It was a great Fall of 2015 with the successful Golf Tournament and great Collaborations Conference. First of all, I would like to recognize and thank Howard Green for his many years of hard work and initiative to make the Benjy Burnette Golf Tournament what it is today, a great fund raiser and event of collegiality and fun! Over the years, thousands of dollars have been raised that help VRA provide quality services to association members by providing low-cost educational opportunities, scholarships and other important VRA initiatives. Thank you Howard! I know the Golf Tournament will be in good hands with Kim Shepard, and hopefully Howard will be an advisor.

The Collaborations Conference was another success this past year with many break-out and keynote sessions providing important information that directly provides impactful information for our work in the field of rehabilitation. Stay tuned for dates and location of the 2016 conference!

One thing I have been pondering over the past several months is the difficulty in finding VRA members who are willing to serve as officers or board members. There was no election this Fall as we could not find a full slate of folks willing to run. Our organization is vital and helpful to Rehabilitation professionals and consumers alike. I truly believe that we need to involve youthful VRA members in our midst to become active and hopefully in board and officer positions. Please reach out to your colleagues who are or are not members yet to become active and involved. We still need to recruit for the President Elect position and for one board member position. Please share with Kim Shepard, Dale Batten, or myself your interest in running or pass on the names of those who you feel would be good candidates.

Thank you and I hope to see you on February 5th at our next VRA Board meeting at the DARS Central office! The meeting begins at 10:00am in conference room 101! Adair Jensen-Smith will be sending out a reminder and the call in number information.
VRA News
VRA needs YOU!

VRA needs YOU to help with a variety of functions of the organization. Please give of yourself, your time and your talents in ways that are fun and pleasing for you.

There are a number of committees and other behind the scenes work making VRA an effective, efficient and viable organization.

YOU can be an important LINK to the infra-structure and continuing work to build VRA and to make a real difference!

VARL Election Results are IN for 2016! -- Submitted by Shirley Lyons, VARL

It is with great delight that we announce the VARL Board Elections, with the service to begin January 1, 2016.

PRESIDENT --- Robin Metcalf
PRESIDENT ELECT --- Roxanne Slaughter (newly elected)
SECRETARY --- Alison Mundy (newly elected, also serving as TREASURER)
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT --- Naomi Aitken
Board Member At Large Jane Bennett-Bailey (newly elected)
                      Alex Spangler (newly elected)
                      Andrew Stowe (newly elected)
                      Bonnie Henn
                      Mark Hawkins
                      Sam Rothrock
                      Eleana Boyer

THANKS TO ALL WHO VOTED AND CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

VRA Golf Tournament Update-- Submitted by the Howard Green and Kim Shepard

The 16th annual VRA Benjy Burnett Memorial Golf Tournament was held at Stonehenge Golf Club on September 14, 2015. It was a beautiful day to play golf and mingle with friends and colleagues. We would like to thank everyone who assisted to make this a successful event!
In appreciation, those folks who made this a success are Susan Green, Mary Kaye Johnston, Kim Shepard, Margie Millner, Liz Smith, Adair Jensen-Smith, and Becky Bowers-Lanier.

This year we had 22 hole sponsors and 26 teams. Thanks to the folks who donated items for prizes. Based on the initial figures VRA will earn over $3,000.00 and maybe as much as $4,000.00 for the tournament.

We would like to thank everyone and remind our members that we can raise more money if each member would be committed to get one business to sponsor a hole for the tournament. We would ask that you start now and reach out to someone you know to get a $125.00 sponsorship for the 2016 golf tournament.

VRA Division and Committee News

VRA Membership Committee Update -- Submitted by Andrew Stowe, Membership and Communications Committee Chair

Please join us in giving a huge welcome to our newest member! --

Caroline Stabler
Deana Holinka
Danielle Lidke
Tuajuana Smoot-Hairson
Julie Saum
Lasonya Jackson

VRA Education Foundation Update -- Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnson, Education Foundation Chairperson

The Foundation Board met in November to conduct its official business and to initiate the 2016 capital campaign, raising funds that will help increase the scholarship awards available to VRA members and their family members. You have most likely already received the letter and we hope you will be generous in your giving!

The Board also decided to broaden access to scholarship funds through three $100 grants each year to members for training workshops, seminars, online courses, etc. Funds will be distributed on a first come first serve basis. The 2016 grants will be awarded in honor of Kristi Lockhart, DARS Transition Coordinator.
Other News & Notes

Nude Food (Employee Highlight!) --Submitted by Kate Gariepy, Vocational Counselor with The Choice Group

A core part of our mission at Nude Fude is to foster a strong sense of community amongst our patrons and staff. To help you get to know us better, we feature one of our stalwart employees each week in a Facebook post.

https://www.facebook.com/Nude-Fude-937524849621632/timeline/

No question, Jeffery Barksdale is the guy we want to represent us front-n-center. Officially, he’s our dishwasher, but he’s also the hardest working man at NF and the engine that allows the kitchen to hum. Quick with a joke and even faster in the dish pit, Jeff brings tremendous energy to the restaurant. Hailing from the Danville-area, Jeff used his skills developed as an Eagle Scout to great success at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind before making his way to Charlottesville. When not slaying dishes, Jeff enjoys live music and brags about the 2 DMB shows he has notched already this year. Thanks for all that you do, and the way that you do it, Jeff! Please check out the NewsPlex feature for October 2015 on Jeff below!

https://www.facebook.com/937524849621632/videos/vb.937524849621632/1070140569693392/?type=2&theater

RGI Establishes Assistive Technology Lending Library to Benefit Workers and Employers -- Submitted by Julie Rettinger, Vice President – Community Relations & Resource Development

Thanks to a very generous gift from The Honeywell Charitable Fund of The Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region, RGI has established a lending library of assistive technology. These various supports allow users to accomplish tasks they otherwise would not be able to do or do effectively.

Both employers and employees are eligible to borrow items for up to 90 days from RGI’s Assistive Technology Lending Library. Available items include iPods, iPads, screen readers, handheld video magnifiers, talking watches, voice amplifiers, and text-to-talk software. Additionally, there are three universal workstations for clients to use that are outfitted with enhancements including a large screen monitor, computer navigation software that assists individuals with sight impairments, a large print keyboard, and an adjustable and wheelchair accessible work surface to meet the ergonomic needs of users.
“Typically, one of our partners such as the disAbility Resource Center or the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services will refer someone to our Assistive Technology Lending Library,” said Megan Bergen, RGI’s vice president of Mission Services. “We work with referred individuals to assess needs and then recommend technology we think will enhance their career potential. Training is provided and once the trial period is over, our staff assists clients with purchasing their own equipment or software at the lowest possible price.”

RGI welcomes interested VRA Members who wish to visit RGI’s Lending Library. Please contact Megan Bergen at 540-371-3070 or Megan.Bergen@FredGoodwill.org.

**VRCEA presents the “Spirit Award” to Susan Green -- Submitted by Bonnie Henn, VRCEA President**

Each year VRCEA recognizes a Rehabilitation Counselor or educator who embodies the spirit of rehabilitation. The recipient of this award receives a certificate and a $50 gift card.

The award is presented annually at the Collaborations Conference. This year, the Spirit Award recipient is Susan Green. She was nominated by Susan Galliard and Dee Dee Batten. Susan has over 40 years of experience in the Vocational Rehabilitation field. She has worked as a Rehabilitation Counselor, Manager and most recently as Interim Regional Director and Coordinator of the new counselor skills training webinars. These webinars provide training to new counselors at DARS and using this technology, counselors need not leave the office to receive quality training, yet still receive the benefit of her considerable expertise.

In addition to her own, Susan brings in agency experts across the spectrum of topics thus providing new counselors the latest information and best practices. In presenting the award, it was acknowledged that Susan has touched the professional career of almost every rehabilitation counselor in the state.

_Pictured:_ Susan Green, 2015 Spirit Award Recipient and Bonnie Henn, President, VRCEA 2015

**Important Save the Dates and Trainings!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VRCEA Training Events!!!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-March 2 2016 Mental Health training in Lynchburg details to follow</td>
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<tr>
<td>-May 13 Training in Richmond details to follow</td>
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</table>
Fingerspelling & Beginning Sign Language Class

(ABC’s, Vocabularies and Sentences)

April 5th to May 10th 2016
(6 weeks)
Tuesdays 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Instructor: Arva Priola

Cost: $70.00
Includes $60 Class Fee and $10 Beginning Sign Language Book

Payment must be made prior to class. A check can be made out and sent to the dRC or link to the DONATE button on the dRC website, www.cildrc.org and using PayPal. Please note that payment is for the April Beginning Sign Language Class

Location:
Reformation Lutheran Church
Fellowship Hall
415 South Main Street # 101
Culpeper, VA 22701

For more information contact:
Arva Priola, apriola@cildrc.org or 540-373-5890

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer”
For all workshops at the dRC, please request accommodations at least ten (10) days prior to event date.
Have you MOVED, changed jobs, or email addresses? If so, please contact NRA or VRA at info@vra.org with the new information so we will know how to contact you!

Please visit www.vra.org also to contact us!
STAY CONNECTED TO DARS

GET SOCIAL

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@dars4employers
@vadars

www.youtube.com/vadars

www.vadars.org

www.pinterest.com/vaeo55
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- 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
Editor’s Note – Submitted by Dawn Scott, NewsNotes Editor

VRA wants to thank you for your continued support and advertisement in this quarterly membership newsletter. It is made available to all VRA members, occasionally legislators, and is posted on the website at www.vra.org with exposure to the public. The rates remain the same and are as follows:

¼ a page is $15 per issue or $50 for the full year

½ a page is $24 per issue or $90 for the full year

A full page is $50 per issue or $175 for the entire year

A billing form is available for completion and should be submitted with payment to VRA. Ads may be purchased throughout the year and should be submitted as a Word document. Article submissions are also appreciated to be in the Word format and pictures are welcome as separate attachments. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please contact me at dawn.scott@vra.org or phone at 434-326-2185.

Connect with other members of VRA!

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

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
### VRA Events Calendar

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 5th</td>
<td>10am-12pm; VRA Board meeting</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 8th, 9th &amp; 10th</td>
<td>DBVI Training on VR Workforce Strategies</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2nd</td>
<td>VRCEA Training on Mental Health</td>
<td>Lynchburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 18th</td>
<td>NewsNotes Deadline, First Quarter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13th</td>
<td>VRCEA Rehabilitation Counselor Day training</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is March 18th, 2016**

Send to newsnotes@vra.org

VRA would like to hear from YOU! What would you like to see included in the NewsNotes? How do you use the NewsNotes and the information provided? What would be useful to you?

Thank you for your time in assisting us!
Next Deadline for NewsNotes: March 18th, 2016

Please Submit NewsNotes articles to Dawn Scott 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