Happy Spring! I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather and fabulous colors of all the flowers and trees beginning to bloom! There are a lot of things going on and are mentioned below.

We were busy in January contacting and visiting our legislators. VRA was a co-sponsor for the Legislative Reception held on January 23. Prior to the reception, some of us met with our legislators to provide awareness of disability issues along with our legislative agenda for 2008. The reception was well attended by legislators and their aides. I would personally like to thank: Maggie Butler, Susan Cianfaglione, Sherman Gifford, Howard Green, Tanya Piotrowski, Ericka Umbarger, Eleanor Williams and David Williams for all their hard work and participation.

Our Education Committee has a training planned for April 10 entitled: Culturally Appropriate: Refugee and Immigration Interpreter Services and Training.

We continue our relationship with the Department of Rehabilitative Services by offering a mentoring program to new DRS employees. This is an exciting way to increase our membership and to become more involved in VRA. If you would like to learn more about this program, feel free to contact Susan Green or Jack Smith.

Planning is in full swing for our annual golf tournament! It will take place on Tuesday, September 9, 2008 at the Hunting Hawk Golf Club. This will be a great event, as it is every year. Please consider playing, getting hole sponsors or volunteering, contact Howard Green at jgreen18@aol.com if...
Presidential Pondering
(Continued from page 1)

you are interested in helping out.

Remember to mark your calendar for the Collaborations Conference scheduled for: October 5-7, 2008 in Virginia Beach! Along with this, remember to think about nominating your co-workers, community partner, service providers and consumers for the VRA awards. Nominations can be sent in at any time – the sooner the better! Please contact Eleanor Williams at 804-662-7075 or Eleanor.Williams@drs.virginia.gov with your nominations.

Just as a reminder, our next Board Meeting is scheduled for July 11. Meeting location and information may be found on the VRA website. I would love to see you there!

Submitted by Amy Miller, 2008 VRA President

VRA Education Report

I am happy to report that we have planned trainings in progress!

Upcoming trainings include:

- Culturally Appropriate scheduled for April 10, 2008- Vissta Richmond Area Training Center, Richmond, VA
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Training is being planned with Carol Schall a tentative date is for September. Carol Schall will also be presenting at Collaborations for us.

Thank you to everyone that has supported the Education committee with creating VRA’s successful training events! As always, the committee is always looking for more trainings so please help us in establishing some great training events for this year. I can possibly make available CRC credits and CEU credits for your training as well. Please contact: Samantha Ruppert (662-7183)

Previous 2008 trainings included:
- February 15, 2008-“Discover and Express your Voice and Inspire Others to Find Theirs” Charlottesville, VA (VRCEA sponsored)

Previous 2007 trainings included:
- Leadership is like an Earthquake June 14, 2007, Henrico, Virginia, coordinated by Susan Green
- Engaging the Autistic Consumer in the Rehabilitation Process, July 23, 2007, Richmond, Virginia, coordinated by Donna

Submitted by Margaret T. Gillispie

VRA Foundation

It is that time of year when you and your family members are making plans for college or taking a class or two to further your education. VRA members, their spouses and children are eligible to apply for scholarship assistance from the VRA Foundation. The application can be found on the VRA website at www.vra.org on the Foundation page and should be submitted to Margaret Gillispie, VRA Foundation Chair, c/o Department of Rehabilitative Services, 2250 Murrell Road, Suite F, Lynchburg, VA 24501. If you have any questions you may contact Margaret at (434) 947-6721 or Margaret.gillispie@drs.virginia.gov, or you may contact any other member of the VRA Foundation Board. Applications must be received by Monday, June 30, 2008. Check it out!

Submitted by Margaret T. Gillispie

VRA Education Report (continued on page 5)
VRA Golf Classic

The Virginia Rehabilitation Association (VRA) is seeking your SUPPORT and PARTICIPATION for its 9th Annual Golf Classic, now called the VRA Benjy Burnett Memorial Golf Classic. Benjy, a vocational rehabilitation counselor and disability advocate, passed away in October, 2007 after a long and courageous battle with Melanoma. As an avid golfer and long-time VRA member, Benjy was the driving force behind this tournament, which benefits the VRA’s educational programs for rehabilitation professionals and promotes services for people with disabilities. This year, VRA is pleased to be collaborating with the Positive Vibe Café, which will cater our awards and recognition luncheon. VRA will be donating a portion of the tournament proceeds to the Positive Vibe Café and a local Cancer Charity in honor of Benjy. The Positive Vibe Café has received national attention as an innovative food service.

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www.vra.org
VRA Legislative Liaison  (Continued from page 1)

- A proposed transfer of funds ($180 million) from the Transportation Trust Fund,
- Overly optimistic revenue projections in the 2008-2010 biennium,
- 100s of millions of dollars for expansion of existing programs and as well as new ones, and
- An over reliance on withdrawing dollars ($423 million) from the rainy day fund.

In the end, the lottery funds weren’t diverted; the transportation dollars were restored via bonds, and the rainy day fund withdrawal was reduced to $351 million. However, the final budget projections show revenue growth of 6.8% in 2010 with personal income growing at a rate 7.6% both of which were a deal breaker for many Republicans in the Senate, such as veteran Senators Wampler and Stosch (both conferees) who felt those numbers were unrealistic and voted against the budget. The final Senate vote was 24-14 for approval.

What the fiscal squeeze did do was inhibit the Governor’s signature initiative – pre-kindergarten. With the economic pressure, the Governor switched from seeking universal pre-K to merely expanding the existing program for poor children. But even then, the Assembly only provided less than half of the $56 million he requested.

But the Governor still has some chips to play and will have a opportunity to do some horse trading when the General Assembly reconvenes on April 16 for the “Veto Session” and on April 23 to resolve House and Senate differences on construction bonds. A special session to fix transportation - yet again - is up in the air at this point. The Governor may prefer to leave the issue open going into the 2009 elections in which the people of Virginia will elect a new Governor and pass judgment on where candidates stand regarding transportation and providing a fix.

VRA Budget Amendments: VRA sponsored budget amendments in the House and Senate this session to fund services for clients projected to be on the waiting list June 30, 2008 and co-sponsored amendments with the Virginia Association of People in Supported Employment (VAPSE) to restore the 3% budgets cuts to the Long Term Employment Support Services (LTESS). If you’ve read the preceding paragraphs, I don’t have to tell you what happened to those requests or why - we’ll try again next year and pray for an improving economy.

Health and Human Resources Funding: In case you missed it, mental health reform was the big winner this year with more than $41.6 million being appropriated for various mental health reforms recommended by the Virginia Tech Review Panel. Also, $44 million was provided for 600 new mental retardation waivers along with $4.5 million for the Wounded Warrior Program that will timely provide mental health services to veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Dollars for continuing 14 drug courts around the state were found, and a language amendment spearheaded by VAPSE (and supported by VRA) allowing Medicaid rates for supported employment to mirror DRS individual vendor rates was approved. And finally, state employees will be getting a 2% salary increase each of the next two years.

Submitted by David Williams, Legislative Liaison
VRA Education Report  
(Continued from page 2)

Grumiaux  
**Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**, October 23, 2007, Daleville, VA, coordinated and sponsored by VARL  
**Scott Miller, Ph.D., "The Heart and Soul of Change, What Works in Counseling"**, coordinated by Donna Grumiaux

We are looking forward to more trainings this year!

Submitted by Samantha Ruppert

VRA Golf Classic  
(Continued from page 3)

training and employment opportunity for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

**Date:** Tuesday, September 9, 2008  
**Location:** Hunting Hawk Golf Club  
**Time:** 8:45 a.m. Shot Gun Start  
1:00 p.m. Recognition and Awards Luncheon

Please support this extraordinary and meaningful event by registering a team from your business, being a Hole Sponsor, and/or making a corporate donation. Suggested donations and contact information is included on the attached form.

On behalf of the VRA, I thank you for your support and hope that you can join us on September 9. It’ll be a fun day!!!

Submitted by Howard Green

VRA Membership Committee

I would like to report that our membership continues to thrive. Our newest members include Mary Seay Gordon, professional membership, Matthew Famigliette, professional membership, and Dorothy Narodny, professional membership. VRA would like to extend a warm welcome to these individuals.

Membership Fee Reminder

- As of January 1, 2008 membership dues will increase.  
  Student Membership $42.00  
  Professional Membership $132.00  
  Organizational Membership $650.00

- Organizational Membership update passed by the NRA Board.  
The CEO, Director or Manager of an organization who registers for organizational membership with VRA may continue to designate four employees that will be recognized as individual members of a chapter. The designated employees will receive full access to VRA member incentives which is a change from the past where the designated employees of an organizational membership were not recognized as individual members. All correspondence for the designated employees of an organizational membership will be sent to the employer for distribution.

VRA Communication Committee

In an effort to make sure that VRA correspondence is reaching all our members the communication committee has begun contacting VRA members to ensure that we have current information.

Submitted by Maggie K. Butler  
Communication/ Membership Chair
LEADERS

“The VARL MISSION is to develop, improve and strengthen leadership skills and practices in both public and private rehabilitation organizations.”

VTC is making life great for VARL officers and Board members. We just had our second meeting of the year and had people in Manassas, Richmond, Lynchburg and Charlottesville. Just think of the gas we were saving!!

Despite an extremely busy first quarter for all of us, VARL is moving along on reaching its’ goals. We have a great training planned for May 16 in the Newport News area. The speakers will be Lisa Speidel, Hilda Ward, and Vicki Hawes, all who teach in the Curry School of Education at UVA. This is a repeat performance and all indications are this is a workshop that is worth your time and effort to get there! See the flyer in this NewsNotes.

Membership is holding strong at 53 members, with one new member in February. I encourage you all to think about joining VARL, as we represent over 1/3 of all VRA members and almost 20% of the NARL members. It is exciting to think that we have so much leadership potential in our Commonwealth!

Quote of the day:
“The ability to change may be the most essential ingredient to success”
Pat Summit, Univ. of Tennessee Lady Vols Basketball Coach, 1998

As the basketball glory season winds down, we are often reminded about how “little” teams can jump and upset the “big teams” and how sometimes the bubble bursts before we want it to. Coaches are often reported to be successful because they were able to adjust their defense or change their expected strategy to deal with the competition. In business, we need the same response mechanisms and in human services, it is clear that there are always environmental changes creating challenges for us.

Many terms are used to describe this ability to change: flexibility, give and take, malleability, adaptability and even being able to bend. There are books on the theory of change and there are classes that try to help people figure out their response to change. Today I am recommending a fun little book that should help you see change in a different way and it is a great book for both the supervisor who has to think about leading a change effort and the employee who is trying to figure out how the change will impact their world.

Our Iceberg is Melting by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber, is the story of a group of Emperor Penguins living on an iceberg being confronted by the effects of global warming. It is written as a fable and is only 150 pages long. There are about 15 of those pages that are just pictures. The basis of the book is Kotter’s 8 phases of change, but you don’t even realize it until you are finished. I encourage you to become engaged in the story of Fred, Alice, Louis and NoNo, penguins who have characteristics of many of the individuals with whom you work. Enjoy the tale as they figure out their future.

VARL Leaders Emerge! (continued on page 12)
VRA Legislative Update

It has been a busy couple of months with the General Assembly. One of the Virginia Rehabilitation Association’s goals this year was to increase participation in legislative affairs. There have been several events recently in which VRA has been involved. The Coalition for Virginians with Mental Disabilities held their annual rally at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on Monday, January 21st. Advocates, consumers, and legislators attended the rally and listened to various speakers, later heading over to the General Assembly to meet individually with Senators and Delegates. As usual, there was a great turnout and the causes important to this coalition were well-received.

The Virginia Rehabilitation Association joined with VA-ACCSES and VA-APSE and as a Contributing Sponsor for the Employment and Community Services for Virginians with Disabilities 2008 Legislative Reception. This reception was held at Old City Hall on January 23rd, 2008. Prior to the reception, Amy Miller, Sherman Gifford, Eleanor Williams, Howard Green, Susan Cianfaglione and myself met with Senators and Delegates to discuss the two budget amendments that VRA was sponsoring or co-sponsoring. These amendments were regarding Order of Selection and LTSS funding. During our visits we were able to meet with many of the Delegates and Senators to discuss the impact that these issues and others have on individuals with disabilities. At the reception later that evening, VRA members Maggie Butler and Tanya Piotrowski also joined the aforementioned members. This reception was very well attended by the legislators.

Traumatic Brain Injury in Children Early Identification is Vital to Successful Rehabilitation

Over 3,000 children die in the United States each year as a result of a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), based on figures available from the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators website. Individuals with TBI face an uphill journey as many must relearn basic stages of development. Rehabilitative and special education resources exist to assist children with TBI in these and other tasks.

“If a teacher or day care provider notices any changes that could be the result of a brain injury, it is imperative that he or she notify the parents, guardians, or school administrators immediately,” said Colleen Miller, Executive Director of the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. “Early diagnosis and treatment is crucial if the child is to regain any of the motor skills or memory that has been lost or to begin appropriate rehabilitative or educational services.”

Signs and symptoms may not appear immediately after an incident. Also, many symptoms of TBI are not always diagnosed correctly because these symptoms may mimic many other types of conditions. For that reason, parents, school teachers, and day care providers are some of the most important partners in helping to recognize TBI in children. Teachers and day care providers spend significant time with the children they serve each day. While it is not easy to identify every change in every child, knowing and being alert to the signs and symptoms of TBI may help with early identification that will lead to diagnosis. Some of those signals include: lethargy, headaches, mood changes, confusion, irritability, constant headaches, and changes in school functioning. This list is not all encompassing. More information may be obtained through the Brain Injury Association of America at www.biausa.org, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia at www.biav.net, or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/TBI.htm.

Traumatic Brain Injury in Children (Continued on page 14)
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Legislative Update (Continued from page 7)

and their aides and VRA would like to thank all the legislators who attended for their support of Virginians with disabilities.

In addition, VRA members Eleanor Williams and Bonnie Hawley attended the National Rehabilitation Association’s 27th Annual Governmental Affairs Conference held in Alexandria from March 9-11, 2008. During this time, Bonnie and Eleanor attended various sessions to learn about federal legislation affecting individuals with disabilities and then took their message to Capitol Hill on March 11, 2008 to meet with Senators and Representatives.

VRA continues to work on creating more exposure for the organization and improving name recognition. Even though the General Assembly is now over, it is still important to keep in contact with your legislators over the summer to maintain the important relationships on which we are trying to build. Please consider meeting with your elected officials in their District Offices to continue discussing the issues affecting people with disabilities. Information on their District Office locations can be found online at http://legis.state.va.us. I am also more than happy to assist you in finding this information and can be reached at Ericka.Umbarger@thechoicegroup.com or (804)334-2862.

Submitted by Ericka Umbarger

Do You Have Access to a Computer?

Do you have an email address? If so, and you are currently receiving the VRA NewsNotes and other association notices by mail, we would like to invite you to accept your association news electronically. Please let us know if you are willing to get your newsletter electronically by contacting VRA at mkaye1@cavtel.net or go to the contact page at www.vra.org. YOU will receive updates and news more expediently and will add to the conservation of the associations financial resources. Notification of updates to the website can be sent to you via email.

Your favorable consideration will be greatly appreciated.

Submitted by the Communications Committee

Send VRA News for the July 2008 issue by 6/27/08. Other news from the VRA Board Meeting can be submitted 5 days after the meeting. Please send all the VRA articles by email to Steven Sommer at steve.sommer@drs.virginia.gov. Also read the NewsNotes at www.vra.org

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Contact Person: ________________________________________

Please check the appropriate box and send your donation with a check payable to: Virginia Rehabilitation Association. Send to Howard Green at the address below!

**Howard Green**

2641 Hillanne Drive

Midlothian, Virginia 23113

Phone: 804-828-9548 (o)

804-305-3999 ©

804-828-2193 (f) Jgreen1949@verizon.net
On March 14, 2008, the United State Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution 487, designating March 22nd as National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day!! Why March 22nd, you ask? In 1983, on March 22, Martha Lentz Walker of Kent State University testified to Congress about the need for qualified Rehabilitation Counselors.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor & Statistics, there are approximately 141,000 Rehabilitation Counselors in the United States. All Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators, dedicated to the self-fulfillment of all persons with disabilities, should be pleased with the work they do. Those of us involved in the Virginia Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators Association should also be proud, not only because we are committed to the enhancement of our profession and the provision of standards of conduct and performance among its members; but also, in that we provide opportunities for students to participate in professional activities and to interface with experiences practitioners in the field of rehabilitation.

Congratulations to all qualified Rehabilitation Counselors!

VRCEA has been busy in the last few months! We were honored to sponsor a workshop in February with Susan Green presenting “Discover and Express Your Voice and Inspire Others to Find Theirs.” Information and strategies to achieve “the call and need for fulfillment, passionate optimism, and significant contribution” was presented, and it was a huge success! Not only were there requests to make the training a full day in length, but there are plans to have Ms. Green provide the same training in another area of the state! If you missed it the first time, keep your eyes open for this informative and exciting workshop in your area!

Our Education Committee is in the process of finalizing other workshops for 2008. Topics of interest include: ethics, multicultural issues, measuring outcomes of rehabilitation, unfolding your full potential, and other topics you do not want to miss!!! If you were a member of VRCEA, you could be involved in the development of these enlightening and educational workshops!

Speaking of membership....our Membership Committee is currently recruiting rehabilitation counselors and educators!! If you would like to become involved in promoting the field of rehabilitation, as well as expand your knowledge through upcoming opportunities and trainings, in addition to gaining those valued CRC credits, just let us know!!

The next VRCEA Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8th at 10:00 a.m. at the Tuckahoe Library in Richmond.

For further information about VRCEA, please contact:
Debbie Veale 757-865-3111
deborah.veale@drs.virginia.gov

Submitted by Debbie Veale, VRCEA President
VARL Leaders Emerge! (Continued from page 6)

And in the end, feel the satisfaction as they realize that “the most remarkable change of all was in how so many members of the colony had grown less afraid of change, were learning the specific steps needed to make any large adjustment to new circumstances and worked well together to keep leaping into a better and better future.”

As VARL, still the largest chapter in NRA in the leadership division continues through the year, we hope you will join us for our Annual training on June 12 in Richmond, with Terrie Glass as our speaker. Her topic will incorporate ideas that we have all been hearing about, including how to become better performers in all aspects of our jobs. Keep an eye open for a flyer.

VARL is also in the process of developing our own leadership award to be presented at the Annual Collaborations Conference honoring someone who is demonstrating Emerging Leadership. Keep your eyes open for more details.

Our quarterly meetings will be from 10:00 AM to noon, with a half-hour training experience starting at approx. 11:30 AM.

The dates are: Thursday August 7 (host site – Fishersville) Thursday December 4 (host site -Richmond)

Look for more information on the web site and via email. We hope many of you will join us to see what is happening in the world of Leadership development.

Yours in leadership,

Shirley Lyons, VARL President, lyo@co.henrico.va.us

VARL 2008: President – Shirley Lyons, President Elect – Jack Smith, Past-President – Jim Hall, Treasurer - Eleana Boyer, Secretary – Amy Mosher,
Board Members Naomi Aitkin, Teri Bertsch, Ned Campbell, Doug James, Ellen Braswell and Jane Bennett

References:
Kotter, John and Rathgeber, Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and succeeding under any conditions., 2005, St. Martin’s Press, NY.

Submitted by Shirley Lyons, VARL President

VRA Board Meeting Dates and Deadlines for the NewsNotes:
Please submit regular items for the NewsNotes one week before the meeting dates scheduled for 7/11, 10/6 (at Collaborations), and 12/5. Other items presented at the VRA Board are requested 5 days after the meeting. Thanks for your cooperation.

Steve Sommer, NewsNotes Editor
The Rehabilitation Community Thanks Ken Knorr, DRS Employee

After 37 years of public service, Ken Knorr is retiring in order to pursue woodworking, volunteer work, travel and other creative explorations on a full time basis.

Ken joined the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services as a vocational rehabilitation counselor at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center after military service in Vietnam. His career path quickly reflected his growing talent for program development, capacity-building and public/private partnerships. Ken’s guidance and leadership have created enduring programs at WWRC, DRS, Centers for Independent Living and within the disability community throughout Virginia.

In 1990, Ken became the founding director of the Virginia Assistive Technology System. This role afforded Ken the opportunity to collaborate with advisory board members, colleagues and others to increase Virginians’ access to assistive technology. To date, their systems change legacies include: an alliance with other stakeholders resulting in the passage of the Virginia AT Device Warranties Act, a “lemon law” for AT devices; partnering with Virginians with disabilities and receiving funding to capitalize Virginia’s Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority, now known as the NewWell Fund; collaborating with the Virginia Information Technology Agency to facilitate the establishment of Virginia’s Information Technology Accessibility Act; and the ongoing integration of the Commonwealth’s AT recycling programs into a more unified and responsive network.
Five Department of Rehabilitation Services’ (DRS) vocational rehabilitation employees have received the 2008 State Rehabilitation Council Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Recognition Award for outstanding service and contribution to the field of vocational rehabilitation (VR) and the disability community. The five awardees were recognized during the 2008 Virginia Transition Forum, held at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center March 17-19.

“This past year, our agency witnessed a record number of clients who exited the VR program successfully employed – thanks in part to the leadership and dedication demonstrated by this group of men and women,” said DRS Commissioner Rothrock. “Their commitment to public service and tireless effort to improve the lives of Virginians with disabilities are to be commended.”

The SRC Employee Leadership Recognition Award honors select VR staff who have distinguished themselves not only by the quality of service they provide to VR clients, but through their contributions at the national, state, or local level to advance the employment and independence of people with disabilities. Each of recipients actively serve on advisory boards and organizations, such as the Virginia Rehabilitation Association and the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council; and provide expertise and leadership in community or agency-based initiatives that enhance the delivery of VR services and develop future VR leaders.

The award is named after Roy J. Ward, a long-time leader in the disability community, former chair of the DRS Board, and current member of the SRC.

The recipients of the 2008 Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Recognition Award consist of:

- Susan Green, Training manager, DRS Central Office
- Larry Overbay, Regional Director, DRS Abingdon Office
- Mark Fletcher, Lead counselor, Manassas DRS Office
- Karen Baugh, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, DRS Alexandria Office
- Gwendolyn Davis, Placement Counselor, DRS Alexandria Office

The most prevalent cause of brain injury at any age is falling. The CDC reports that twenty-eight percent of brain injuries are caused by falling. For children, falls are part of normal development as they learn to walk, run, and participate in activities. The effects of those falls must be monitored carefully. In addition to falls, key causes include car accidents, blows to the head (accidental or intended), sports injuries, and shaken baby syndrome.

The Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy, an independent state agency whose mission is to effectively advocate for individuals with disabilities, has prepared a resource information sheet to aid in identifying appropriate service providers. The fact sheet may be downloaded at www.vopa.state.va.us/publications or may be provided in the mail by calling 804-225-2042 (voice or TTY) or 800-552-3962.

Submitted by Lisa Shehi
And Becky Currin
COLLABORATIONS CONFERENCE 2008
SAVE the DATE
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At the Wyndham Hotel in Virginia Beach, VA

This year we are fortunate to have
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Collaborations this year will begin on Sunday, October 5th at 3pm with our keynote speaker! (Reception to follow)
Call for VRA 2008 Award Nominations

Is it too early? NO! It is time to think about recognizing your colleagues, businesses, and successful customers for their award winning EXCELLENCE? YES! This year, in an effort to get more nominations as well as nominations in all categories, the Awards Committee will be accepting nominations from January 1, 2008 – August 22, 2008. The award categories, descriptions of each, and nomination forms are located at www.VRA..ORG. Take the time right now to nominate someone you feel is deserving of one of these awards. Nominations can be submitted by email/mail to: Eleanor Williams c/o DRS – Internal Audit 8004 Franklin Farms Drive Richmond, Virginia 23229 Phone: 804-662-7075

| Norman C. Hammond Award |
| Franz Stillfried Barrier Free Achievers Honor Roll |
| Dr. Roy M. Hoover Award for Outstanding Medical Achievement |
| A. R. Dawson Humanitarian Award |
| R.N. Anderson Award for Leadership |
| Virginia Rehabilitation Association Distinguished Achievement Award |
| Corbett Reedy Award for Excellence |

2008 Virginia Collaborations Conference

Call for Papers Deadline May 16, 2008

Consider being a presenter at this year's conference and sharing your experience. This Year's Special Key Note Speaker and Trainer, Denise Bissonnette, renowned trainer and speaker, on Oct. 5th at 3 p.m.. Mark Your Calendars for Collaborations 2008, October 5-7, 2008 at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront. We are looking for innovative ideas and practical applications of service delivery that will be of interest to a wide-ranging audience.

Greetings from the Mid-Atlantic Region. It is so nice to be able to say that the Mid Atlantic Region is not only alive and well, but thriving and making progress. Elections were held in the fall of 2007 and the following individuals were elected to serve through December 31, 2008: President - Eleanor Williams (Virginia), President-Elect – Carl Marshall (Pennsylvania), Secretary – Alison Mundy (Virginia), Treasurer – Evan Jones (Virginia), and Representative to NRA Board – Ken Hergenrather (D.C.). We are looking forward to the Delaware State Chapter reactivation. Harriet Ann Litwin of Delaware has been very active in participating in Mid Atlantic Region Meetings. Melissa James from the Maryland Rehabilitation Association has been representing her Chapter as well. Each active State Chapter has representatives appointed and we are meeting quarterly via phone conferences.

The Mid Atlantic Region, along with the National Rehabilitation (NRA) and Didlake, Inc. co-sponsored a Seminar immediately following the Legislative Affairs Summit entitled “Ethics and Advocacy: Considerations for the Rehabilitation Professional” presented by Dr. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, Director/Associate Professor, The George Washington University Mid-Atlantic Regional Continuing Education Program (GW-RCEP). We had 18 registrants with 17 attending and each receiving 4 hours of Ethics CRC credits. From all indications the training was well received, and the attendees stated they are looking forward to another post-conference training next year. Also, as a result of the training, we signed up a new member for NRA.

Eleanor Williams, President
Mid-Atlantic Region/National Rehabilitation Association
On Tuesday, April 1, 2008, in the Charlottesville City Council Chamber, Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, presented the Board’s 2007 Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership to advocate and community leader, Rose Williams. The Honorable Dave Norris, Mayor of Charlottesville, and Mary T. Miller, Co-Chair of VSA arts of Charlottesville and Albemarle, joined Ms. Lawyer in the presentation.

Colleagues described Ms. Williams in her nomination as “quiet, gentle, well tempered, insistent for architectural improvements and barrier removals in the City of Charlottesville.” They further commended her “ability to challenge and change the public mindset about persons with disabilities in a positive way.”

Born with athetoid cerebral palsy, Ms. Williams became dependent on use of a wheelchair for mobility in 2001 after two falls and other serious health complications. In 2007, after realizing that wheelchair users could not address the Charlottesville City Council from the microphones provided for public speakers, she successfully spearheaded accessibility changes to the Council Chamber. Later that year, she worked with city planners to have automatic doors installed at the new Transit Station and Visitors Center nearby on the downtown pedestrian mall.

These accomplishments were just the latest in a lifetime of personal and professional achievements and advocacy on her own behalf and for others with disabilities. In 2005, Ms. Williams joined with others in her community to found the Charlottesville and Albemarle County district of VSA arts. Her poems have appeared in all seven VSA collections of writings by individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, she teaches workshops to help others express their thoughts and dreams, and in 2005, she published her first book, Strike a Pose Rose.

The Jackie Crews Award recognizes Virginia self-advocates who excel in leadership. The four stars on the award logo represent Independence, Productivity, Inclusion, and Self-Determination—the four values of leadership and qualities exemplified by Jackie Crews, a graduate of the Virginia Board’s Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program who passed away in April 2004.

Previous recipients include Jack Brandt of Harrisonburg in 2006 and Ed Turner of Richmond in 2005. Mr. Brandt, a community leader and policy analyst, served as a Governor’s Fellow with the Office of Community Integration in 2006 and currently works with the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. Mr. Turner serves as Senior Advisor to the Governor for Disability Issues and is a trainer with Virginia Commonwealth University’s Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities serves as the state’s Developmental Disabilities (DD) Planning Council. DD Councils are in every state and territory of the United States. They work for the benefit of individuals with DD and their families, identifying needs and helping develop policies, programs, and services that will meet those needs in a manner that respects dignity and independence.

To learn more about the Virginia Board, its Community Service Awards, and their recipients, please visit www.vaboard.org or contact Tom Driscoll at thomas.driscoll@vbpd.virginia.gov or 804-786-9380.

Submitted by Tom Driscoll
Virginia Association for Rehabilitation Leadership

Presents

The Intersection of Race and Class in Today’s Society

by

Lisa Speidel, M.Ed., Hilda Ward, RN, M.S., & Vicki Hawes, M.Ed.

Friday, May 16, 2008
10:00 AM – 3:30 PM

In a society where the idea that all people are created equal and that a poor child can become President is part of our national legend, real discussion on the subject of socio-economic class is often very difficult. This workshop will consist of experiential activities designed to facilitate awareness and promote an in-depth discussion on classism and how it can specifically intersect with racism. Discussion will include the connection of these issues to the work we do and the importance of this awareness to effective leadership.

Lisa Speidel, Hilda Ward, and Vicki Hawes teach Multicultural Education classes for teachers and students in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia and conduct diversity trainings locally and statewide.

Location:
Main Street Library
110 Main Street, Newport News, VA 23601
See http://www.nngov.com/library/resources/locations for directions

Registration Fee: $15 VARL members/ $25 non members
Pre-registration/payment requested due to seating limitations. To register, please contact Marie Gibson at marie.gibson@drs.virginia.gov and mail your check made payable to VARL to Attention: Marie Gibson, Dept. of Rehabilitative Services, 861 Glenrock Rd., Suite 202, Norfolk, VA 23502
Virginia Transition Forum “Youth Driven Transition: A Roadmap to Success”

The 23rd annual Virginia Transition Forum “Youth Driven Transition: A Roadmap to Success,” can once again be touted as a great success for Virginia. The Virginia Transition Forum is realized through combined sponsorship from the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), the Department of Education, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired in collaboration with all transition partners throughout the Commonwealth. There were over 1,000 attendees at the 2008 Transition Forum, held in Roanoke, inclusive of youth, parents, educators, DRS staff, administrators, and representatives from Delaware and Pennsylvania, all interested in the transition needs of youth with disabilities.

The Forum began on Monday, March 17, with welcoming remarks from Commissioner James A. Rothrock and closed on Wednesday, March 19. During Commissioner Rothrock’s opening he also presented his annual Commissioner’s Transition Award. The recipient this year was the Tazewell Department of Motor Vehicles. Ms. Teresa Hurley, DMV representative, accepted the award with her collaborative partner, Tammy Muir, Rehabilitation Counselor serving that area. The award is given to a person or group of individuals who have demonstrated a commitment and contribution in the area of leadership and program development to serve youth with disabilities. This award was made based on the excellent work that has been done to assist youth with disabilities in preparing for and obtaining their driver’s license. This project has had a tremendous impact on the number of youth with disabilities who were able to secure and maintain successful employment with the acquisition of their driver’s license.

DRS and WWRC were able to support a significant number of employees to this year’s Forum. A total of 95 DRS staff received support to attend with approximately 35 WWRC staff supported as well. The success of the forum is in large part due to the planning and collaborative efforts of many individuals. DRS and WWRC have a combined total of 23 individuals who support the Forum by serving on the planning committee. This has increased substantially over the past few years. There were over 150 workshops and poster sessions available for individuals to attend this year. The agency had 44 staff members involved in presentations, either as the lead presenter or a co-presenter.

Youth involvement at this year’s Forum was substantially increased. The Forum hosted the first Self-Determined Youth Summit (SDYS). There were approximately 50 youth from across the Commonwealth and other invited states who attended the Summit. The SDYS was a two-day session where youth met to identify important youth and disability issues where they can become involved and make a difference at the local and state level. The youth delegation created steps that they would like to have other youth, service providers, administrators and state representatives follow to increase the involvement of youth with disabilities and empower youth to become self-determined.

On Wednesday, March 19, the Forum was brought to a close through the keynote address of Peter Squire. Peter used this opportunity to encourage all youth to become empowered and take a leadership role in their transition process and for Educators and Adult Service providers to work collaboratively with youth in this process.

Submitted by Erica A. Lovelace
VRA Education

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