his hard work and a little help from his friends at the dRC, he has the choice and ability to go to Wal-Mart, the mall, or anywhere else he wants to go.

--Submitted by Kim Lett

**How many VRA members do you recognize?**

Just for fun! Can you identify any of these VRA members? This picture was taken years ago at a VRA tennis tournament in conjunction with a VRA Annual Conference.

--Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnston
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
WORKSOURCE ENTERPRISES

Providing job training and employment to people with disabilities since 1967

The WorkSource Order of Selection

Category 1 - Call Us!
(434) 972-1730
Chuck McElroy, President
Donna May, Rehabilitation Services Manager

Category 2 - Email Us!
info@worksourceva.org

Category 3 - Visit Us!
1311 Carlton Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Category 4 - Check Us Out!
www.worksourceva.org

All Categories Are Open!

WorkSource is celebrating its 45th Anniversary of Service to Virginians with Disabilities
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!
**VRA Events Calendar**

Mark your calendars for these important dates for your state and national associations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting, Fredericksburg, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17-19th</td>
<td>NRA Legislative Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22nd</td>
<td>VRCEA Rehabilitation Counselor Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23rd</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting, Fairfax, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting; NewsNotes article submission deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting, Richmond, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting; NewsNotes article submission deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 18-20th</td>
<td>NRA 2013 Annual Training Conference, New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 20th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting, Charlottesville, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 10th</td>
<td>2013 Annual Benjy Burnett Golf Tournament, Hunting Hawk Golf Course, Richmond, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 29th- Oct 1st</td>
<td>2013 Collaborations Conference, Virginia Beach, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting; NewsNotes article submission deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 10th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 13th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting</td>
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</table>

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

**Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is April 26th, 2013.**

Send to newsnotes@vra.org
### Virginia Rehabilitation Association

**VRA President**  Rob Froehlich  
**President-Elect**  Kim Shepard  
**Past President**  Ned Campbell  
**Treasurer**  Eleanor Williams  
**Secretary**  Adair Jensen-Smith  
**Board Members**  Naomi Aitken, Sandra Mottesheard, Susan Gaillard, David Gitlin, Jean Steveson, Antoinette Smith, Wendy Gradison, Margie Millner, Roxanne Slaughter

**VRCEA President**  Karen Backus  
**VARL President**  Jim Hall  
**NewsNotes Editor**  Kristina Derderian

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**Run An Ad in the VRA NEWNOTES**

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<th>Price 1/4 Page</th>
<th>Price 1/2 Page</th>
<th>Price Full Page</th>
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<td>Full Page</td>
<td>$50 / issue</td>
<td>$175 / year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Next Deadline for NewsNotes: April 26th.**

Please Submit NewsNotes articles to Kristina Derderian 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