Presidential Pondering by Dale Batten  --Submitted by Dale Batten, VRA President

Rounding out 2016, I want you to know that it has been a pleasure serving the Virginia Rehabilitation Association as President for 2016. Thanks to all the board members and others who have been so supportive of the organization. I would especially like to thank the board members whose terms ended in 2016: Nora Tucker, Susan Gaillard, and Lisa Biler. Also a special thanks to our Secretary that has served for several years, Adair Jensen-Smith. Another big thanks to Dawn Scott for her dedication to the News Notes in 2016.

Congratulations to our new President 2017 Marjorie Millner! The ballot for new board members was submitted and thank you all for your many votes!

This Association has so much to offer to its members and those that work in the field of Rehabilitation. If you are not a member, I encourage you to join and become active in an organization that fosters collaboration on all levels.

Now let me reflect on some positives as a wrap-up for 2016. We held an event to recruit new members and we received approximately 10 or more new members during 2016. The excitement of this initiative is the new members are enthused about being active and dedicated to helping move our organization forward. Several are taking on new roles in 2017. We had a new Chair for the Golf Tournament this year. Thanks to Kim Shepard for taking on an enormous task along with all her other professional duties. The tournament would not have happened without her leadership. Please contact Kim Shepard, Kim.Shepard@dars.virginia.gov, if you are interested in helping with activities like the Golf Tournament in 2017.

Collaborations Conference was held in November with great speakers on current federal and state laws and changing regulations with WIOA. The networking of how we as professions will work together through this transition was very successful. VRA gave out awards during the Conference and the R. N. Anderson award went to Kathy Hayfield, DRS Director for DARS. Other awards were given to persons in the profession of rehabilitation that has made a significant impact on service delivery. Thanks to all of you!
I cannot say enough about you, the professionals, in the field of Rehabilitation who make a difference each day in someone’s life. Continue to be the positive influence in this field. Continue to make a difference for those you serve. Remember, it is only what we do for others that will last when we reflect back on our accomplishments.

I have enjoyed serving you as President and need your support as VRA Chair of the Steering Committee for Collaborations 2017 to be held in Norfolk, Waterside Sheraton Hotel, September 10-12, 2017. Our next VRA Board meeting will be held January 18, 2017, 10 am-3 pm, Richmond. Put the date on your calendar. Meeting dates for next year with President Margie Millner: January 18, April 17, July 14, September 11, and December 8, 2017.

Again, I am honored to have been able to serve you as President of VRA for 2016. Keep up the great work! Let’s continue to make a difference together.

### National Rehabilitation Association Position Posting! ---Submitted by Paul Barnes and Dale Batten

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<tr>
<th>Position Description/Title: Membership Coordinator</th>
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Reports to: Executive Director/Department: Membership
Please submit to Paul Barnes (pbarnes@wcf.com)

About the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA)

Our Mission: To provide exemplary leadership through social advocacy and legislation, advance cultural awareness and competence across communities, promote excellence in research and practice, and support professionals engaged in the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Our Vision and Values: The NRA is committed to advancing the professional practices of rehabilitation driven by culturally-competent, ethical, evidence-based and accountable practices so that individuals with disabilities would be regarded and valued as full members of our society. These individuals deserve equal access, expression of choice, and security of freedom within our communities when engaging in all aspects of life.

The NRA draws strength from the unique training, education, and credentialing of our diverse membership that believes excellence and outcomes are achieved by upholding the utmost importance of continuous learning, and professional and personal enrichment.

The NRA values collaborative partnerships and relationships. Our membership reflects the importance placed on integrity, respect, transparency, accountability, and collaboration across the full spectrum of the rehabilitation profession.

Position Summary
The Membership Coordinator is responsible for maintaining the association’s membership database and all associated functions. The Membership Coordinator must establish and maintain a strong, collaborative working relationship with all association staff who manage financial and other related processes. Attention to detail, flexibility and the ability to work cohesively with a small virtual office team are essential. This is a full-time telework position.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Membership & Database Support

- Maintain the membership database by editing and updating member records.
- Submit Help Desk support tickets to database vendor as needed to ensure database is working properly.
- Process monthly payment renewals to create member invoices.
- Enter member monthly payments with accuracy into membership database.
- Enter new member applications with accuracy into the database.
- Query the membership database to pull membership data; format membership data into excel reports; send reports monthly to NRA stakeholders.
- Respond to Executive Director, member, and other stakeholder requests via email and/or phone in a timely manner.
- Provide e-marketing support by setting up and sending out member announcements such as NRA’s legislative updates known as Washington Wires using Constant Contact platform software.

Qualifications

- Two years experience working in the membership association field (preferred).
- Highly organized and able to manage multiple tasks simultaneously.
- Strong computer skills and proficiency with membership software (iMIS preferred) and Microsoft Office Suite.
- Must be comfortable and efficient working in a virtual environment.

Meet our new Members! – Submitted by Veronica Hunter, Senior Manager (Program Experience at Goodwill of Central and Coastal Virginia

Veronica Hunter is the Senior Manager, Program Experience at Goodwill of Central and Coastal Virginia. As the Senior Manager, Program Experience she is responsible for ensuring that the job seekers experience is outstanding by making sure the individuals served are able to access services and build a career path regardless of challenges they may face.

She recently received her MBA from the University of Phoenix. Veronica moved to Virginia from New York when she accepted a position with Goodwill fifteen years ago. Veronica enjoys running races, and is in the process of training for a half marathon. She can be contacted at Veronica.H.Hunter@outlook.com.
2016 Election Results – Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnston

Margie Millner is President
Adair Jenson-Smith is President-Elect

Elected Board Members:
Tiffany Jenkins
Dawn Scott
Vera Hensley

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. We are also looking to fill 2017 VRA Board positions!

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

VRA Division and Committee News

VRA Membership Committee Update -- Submitted by Susan Gaillard, Membership Chair

As a reminder, for all members in their first year of membership in the Va. Rehabilitation Association: As part of your free first year membership you were assigned a VRA Friend and you were told you may attend a VRA training event of your choice in your first year, free!

If you haven’t used that option yet, I want to be sure you have been made aware of all of the amazing trainings being offered throughout the year through VRA and VARL, to name a few organizing groups.

We will continue to update you with trainings throughout the state on varying topics and look forward to meeting all of you at upcoming trainings, retreats, and VRA events!

VRA Education Foundation Report – Submitted by Mary Kaye Johnston, 2016 Chair

Composition of the 2016 Foundation Board: Dale Batten, Howard Green, Rob Froehlich, Kim Shepard, Mark Fletcher, Bonnie Hawley-Henn, and Mary Kaye Johnston, Chair. Al Dickerson (former DARS Commissioner) Ex-Officio, Honorary Member; VRA President, Ex-Officio Member.
Mary Kaye will rotate off the Board at the end of this year and Dale Batten will become the 2017 Chair; Mark Fletcher, Secretary, and Rob Froehlich, Treasurer. One board position will be vacant. If you have interest or know of anyone that might have interest in serving on the Foundation Board, please contact Mary Kaye at marykaye.johnston@gmail.com or 804.339.2334 by December 12th.

The final Board meeting of the year was held on Monday, December 5th. Routine business was conducted as well as the collation of letters to VRA members and friends to embark on the annual capital campaign. Bill Burnside and Roxie Wilkerson provided music entertainment at the Collaborations Exhibit Reception, initiating the Foundation capital campaign kickoff.

Contributions received through this effort, the letter requests, and other donations received throughout the year add to the principal Foundation endowment account, which then determines the amount that can be awarded scholarship recipients each year.

The routine business included ensuring updates to the duties and responsibilities manual are made and then posted to the website; final revisions to the score sheet for the scholarship; discussion of processes to disseminate information to members regarding the scholarship and continuing education awards i.e., use of VRA website Foundation page, NewsNotes, Exhibit Table at Collaborations, and email blasts to members. Feedback from the VRA Board regarding more effective promotion is welcomed.

There were no applicants this year for the continuing education grants which is a new member benefit and only one application for the annual scholarship. Last year there were no applications for the annual scholarship which made it possible for us to increase the amount of the award this year; However, given it is considered to be a VRA membership benefit, it seems unusual that there would be no or only one application.

The Foundation Board set the 2017 meetings dates as follows:

- April 10th – conference call
- July 27th at 10 AM
- November 21 at 10 AM; includes capital campaign collation activity


**On the federal front:**
The presidential election and change in political ideologies at the top of the executive branch are bound to create changes and, of course, anxieties in federal agencies. How these play out over the next few months will be interesting, to say the least, including the impact on funding for services for people with disAbilities. Stay tuned and stay vigilant.

BTW, if you are available and can attend the NRA Government Affairs Summit, please do so. The dates are April 2-4, and the bulk of the summit will take place at the Hilton Alexandria Hilton. Hill visits will be scheduled for April 4th. Go to the NRA website and click on Government Affairs for more information (https://www.nationalrehab.org/).
On the state front:
The General Assembly convenes January 11th for its “short” session, which will most likely adjourn Saturday, February 25. This is also the biennial session in which the Governor introduces amendments to the biennial budget passed in April 2016 for the FY 16-18 biennium (too many biennia in that sentence; hope you stayed with me). At any rate, as you probably are well aware, we have a budget shortfall for the second year of the biennium. The figures of the actual revenue projections are not totally clear at this point; we are hopeful that the next quarter financial report will provide a bit of breathing room so that there is less to cut.

Also, if you’ve been watching and reading, there are some solutions to the budget shortfall that don’t include a heavy cutting board, but that the General Assembly is unlikely to reap some extra revenue by making changes to the tax code. The Richmond Times Dispatch journalist, Jeff Schapiro, wrote a column about this, and The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis has done some nice work on how repealing some tax credits will help the state’s revenues. These changes are not likely to happen—too many vested interests—and this is an election year for Virginia.

We’re keeping an eye on bills that may have an impact on our population. We’ll also be working with our partners to advance their legislation and interests. If you would like regular emails about our issues, please email me and let me know. (bowerslanier@gmail.com)

VARL Update – Submitted by Robin Metcalf, VARL President

VARL ended the year strong by sponsoring Amy Armstrong and Chris Reid at Collaborations for the pre-con 3 hour ethics training. The feedback was excellent and both Amy and Chris have made commitments to continue to do trainings for VARL.

VARL is in the process of planning three exciting trainings for the upcoming year. Stay tuned for announcements.

Two emerging leader awards were presented at Collaborations this year to very deserving recipients: Dawn Scott of The Choice Group and Tiffany Jenkins of DARS.

VARL recently sent out the ballots for VARL elections so please respond and return them to Naomi Atkin. VARL has had a good year and the Virginia Chapter is the second largest in the nation, second only to Georgia. We are still actively recruiting members and are especially looking for bright young talent to join us. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join us at a meeting to discover what we are all about.
Upcoming meetings are as follows:
January 31st-10 am-Charlottesville
April 11th-10 am-location to be determined
July 11th-10am-Richmond
November 16th-10am-Charlottesville

Before I bid you adieu, I would personally like to thank all board members and officers for their work this year with a special shout out and thanks to Eleana Boyer and Bonnie Henn as they roll off the board and to Alison Mundy for serving as both Secretary and Treasurer this year. We had an outstanding year, but it did fly by as we managed to squeeze the most out of it.

A great big welcome to Roxanne Slaughter as she assumes the role of President for 2017. We are looking forward to working with you Roxanne.

Please consider joining VARL if you are not already a member. While you are considering membership, please also consider a position with the board. It is a great way to meet and network with the current leaders in the field and help pave the way for your future in leadership.

**VRA Training Committee Update -- Submitted by Margie Millner, Education/Training Chair**

The contributors for the 2016 Training Committee are Susan Gaillard, Rob Froehlich, Lisa Biler, Shawn Zimmerman and Margie Millner.

VRA sponsored a training entitled “DSM-5: An Overview” on May 23, 2016 at the DARS Central Office. The presenter, J. Patrick Slifka, has worked as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Addictions Counselor in the state for over 25 years. Currently he is the Director of Training for the National Counseling Group, Inc. (NCG) and is a senior consultant for the agency.

The workshop identified the major changes in the DSM-5 and outlined potential issues with the transition to the DSM-5. Thirty two participants attended the event with representation from DARS, WWRC, ESOs, CSBs, and Drug Court. Due to popular demand, VRA hosted this same training in the Eastern District on October 7, 2016 with like results.

Finally in 2016, VRA sponsored a training in the Fairfax area entitled “Effective Strategies for Serving Persons with Criminal Histories. Included on this training agenda, various speakers presented information on Fidelity Bonding, EEOC practices as they relate to background checks, Restoration of Rights and WOTC. The event was highlighted with a finish from an expert panel sharing their wisdom and tips. The expert panel included representatives from DOC, Sheriff’s Office, Reentry Specialists and community leaders. Nearly 50 participants attended, with representation from DARS, ESOs, DOC, Probation, and CSBs. Shawn Zimmerman is credited her efforts in orchestrating this most successful training.

As an incentive for VRA members, participation in trainings is free for VRA members and CRC credits are provided.
VRCEA Update -- Submitted by Marie Worley, President

As outgoing President, I would like to thank the Board and Officers for helping make this a great year for our association. A special thank you to Bonnie Henn, Karen Akers and Mary Kaye Johnston for the guidance they patiently provided to me.

VRCEA provided four trainings this year to the Rehabilitation community. The trainings were: A brief review of Mental Health Disorders, Cultural Competency, and Emotional IQ. We also sponsored Rehabilitation Counselor and Educators Day in May with presentations on Ethics and Self Care. VRCEA provided trainings in various parts of the State this year to include Lynchburg, NOVA and 2 trainings in Richmond. Next year, our association has intention to provide a training in the Danville area, thereby fulfilling a goal to expand training opportunities for our members. VRCEA would also like to thank the presenters who all so graciously gave of their time and knowledge in collaborating with us.

VRCEA proudly recognized two Rehabilitation Counselors with a Spirit Award, which were announced at The 2016 Collaborations Conference. The counselors who were recognized are Loretta Harris in NOVA and Robbyn Spencer-Bennett in Portsmouth. Both counselors were nominated by their DARS coworkers for performing outstanding work. VRCEA congratulates both Loretta and Robbyn for being role models for the rehabilitation community.

As we look toward 2017, Kelly Desclos-Estes will guide our association as the new President. Please join me in welcoming and supporting her as she takes the reins in a few weeks! Welcome Kelly!

The election results for VRCEA Board of Directors is:

Secretary: Dawn Mosley
Treasurer: Kathleen Shifflett
Board Member: Loretta Harris
President Elect: TBD

We voted 2017 VRCEA President Kelly Desclos-Estes in the previous year. She will provide Leadership and Guidance to the Association for 2017.

Please congratulate all the above individuals for the enthusiasm in volunteering for our Association as we continue to develop and grow! We also Welcome New members Sang Qin and Andrew Stowe.

Also, thank you to all who voted! Let’s all dig in and help Kelly this year!
Other News & Notes

Granting Freedom Grant -- Submitted by Karen Michalski-Karney

Veterans, servicemen and women who sustained a service connected disability can now apply for a Granting Freedom grant up to $4,000 through the Blue Ridge Independent Living Center. The funds must be used to modify a home and are available to both renters and homeowners.

These funds can be used to pay for modifications needed to make living spaces more accessible. Examples of modifications include: ramps, widened doorways, grab bars, raised toilets, lowered countertops, tub cuts, visual smoke detectors, shower chairs and handheld shower fixtures, as well as other approved modifications.

The funds are made available through the Virginia Housing Development Authority. For additional information contact BRILC at 540-342-1231 or by calling Virginia Relay 711. BRILC is a private, nonprofit organization that assists individuals with disabilities to be independent. BRILC will accept referrals from the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig and Roanoke and the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem.

The disAbility Resource Center Update -- Submitted by Kimberly Lett, Program Coordinator/Deputy Director

The disAbility Resource Center
409 Progress Street, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401
Website: www.cildrc.org, Email: drc@cildrc.org

DATE: December 16, 2016
CONTACT: Kimberly Lett, Program Coordinator/Deputy Director
540-373-2559 or klett@cildrc.org

Arva Priola, the disAbility Resource Center's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator for the last 21 years, is retiring December 29. The dRC held a farewell celebration in her honor at the dRC's Open House on December 8. Many individuals from the greater Fredericksburg community and beyond, including Eric Raff, the new Deputy Director of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Dr. Rebecca Bigoney, Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer the Mary Washington Health Care, came to thank Arva for her passion and advocacy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing services across Virginia. Arva created the Visor Alert that the DHOH community can use to communicate with law enforcement and she was instrumental in developing communication access in hospitals across Virginia.

Taking over as the new dRC DHOH Coordinator on January 3, 2017, will be Brittany Howard. Brittany is currently a senior at Gallaudet University majoring in Deaf Studies and will graduate in the spring. She is fluent in American Sign Language and knowledgeable on Deaf culture. Brittany interned under Arva at the dRC and is familiar with the assistive technology needed by those with different degrees of hearing loss.
While Arva will be missed, the dRC welcomes Brittany and her ability to carry on advocacy efforts and support for the DHOH community.

*Resources for Success for Young Adults with Disabilities* is a new grant awarded to the dRC from the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation. The main components of the grant which helps students with disabilities transition from school to adult living is the development of a transition guide, providing community workshops, and individual direct consulting services for transition planning. The workshops will cover topics including financial resources, employment, and independent living resources. Students and families that request additional assistance will be provided individual consultation, assistance in research and planning for their independent living goals.

The dRC offers office hours in Culpeper every Thursday from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Goodwill office, 210 E. Stevens St., Culpeper. To schedule an appointment, call Dave Shafferman, 540-940-4138 or Petrina Thomas, 540-645-2443.

Informational sessions about the dRC’s new *Include!* advocacy organization will be held January 24 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. and on January 26 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Self advocates, family members, community members and anyone interested and passionate about inclusion for all and access for all are encouraged to attend. For more information contact Kevin Koziol at kkodziol@cildrc.org or 540-373-2559, ext. 291.

The dRC is sponsoring two new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) workshops at its office:

- *The ADA and Assistive Technology Needed to Access Education* on March 10, 2017, 10 a.m. to noon. This presentation is geared towards parents, students and professionals. Link to [https://adaatandeducation.eventbrite.com](https://adaatandeducation.eventbrite.com) to confirm your space.
- *The ADA and Digital Hiring* on March 24, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. When using digital hiring, learn what the ADA says and how it can help you to secure the best employee for your company. This presentation is geared towards professionals and job seekers. Link to [https://adadigitalhiring.eventbrite.com](https://adadigitalhiring.eventbrite.com) to register. For more information about either workshop, contact Kevin Koziol at kkodziol@cildrc.org or 540-373-2559, ext. 291.

Two new Medicaid workshops are planned for the new year, one on January 20 and the other on March 17. Both workshops will be held at the dRC from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Learn about Medicaid Waivers, how to access them, services offered, and how the waivers changed in the Waiver Redesign. Link to [https://medicaidwaiversjan2017.eventbrite.com](https://medicaidwaiversjan2017.eventbrite.com) or [https://medicaidwaiversmarch2017.eventbrite.com](https://medicaidwaiversmarch2017.eventbrite.com).

SAIL (Self-Advocacy, Independent Living), the dRC’s youth transition, independent living group, is still accepting applications. The group meets weekly on Wednesday nights from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the dRC. SAIL is geared for students ages 17-21 and who are in their last two years of school. Applications can be downloaded from the dRC website at [www.cildrc.org](http://www.cildrc.org) and students and their parents must meet with Linda Galloway, Youth Services Coordinator, to apply for the program. For more information, contact Linda at lgalloway@cildrc.org or 540-373-2559, ext. 101.
The dRC offers two other independent living (IL) groups, SOLE (Sharing our Life Experiences) and Wednesday Afternoon Live. SOLE is the dRC’s Independent Living Group for adults ages 21 to 30. SOLE members work on independent living skills, social skills, soft employment skills and more in a fun and supported environment. SOLE meets the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month from 6:30-8:30. Contact Dave Shafferman at dshafferman@cildrc.org or 540-940-4138 for registration and information prior to attending.

Wednesday Afternoon Live is a weekly independent living group for adults with disabilities of all ages, their friends, and caregivers. Independent living skills are woven in weekly social, recreational activities both at the dRC and in the community. Wednesday Afternoon Live facilitates natural connections between the participants and helps bridge the gap to support services and resources. The group meets on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Tanya Stephens at tstephens@cildrc.org or 540-373-2559 for more information.

Mark your calendar for the dRC’s Walk ‘n Roll around Fredericksburg’s Heritage Trail on April 2, 2017, and our 2nd annual Independent Living Expo schedule for May 13, 2017. Vendors are currently being solicited for the Independent Living Expo. Email or call drc@cildrc.org or call 540-373-2559 for information.

Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center News and Updates! -- Submitted by Jackie M. Davis, WWRC Representative

WWRC’s mission is clearly focused on helping people with disabilities obtain independence through employment. Through our comprehensive medical and vocational services, we continue to focus on assessment, transition and workforce-driven training.

These have been exciting times for WWRC as we continue in our workforce driven programs. We finished up the year with some record outcomes. Of the Agency’s 4,060 successful closures, WWRC was excited to have served 740 of these consumers.

CVS Officials with graduate and DARS Commissioner Rothrock

Manufacturing Technology Training Consumers

Brian Evans back at work at Bank of America following Rehabilitation at WWRC

WWRC has been most excited with the startup of its Manufacturing Technology Training (MTT) program where consumers will earn a Career Readiness Certificate, OSHA 10 Certification, Manufacturing Specialist and Manufacturing Technician One (MT1) Credentials. The MTT Program cohort underwent testing in November 2016 for the nationally recognized credential, MT1 with the Manufacturing Skills Institute. Five of the seven participants passed their MT1 exam, which is the capstone in the stackable credentials series in the
program. Screening and enrollment is underway for the new MTT Program participants, with three cohorts scheduled annually beginning in January 2017.

Manufacturing Technology Training Consumers

WWRC will continue to offer its workforce-driven training programs to respond to business needs for high-demand fields including manufacturing, information technology, health care and retail sales. We hope to expand our collaboration with prominent businesses such as CVS Health, Hershey and Daikin Applied, and to enhance the local workforce by preparing skilled and credentialed workers.

WWRC is Recipient of VMA’s Workforce Partner of the Year Award

The Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI) announced the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) as the recipient of the 2016 Virginia Manufacturer’s Association (VMA) Workforce Partner of the Year Award for its outstanding leadership in changing perceptions about careers in manufacturing and in increasing access to industry certifications for individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Utilizing MSI workforce solutions, the WWRC has established a new job skills academy to close the career interest and skills gaps for its consumers to connect them with careers in advanced technology industries, such as manufacturing. "WWRC is providing its consumers with the opportunity to gain skills and credentials to seek employment in competitive, high-demand, high-quality manufacturing occupations," said Dr. Victor Gray, MSI Executive Director. WWRC launched its Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) project earlier this year, which is overseen by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services. The CPID is using the MSI ‘Dream It. Do It’ Virginia career planning information system and hands-on advanced technology academy to increase interest in manufacturing careers, and the MSI Manufacturing Technician Level 1 (MT1) certificate program to increase competencies in core manufacturing skills for its academy participants. WWRC was recognized for promoting the awareness of careers in manufacturing through community and statewide events and its podcast, the VR Workforce Studio.
WWRC Director Rick Sizemore and WWRC Foundation Director Anne Hudlow co-host a podcast called VR Workforce Studio featuring inspirational stories from some of the Center's consumers—many whom have overcome disabilities to lead fulfilling lives and careers. A new episode airs each month. Podcasts are available through the website or through apps such as iTunes.


Dr. Mammen Mathew Receives Roy M. Hoover Award for Outstanding Medical Achievement

Dr. Mammen Mathew, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Physiatrist and Director of Rehabilitation Medicine, was awarded the Roy Hoover Award by the Virginia Rehabilitation Association at the Annual Collaborations Conference in Virginia Beach on Thursday, November 17, 2016. The award recognized Dr. Mathew for his oversight of the transition of Inpatient Medical Rehabilitation to the status of Comprehensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Faculty (CORF). Dr. Mathew is WWRC’s only Physician and he is on call 24/7 for medical emergencies, and is recognized for his effective assessment and diagnostic skills. Dr. Mathew was recognized for his exceptional clinical skills in the field of rehabilitation medicine and for his consultation with Division of Rehabilitative Services Field Counselors. His oversight has proven to be highly effective while maintaining high standards of service to consumers. Dr. Mathew is a dedicated and valued employee, effectively improving many consumers’ level of independence, quality of life, and opportunity to succeed with their vocational goals.

WWRC Assistive Technology Training

On Tuesday, December 6, 2016, and Wednesday, December 7, 2016, the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center conducted an Assistive Technology (AT) workshop for seventeen Agency staff representing the
Charlottesville, Culpeper, Hampton, Henrico, Fairfax, Fishersville, Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Roanoke, and Warsaw DRS Offices. Johnny Kelley, AT Specialist, Chesterfield County Public Schools, was the featured opening session speaker. He used an augmentative communication device to deliver a prepared presentation on the types of AT he uses in his daily life and the overall impact of vocational/medical rehabilitation and assistive technology in helping him gain employment and independence. Johnny credited DARS and WWRC for their sponsorship of specialized services and for helping him achieve his goals and for his success. He provided contact information for any follow-up questions participants may have, including links to his Facebook site and a series of YouTube videos that he has developed to “share his story.” In addition to the opening session keynote, Johnny assisted WWRC’s Occupational Therapy Supervisor, Mary Breister, in the AT and Driving concurrent session on Day #1, proudly demonstrating his accessible van and sharing his journey in learning to drive, from overcoming preconceptions and barriers to gaining the requisite skills and confidence to be successful.

The December AT workshop highlighted the use of various technologies to enhance employment outcomes for Agency Vocational Rehabilitation clients, and offered opportunities for participants to learn more about augmentative alternative communication (AAC), technologies to assist persons who are deaf/hard of hearing, hand-held hardware and software, adaptive driving, wheelchair and mobility options, and assistive computer technology. Sessions included general information, awareness activities, case studies, and hands-on, interactive experiences. Feedback was very positive. WWRC will conduct its next AT workshop for Agency counselors on April 4-5, 2017.

**WWRC History — Book and Movie**

Nancy Sorrells, a local historian/author, and Connie Deboele, a video producer who retired from a twenty-year career with CSPAN, were contracted to produce a film and write a book on the history of WWRC. The project was funded by family members of a former WWRC staff and the Community Foundation.

The movie and book “Hope Reborn or War” detailing the entire history of WWRC premiered in the auditorium at WWRC on November 11, 2016. A Town Hall meeting followed the showing of the film; and will be recorded and televised at a later date. The film will air on Public Television sometime later this year, as well.
Wilson Workforce Center for Employment’s Manufacturing Technology Training (MTT) program -- Submitted by Susan M. Collins, Career and Transition Resource Teacher

Simon Severson is a client of the Fairfax DARS office and is a graduate of the first group of students who participated in The Wilson Workforce Center for Employment’s Manufacturing Technology Training (MTT) program.

While in high school Simon took work based learning classes, Education for Employment and Work Awareness and Transition Class. His work based learning experiences include materials handling and electronics recycling. Simon also worked part time as a receiving clerk in a retail setting.

Simon, his parents, DARS counselor and Career and Transition Resource Teacher started the transition process during his junior year in high school. Simon completed Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center’s (WWRC) 5 day Vocational Evaluation during his senior year and was asked to return for an additional assessment for the MTT program.

Simon said that he and the other MTT students worked well as a team and he appreciates and values the MTT training. Jim Leech, Manufacturing Technology Instructor, reminded Simon that technology requires life time learning and encouraged him to continue his training and education. We wish Simon the best as he moves forward.

DARS and the Brain Injury Association -- Submitted by Donna Cantrell, Program Specialist (Brain Injury Services Coordination Unit)

The Brain Injury Association of Virginia will host its 16th annual brain injury conference on March 10-11, 2017 at Hilton Richmond Hotel and Spa - Short Pump. The conference will offer a variety of educational sessions to share new and innovative topics and opportunities for persons with brain injury, caregivers, and professionals in the brain injury community.

The objectives of this annual conference are to:

- provide a venue for the exchange of information about brain injury programs, resources, treatment and therapies.
create a positive learning environment through discussions, case studies, lectures, and exhibits.

design a program that is specific to individuals with brain injury, caregivers, family members and professionals.

To learn more about this event contact Debra Holloway 804-355-5748 or debra@biav.net

The Voice of Brain Injury: Help, Hope & Healing

Recent events:

The Conference on Brain Injury in Children and Adolescents, presented by Brain Injury Services, Inc. in Springfield, is a conference held every other year for professionals who work with young brain injury survivors, as well as their parents and family members. This year, it was held on October 6th in Herndon, Virginia. Please see link below for additional information.


Editor’s Note – Submitted by Dawn Scott and Kate Gariepy, NewsNotes Editors

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

Like us on Facebook!

**Network:** with other members of VRA by joining the VRA Facebook group! Members can discuss VRA issues, trainings, articles, and upcoming events on our new and improved social networking website:

https://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/groups/258928867454860
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
At the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, most of our employees can say this at the end of each day. We hire individuals with a variety of occupational skills: vocational rehabilitation counselors, vocational evaluators, disability determination analysts, program specialists and more. Join us in our mission to secure independence, inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into our communities. Our employees truly make a difference in the lives of Virginians. Visit www.vadsa.org/jobs/default.asp to learn more about careers at DARS.
## 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18th</td>
<td>10-3pm; VRA Retreat, Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 31st</td>
<td>10am; VARL Meeting, Charlottesville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17th</td>
<td>NewNotes Deadline, First Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10th</td>
<td>10am; Foundation Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11th</td>
<td>10am; VARL Meeting, location to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12th</td>
<td>10-12pm; VRA Board Meeting, Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16th</td>
<td>NewsNotes Deadline, Second Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11th</td>
<td>10am; VARL Meeting, Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14th</td>
<td>10-12pm; VRA Board Meeting, Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 27th</td>
<td>10am; Foundation Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 15th</td>
<td>NewsNotes Deadline, Third Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 16th</td>
<td>10am; VARL Meeting, Charlottesville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 21st</td>
<td>10am; Foundation Meeting (Capitol Campaign Collation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 8th</td>
<td>10-12pm; Annual Board Meeting at Collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7th, 8th and 9th</td>
<td>Collaborations; VA Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 22nd</td>
<td>NewsNotes Deadline, Fourth Quarter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is March. 17th, 2017**

Send to [newsnotes@vra.org](mailto:newsnotes@vra.org) or [dawn.scott@vra.org](mailto:dawn.scott@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!
VRA President          Dale Batten
President-Elect        Margie Millner
Past President         Jean Stevenson
Treasurer              Eleanor Williams
Secretary              Adair Jensen-Smith
Board Members          Nora Tucker
                       Susan Gaillard
                       Lisa Biler
                       Tuajuana Smoot Hairston
                       Gerry O'Neill
                       Susan Collins
                       Chuck McElroy
                       Beth Groff
                       Shawn Zimmerman
VRCEA President        Marie Worley
VARL President         Robin Metcalf
NewsNotes Editors      Dawn Scott and Kate
Gariepy

Next Deadline for NewsNotes: March 17th, 2016

Please Submit NewsNotes articles to Dawn Scott by Email at:
newsnotes@vra.org or dawn.scott@vra.org