Presidential Pondering by Adair Jensen-Smith, VRA President

Hello VRA members and friends! Its hard to believe that the year has flown by so quickly, but here we are with only 2 months left to 2018. It has been a great year and I appreciate all of the support this year.

As the year winds down, many things with VRA have been winding up! We had a wonderful Collaborations conference September 23-25, 2018 in Norfolk, VA put on with our partners from vaAPSE and VaACCSES where we learned about how “It Starts With Us”. We also had our annual business meeting during the Collaborations conference in Norfolk where we learned about the wonderful things happening within our organization. Membership is up, trainings and education is happening across the board, and it was a wonderful opportunity to get to see many of you in person. If we missed you at the business meeting or the conference, we look forward to seeing you next year. In addition, we were able to present eleven awards to well deserving recipients this year during the awards dinner and membership luncheon. We received a record number of nominations this year, and it was an honor to be able to meet those well deserving award recipients in person.

Finally, we had one or our biggest and arguably most exciting event coming up on October 27, 2018 – the VRA Family Color Run/Walk; however, due to a Nor’Eastern storm we are rescheduling until Spring 2019! There will be plenty of time to sign up on our Facebook page or the VRA website as well as Email Blasts with updated information in the coming month.

As always, many thanks to the hard working offers, Board members, committee chairs and general membership for your continued participation!

VRA Division and Committee News

VRA Membership and Communication Committee – Submitted by Dawn Scott, Committee Chair

VRA Membership and Communications:

- 204 VRA (Current) members
- 80 new VRA members so far this year (Sept 2017-Sept 2018)
- VRA New Member “Friending” Program

--Susan G (Thank you for your continued hard work and efforts for VRA Friends through DARS as well as mentoring for VRA Friends outside of DARS)
NRA Lists: new online access using NRA.ORG and signing in to access lists, graphs, and additional information for membership

**Plans to increase membership:**

--increased student membership and working with NRA to get the word out about the special new member rates for students (this year we have seen a large increase in student memberships; a huge thanks to Eleanor for her work in this!)

--increased communication and reminders to ‘soon to be lapsed members’ to renew and reasons for renewing; we will be reviewing this as of this month’s new membership portal and lists to start tracking such things

--ensuring that through Email Blasts, NewsNotes and Facebook we keep members current on events and create an ease of access to information and for participation

  - NewsNotes – big thanks to Kate Gariepy for your help

  - Facebook/Website – Sue Collins has been our Facebook guru and has been keeping Facebook current with articles, events, and reminders as well as keeping our VRA website up to date; Sue will be taking on the Membership Chair title for 2019!

**Ideas from you on increasing Membership?**

- How can a VRA Membership be more valuable to YOU?

**VRA Board Members and Nominations – submitted by Margie Milner**

As we enter the Fall season of 2018, it is time to start soliciting VRA Board members for upcoming 2019 VRA Board vacancies. We will need to fill our President Elect position.

Ericka Neville has also offered to stay on as the Secretary. Thank you, Ericka!

So, I am looking to you, the current VRA Board, to help me with securing nominations for the remaining vacancy – 2019 President Elect.

If you have a person that you recommend and they accept the challenge, please shoot me an email at margie.milner@dars.virginia.gov with their name/email. If they can provide me a brief bio, I can use that to put on the nomination ballot for dissemination and selection down the road.

I am hopeful to send the ballots out to all VRA members in November, allowing for us to make determination in December - and bring the new VRA Board members on in January 2019.

Thanks in advance for helping me find some good people!
VRCEA Update -- Submitted by Kelly Desclos-Estes, VRCEA President

During the VRA General Membership Meeting, at the Collaborations Conference 2018 in Norfolk, VA, on Monday, September 24, 2018, Leslie Diaz, DARS Counselor from the Manassas Field Office was recognized as the VRCEA 2018 “Spirit Award” recipient.

Leslie has been a tireless advocate for her clients as a Transition Counselor, and in serving the Spanish speaking population in Prince William County. She has been the Project Search Coordinator for Prince William County since the beginning, and has helped the program grow into a model program.

She has taken on the role of a Pre-Employment Transition Counselor for the Manassas Office, and has been a pioneer in the beginning growth of this new position. She is quick to share ideas with others. Most importantly, she has been a resource and support to staff in the Leesburg Office as they struggle with multiple vacancies.

Congratulations to the winners of a special drawing held for a Fall Lantern, Keisha Johnson, and VRCEA 1 year membership ($45) was Donna Fuller. Thank you for stopping by our vendor table to ask how you can join VRA, VRCEA, or VARL, and to enjoy a snack or beverage.

Look for save the date fliers soon with information on upcoming trainings late fall 2018 and spring 2019.

Rhonda Beavers-Chandler, President
Kelly Desclos, Past President
Dawn Mosley, Secretary
Kathleen Shifflett, Treasurer
Board Members: Tuajuana Smoot-Hairston and Tyler Schreffler

VARL News -- Submitted by Dawn Scott, VARL President

During the 2018 year, our VARL Board met quarterly and held Leadership Chats that offered opportunities for continued leadership and growth. Some topics discussed and presented included:
--Everyday Leadership and Lillipop Moments!
--Being a Boss and a Leader and the Differences between the Two?
--Boosting Morale!
--Overcoming division in the Workplace?
These brown bag Leadership Chats are great as we also welcome other VARL members to attend and join in the presentations and discussions. We used ZOOM later in the year to access members throughout the state and hope to continue with this method as well as have more members attend in person.

VARL Trainings:
Throughout 2018, VARL held two separate Trainings ad invited numerous attendees both in person and via VTC.
March – Ethics
May – Meeting Management and Boosting Morale/Team Building
Both trainings offered CRCs and although we had some glitches getting the CRCs out in a more timely manner efforts were made to identify each participant and set up that they receive these CRCs soon if all have not already received them. Let me know right away if so!
We are collaborating with VRA for a probable Training in the Fall or early Winter for a leadership related training with CRCs.

VARL Membership:
VARL membership is at 41 current members. We have a full Board and are still looking to fill a few positions for the 2019 year. Please let us know if you are interested as we hope to vote in and set these positions by Dec. We also to have current members agree to fill roles within the committees of Education and Membership.

President Elect (2019)
2 new Board Member at Large positions

Other News & Notes

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

The disAbility Resource Center of the Rappahannock, Inc.
409 Progress St., Fredericksburg, VA 22401
540-373-2559 (voice), 540-5890 (CAPTEL), 540-373-8126 (Fax)
www.cildrc.org    drc@cildrc.org

DATE: September 26, 2018
Contact: Kim Lett, klett@cildrc.org or 540-373-2559

The dRC will celebrate its 25th anniversary with an elegant gala on October 20, 2018 at 6 p.m., at the Fredericksburg Expo Center. The evening includes dinner with complimentary wine, a live and silent auction and dancing to the music of the Fredericksburg Big Band. The dRC will be honoring Van Falkenburg, one of the dRC’s founders, and Caregiver of the Year at the event. Tickets for this event are $85/person or $150/pair. Tickets can be purchased at https://drc25thgala.eventbrite.com. All proceeds from the gala will be used to support the dRC’s programs and services.
On September 8, the dRC held their first-ever Block party complete with multiple vendors, a motorcycle club, live radio broadcast, trial rides in accessible van, kids games, adult yard games, a bee keeper, the SPCA, BBQ, beer, and more. Despite the rain during set up and towards the end of the day, it was a successful event both in regards to fundraising and community fun.

The dRC, partners in the Fredericksburg Area Coalition on Transition (FACT), will have several staff presenting at Pathways to the Future, FACT’s biannual transition conference, on November 10. Topics dRC will discuss include Medicaid Waivers; options for housing; and the dRC school transition program, SAIL. Pathways is free to attendees and includes lunch. To register for Pathways, link to https://pathways2018participant.eventbrite.com.

Are you 18-25 years old, looking for a job or employed and identify as a person with a disability? Your voice is needed! The dRC is hosting an Employment & Disabilities Focus Group on October 22, 2018, 6 to 7:30 p.m. The focus group will be used to gather information on youth (classified as 18 to 25 years old for the purpose of this focus group) and their employment experiences. Participants receive a $25 gift card for participating. Email kkoziol@cildrc.org or call 540-373-2559 to see if you are eligible to participate in this focus group and please mention you are calling about the ADA Employment Focus Group.

Sign Language Continued is a new sign language class offered by the disAbility Resource Center. The class is offered for beginners to sign language and those that have taken the Basic Sign Language class before. New information, words, and phrases to use in everyday life will be taught. Cost for the six-week session is $75. Books will be provided to those who did not attend the Basic class. Those who have attended a sign language class at the dRC prior to this are asked to bring their book. To register, link to https://signlanguagecontinued.eventbrite.com. For more information contact Rebecca Bennett at 540-373-2559 or rbennett@cildrc.org.

Future trainings in the works at the disAbility Resource Center include Medicaid Waivers, Social Security, and Chronic Disease Self-Management classes. For dates and times, link to the dRC’s website, www.cildrc.org or the dRC Facebook page, https://facebook.com/dRCVA.

The mission of the dRC is to help people with disabilities of all ages to live as independently as possible in their community. Founded in 1993, the dRC is a Center for Independent Living (CIL) that promotes community inclusion and access for all in the greater Fredericksburg area. With community support, the dRC will continue to inform, guide, and help people with disabilities and their families and to help the community realize the ABILITIES of individuals with disabilities for many years to come.

VRA Gives Back – Special Projects Awards 2018 Recipient
The VRA Special Projects committee sent out a call for nominations soliciting a potential student of VR, a family member in need, a consumer in need, or a project in the state of Virginia that highlights the mission and values of VRA and is in need of support for their endeavors.

VRA is pleased to announce that The McShin Foundation was nominated by Eleanor Williams and selected to receive a monetary award of $500.00. This donation will be used to promote their recovery resource foundation and mission to deliver a message of hope to recovering addicts and alcoholics while facilitating their journey to a healthier life.

Founded in 2004, The McShin Foundation is Virginia’s leading non-profit, full-service Recovery Community Organization (RCO) committed to serving individuals and families in their fight against Substance Use Disorders (SUDs). While providing the tools for recovering individuals to create clean and positive lifestyles, they aim to spread the word of recovery and educate families, communities, and government regarding SUDs while reducing the stigma attached to them.

Margie Millner and Eleanor Williams presented the $500.00 award to the staff at the McShin Foundation’s monthly Board Meeting on August 13, 2018.

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

On Friday, July 20, a group of 29 individuals, representing a multitude of businesses (Newport News Shipbuilding, Sysco, Sprint, Omni Homestead Resort, VDOT, etc.) from across the state of Virginia toured the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC). The tour was arranged by Nate Mahanes, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Blue Ridge District Business Development Manager (BDM), in conjunction with James Hall, Career and Workforce Development Division Director. In addition, various DARS Placement Counselors, DARS
Marketing and PR Specialists, and all DARS BDM team members attended the tour. The goal of the tour was to show employers that WWRC is a modern Workforce Center in addition to being a Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) state operated program educational facility that meets the needs of businesses using its workforce driven curriculum. Many facets of the Center were shared, such as the wraparound Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy supports, educational and Assistive Technology accommodations, and the obtainment of hundreds of WIOA industry recognized credentials. Many tour participants left amazed at the level of support, passion, and professionalism of the services WWRC consumers receive to enter the modern workforce.

Distinguished Achievement Award

On September 26, WWRC’s Rehabilitation Counseling Team paused briefly to accept the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Virginia Rehabilitation Association presented posthumously to the late DeWanna Christina. The Award’s final home and resting place will be in the Rehabilitation Counseling Department where it’s our hope that DeWanna’s life will continue to be a shining example of WWRC’s vision of hope.

Virginia Rehabilitation Association Awards Ceremony

While at the Virginia Rehabilitation Association Awards Ceremony, we were delighted to see the Norm Hammond Award presented to our friends from CVS Health. We offered letters of support for this award in partnership with key partners in education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Duane Rohr of CVS accepted the award and talked at length about the Center’s partnership and training efforts, as well as our DRS Team Members.

New DRS Field Director

One of the watchwords for 2018 is “change.” In August, Commissioner Hayfield announced that Dale, or as she is known to us, Dee Dee Batten has been named the new Division of Rehabilitative Services Field Director. Please join us in congratulating Dee Dee on this “key and critical” role for Virginia DARS and the DRS Field Program. WWRC’s primary focus is working collaboratively with our Field partners to maximize WIOA outcomes, and as Steve Wooderson, CSAVR, would say, maintaining that concentration on a dual customer
focus of the VR consumers and business, Dee Dee comes to the position with experience in both VR Counseling and as the Deputy Director for Workforce overseeing the Business Development Managers. Her experiences and role in the VR Program and in Business Development are aligned very tightly with the Vision 2020 dual customer focus and WIOA.

**Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources Visits WWRC**

On September 18, WWRC was fortunate to have a tour with Deputy Secretary, Marvin Figueroa, from Secretary Carey's office. While he only had a few minutes during the lunchtime hour, he did meet several students in the Dining Hall and had a quick tour of the new facilities. The students in our Computer Support Specialist classroom took a few minutes to share their stories of vocational rehabilitation. Many described WWRC as a place that is uniquely suited to their needs and how WWRC’s programs are hitting the mark to help them become ready for the job market. Marvin relayed his appreciation not only to the students, but the staff across the Center who are going through our recent changes. Marvin hopes to return in the near future for graduation and tours of our "Medical-to-Work" program.

**Virginia Economic Development Partnership and Southern States Tour WWRC**

On Tuesday, August 14, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and Southern States toured WWRC. The tour was arranged by Wes Seaton, DARS Central District Business Development Manager, in conjunction with James Hall, WWRC Career and Workforce Development Division Director, and William Sutton, DARS Placement Counselor. The VEDP is a state agency whose sole mission is to bring businesses (stateside and international) to Virginia in the following key industries: corporate services, food and beverage processing, information technology, life sciences, manufacturing, supply chain management, and unmanned systems. The goal of the tour was to show employers that WWRC is a modern workforce center in addition to being a Virginia Department of Education state operated program educational facility that meets the needs of businesses using its workforce driven curriculum. Many facets of the Center were shared such as the wraparound Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy supports, Behavioral supports, Educational and Assistive Technology accommodations, and the obtainment of hundreds of WIOA industry recognized credentials.

**WWRC Received Stand-up Forklift**
In August, the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center received a donation of a stand-up forklift from Bobby Berkstresser, owner of White’s and Lee Hi Truck Stop in Rockbridge County, VA. This donation was facilitated by the WWRC Foundation board members, Leonard Pittman and Anne Hudlow. The donated stand-up forklift will enhance the technical skills of students enrolled in the WWRC Forklift training program by providing warehouse quality equipment and scenarios. These technical skills have been reinforced as heavily needed in industry by the Council on Occupational Education Advisory Committee and employer tours. Many thanks are given to Facility Services and Bare Construction for helping install the new building to house the forklift.

**PreETS Career Day**

If you would like to hear directly from one of our students, involved in the Pre-ETS Career Day held on campus recently, [check out this month’s podcast](#). Jessica Stehle, the statewide Pre-ETS Coordinator, also explains the five required services for Pre-ETS under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Matt Luther, Pre-ETS Counselor who helped oversee Career Day at WWRC, discusses what he sees as the value of hands-on activities provided here. A special thanks to our team members who helped implement this first Career Day.

**Pictures from Career Day**

Check out Cherie Takemoto’s National Clearinghouse Update from the Rehabilitation Services Administration with her update on Pre-ETS. Cherie has joined our podcast team. This month’s episode is released just ahead of International Podcast Day on September 30 and National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

**Success Story**
We just received a recent success story from Nate Mahanes about one of our WWRC graduates, Philip Conner. Philip works at Intercon in Forest, Virginia, in a Manufacturing Tech position processing cable assemblies. Check out this very nice YouTube video about Intercon, produced by Amber Gulla.  
https://youtu.be/ezJcKu1iLuQ

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month

September 30 was International Podcast Day, and October is Disability Employment Awareness Month. Please join us for this special episode of the VR Workforce Studio to celebrate.

National Disability Employment Awareness Celebration Podcast

We were thrilled to learn that WWRC was a focus of congressional testimony before the House Education and Workforce Committee about WWRC’s on-the-job learning and particular apprenticeships. The following is a link to the testimony – it is over two hours in length, be sure to fast forward as noted below:

Link to YouTube – Congressional Hearing on “On-the-Job: Rebuilding the Workforce through Apprenticeships”
U.S. House Sub Committee on Education and the Workforce - September 5, 2018

Please Note: The Video begins at 18 minutes. Sharon’s testimony begins at 28 minutes and lasts for five minutes; WWRC is at about 31 minutes, and Hershey about 32 minutes.

WWRC Career and Workforce Development Division Moves into Renovated Facility

The Career and Workforce Development Division, which encompasses PERT, Vocational Evaluation, and Vocational Training, has completed their move into the Phase I Section of the newly renovated Anderson Building. This new facility will allow our students to learn in a 21st Century institution of higher education.

James Hall and Dee Dee Batten
The Virginia Rehabilitation Association invites you to participate in our first annual VRA 3K Family Color Walk/Run!!!

Come and SHOW US YOUR COLORS while also supporting a great cause!

When: Dates Coming Soon! Spring 2019!

Who: ANY and ALL are welcome!

Stay tuned with more details to come regarding the event in regards to how to register, donate, sponsor and volunteer for this event

VRA is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all persons with disabilities
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/apps/DSAJobs/Default.aspx to learn more about careers at DARS.
VRA Events Calendar
Mark your calendars for these important dates for your state and national associations

Nov 1st  
NewsNotes Deadline, Fourth Quarter

Deadline for next issue’s NewsNotes articles is January 1st, 2019
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!
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/VirginiaRehabilitationAssociation-221447861231371/?ref=page_internal
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President-Elect
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Margie Millner
Eleanor Williams
Ericka Neville
Dawn Scott
Tuajuana Smoot-Hairston
Gerry O’Neill
Rhonda Beavers-Chandler
Tiffany Jenkins
Susan Gaillard
Vera Hansley
Susan Collins
Angela Volkening
Tyler Schreffler

Next Deadline for NewsNotes: January 1st, 2019

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