



The OVR Review

"To assist Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve suitable employment and independence"

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Summer 2008

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Article submitted by Dave Matheis

May Again Named Job Placement Month

Activities Dedicated to Gina Hughes



Gina Hughes' Family and Sherri Greer

On April 15, Governor Steve Beshear issued a proclamation declaring May to be the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Job Placement Month. As it does every year, the agency held a number of events around the state to celebrate the month. This year, the events were dedicated to Gina Hughes, a long-time OVR employee who passed away in 2007. Gina spent several years of her employment as a job placement specialist and championed job placement throughout her career. Activities during the month included factory tours, employer presentations, and celebrations of consumer successes.



Left to Right: Robin Ritter, Holly Hendricks, David Beach, Chris Sheeting, Taylor Carter, Greg Willett, and Lois Carpenter toured the Centria plant in Frankfort.



Sherry Washington and Lea Miller at the Job Placement Team meeting in April.



Michelle Denton, Dawn Rowe and Debbie O' Hara participate in Job Placement Month activities with the West Liberty and Ashland district staffs.



Carla Tillett, EEO/Selective Placement Coordinator for the U.S. Census Bureau, distributed information to OVR counselors and staff at the Louisville Job Placement Month activity.

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Message from Executive Director, Beth Smith

Extends Thanks to OVR Staff



I would like to take this opportunity to say how excited I am to be back at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. When I left the agency a few years ago, I did so with a heavy heart. In my first stint as Executive Director, I developed a deep passion for vocational rehabilitation and found it difficult to leave the agency. I came to understand then, as I do now, the great difference OVR can make in the lives of Kentuckians with disabilities. I may have left, but my desire to see this agency and its consumers succeed has not changed.

I came to appreciate the passion the staff of this agency has to help our consumers realize their dreams. I truly believe there is not a better staff anywhere and I applaud the empathy, advocacy and vision OVR employees bring to their work. I will continue to hold this agency to a high standard of service and will do everything I can to facilitate its achievement of that standard.

I plan to be a very accessible director who will listen to the concerns of employees, consumers, our partners in providing services, and the public alike and who will do what I think is best for the agency and all Kentuckians with disabilities. Over the next few months, I will visit as many offices as possible to get a better picture of how we are doing across the state.

As state government faces a mounting budget crisis, predictions of gloom and doom are commonplace. I do not share such a dire picture of the future. With a dedicated and motivated staff and with Kentuckians with disabilities who seek gainful employment determined to succeed, I do not doubt that we still make the most of what we have and continue to provide the best possible services.

Again, I would like to thank the staff, our consumers and our partners for their dedication and passion. I am very excited to be back!

Thank You from Consumer

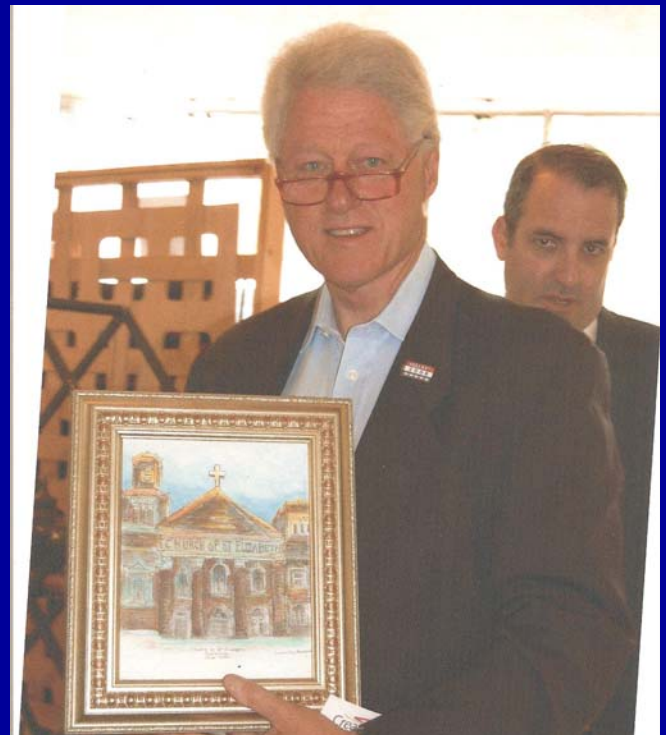
This comment was received in the OVR general web mailbox.

I would like to express my personal thanks to all of you at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation because it is thanks to the services you provide that I have the job that I now have. Approximately 20 years ago, I was diagnosed with MS, while working in the field of computer hardware support. To make a long story short, I was able to attend school at Lexington Community College, and change my career direction into an area of Information Technology that did not involve lifting of heavy equipment. I have remained not only gainfully employed, but have advanced in my new career.



Judy Sutter, Frankfort

Clinton Buys Painting



While in Louisville on election day, former President Bill Clinton purchased a painting by Dennis Bessenecker (not pictured), a member of Creative Diversity, an artist cooperative for individuals with disabilities partially funded by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Linda Irvin is the OVR counselor involved with the project.

Consumer Spotlight

OVR Consumers Relate Successes at Job Placement Month Celebration



Rebecca Keefe and Suzanne Isaacs

On May 28, a Central Office Showcase was held to conclude activities for Job Placement Month. This year, job placement month activities were dedicated to Gina Hughes, a job placement specialist and district manager with the agency who died of cancer last October. Three OVR consumers were featured at the Showcase and all spoke eloquently of their experiences with the agency.

Rebecca Keefe of Lexington first received vocational rehabilitation services when she became an individual with quadriplegia in 1969 and has been involved as a consumer on a number of occasions since then. OVR assisted her in obtaining her undergraduate degree (1978), and a Master's Degree in Social Work (1998), when she needed further education to improve her

employment prospects. Rebecca talked about a number of jobs she held over the years, some more successful than others. She first utilized job placement services extensively after obtaining her Master's degree and found Suzanne Isaacs, to be a tremendous help. 'I never received the kind of support before that I got from Suzanne,' she said. Suzanne helped her get a job with state government in New Mexico, but a pressure sore forced her to quit and return to Kentucky after just over a year. After briefly considering and rejecting self-employment, Rebecca received further assistance from Suzanne and the PACE program in Lexington in obtaining employment at Opportunities for Work and Learning (OWL), where she performs assessments and teaches job readiness skills. She strongly endorsed the PACE program and advocated it be extended to college students so they could obtain work experience before graduating.

The second speaker of the day, Richard Craiger, has received services from OVR twice in his lifetime. The first time was in 1986 when, while recovering from a foot injury, he received assistance that helped him become a motor vehicle enforcement officer with the Department of Transportation.

On and off duty injuries made it impossible for him to continue serving as a DOT officer in 2005 and he applied for services a second time. His loss of that job led to a long and arduous journey for Richard. Reluctant to accept government benefits, Richard eventually lost everything he had and became homeless, living out of his

automobile. He credits the staff at the Frankfort OVR office, specifically Jodi Harris, Taylor Carter, Tammy Cobb, and Gina Hughes, for helping him out of his downward spiral. Utilizing the PACE program and the twice-a-week job clubs at the OVR office, Richard determinedly searched for employment, taking part in no less than 90 job interviews. OVR provided constant support, a suit, and gasoline. He eventually went to work at Wackenhutt Security where he found a compassionate employer, Mike Updike, who was willing to stick with him. Richard called the OVR staff who helped him through all his trials his 'family' who 'never gave up' on him.



Tammy Cobb, Richard Craiger, Jodi Harris, Taylor Carter, and Beth Manns

The last speaker of the day was Jamie Osburn of Owenton. Jamie graduated Summa Cum Laude from Kentucky State University and was working as a technology coordinator at an elementary school when debilitating health problems related to mold in the farm house she was living in made it impossible for her to work outside the home any longer. OVR assisted Jamie in setting up a home-based custom embroidery business (Jamie's full story can be found in the October, 2007, issue of The OVR Review). Jamie expressed deep gratitude to Suzanne Isaacs and to her counselor, Julie McConnell, of whom she said 'I could not have asked for a better counselor.'

The family of Gina Hughes was invited to the event and her husband, Mark, and son, Caleb, attended, as well as her sister, niece, and mother-in-law. Deputy Executive Director Sherri Greer said that Job Placement month was dedicated to Gina because 'when you think of job placement, you think of Gina Hughes.' Sherri also referred to Gina as the 'most thoughtful person I have ever known.'



Suzanne Isaacs, Jamie Osburn and Julie McConnell

Employee Spotlight Presents Penney Baseheart

Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant



Penney Baseheart, Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant

"Penney is my right arm," says Jim Wallace about his long-time assistant, Penney Baseheart. A fixture in the Bowling Green office since June of 1989, Penney started her career working as an assistant for vocational rehabilitation counselor Teresa Winkler. Since then she has worked for a number of counselors and staff. She spent eight years as the assistant for the regional administrator, a position since abolished. Currently, she works for counselor Keith Brown and job placement specialist Missy Wheeler, provides support to the district manager, handles the payroll for the district, and is now district case management system (CMS) specialist as the agency works to install and implement new software statewide. She maintains a very full plate.

Penney came to the agency from the retail business, tired of the long hours. She has an Associate degree in Secretarial Science and a Bachelor's in Marketing from Western Kentucky University.

Her modesty keeps Penney from saying much about herself, but her co-workers do not share the same inhibition. Here is what a few have to say.

Counselor Keith Brown: "Penney is the heart of our office. She is the go-to person for information, assistance and support for our staff. When answers seemingly cannot be located, the philosophy of our staff is "ask Penney." She always exudes confidence and optimism, even in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. In her role as my assistant, Penney works tirelessly and effectively, and always exhibits a positive attitude. She never complains and conducts herself in a consistently professional and pleasant manner. I personally appreciate her efforts and contributions very much and I am sure that my sentiments are shared among all staff in our office."

Job Placement Specialist Missy Wheeler: "Penney is organized to a fault and detail-oriented to the point of perfection. There are certain words that come to my mind when I think of Penney. Some of them are: level-headed, even tempered, dependable, trustworthy, highly ethical, generous in giving of her time or assistance, conscientious, and loyal. Of course, the most important word I can think of to define Penney is 'friend'."

Counselor Leslie Burton: "Penney is one of the hardest working, most efficient people in our office. She is always willing to help anyone she can with anything they need. Last year my assistant left for a different job, and I could not have gotten through the end of the year without Penney. I have great respect and admiration for her."

And Jim Wallace, her district manager: "Penney keeps this office and District running smoothly. She keeps all of us very organized and gives me a different perspective on office issues that helps when I have to make a hard decision. She makes me look good as a manager."

Penney has always loved her job and the agency. "It is a wonderful place to work. Everyone I have worked for has always done a lot for me. The flex scheduling helped me with raising my children." She calls obtaining her Professional Rehabilitation Assistant (PRA) Certification several years ago her proudest achievement with the agency. "It was excellent training and I enjoyed every bit of it," she says.

Penney has been married to husband Mark for 19 years and they have two daughters, Haley, 16, and Allison, 12. Outside of work, she loves to play tennis and the family spends a lot of time camping and backpacking. Their favorite spot is Falls Creek Falls, Tennessee.

"In her role as my assistant, Penney works tirelessly and effectively, and always exhibits a positive attitude. She never complains and conducts herself in a consistently professional and pleasant manner. I personally appreciate her efforts and contributions very much in and I am sure that my sentiments are shared among all staff in our office."
- Keith Brown, VR Counselor



Program Services Update

Tribute to Lori Doom Dawson

On May 13th, Lori Doom Dawson, OVR assistant, lost a two-year battle with cancer just before her 29th birthday. A few of her colleagues pay her tribute.

From Robin Ritter (Central Office Administrator): Lori Doom Dawson began working with OVR in January of 2003. Her amazing computer skills, speed, accuracy, efficiency and positive attitude quickly made her a valuable member of the Central Office team. In 2004, she transferred to Louisville. Having developed a special interest in working with the deaf and hard of hearing, she was working toward becoming an American Sign Language Interpreter. Lori was diagnosed with cancer in 2006. In spite of this, she remained steadfastly devoted to her work with Vocational Rehabilitation. Lori came to the office before and after treatments, whenever her health allowed. Her drive and tenacity were an inspiration to her coworkers. We were so fortunate to know this extraordinary young lady.

From Charles Puckett (Central Office Administrator): I was the head of the interview team when Lori applied for the assistant position. I had very carefully looked over the applications and prepared a list of individuals to interview. At the very last minute an additional application came in. It had gotten lost somewhere in the personnel process. My first, and very strong inclination, was to not consider this application because I would need to re-do the schedule and reorganize the materials. For whatever reason at the last minute I decided to schedule her. This applicant, of course, was Lori. As soon as we interviewed her there was no question as to the most qualified person for this position. Every time that I am tempted to "take the easy way out," I think back to this experience.

From Carol Estes (Supported Employment Branch Manager): Lori was assigned to work for the Supported Employment Branch for about ten percent of her time, but she contributed so much more. Active in APSE, she believed in our mission and understood the value of ongoing support in the workplace. Replacing her will be difficult, and she will always be significant in our memories.

From Gina Stephen (Co-worker): Although I met Lori several years ago, it was not until this past year when I relocated to the Chestnut office, we became closer friends. Lori had a beautiful spirit and was one of the most real people I have ever known. She had a great sense of humor, a bright smile, and a genuine kindness you do not see often. Lori loved life and impacted everyone around her. I will always treasure the memories we shared and feel privileged to have known her.

From the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Branch: When Lori became a member of the Branch family, she brought talent, a willingness to learn and a great attitude. Soon we were challenged to keep her busy even with the work she did for other branches. Everything was completed with a smile and she always went beyond the minimum requirements of a task. She even branched out on her own to learn sign language. Losing Lori is like losing family...we all loved and cherished her and miss her tremendously.

From Mary Beth Schoen (co-worker): Anyone who has ever worked with Lori knows that she never gave less than 110% and always took on the challenges of extra projects. But Lori was so much more than a hard worker. She was a fun loving, easy to get along with, down to earth, beautiful person, who could bring a smile to anyone's face. Lori and I shared an office for some time and often vented to each other and laughed at each other. She was the kind of person who would be there for you whenever you needed, listen without judgment, and then somehow make you laugh. She had a need for perfection, where each item had a place where it belonged. But that was Lori and her obsessive ways were contagious. She was a wonderful aunt and dearly loved each of her nieces and nephews and deeply loved her husband. Lori will be missed so much, but I know I was truly blessed to have had her in my life and to have been able to call her my friend.

And a 'Thank You' from her father, Rodney Doom: "I would like to thank everyone for all the love, kindness, generosity, and prayers you have given to Lori and our family! At times like this it would be easy to question our faith but with very little thought it hits us in the face how blessed we have been for having people like you in Lori's and our lives. You have touched our hearts! THANK YOU!!"



Lori married Brian Dawson in a storybook wedding ceremony on February 16.

A Poem for Lori from a friend, Angie Holcomb

When I think of Lori, I will be reminded of...

Her deep belly laugh when she was cracking up over some corny joke
Her love for Gary Allan and his music,
Her cozy home that reminded me of a little beach cottage.
Her hilarious and selfless self,
How she planned a cruise during whale season, even though she was terrified of them,
How she ate brownies for breakfast.
Her character, personality and her gift of friendship,
Her courage, hope and grace that allowed her to persevere through the hardest of times,
Her ability to laugh and be positive through it all.
When I think of Lori, I will be reminded of...
How much of a blessing it was to be a part of her life and have her in mine.



Program Services Update continued *Vicki Lang and Staff Facilitate Consumer Orientation*

Because of an increasing number of referrals at the Chestnut Street office in Louisville, an innovative approach has been developed to help potential applicants determine if vocational rehabilitation services are what they really need. Every Wednesday morning at 8:30am for the past year and a half, a VR Orientation Session has been held for individuals who have referred themselves or who have been referred from atypical sources. The session, conducted principally by counselor Vicki Lang with assistance from other staff, provides these potential consumers with a description of vocational rehabilitation services and the eligibility requirements for those services. In about twenty minutes, the individuals learn what OVR considers to be significant disabilities, that the total focus of all VR services is work, and that the main services provided are guidance and counseling. Other things discussed may include adult literacy services, criminal records, drug tests, and Social Security benefits.

After the twenty minute session, all participants are invited to stay to meet individually with Vicki. In these individual sessions, the individual's particular circumstances are discussed and Vicki provides them with possible resources that may fit their more immediate needs, if appropriate.

A good number of the individuals that attend are homeless and most invitees have only heard that the agency can provide bus passes and clothing vouchers. Many are in crisis situations and are far from ready to go to work while others may not have employment as a goal. The orientation session is designed to help participants decide if vocational rehabilitation is what they need at this particular time in their lives or if they need to seek assistance elsewhere. Sixteen individuals are invited to attend each session. About half of those invited actually attend and, of those eight, an average of five individuals become applicants.

Related to this effort, the Louisville district has also made a presentation to managers of Probation and Parole to discuss appropriate referrals for services and plans a similar presentation to the Phoenix Health Center, a health clinic principally serving the homeless population.

District Managers Retire *Phyllis Farson and Jerry Adams*

Two of OVR's District Managers said their goodbyes to staff recently. Phyllis Farson of the Lexington District began working for OVR in 1973 and Jerry Adams of the Paducah district started in 1975. Both Managers will be greatly missed by friends and co-workers alike. Good luck to them both as they enjoy their retirement!



Jerry Adams



Phyllis Farson

HRD Update

PRA Program Revisited

In October 2007, a letter was sent to all assistants in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Office for the Blind announcing the dissolution of the Professional Rehabilitation Assistants (PRA) Program. After sixteen years, the needs of the agency and the assistants had changed. It was decided the assistant classification series would be realigned to more fully integrate our positions with those in other agencies within state government. This change opens doors and career paths for assistants and though change can be good, it can also be difficult. With the reclassifications reaching completion, it is time to celebrate the accomplishments of the PRA program and move into a new era.

During the past weeks, I have spent time looking through the many photographs that document PRA through the years. The pictures show the young faces of our career employees engaged in activities that promoted professional growth in a way that they had not previously experienced. Many of the participants have said that their first true public speaking experience came from participation in PRA and they rose to the occasion. The photos also show the dedication, commitment, networking and laughter that the employees have described as such an important factor of becoming who they are as professionals and individuals. Consistently among the faces that can be seen were Wayne Mulkey and Jack Castle from the University of Tennessee Regional Continuing Education Program who provided guidance and direction for the program along with the HRD program administrators from the agencies. Jack retired from UT in 2005 and Wayne recently announced his retirement date of July 1, 2008. Change is occurring everywhere and new chapters are beginning.

For PRA graduates this was not just a program, but an integral part of what molded them as professionals. PRA was an amazing program founded by leadership of both agencies and the changes that are occurring do not minimize the accomplishments of the program and the individuals who successfully completed the required courses and projects for PRA certification. The agencies salute their accomplishments and applaud their success. We thank them for the tireless commitment of the committees through the years and for the dedication of those who trained to be better employees as well as advocates for the consumers.

Personnel Changes

Appointments/Promotions

Wes Whitworth Jefferson	May 1
Evelyn Elliott Fayette	May 16
Debra Smith Johnson	May 16
Jeannie Bevins Jefferson	June 1

Retirements/Resignations

Nancy Orem	May 31
Debra Castle	May 31
Phyllis Farson	May 31
Connie Austin	May 31
Billie Lewis	May 31
Dawn Rowe	May 31
Diana Smith	May 31
Hope Florer	May 31
Donna Mitchell	May 31
Tony Sweatt	June 20
Jerry Adams	June 30
Tressa Howard	June 30

50 Years and Counting!



Peggy Kurzendoerfer recently celebrated 50 years of working for the agency. While a consumer of vocational rehabilitation services in 1958, she was encouraged by her counselor to seek state employment. She came to work for the agency on May 1 of that year. Although she retired from full-time employment in 1998, she has spent the last ten years working part-time in the Louisville and Middletown districts, filling in where needed to answer the telephones. In her 50 years with

the agency, she has worked in at least 11 different vocational rehabilitation offices and has been an assistant for counselors, for a manager, for the driver's evaluation program, and for public relations staff. Peggy says she has enjoyed her many experiences with the agency and has met many nice people.



The Florence District staff gathered to celebrate the retirement of two assistants in May. Connie Austin (front row, third from left, in brown jacket) worked for the agency for 36 years. Hope Florer (to the left of Connie) had 18

years of experience with OVR



CDPVTC Report

Article submitted by Barry Newell

Kentucky Educational Network Installation

The Education Cabinet has completed the installation of cable and 2 jacks in each room in the dormitory to enable access to the internet. All of the necessary software and hardware has been installed, including eight wireless hubs on the first floor level. Students are now able to access the internet through a separate student network via hard wire in their rooms and wireless capability in all of the main areas on the first floor of the Center. We are currently developing a "student acceptable use" operating policy on computers and a set of procedures detailing those items that govern the use and operation of the network.



Norb Ryan speaks at the June 2008 CDPVTC graduation ceremony.

Behavior Education System

The Behavior Education System developed and used at CDPVTC has been in use for approximately 9 years. A review committee has been appointed to study all aspects of the system and to provide recommendations for improvements. The committee report was due to the Center Director on June 20.

Marketing and Admissions Study Team

A Marketing and Admissions Study Team was been appointed to review the methods used to market the Center and was to have its report to the Center Director by June 20.

2008 Graduation

Graduation was held on June 15. Key note speakers were Norb Ryan, Kentucky ADA Specialist, Sherri Greer, OVR Deputy Director and Field Services Director, and James Lefler, student speaker.

NEWS BITS

KATLC Lowers Interest Rate

Effective July 1, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) will lower the interest rate it charges on loans for assistive technology from 5.5% to 4.5%. The new rate will be effective for the next two years.

KATLC has been providing low interest loans for assistive technology through its lending partner, Fifth Third Bank of Kentucky, since the summer of 2000. To date, KATLC has made loans for a total of \$3.7 million. The great majority of loans are for vehicles and vehicle modifications and hearing aids. KATLC uses more flexible guidelines in determining financial eligibility for loans than most lending institutions. For more information, call toll-free at (877) 675-0195 or visit www.katlc.ky.gov on the web.

West, Hendricks, Beach to Participate in National Efforts

Sherry West, Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf in the Bowling Green district, recently completed participation in the Commission on Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CCRC) Test Equity for Deaf/Hard of Hearing panel. The panel made recommendations concerning changes to CRC Certification Testing designed to make the testing more equitable for everyone who takes it, including those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Two central office employees, Holly Hendricks and David Beach, have been invited to contribute to initiatives of a national scope.

In 2007, Lou Kurtz from the Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Services asked OVR to participate in an 'Other State Agency Project' being conducted by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Research Institute. This project was an effort to determine how much money is spent on individuals with mental illness across all state and federal agencies. Kentucky was one of 11 states in Cycle II of the project. Holly Hendricks provided MH/MR with the data they needed. As a result of her contribution, Holly was nominated by Lou to participate in a panel in Washington, DC, at a conference that will develop a procedural manual for other states to follow when conducting the same data-gathering efforts in the future. The conference will take place in early July.

David Beach has been selected to participate in the Commission on Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CCRC) Cut Score Workshop in Chicago, Illinois, July 31 to August 1. The workshop will review the minimum scoring requirements of the CRC exam.

DD Council Awards Grant to Lifeskills

The Kentucky Developmental Disabilities Planning Council recently awarded a three-year grant to Lifeskills in Bowling Green. The grant will enable Lifeskills to develop supported employment options for Kentuckians who receive resources through the Medicaid Supports for Community Living (SCL) Waiver and the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Waiver. Under the ROLES Initiative (Real Opportunities for Lifestyles Enriched through valued Social roles), Lifeskills will partner with Realizations, LLC of Louisville and the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky to provide personalized services and train direct support personnel. For more information, contact Elizabeth Markle at Lifeskills at (270) 901-5673 or on the web at markle@lifeskills.com.

Migrant Grant

Israel Avelar, Marisol Valles and Esperanza Rivera attended the kick-off luncheon for the Migrant farmworkers with Disabilities Employment Program (MDEP), OVR's five-year grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Israel, Marisol and Esperanza have been hired as the outreach workers for the grant to find appropriate referrals for the agency among migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The luncheon was held at the Holiday Inn North in Lexington on April 17.



Israel Avelar, Marisol Valles and Esperanza Rivera

NEWS BITS *continued*

Project Reach in Scottsdale, Arizona

OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Malinda Davis recently presented at the Project Reach Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. Project Reach is a program funded by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Henderson Community College (HCC) was one of eight community colleges in the nation to receive a Project Reach grant. Malinda's office is at the college and she worked closely with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) on the project. It assisted community college students with disabilities in obtaining a degree by allowing them to earn credit hours for doing service work for non-profit agencies. Students were able to apply what they learned in the classroom to a real job site. They worked at the local hospital, with Hospice, with the school system, with the humane society and with various other social programs. Students were provided jobs based on their needs, interests, and vocational goals and developed valuable transferable skills to put on their resumes. Although the three-year AACC grant has ended, Henderson Community College plans to continue the program.



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Malinda Davis in Scottsdale

District Advocacy Trainings



Presenter, Pamela Roark-Glisson and consumer Melanie Newton attended the Advocacy Training in Lexington, KY held at the Independence Place on April 28, 2008. Topics discussed were, what is advocacy?, why advocate?, strategies for developing your message, and much more. Advocacy trainings took place in every OVR district across the state. They were sponsored by the agency and conducted by the 5 Independent Living Centers.

AT Conference

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky and Kentucky AgrAbility hosted the 5th Annual Summer



Attendees listen carefully as presenter, Debbie Thompson speaks about software accessibility.

Institute in Assistive Technology (AT) at Cardinal Hill Rehabilitation Hospital in Lexington, KY on May 27 – 29, 2008. The three day event included several interesting topics such as home modifications, software accessibility, building your own AT, and the use of AT for people with cognitive disabilities. The workshops also included panel discussions from OVR consumers and their AT experience, an overview of disability services provided by postsecondary institutions and the possible establishment of a statewide AT organization facilitated by OVR Rehabilitation Technology Branch Manager, Carol Weber.

Get to Know Your Council Members

Judith Swim

Judith Swim



Judith Swim was appointed to the Council in the spring of 2006. She is a life long advocate for individuals who are deaf and has a profound hearing loss herself. For the past five years she has worked as an employment counselor at BAWAC, a community rehabilitation program in Northern Kentucky. Judy assists individuals who are deaf or have a significant hearing loss to secure and maintain employment.

Judy was born in Flint, Michigan in 1947. Although she may have had a hearing loss from birth, it was not diagnosed until she began school. After her diagnosis, Judy attended the Michigan School for the Deaf, where she learned to communicate using American Sign Language

Judy credits her mother for treating her like the other children in the family rather than being overprotective. Vocational rehabilitation in Michigan helped fund Judy's education at Gallaudet University. She graduated in 1972 and married Dwight Swim, who is also deaf, a few months later. Her husband's career as a minister has taken the couple to several different states. She worked in Iowa as a dietary aide, in Michigan as a tutor, educational aide and interpreter for deaf students, and in Louisville as an instructor in American Sign Language and as a trainer and job coach for Independent Industries for seven years. After moving to Northern Kentucky, Judy was assisted by OVR Counselor for the Deaf, Carol Leonhart, and Employment Relations Specialist, Pat Butcher in getting her current job at BAWAC where she is able to make a difference in the lives of individuals who are deaf.

Through decades of dedicated work, Judy has assisted many persons with deafness, hearing loss or multiple disabilities to identify and use their skills and abilities. "The important thing is to have a positive attitude. If there is a problem, find a solution through it or around it, but do not give up," said Judy. "Each and every person can have a successful life."

Judy is a member of the Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) and serves on a team developing greater mental health resources for the deaf in Northern Kentucky.

Save the Date

Upcoming Council and Committee Meetings

Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC)

Tuesday, August 19, 2008

10:00-12:00

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

209 St. Clair Street

Frankfort, KY 40601

Training Room C, 1st Floor

Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR) Meeting

Monday, September 8, 2008

9:00-3:30

Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa

1800 Newtown Pike

Lexington, KY 40511

Employer Recognition Awards

To Be Presented at September Meeting

The SCVR will once again present Employer Recognition Awards during a luncheon at its meeting in September. The Council recognizes employers who have made exemplary efforts to hire and accommodate individuals with disabilities. Four awards will be given on a regional basis.



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(Dave Matheis and Nanci Shelden, editors)