Presidential Pondering by Rob Froehlich

Spring has finally arrived in Virginia, and I’d like to begin my Ponderings this quarter by following up on some of the issues I wrote about in the January NewsNotes.

As you may recall, I noted that I intended to follow up with VRA membership outreach to several other entities such as employment service organizations/community rehabilitation programs. Since January I’ve had the opportunity to talk with professionals in West Virginia (with a disbanded WVRA chapter), with the ESOSC, and with VA DBVI. In addition I will be talking with professionals in DC (DC RA has also been disbanded) this upcoming week. I want to encourage you all as VRA members to also engage in such outreach efforts as well, and I thank the membership committee for all their hard work in this area.

In January I also mentioned stepping up our efforts to expand our educational offerings throughout the year. I am proud to report that our education committee has been engaged in meeting internally and with other entities such as VARL, VRCA and VRCEA and this year will be one of the richest in terms of VRA sponsored education sessions in recent years. I want to extend a hearty thank you to this wonderful committee for their work over the past quarter.

The VRA Board met on May 7th for a retreat at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center with a focus on our existing processes and procedures (Constitution; Bylaws; Policies and Procedures Manual, and Duties associated with each position), as well as current information relating to committees (functions, roles, what are the committees) and processing suggestions for necessary, desired changes. I see this as the first step in a multiyear process of assisting VRA to meet the needs of our current society. Thanks to the Retreat Advisory Panel for helping to pull this all together.

I’ve detailed areas where there has been a lot of activity over the past quarter and many positive results. In fairness, I’d like to also bring up an area where I didn’t have such a successful response. In our last NewsNotes I asked folks to share with me their elevator speech relating to ‘Why I am a VRA member.’ I received one response that was moderately related. In my mind, the reason for the low response rate has to do with a contemporary reality and with part of my response to ‘Why I am a VRA member.’ I don’t think I’d surprise anyone by reflecting back that in the current world of work (more with less, 24/7 access, etc.) we are all REALLY BUSY. Sometimes things like professional organization participation and responses to surveys, etc. just seem like one more task and one more thing we really don’t have the time for. Well I’d like to suggest that we reframe our thinking on this topic and think about the potential ways we can harness some energy and get some support from our VRA community. Think about how when you come together with your VRA colleagues you are with folks who understand your world of work (no matter whether that’s in the VR setting, in an ESO setting, in an education setting, or in some other related field). Remember that at our core,
we are all helping professionals, and on that day when you feel you can’t possibly create one more report, handle one more traumatic situation, or get your kids to one more scheduled activity (maybe I’m personalizing a bit on that one ☺) your VRA colleague is likely to completely understand and to perhaps even suggest a way for you to manage one of those situations.

This quarter I would like to request one more piece of information from the VRA membership. At our retreat this week we will be discussing the concept of something I’m referring to for lack of a better name as VRA Gives Back. I would like for us as an association to identify an activity (or multiple activities throughout the state) on a particular day where VRA members have the opportunity to engage in an activity that somehow directly impacts the lives of people with disabilities in a positive manner. I don’t have any other formed thoughts on what that would look like so I really am looking for your thoughts on this topic.

Over the past quarter I have had the opportunity to work with and to sit in on meetings of multiple VRA groups and committees (membership, golf/ways means, collaborations planning, retreat committee, fiscal, legislative, and education). For me, many of these interactions were the first time I was involved with those groups. For our broader membership I’d like to reflect back how impressed I have been with all of the efforts each of these groups puts into all the work they do. I’m looking forward to continuing through the year as your VRA President and I thank you all for the support you have provided for me.

--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 VRA 2013 Golf committee has sent out sponsorship letters to last 18 sponsors from last year. So far, we have received 4 positive responses totaling $925.00. The committee is developing list of additional new sponsors and has identified at least 12 new potential sponsors. We need more, so if you have contacts or organizations/businesses you can target please send them the link from our web site (http://www.vra.org/www/ngw/events.shtml). Thanks, and sign up a team to play on Tuesday September 10th, 2013 at Hunting Hawk Golf Course.

--Submitted by Howard Green
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/

Rehabilitation Counselor’s Day!

The Virginia Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Association, a Division of VRA, and the Virginia Rehabilitation Counselors Association are Celebrating Rehabilitation Counselors on September 6th in Richmond. A full day of activity is being planned to include training topics on Ethics and Wellness. More details will be forthcoming. ALL Rehabilitation Counselors are welcome at no cost! This is a day of recognition, appreciation and celebration for the profession and work you do each day!

VRA Division and Committee News

Legislative Liaison & Committee Report

By all accounts, VRA had a good year at the Virginia General Assembly. We focused on one budget amendment item, sponsored by Senator Emmett Hanger, which would have increased funding by $2,000,000 to restore VR services for consumers in the order of selection, which DARS estimated at 2,136. In addition, we supported budget amendments that would increase appropriations for LTESS and ESS for the 2,726 consumers already employed.

Fortunately for our consumers, this was a budget year with some discretionary spending available, unlike the severe economic times of recent memory. That said, lots of stakeholder groups wanted their portion of funding, and the member budget amendment list was substantial.

In the end, $1.3M was allocated to VR in the General Assembly conference report. In addition, $240K was allocated to LTESS to reduce the waiting list, and $250K was allocated for personal assistance services. Finally, brain injury services received $105K in the conference report. All in all, we could have fared much worse than we did.

In addition to our primary budget concerns, the attached table chronicles the progress of other budget items including the following in the conference report:

- Approved: Supported employment (DMAS): DMAS will realign billable activities paid for individualized supported employment provided under Home and Community Based waivers to be consistent with the job and placement services provided through ESO reimbursed by DARS.
- Rejected: Provide for sick leave funding for consumer directed care providers.
Thanks to all who contacted members of the “money” committees to advocate for VR and ESS funding. On behalf of VRA we also thanked each member of the Senate Finance Committee in writing for supporting Senator Hanger’s amendment, and we encouraged all budget conferees to include the amendment in their final report. Which they did.

Otherwise, you probably read and heard as much about the General Assembly as you wanted during the 47 days they were in Richmond. And in the end, the suspense was focused on horse trading on transportation funding and Medicaid expansion. Governor McDonnell becomes the first governor since Governor Baliles (I believe) to obtain an increase in revenue for transportation. And it appears that the door remains open, albeit partially open, for Medicaid expansion, which if enacted, will bring health insurance to an additional 250,000-400,000 eligible Virginians. Not too shabby for those of us in the health advocacy fields.

Finally, in the reconvened session, the Governor tweaked some budget items, but not any of ours. He did add some provisions for the Medicaid expansion, further detailing what reforms he expects to occur in Medicaid prior to the implementation of Medicaid expansion.

A requirement for expansion of Medicaid is the approval of the Medicaid reforms by the Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission, a bicameral, bipartisan panel including as ex-officios, the Secretaries of Finance (Ric Brown) and Health and Human Resources (Bill Hazel). Both houses have named the members to the Commission. In the House, they are Delegates Sherwood (Winchester), Landes (Waynesboro), Joannou (Portsmouth), O’Bannon (Henrico), and Massie (Richmond). In the Senate, they are Senators Stosch (metro Richmond), Howell (Fairfax), Lucas (Portsmouth), Watkins (Powhatan), and Hanger (Staunton). The House has taken a position very skeptical of expanding Medicaid, while the Senate has generally been more supportive of the expansion.

The first meeting of the Innovation and Reform Commission is scheduled for June, so stay tuned.

--Submitted by Becky Bowers-Lanier

### Membership Committee Update

#### Membership By the Numbers

Total Membership: 156 members (this is down from 166 in February 2012; a net loss of ten members).

#### DARS Friend Program

We are currently undergoing an analysis of the program.

**Welcome, 2013 New Members:**

- Terry Seward, Fishersville, VA
- Katy Tweedy, Portsmouth, VA
- Nate Mahanes, Lynchburg, VA
- Sarah Gonzales, Petersburg, VA
- Michael DeMark, Portsmouth, VA
- Leslie Diaz Ortiz, Winchester, VA
- Patti Drescher, Riner, VA, New Board Member!
- Shaquwanda Baker, Manassas, VA
- Karen Stevens, Waynesboro, VA
- Matthew Fields Rockford, VA is also a new member
- *Karol Treadway, Christiansburg, VA
- *Karol is not yet official on NRA reports and is not included in the counts above.
Along with VRA President Froelich, Membership/Communication Committee members met by conference phone at the end of March to discuss several matters. The first of which is the Student Membership Drive. President Froelich wants to encourage outreach to student members with an eye to infusing new passion, drive, energy, and technology to the membership. Another focus of the conference was on social “mixers.” These would be small regional get-togethers at a local establishment to discuss VRA, do some recruiting, help to retain current members, and to provide an event around which to gather, greet, and enjoy each others’ company. Events are currently planned for Tidewater for May 17th, Southwest on the morning of May 24th, and a Blue Ridge event on Friday, May 24th (or May 31st) at 5:00 p.m. at the Blue Mountain Brewery in Afton, VA.

--Submitted by Andrew Stowe

VRA Education Committee Update

By request, another workshop on Emotional Intelligence, with Susan Green as Trainer, has been scheduled in the southwest region of the state (Wytheville) on June 7, 2013. VRA Board member and Education Committee member, Nora Tucker, will be the on-site person for this workshop. We hope to use this opportunity also to entice new membership from professionals in the far southwest region of the state.

The Education Committee has also been working on confirming details for a workshop in Fairfax on June 13, 2013. The workshop will feature Jose Campos, Director of the Job Avenue at Arlington County’s CSB, speaking to and facilitating discussion around how to initiate conversation with persons with SMI about competitive employment. This will be followed by a second discussion around employment placement strategies for persons with criminal backgrounds. We are working on confirming a presenter/facilitator for this second topic now. The workshop is tentatively scheduled to run from about 10:00 – 1:30, with a brown bag lunch concept.

Other topics the committee has identified as potential for workshops in the coming year include:

1) Street Drugs – the latest trends
2) Ethics related to potential issues related to newly legalized or lenient laws (in some states) around recreational/medicinal use of marijuana and drug screening by employers
3) DSM-5 – new version of DSM due out in May 2013 – what’s new and different
4) Motivational Interviewing
5) Stages of Change

We have made efforts to reach out to VARL and VRCA to share training plans and in an effort to not duplicate efforts. VARL plans to offer a training workshop also in June around change management around the book Our Iceberg is Melting and VRCA is also planning a one-day workshop in June (topic unknown).

--Submitted by Susan Gaillard

VRA Foundation Update

It is an honor to bring greetings and an update from the VRA Foundation.

It was with great sadness we learned of the passing of Lynn Kushner in February. Lynn was a long time member of the VRA Foundation and a very active member of VRA and a dedicated member of the DARS family. As Chairman of the VRA Foundation, I attended the memorial service held in her honor on February 17th. Her dedication to her family and to her VR customers and staff was shared with the many who attended her service and celebration of her life. It was a pleasure to know her and an honor to have served with her on this Board. Additionally, Lynn’s husband assisted the Foundation in drafting the legal documentation for our tax status at the time of our Incorporation, her family was an important part of our VRA Foundation legacy. On behalf of the VRA Foundation, we extend
heartfelt thanks to those who have made contributions to the VRA Foundation in the memory of Lynn Kushner. Currently, the VRA Foundation is seeking nominations for the 2013 scholarship. We will be meeting on July 15th to review applications and will announce the recipient of the scholarship soon after that date. If you know of someone who qualifies for this scholarship, please encourage them to visit the VRA website and submit their application. This is yet another benefit of membership in the Virginia Rehabilitation Association. 

Please consider making a donation to the VRA Foundation, we are a 501 c (3) organization….your donation is tax deductable! One can make a donation to honor a colleague …it is the perfect way to recognize those professionals who are retiring or celebrating a promotion.

This Chairman would like to thank her fellow VRA Foundation Board Members, Dale (“Dee Dee”) Batten, Howard Green, Mary Kaye Johnston, Margaret Gillispie, Bill Burnside and Mark Fletcher, for their dedication to the VRA Foundation and their support.

--Submitted by Bonnie Hawley

VARL Division Update

Life happens and even for leaders, sometimes things go haywire. VARL is a strong organization and luckily can react to change the way we hope most leaders can. Our President Jim Hall had some personal issues that superseded his intents and he has resigned. Stepping into his shoes, Shirley Lyons, who was the President-elect, is now in this key leadership role. The VARL Board – an outstanding group of individual leaders themselves, have also stepped up to the plate. VARL is in regrouping-mode but has not stopped working. VARL just successfully completed the April training which was presented by our wonderful VRA President Rob Froelich and all reports were very positive. New initiatives include a June Training which will meet the need of our Annual meeting. See the announcement elsewhere in the NewsNotes – this is a training that is dear to our hearts – CHANGE!

VARL will be re-instituting the popular Brown Bag luncheon series following the June training to continue to carry the message that the world we work in is in a state of change and as leaders, we must adapt.

As leaders we are constantly reminded of balancing the needs of our organizations, and of the people we lead. Even if not in a position of leadership, we must all hone our skills in this area. It also means that sometimes we have to risk and we have to expand from our comfort zone. I ran across a quote the other day and it stuck with me – I hope it can inspire you too.

“A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”
- John A. Shedd, Salt from My Attic, 1928

--Submitted by Ralph Figaro

NRA News

Mid Atlantic Regional Election Update

Pennsylvania - PRA membership holds steady. Rebecca Spirito-Dalgin is the new president of PRA. When PRA loses members, they are getting new, young members involved. However, they are also only replacing people who have resigned, so there is no significant growth. The Board is reaching out to younger individuals and educational groups to
increase membership. Happenings & Events included the 2013 PRA Professional Development Institute, “Maximizing Opportunities: A Bride to the Future,” which was held April 4th at the Central Pennsylvania College in Summerdale, PA.

DELAWARE - Membership is still small but it was increased in size as Goodwill Industries joined as a professional organization. They hope to do trainings and/or conferences in the future with the joint effort of Goodwill Industries. Delaware is organizing membership meetings around specific speakers to increase attendance and hopefully membership.

VIRGINIA - VRA is doing well. Rob Froelich is the new VRA President. Happenings & Events are:
1) Board is working on a plan to energize existing members and enticing new members.
2) Money from rebates will be used for membership promotion and trainings.
3) Executive Committee of the Board is in the process of developing a one day retreat/planning session for the 2013 VRA Board.
4) VRCEA and VRCA are making plans to co-sponsor a counselor appreciation day sometime in the spring.
5) VRA Foundation (provides scholarships to members and family members)

MARYLAND – MRA’s new president is Dr. Spry from Coppin State University. Happenings & Events are:
1) MRA co-sponsored an all day multi-cultural raining on February 27, 2013. There were presentations from the MD DORS, Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the IRC, International Rescue Center, as well as a panel discussion from staffers of various cultural backgrounds. Attendees were treated to a luncheon of foods from around the world.
2) MRA received a certificate of recognition from the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. for its fundraising activities at its annual conference in October 2012.
3) MRA presented six awards at its annual conference in October 2012 in Ocean City, Maryland.

The Chapters in the Mid-Atlantic Region of NRA have been very busy and truly offer many opportunities and trainings for their members. Kudos to the Mid-Atlantic Region of NRA!

--Submitted by Eleanor Williams

32nd Annual Government Affairs Summit

Once again, Eleanor Williams and I had the opportunity to represent Virginia at the NRA Government Affairs Summit, held on March 17-19th in Washington DC. The program reflected speakers from a wide range of topics and concerns and the potential impact on the VR program.

Of note, the sequestration and effects of sequestration was a central theme for all speakers. There will be cuts to the Department of Education’s budget which will be felt throughout the programs supported in that agency. This includes the Rehabilitation Services Administration. At the time of the conference, there were many unknowns, so it has been a developing story since that time. Of note and great concern, is the potential for RSA to blend Title III (In-service Training Grant) and Title VI (Supported Employment) into Title I. Title III and Title VI do not require a match to draw down funds. As such, if blended, Title I would be increased and in effect increase the amount of match money that is required to draw down VR grant monies. Virginia has been fortunate to be able to make their match each year and draw down their VR grant. However, with the possibility of an increased match amount due to the blending of Title III and Title VI into Title I, it is difficult to say how many states would not be able to make their match, as even now many are not able to completely fund their match and are therefore are not drawing down their entire VR grant.

Although this presents an opportunity for some states to draw down a re-allocation (the grant monies that other states are not able to match), it does not bode well for individuals with disabilities in those states that
are unable to make their match. The NRA strongly opposes the blending of Title III and Title VI into Title I. For a full report, please visit the NRA website (www.Nationalrehab.org) and click on Government Affairs and then Issue Statements to view all of the position statements of the National Rehabilitation Association. There is both a full version and a summary provided on this link.

The Keynote speaker for the Summit was the Honorable Janet LaBreck, Commissioner for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind who has been nominated by President Obama to be the next Commissioner of RSA in the Dept of Education. By the time you read this, her nomination may be confirmed! I had the opportunity to speak to her and her Chief of Staff, Antonio Harris, at length. I shared with her the good things that were happening in VR here in Virginia. Mrs. LaBreck was very interested in attending our annual Collaborations Conference, and I have provided their contact information to our VRA President, Rob Froehlich to pass onto the Collaborations planning committee. Hopefully we will be seeing Commissioner LaBreck soon!

Eleanor and I had a successful day on the Hill. We had the pleasure once again to meet with Patience Wiggins, Legislative Assistant and Correspondent for the Honorable Gerald Connolly, 11th District who represents my Congressional District. We also provided information to the offices of Frank Wolf (10th District); James Moran (8th District) and Eric Cantor (7th District and Majority Leader). On the Senate side, information was provided to the office of Senator Kaine, and information was electronically sent to Senator Warner.

As your Legislative Chairman, thank you once again in supporting my attendance at the NRA Government Affairs Summit. I encourage all of you to consider attending next year. Should you have any questions regarding these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

--Submitted by Bonnie Hawley

Other News & Notes
Virginia Lifespan Respite Care Program Provides Relief to Hundreds of Families

DARS’ Community Based Services division and the Virginia Division for Aging have been busy processing applications for the Virginia Lifespan Respite Care Program since the program launched January 29th.

More than 400 applications have been received and approved. This unique program, funded through a grant from the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Office of Home and Community Based Services, provides up to $400 in reimbursement vouchers to home-based caregivers for the cost of temporary, short-term respite care provided to individuals of any age with a disability or special need.

Since the kickoff event, DARS staffers have heard firsthand the critical need for respite services for Virginia’s dedicated family caregivers. Family members express gratitude and joy at the opportunity for what many of us take for granted: time to rest, relax, and rejuvenate. Here are some comments from family caregivers:

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity to receive respite reimbursement funds. My husband and I were able to take a mini “vacation” this weekend and feel so rejuvenated! We are back now taking care of our precious daughter, but that was all we needed.

Thank you so much, I so very, very badly need a break; he requires 24-hour care and I can’t go shopping, do the laundry, or even take a relaxing bath for much longer than I care to tell you. This is a godsend.

Thank you so much for blessing me and my family. We are honored and I really can’t thank you enough!
A reporter for the NBC affiliate in Richmond who heard about the voucher program asked DARS to pull together people to answer questions about respite care during its “Call 12” show on March 18. VDA’s Ellen Nau and Mary Ann Johnson of the Virginia Caregivers Coalition helped to muster volunteers representing organizations providing services for children, adults and hospice patients, a provider of respite services and other experts to handle calls for the 90-minute newscast beginning at 5 p.m. The volunteers were kept busy the entire show. The station also aired interviews with VDA Program Director Kathy Miller and the VCC’s Johnson, herself a long-distance caregiver.

Community partners involved in implementing the Virginia Lifespan Respite Care Program include the Virginia Caregiver Coalition, VirginiaNavigator, and the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University. With input from the VCC, VirginiaNavigator will unveil a Caregiver Solution Center later this spring. Caregivers will be able to easily find information on a variety of caregiver issues in the Solution Center. In addition, an “Ask an Expert” feature on the Solution Center will offer caregivers the opportunity to ask question questions about caregiver issues in a secure and private environment.

For additional information on the Virginia Lifespan Respite Care Program, including details on eligibility, and to obtain application forms, visit www.vadrs.org/services.htm. For further information on the Virginia Caregiver Coalition or VirginiaNavigator, contact Ellen Nau at VDA. For information on the Virginia Lifespan Respite Care Program, contact Kristie Chamberlain at CBS.

--Submitted by Liz Smith

**VA CILs Kept Busy in 2013**

Virginia’s Centers for Independent Living (CIL) have been busy!

CILs are serving on the Medicaid Dual Eligibility Committee and are being contacted by managed care organizations for technical assistance with their proposals to DMAS. These organizations are hoping to be selected to operate regional programs.

CILs are applying for the new WISE contract. Funds will be available August 1 to continue these important work incentives and assistance services.

At least nine CILs are sending staff to the annual National Council for Independent Living Conference (NCIL) in Washington, D.C. We are coordinating Hill visits to speak with our senators and delegates about issues that are important to individuals with disabilities.

CILs are assisting with an upcoming ADA Summit by identifying presenters and attendees. The Summit will be held on June 18.

CILs are working with state agencies and Donald Fletcher, the Independent Reviewer for the DOJ Settlement Agreement. Representatives are serving on the Housing Work Group, DBHDS DOJ Settlement Advisory Group, Case Management Work Group and Children in Facilities Work Group.

We are also working with DMAS to improve qualification standards for Medicaid consumer-directed services facilitation organizations.

CILs are also working with several school divisions to improve transition services and options for students with disabilities. Data is being collected about current practices. CILs are working with steering committees comprised of individuals with disabilities, students, and
community agencies to identify gaps in service, training
needs, and early career exploration and goal setting.

CILs are also in the process of converting to the newest
version of their data collection system CILsFirst. The
system provides CILs with the ability to gather data on a
consistent basis. It also provides the flexibility needed
to meet the needs of individual CILs by ensuring that
reports can be generated for local funding sources and
for management purposes.

--Submitted by Karen Michalski

WWRC Updates

Secretary Hazel Visits WWRC
WWRC had a wonderful visit from the Secretary of Health and Human Resources,
Dr. Bill Hazel, on Tuesday, April 16, 2013, who spent time in our Fork Lift Training
area with our students. After only a few minutes of instruction, he tried his hand at
moving some pallets of product. This was a great experience for everyone involved,
especially our clients who cheered for, cajoled, and applauded the Secretary’s
attempt to operate the forklift. Dr. Hazel took time to meet with each and every
client and reviewed their vocational experience here at WWRC, and more
importantly, their career goals.

The students reflected on the various job leads they have and received Dr. Hazel’s
encouragement to continue their training and pursuit of employment. Thanks to
Donna Hawkins who made a “custom designed hard hat” for Dr. Hazel.

His parting comments were that he loved spending this time with our students and
planned to wear his new hard hat celebrating the day on a tour he had planned at
another state agency. Special thanks to Steve Sweeney, Norma Shifflett and all of
the student forklift operators for hosting this event.

Fork Lift Rodeo
On March 20, 2013, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center held a
Forklift Rodeo which allowed clients from the Center to
demonstrate their skills in forklift operation for local business and
industry. The event was attended by Legislators, the State
Rehabilitation Council, and the WWRC Foundation. This event
received significant media attention. Four clients who participated
in the rodeo graduated from WWRC on March 22, 2103, and are
now seeking employment.

Health Occupations Training Program
Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Personal Care Aide (PCA) clients now have the option to register with a
statewide database through a new program that has been implemented. The Valley Associates for Independent Living
registry is available to all consumers who are participating in a “Customer Directed” service. The registry is totally
voluntary. It is just one more tool to enhance the employability of WWRC’s completing PCAs. As a student successfully
tests and attains certification for a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) position, they can update their information page
and be available at the higher level of CNA through the “Consumer Directed” program.

Vocational Training staff, along with DRS staff from the Northern Region, visited Spring Arbor Assisted Living Facility in
Leesburg, Virginia, this past week. Spring Arbor developed interest in WWRC’s Health Occupations Program after hiring
a recent Center graduate who is a Certified Nursing Assistant. This is an important contact for the Health Occupations Program because of the statewide presence of Spring Arbor. Their CEO became very engaged in this visit and the floor supervisor said that they want to hire Center graduates because of the quality skills they bring to the job. WWRC is enhancing its focus on connecting Center instructors to DRS Counselors and placement staff to connect recent graduates to employment opportunities, and more importantly accessing corporate executives who have the ability to connect Center programs to industries and businesses statewide. This connection is not only important to the employment of Center graduates, but to constantly assess the curriculum of vocational training programs, as well as the performance expectations that Center graduates must meet to be successful in employment.

Materials Handling Training Program

WWRC’s 2013/14 Blueprint for Direction emphasizes the importance of connecting Center instructors to DRS Counselors and Placement staff. In recent days, the significant role of the Business Development Managers has also become apparent. On Wednesday, February 20, 2013, Wes Seaton, one of the DARS Agency’s Business Development Managers in the Richmond area, facilitated a tour of WWRC’s Materials Handling Program with Southern States’ executives in charge of recruitment statewide. Southern States’ Superintendent of Operations in Cloverdale was also here for the tour and scrutinized curriculum for the Materials Handling, as well as the Forklift Operators Program. He advised WWRC that they are on the right track. Recent rehabilitation rates for the program are above 70 percent. Southern States operates many stores and warehouses throughout the state and have a need for trained forklift operators. Following the tour, the Southern States team relayed the following, “We gained so much insight to the inter-workings of your programs and left with a lot of thoughts and takeaways. We are looking forward to partnering with you all for future job opportunities within our organization.”

Meet a VRA Board Member: Nora Tucker

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve on the VRA Board!

I’ve been a member of VRA since joining the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services in 2008. I have had a varied professional background that has led me to where I am currently holding. Prior to graduating with my undergraduate degree from Radford University, I began an internship with Easter Seals Virginia providing Early Intervention (EI) Services. This position worked with infants and toddlers with disabilities in their home providing cognitive and social education to help clients meet various developmental milestones. This internship led to paid employment upon graduation from RU.

I continued to work within this field for several years and moving to Northern Virginia with their EI program in Prince William County and Fairfax County. After a devastating apartment fire, I decided to move back home to Southwest Virginia. I took a position providing case management services for adults with Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injuries within the New River Valley. This was an exciting opportunity and learning curve for me and I developed a strong passion for this disability.

After working there for five years, I decided to move back into the pediatric sector and entered the school system in Roanoke as a Behavior Specialist. Through conversations with a previous professional colleague who worked for DRS, I applied for a position within the agency as a Job Placement Counselor. I was offered a job, remained in this role for two years before moving into a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor role. Initially I worked with the Serious Mental Ill population then transferring into a Transition Caseload. I like to say that I have officially worked the life span of individuals with disabilities and am thankful for the paths that I have chosen which have led me to where I am.

--Submitted by Nora Tucker
Meet a VRA Board Member: Wendy Gradison

Wendy Gradison currently serves as President and CEO of PRS, Inc. (Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services) a community-based, non-profit organization dedicated to helping people living with mental illness, mild intellectual disabilities, substance use disorders, and autism spectrum disorders achieve personal wellness, recovery and community integration.

A licensed clinical social worker, trained family therapist and facilitator, Ms. Gradison received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Williams College and her Masters in Social Work from Catholic University. Under Wendy’s leadership, PRS was named by the Nonprofit Times as one of the nation’s 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For in 2011, 2012 and 2013. PRS, Inc. has been named a finalist in the 2013 Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. Wendy received the regional Center for Nonprofit Advancement’s 2011 EXCEL Award for outstanding nonprofit leadership.

Recent examples of her service to improve employment outcomes for persons living with disabilities include: serving as the Co-convener of the Implementation Action Team to create employment opportunities for individuals with mental health or substance use disorders for the statewide Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; serving as a member of the Executive Committee for the Board of Directors of the Virginia Association of Community Rehabilitation Programs; serving as a member of the Advisory Council of the Regional Community Support Center of the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute; serving for two terms on the Department of Rehabilitative Services’ Employment Services Organization Advisory Committee and serving as the Chair of the Supported Education/Supported Employment Workgroup for the Fairfax County Beeman Commission Implementation Steering Committee.

In her free time, Wendy enjoys hiking, and cross-country skiing in Davis, West Virginia with her husband and grown children, and running after her dogs.

--Submitted by Wendy Gradison

Meet a VRA Board Member: Roxanne Slaughter

Roxanne Slaughter is a Counselor Manager with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services in the Lynchburg Office. Prior to her current position, she worked as a Human Services Program Specialist at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center serving high school students in the Tidewater area, Rehabilitation Counselor in the Charlottesville office, and a Counselor for with the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Roxanne received her B.S. in Sociology from Longwood College and her M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University. She is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

Roxanne enjoys spending time with her family, exercising, and gardening during her leisure time.

--Submitted by Roxanne Slaughter
AgrAbility Assistive Technology Training Program

For years, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and agriculture professionals in Virginia have been partnering to improve employment outcomes for farmers and agricultural workers with disabilities. AgrAbility Virginia helps individuals with disabilities overcome barriers to continue in their chosen profession in agriculture. AgrAbility Virginia is a cooperative effort of the Rural Rehab Partnership which includes: Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension (VCE); Easter Seals UCP Virginia; the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS); Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS); Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC); Virginia Farm Bureau Safety (FB); Centers for Independent Living (CILs); Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA); Virginia Arthritis Action Coalition (VAAC); and Virginian Disability Service Agencies.

On April 25 – 26, 2013, DARS and VATS coordinated the AgrAbility Assistive Technology Training program in Colonial Heights, Virginia to thirty five Division of Rehabilitative Service (DRS) staff and community partners. National AgrAbility experts from Wisconsin trained VR professionals and community partners to better assist farmers with disabilities. The two-part training included a classroom setting and a visit to a nearby farm. Training participants were able to observe how AgrAbility professionals and VR staff were able to work collaboratively to help a farmer overcome physical barriers to continue working on his family farm.

For additional information and resources to support positive outcomes with this population, please contact Virginia Assistive Technology System at: (804) 662-9990 or www.vats.org.

--Submitted by Bob Krollman and Barclay Shepard

Indiana Man Seeks Signatures for Airline Accessibility Petition


Ben Trockman is from Evansville, Indiana and is a young man with a spinal cord injury. He uses a power wheelchair and is very frustrated with his lack of access to airlines. He is looking to gain support to open up the discussion about improving airline access and has started a petition, which already has hundreds of signatures. Please consider signing the petition and circulating it through your networks to build support for better airline access.

Ben is traveling to Washington DC in mid-May to advocate for changes in the airlines. With your signature, he can show the world that he has your support.

A link to a recent Evansville Courier and Press article that was written about progress on the airline issue. In mid-April Ben traveled to Indianapolis to speak in front of the state Senate and House, who have just passed a resolution in favor of the proposal.

--Submitted as an excerpt from RehabNet
The Virginia Rehabilitation Association presents:

BEYOND IQ: Are You Playing Well with Others?
Understanding Emotional Intelligence and Optimism and Its Impact on Your Success
Presenter: Susan Green

Do you recognize your feelings and manage your emotions to the maximum benefit of your personal and professional relationships? Can you assess others’ feelings accurately and leverage that awareness into successful outcomes for yourself and others? Do you know how to use optimism when facing challenges or setbacks?

This training will introduce you to the competencies that make up Emotional Intelligence and how they translate into on-the-job success. This is information that can help your clients or employees or even your children!

And, what about YOU? Are you playing well with others?
Come increase your self-awareness and learn strategies for change!

Susan Green has over 35 years experience in Vocational Rehabilitation counseling, management, and staff development. She conducts training for state government agencies, private sector community partners, and for professional rehabilitation associations. She has extensive experience in performance coaching, caseload management, and community partnership development. In addition to training on topics in vocational rehabilitation, Susan has been active in facilitating leadership ‘chats’ on topics such as situational leadership, the FISH Philosophy, Stephen Covey’s ‘Seven Habits of Highly Successful People’ and “8th Habit” as well as delivering training on living our lives by design vs. by default.

Always a very energetic and enthusiastic trainer ~ expect to have some fun!

Friday, June 7, 2013
Check in/coffee 9 a.m.
Training 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
(lunch is on your own)

DRS/DARS Wytheville Office
800 E. Main St., Suite 160
Wytheville, VA 24382

Register early! Space may be limited!
CRC credits available
$15 VARL members/ $25 non members
SEATING LIMITED - NO REFUNDS AFTER MAY 31, 2013

Disability related accommodation requests must be received by Wednesday, May 20th
Make check payable to Va. Rehab. Association and mail to ATTN: Susan Gaillard, Dept. for Aging and Rehab Services, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA 23229
Questions to Susan.Gaillard@dars.virginia.gov
VARL Leadership Series

*Your Iceberg is Melting: Successfully Handling Change for you and your clients*

Date: June 18, 2013
Time 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Check-in begins at 9:00; Lunch on your own
Henrico Mental Health and Developmental Services East Center
4825 S. Laburnum Ave. Henrico, VA

Using the fable “*Our Iceberg is Melting*” by John Kotter as a building block, this training will look at change and provide insight into handling the changing environment in which we live. The interactive workshop will give you information on dealing with the changes in your professional capacity on both a personal level and with your clients. You will definitely view change differently after this workshop.

**Objectives:**
- Understand the steps involved in the change process
- Identify emotions that may impact the way we handle change
- Understand the steps needed to use change in a positive way
- Identify ways to help clients undergo change in a more positive way

**Presenter:** Shirley A. Lyons, M.S. Shirley is an adjunct professor at the University of Phoenix Richmond campus where she has taught Business and General Ed courses since 2011. She is also the Program Manager for Employment and Day Services at Henrico Area Mental Health & Disability Services. Shirley has a Masters of Science in Organizational Development with a Specialty in Leadership from Capella University. She has taught a variety of leadership seminars for VARL and VRA and has been a presenter for Collaborations Conference for several years.

This training is appropriate for ESO managers; Employment Specialists, DARS managers, DARS counselors, and other human services staff. CRC’s have been requested.

**Registration Form**

*Your Iceberg is Melting: Successfully Handling Change for you and your clients*
Henrico Mental Health and Developmental Services East Center
June 18th 2013 9:30am-3:30pm

Name: ____________________________________________
Title: ______________________________________________
Agency: ____________________________________________
Email: _____________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________

$15 for VARL members; $25 for nonmembers. Please make checks payable to VARL.
Please send check and registration to: Naomi Aitken 2211 Hydraulic Road Suite 101n Charlottesville, VA 22901
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
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!

YOUR AD COULD BE HERE!

Contact VRA at newsnotes@vra.org to reserve space in the next issue.

Ads are available in quarter, half and full-page sizes and can be purchased per quarter or year. Prices are available on the back page of this issue.
## 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>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 7th</td>
<td>VRA Training, “Beyond IQ: Are You Playing Well With Others?”</td>
<td>Wytheville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18th</td>
<td>VARL Training, “Your Iceberg is Melting: Successfully Handling Change for You and Your Clients,”</td>
<td>Henrico, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2nd</td>
<td>NewsNotes article submission deadline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 18-20th</td>
<td>NRA 2013 Annual Training Conference</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 20th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting</td>
<td>Charlottesville, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 10th</td>
<td>2013 Annual Benjy Burnett Golf Tournament</td>
<td>Hunting Hawk Golf Course, Richmond, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 29th-</td>
<td>2013 Collaborations Conference</td>
<td>Virginia Beach, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1st</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1st</td>
<td>NewsNotes article submission deadline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 10th</td>
<td>VARL Board Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 13th</td>
<td>VRA Board Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

---

**Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is August 2nd, 2013.**

Send to newsnotes@vra.org
Run An Ad in the VRA NEWSNOTES

1/4 PAGE
$15 / issue: $50 / year

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

Next Deadline for NewsNotes: Aug 2nd.
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