Spring has come and summer is here. Let’s enjoy this great weather together! I’d like to begin my Ponderings this quarter by following up on some of the items I wrote about in the 1st Quarter NewsNotes.

You may recall that a major goal for VRA for 2017 was the rekindling of the “VRA Gives Back – Special Projects” initiative. A new line item was incorporated in the VRA 2017 budget to support this effort, allowing for two monetary rewards to be presented to persons or programs endorsing VRA’s mission. It is so exciting to know that this initiative has taken off, with multiple nominations and monetary rewards given to the Sunwheelers Wheelchair Basketball Team and to Reachcycles, who provide modified bicycles on a charitable basis to allow individuals with disabilities the otherwise impossible opportunity to ride. I am so pleased with this project and excited to embrace the mission of VRA by giving back!

You may also remember that VRA hosted a VRA strategic planning and retreat in January resulting in targeted goals and objectives for the upcoming year. I am pleased to say that there has been much progress as we move forward with our strategic plans. One goal was to reach out to new professionals to encourage VRA education and new membership. VRA successfully hosted a welcome and info session with multiple VTC sites across the state in April 2017. Participation was great in each VTC site. Information was shared on the VRA events and happenings, along with the benefits of joining VRA.

The Communications committee has successfully met their targeted goals through improving and increasing email blasts on regular intervals to our VRA members. These regular blasts keep our members updated, informed and engaged!

Now let me remind you of some upcoming events and dates to remember:
October 23, 2017 – VRA Golf Tournament, Richmond, VA. Please support the VRA Golf Tournament by soliciting sponsors for this event. There is additional information further down in these NewNotes.
September 10-12 – Collaborations Conference in Norfolk, VA. Collaborations is a great opportunity to meet professionals, share best practices and collaborate on new initiatives. Our Annual VRA meeting will be held at Collaborations on September 11, 2017. Come join us! VRA awards nominations are still open until August 21, 2017, and the awards will also be given out at the Collaborations Conference. Please review the award descriptions and nominate a great Virginia person or business. Finally, don’t miss your opportunity at a chance to win the VRA 50/50 raffle. Information on this raffle is further down in this issue of NewNotes, and the drawing will be held at Collaborations – you do not have to be at Collaborations or present to win.

Support our cause!
I am certainly enjoying my role as VRA President and it is such an honor to serve you and the great work that you are doing!!
VRA Division and Committee News

VRA Membership Committee Update -- Submitted by Dawn Scott, Membership and Communications Chair

Committee Members:
Kate Gariepy – Co-Editor for NewsNotes
Lisa Biler – communications to new members and outreach
Mary Kaye – communications with VRA members; email blasts and wisdom;)
Sue Collins – website; email blasts, info@vra with MK
Veronica Hunter – Facebook updates
Margie Milner – VRA Pres and goal setting for membership
Tiffany Jenkins – awards; with Sue C

The VRA Membership Committee also wanted to welcome Katherina Edwards and Dr. Kristen Rowe from Richmond, Virginia. John Santoski from Charlottesville, VA, Nancy Spencer from Arlington, Va, and Charleigh Tamashiro-Yamauchi from Fall Church, Va. We look forward to getting to know each one of you over the next few months. Join us in welcoming these five new members to VRA!

VRA Special Projects and Communication Committee

In June, the VRA Special Projects and Communication Committee presented a $500 check to Virginia Sun Wheelers. Thank you Vera Hansley for this nomination for the Special Projects Committee! We will be taking more nominations for the Fall 2017 so please stay tuned for more information and share your nomination with us. We would LOVE to hear from you!

VRA 50/50 Raffle – Submitted by Margie Milner, VRA President

50/50 Raffle!
The mission of VRA is to promote issues that enable persons with disabilities to participate in the mainstream of society, and to provide opportunities for professional development for persons in the field of rehabilitation and independent living.
The VRA Special Projects Committee provides support and funds for a student of VR, a family in need, a consumer in need, or a project in the state of Virginia that highlights the mission and values of VRA for these endeavors.
Please support our 50/50 raffle!
All proceeds received are targeted and used to provide direct support and funding to our VRA Special Project award recipients.

Thank you for your consideration. For more information please contact Margie, at Margie.milner@dars.virginia.gov

- 2017 VRA Special Projects Recipients
  - Sunwheelers Basketball Team
  - Reachcycles, who provide modified bicycles on a charitable basis to allow individuals with disabilities the otherwise impossible opportunity to ride

- Drawing will be at the Collaborations Conference on September 11, 2017 at 5:00 PM. **You DO NOT have to be at Collaborations or present to win.** We will call you and coordinate delivery of your cash prize if you have the chosen ticket!

- Tickets: 1 for $1.00  6 for $5.00

There are two ways to purchase tickets:
1. To purchase your tickets, please send a check **made payable to VRA (with your name, address and phone number included)** in the designated amount to:
   - Margie Millner
   - 6 Robert Bruce Road
   - Poquoson, VA 23662
   - Margie will fill out your ticket and return a 2nd matching ticket to you as confirmation.
   - margie.millner@dars.virginia.gov

2. To purchase tickets directly/in person from the following individuals:
   - William Sutton, Eleanor Williams, Ericka Neville, Lisa Biler, Adair Jensen-Smith, Sue Collins,
   - Vera Hansley, or Margie Millner

**VARL Update – Submitted by Roxanne Slaughter, VARL President**

VARL NewsNote-2nd quarter
Hello from VARL. We had a successful training on May 11th, WIOA and LGTBQ. The feedback received was very positive.
Thanks to Robin Metcalf who presented on Appreciative Inquiry at the most recent VARL board meeting. We learned about the process and it’s a good strategic planning tool that can be used in multiple settings. This was be a preview of the training coming in October.
Please come by to see us at the VARL table during the Collaborations Conference. We would love for you to learn more about us and become a member of VARL. We will be holding a drawing at the conference for a free one year membership to VARL.
On October 19th, VARL and VRCEA will be sponsoring Appreciative Inquiry and Ethics for Supervisors training at the DARS Maywill office. Presenters for the training will be Dr. Christine Reid, Dr. Amy Armstrong, and Robin Metcalf, LPC. More information will be coming soon about the cost and registration. Have a great Summer!

Calendar of Events:
Sept. 10-12, Collaborations Conference, Norfolk
October 19, Appreciative Inquiry & Ethics for Supervisors Training, DARS Maywill
Nov. 16, 10-12pm, VARL Quarterly Meeting, DARS Charlottesville

VRA Foundation Scholarship – Submitted by Dale Batten

Are you a member of the Virginia Rehabilitation Association?
Are you or a family member attending college?
Are you aware of the VRA Foundation Scholarship?

Each year the Virginia Rehabilitation Association Education Foundation requests applications from interested and eligible members or family members in consideration for the VRA Education Foundation Scholarship. The application may be found on the VRA Website on the Foundation link. Applications are due by June 30th … so don’t delay!

For additional information contact:
Dee Dee Batten
Dale.Batten@dars.virginia.gov
804-662-9792

VRCEA Update -- Submitted by Kelly Desclos-Estes, VRCEA President

Happy Summer Everyone! It’s hard to believe we are half way through 2017 already. Thanks to all VRCEA members and Board members for your on-going support.

Rehab Counselor Day: This year’s Rehab Counselor Day training may be considered one of the more memorable in recent years. Part training and part “experiment”, we can proudly say we conducted our first tele-conference. Over 40 people across the state-from Abington, Charlottesville, Danville, Lynchburg, and Manassas-gathered at local DARS Field offices, to hear Teresa Mullins’ session titled: Successful Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities in Rural Areas. Having lived and worked in Far Southwest Virginia most of her life, Ms. Mullins shared helpful tips to better relate to employers in small towns, collect data, and improve employment outcomes. As a bonus Teresa offered a free copy of her first book: Job Coaching in Rural Areas, to one lucky attendee. Erin Fowler, Employment Specialist with RSVP in Danville, won the book! Overall, the training was well received. DARS and ESO staff from other areas of the state has asked VRCEA to sponsor the same training in the future. This is being considered. Stay Tuned! Special “Thanks” to Rhonda Chandler, Tammy Muir, Kathleen Shifflett, Ron Simmons, and Andrew Stowe, for helping with the set up.
This would not have been possible without you!

**Up-Coming Training:** One of our Board members, Paula McMahon, is going to be a presenter at the National Rehabilitation (NRA) Conference in Texas this year. Before heading west this fall, Paula would like to “give it a dry run.” Not wanting to turn down an opportunity, the VRCEA Board is coordinating a presentation at the end of August: Cultural Factors and Its Impact on Disclosure; How rehabilitation counselors can educate employers, and assist clients to negotiate accommodations in the workplace. Although the title may sound drab, Paula promises to keep the session interactive and engaging.

**Spirit Award:** It’s that time of year again! Time to honor a co-worker or colleague that you feel:
- Advances the profession of rehabilitation counselors and educators
- Develops innovative programs and services for all persons with disabilities
- Enhances the public’s understanding of the role of rehabilitation counseling

VRCEA members are encouraged to nominate a professional of their choosing. The nominee does not need to be a member of any professional membership organization. A Nomination Flyer is included.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS:**
- Deadline for Spirit Award submissions: August 1
- 2017 Collaborations Conference  September 10-12 Norfolk, VA.

Next VRCEA Phone Conference Board Meeting: Tuesday, July 18  8:30-9:30 AM
Board Meeting at 2017 Collaborations Conference: Tuesday, September 12  Time/Place TBD

**Other News & Notes**

**DARS and DBVI team up to sponsor academies for high school students with disabilities –**
Submitted by Betsy McElfresh

Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) has a busy summer planned for high school students with disabilities seeking to learn skills and earn certification that could lead to jobs in high-demand fields in Virginia’s IT and manufacturing sectors.

From June 26-30, CPID will sponsor a five-day robotics and cyber academy at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired. DARS and DBVI VR consumers will learn to assemble, program and code their own robots and learn about cyber ethics and safety, as well as hear about training and career opportunities from Capital One employees. The students will take their robots and laptops home with them to continue developing their interest in the field.
CPII plans to replicate the robotics academies as well as other programs across Virginia. Following last year’s successful effort, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center will hold its second Water Filtration academy this summer.

In July, a group of DARS and DBVI consumers will attend an academy to assess their interest and aptitude in Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining. In this academy, held at the Valley Career and Technical Center in Augusta County, students will learn how computers control tools such as lathes, mills and grinders.

For more information about CPII, visit the website or contact a member of the CPII project team:

DARS: Emily.West@dars.virginia.gov
Kate.Kaegi@dars.virginia.gov
Paula.Martin@dars.virginia.gov
DBVI: Tish.Harris@dbvi.virginia.gov

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: May 26, 2017 CONTACT: Kimberly Lett, Program Coordinator/Deputy Director
540-373-2559 or klett@cildrc.org

dRC Happenings

The disAbility Resource Center is sponsoring several new training events this summer including a series of workshops for high school students and post graduates up to age 21 on different aspects of transition. Called Summer FUNdamentals, session topics are:

- Transitioning from Middle School to High School, Monday, June 26, 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. This session is only for 9th graders in 2017-2018 school year. Interactive instruction will highlight making new friends, understanding accommodation needs and IEPs, being a member of a high school community, and finding support and assistance.

- About Our Community (including riding the FRED bus, volunteering and more.) - Thursday, July 13, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Transition from School to What’s Next - Friday, July 21, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Turning 18 - Tuesday, August 1, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.: 
- Healthy Living (including shopping, reading labels, food prep, exercise, and more.) - Thursday, August 10, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Responsible Pet Ownership (with a trip to Rikki’s Refuge) - Tuesday, August 15, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Each program requires individual registration and there is a $25 cost which includes materials, snacks and lunch. Scholarships are available. REGISTRATION: https://drcsummerfundamentals.eventbrite.com

The dRC is also continuing its Ticket to Work presentations in conjunction with the Choice Group on the third Thursday of the month from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. To register, link to https://tickettowork.eventbrite.com.

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be at the dRC on June 26, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., to provide an information about resources to help people in the Virginia Settlement Agreement Population access housing in the community. The Settlement Agreement Population includes people with developmental disabilities, age 18 and older who are:
- living in a training center, intermediate care facility, skilled nursing facility or group home and are eligible for the Medicaid DD Waivers (Community Living or Individual Supports waivers)
- receiving services under the Medicaid DD Waivers
- on a waitlist for Medicaid DD Waivers

Registration is requested. Link to https://housingresources.eventbrite.com. If you need a reasonable accommodation, contact j.cummins@dbhds.virginia.gov

On July 10 at 1 p.m. the disAbility Law Center of VA will be at the dRC to discuss their mission and goals and how they help people with disabilities in Virginia. Individuals with disabilities, their family members, and the community is invited to attend. No registration needed.

Mark your calendar. The Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the dRC will hold the first of several workshops on autism for DARS staff, vocational services providers and other adult services providers on August 4 at the dRC. Details are still being worked out and information will be provided on the dRC website and other social medial.

The dRC, a member of the Rappahannock Area Autism Council, RAAC, is partnering with RAAC members to offer its second annual conference about autism across the life span on September 9 at the Caroline County Government Center. Lunch is provided as is childcare (for the first 30 children) for a cost of $10 per person and $20 per family. Topics will include recreation and social activities, behavior, Medicaid waivers, transition from high school, and living with autism. Two Lunch and Learns will be offered at noon, one focusing on different types of therapies and the other on educational advocacy. Keynote, D. J. Svoboda, a self-advocate from N.C., will begin the day and an interactive discussion with self-advocates will round out the conference. Registration will open July 1 and will be available on the dRC’s website and other social media.

The disAbility Resource Center held its second Independent Living Day at the Fredericksburg Expo Center on May 13 with representation from DARS, VATS, VDDHH and many other organizations and vendors. Thanks go to all the participants, our vendors and particularly our sponsors, Mobility SuperCenter in Richmond, Rappahannock Goodwill Industries, and DARS.
Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID)

Career Pathways connects Virginians with disabilities to the education, training, certification or credentials needed to qualify for high-demand jobs. On May 10, participants from the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) and Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA) Industrial Roundtable toured Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. The participants were from several states representing a myriad of organizations that all have an interest in workforce development with an emphasis in the manufacturing sector. The Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Grant, along with the VMA hosted this event. The group toured Provides U.S., a local manufacturer that has hired several DARS consumers/WWRC Graduates. The group toured the Center from 10:00 a.m.-noon, and traveled through Administration, Medical Services, the CRC labs, Vocational Evaluation, Materials Handling, Forklift Training, Production and Assembly and Manufacturing Technology Training (MTT).

Mike Thompson, Hershey employee, described how he has been able to advance at Hershey to obtain a family-sustaining wage through skills gains and Vocational Rehabilitation. His employment has been sustained through the second and fourth quarters. This success story is based largely on the business engagement between Hershey and Vocational Rehabilitation and the individual determination Mike exhibited.

WWRC has a new podcast episode out that features one of our consumers, Alex Cullison. Alex is a person with high functioning autism, who now works in the IT industry. His dad is a guest on the show and discusses a book he has written.
Click here for video outlining Alex’s story about his son’s experience in vocational rehabilitation and at WWRC. Click here to hear the story “A Journey of Inches.”

There is also a new introduction to the podcast available. Check out this short three minute podcast.

April Assistive Technology Training Hosted at WWRC

On April 4 and 5, WWRC hosted a two-day Assistive Technology (AT) Training for Agency staff. Attending were eighteen Counselors, Counselor Trainees, and Employment Support Services staff representing the Abingdon, Alexandria, Fairfax, Hampton Roads, Henrico, Leesburg, Portsmouth, Roanoke, South Boston, and Winchester DRS Offices. Brian Evans, Assistant Vice-President and Business Consultant for Bank of America, was the featured opening session speaker. Brian stated that this day marked his one-year anniversary in coming to WWRC for a ten-week medical rehabilitation program that “was the beginning of the best days of my new life.” He credited DARS and WWRC throughout his eloquently delivered speech for helping him transition from a “dark, scary place that was unpredictable and hard to grasp” to a quality of life he hadn’t believed possible. As he spoke, he shared how his DARS/DRS Counselor helped him connect with WWRC, how WWRC provided him the tool, skills, and confidence to move forward and “regain his life.” His advice to the participants was: “It’s all about relationships, pointing people in the right direction, and helping them believe in themselves to reach their goals.” Brian demonstrated the AT he uses in his daily life and at work on a daily basis and shared that “AT is constantly changing,” with no end to the possibilities. The 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.
Ms. Wheelchair Virginia

WWRC is pleased to announce that the 2017 Ms. Wheelchair Virginia pageant winner is Lelia Dunning, a current consumer in our Business and Information Technology (BIT) Training class. Lelia said “Originally, I came to Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center for their BIT Program. If I were to have never come to WWRC, I do not know that I would be blessed with the honor of Ms. Wheelchair Virginia. Thus far, my experience as Ms. Wheelchair Virginia has been a great one. This is going to be a great year, and I look forward to better advocating for Virginians with disabilities; we are the conditional, not the unable.” We have since learned that Lelia will be competing in the Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant in Erie, Pennsylvania.

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 and 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.
Community Events

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, December 2, 2017
George Mason University
» Johnson Center

FUTURE QUEST

Middle and High School Students with Disabilities, Their Families, and Adult Professionals Who Work with Them

You can learn about:

» Options After High School  » Employment Strategies
» Career Planning           » College Application Process
» Career/Technical Schools   » Supports and Resources in College

Pre-registration beginning FALL 2017

For more information, please visit:
www.futurequest.gmu.edu

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education, Training & Technical Assistance Center and The Northern Virginia Transition Coalition www.novatransition.org
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](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2114298)
VARL LinkedIn Network: [http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2613703](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](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

July 18th 8:30am-9:30am; VRCEA Board Meeting
Sept. 13th TBD; VRCEA Board Meeting
Sept 10th, 11th & 12th Collaborations and VRA Annual Board Meeting; Norfolk
Sept 20th NewsNotes Deadline, Third Quarter
Oct 19th VARL and VRCEA Training, DARS Maywill
Oct 23rd 18th Annual VRA Golf Tournament
Nov 16th VARL Quarterly Meeting, DARS Charlottesville
Dec 12th 8:30am-9:30am; VRCEA Board Meeting
Dec 22nd NewsNotes Deadline, Fourth Quarter

Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is September 20th, 2017
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!

Virginia Rehabilitation Association

18th Annual
Virginia Rehabilitation Association
Benjy Burnett Memorial Golf Classic
Stonehenge Golf & Country Club
Shotgun Start ~ All profits are used to support the advocacy of people with disabilities

Check-in: 8:15 ~ 9:00 A.M.  
SHOTGUN START: 9:00 A.M.

Format: 18 Hole Captain Choice ~ 4-person team

Entry Fee: $75.00 per person ~ includes green fees, cart, food, prizes, beverages (Beer & soft drinks)

Prizes: Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place teams; closest to the pin, longest drive—both men and women—and additional door prizes!

Dress Code: Proper golf attire to be worn ~ no jeans or cut-offs ~ all shirts must have a collar

SOFT SPIKED GOLF SHOES ONLY!

DIRECTIONS:

Stonehenge Golf & Country Club  
1000 Farnham Drive  
Richmond, VA 23236  
(804) 378-7841  
www.clubcorp.com/clubs/stonehenge-golf-country-club/about-the-club/directions-hours

This tournament is limited to 36 teams.

Call Kim Shepard at: (757) 570-6737 to reserve your spot.

Email communication to: kimberly.shepard@dars.virginia.gov

Entry Deadline: October 16, 2017

Mail entry form and fees, (checks payable to Virginia Rehabilitation Association) to:

Kim Shepard  
170 Beach Road  
Poquoson, VA 23662
MEMBERSHIP
Virginia Rehabilitation Association

Training opportunities for professional development at little to no cost

Network and build connections across the state with various providers and specialists/mentors/leaders

Connect and become involved in projects that develop the mission of vocational rehabilitation

Join today! https://www.vra.org/membership/index.html


Like us on Facebook and become part of our public group to receive articles and info on upcoming events and trainings!
https://www.facebook.com/Virginia-Rehabilitation-Association-221447861231371/?ref=page_internal
Virginia Rehabilitation Association

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                        Sue Collins
                        Susan Collins
                        Tiffany Jenkins

VRCEA President        Kelly Desclos-Estes
VARL President         Roxanne Slaughter
NewsNotes Editor       Dawn Scott
                        Kate Gariepy

Next Deadline for NewsNotes: September 20th, 2017

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