

GVRA



2014 LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE

Georgia's Economic
Recovery &
Growth **MUST** include
Employment for
citizens
with disabilities –
GVRA is good

Celebrating

S E R V I C E

It's that time of year. The weather has cooled. The leaves are changing colors, and the holidays are fast approaching.

At the end of the day, what makes the agency excel is the commitment and dedication of employees across the state.

While we use this time to eat and gather with loved ones and friends, it's also important to remember why we do what we do the other 364 days of the year.

It's not easy, and things worth doing rarely are. But because it's not easy, it's especially important to recognize the hard work that goes into serving those who need our help.

The mission at GVRA is simple: to maximize employment opportunities and independence for individuals with Disabilities. But the intangibles that go into making this mission a reality for so many across Georgia is far from simple.

Thank you for waking up every day determined to make someone else's life better. Thank you for working long hours to make sure that the work gets done. Thank you for giving of yourself and your time. Without all of you, the agency's mission would be just words on paper. You make it real.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Board profile on Bob Green.
- New Hires and Retirements
- BEP Celebrates 69 Years
- DAS End of the Year Celebration
- GIB Recognizes Veterans Day
- CNA Course Schedule
- VR Success Story

Think **BIG** to serve **MORE...**
BETTER



Did You Know?

What Georgians Need
From Georgia: \$28.4 Million
The total federal match will be ...
\$105 Million



Board Profile Bob Green

Governor Deal appointed Bob Green to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board in July 2012, and Bob has truly enjoyed having this opportunity to provide leadership and guidance to GVRA programs. Bob says that he is most concerned with helping people with disabilities and would like for GVRA to have more funding to assist more of them to work and live independently. In return, he said, they will give back to the economy and their communities and help GVRA to help other individuals with disabilities. Like several other Board members, Bob is a prime example of how recipients of VR services become successfully employed and contribute to their communities in many ways.

Bob came to work with the Georgia School for the Deaf after earning a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Gallaudet

University. Six months later, he transferred to a position with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) providing transitional training and adjustment services to Deaf clients. Bob spent the rest of his 34 years of dedicated state service in VR. He worked as a VR Counselor for the Deaf for over 10 years and achieved promotions in various offices up to State Coordinator of Deaf Blind Services, providing statewide leadership in these services with an office in College Park until retiring in 2012. Also, Bob has taught American Sign Language classes at Georgia Perimeter College since 1986.

Bob has been an active member of the Georgia Association of the Deaf for over 25 years, serving as an officer in several positions and helping plan three annual conferences among other functions. He is also involved with the Georgia

Bob Green Continued

Association of the Deaf-Blind and was an advisory committee member for the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project. Bob takes pleasure in having more time in retirement to stay involved with Deaf and Blind community groups where he often catches up with his prior VR clients and is very proud to see their success and achievements over the years. One of Bob's current projects is that he is helping the non-profit Total Living Community, Inc. to plan for an independent retirement home for seniors who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. He believes it is very important to assist these seniors in as many ways as possible.

Bob grew up in California with two older brothers and a twin sister who is Blind. Since Bob is Deaf, the twins spent a lifetime of challenges with communication. Thanks to advances in technology, Bob is happy to talk frequently now with his sister who still lives in California with direct telephone calls. Bob lives in Conyers with his wife Karen. They have two grown sons: one is Deaf and is a student at Gallaudet University, while the other son lives in Atlanta and has a 21-month old daughter. They are looking forward to a very special Christmas with her this year.

IAWP Fundraiser

The International Association of Workforce Professionals is hosting an ongoing fundraiser through the end of this year. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go to help the homeless.

For only \$25 you can get 3.5 gallons of liquid or powder laundry detergent. You can choose between either Gain or Tide. It is a presale, and the IAWP needs the money prior to delivery.

Also, there will be 3.5 gallon jugs of Clorox Bleach available for \$9. For an idea of how much you'll save by taking advantage of this fundraiser and buying in bulk, see the graph below. It's a savings of nearly \$40 if you buy the detergent, and for a large family, that would really make a difference in savings at the end of the year.

For more information, please contact Debra Barnes-Homer or Jonelle Samuel on the 6th floor of 2 Peachtree St. in Atlanta.

New Hires and Retirements

Please welcome Tabitha Daniel—RWS EW2 INPATIENT UNITS, Krystal Whitten—RWS Housekeeping, David Drummond—RWS Housekeeping, Janice West—VR Newnan Unit, Ruby Kaspers—Cave Spring, Brandi Buffington—VR Gainesville Unit, Candace Wilson—VR Decatur Unit 2, Amber Wiggins—VR Jonesboro Unit, Maria Moss—VR Douglasville Unit, Kenyana Ferguson—RWS VRU Life Adjustment SVS, Christopher Janes—Cave Spring, William Holliday—VR College Park Unit 1, Meredith Burke—VR Atlanta Unit 2, Melinda Jeffers—Cave Spring, Megan Gaudet—VR Atlanta Unit 2, Imogene Mahone—RWS Housekeeping, Kim Allen—GVRA General Admin, Brittanie Burdette—VR Thomson Unit, Paige Payne—GVRA General Admin, Katherine Whitaker—GIB-Bainbridge, George Sanders—RWS VRU Life Adjustment, Jorge Navarro—RWS VRU Emp. Dev. Pro Work, Jacqueline Henderson—RWS Housekeeping, Martina Burton—RWS VRY Life Adjustment, Kelli Yelverton—RWS VRY Counseling, Marie Hall—Cave Spring and Cynthia Beeland—RWS EW2 Inpatient Units.

Happy trails to Alvin Dixon III and Terry Sears!

Sign Up for the Daily Update or the Newsletter

Some of you may have received this newsletter from a friend. If you'd like to receive further newsletters in your inbox or the daily update, please contact GVRA Government Relations and Communications at 404-232-1978 or at John.Boan@gvra.ga.gov.

Upcoming Board Meetings

The following is a list of upcoming meetings of the GVRA board.

Dec. 11, 2013 (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.)
Goodwill of North Georgia Career Center
3515 Mundy Mill Road, Oakwood, GA 30566

Jan. 8, 2014 (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.)
Location TBD

Mar. 12, 2014 (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.)
Location TBD

May 14, 2014 (1 p.m. to 3 p.m.)
Location TBD

Please contact GVRA Communications and Government Relations with questions about upcoming board meetings at 404-232-1978. The following is a list of upcoming meetings of the GVRA board.

\$2.1 Billion

That's how much fully funding GVRA would contribute to the Georgia economy.

That's a big impact on the Georgia economy. Not only does it account for an increase in tax revenues associated with greater statewide employment, but it also accounts for the decline in state entitlement spending associated with a larger working population.

That's big. And it's very much possible.



BEP Celebrates 69 Years

Business Enterprise Program

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

For three days in October, the Business Enterprise Program staff and 64 of its licensed blind vendor managers from around the state celebrated the program's 69th year of providing employment opportunities to individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired. This year's theme, "Reaching for the Star," encouraged managers and trainees to set their goals high. The event highlighted the idea that with hard work, commitment and never-ending perseverance, anything is possible.

More than 30 businesses sponsored the tradeshow portion of the celebration, which highlighted samples of the latest snacks and beverages. Training courses on tax deductions and how to create business plans were also presented to all blind vendor managers.

BEP had a first time Committee of Blind Vendor (CBV) forum, which allowed four candidates to speak on the reasons why they should be elected the next committee chairman. GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg used the opportunity to discuss the greater agency goals as they apply to BEP.





Disability Adjudication Services
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Employees of the Month



Pictured: DAS employee of the month Kathy Beatty with DAS Director Awilda Danko.

The following nomination for the DAS November 2013 employee of the month award was submitted by Ayanna Conley:

"Kathy Beatty has consistently shown her commitment to make timely and accurate decisions on all the disability claims that come across her desk. Kathy started at DAS in 2007. She processes initial and disabled child claims and was recently promoted to Adjudicator. She is known to treat her claimants and her coworkers with compassion and respect. Kathy is an active member of the Morale Building Committee. She is always the first person to volunteer to organize unit activities, and she makes a delicious key lime cake! If I were asked to design my own unit, Kathy would be my first pick. She exemplifies excellence in everything that she does. It is my privilege to nominate Kathy Beatty for employee of the month."

DAS End of the Year Celebration

Disability Adjudication Services (DAS) recognized the achievements of the division as a whole, the work units, and individual employees with a series of events on

Nov. 6. This included an awards ceremony and a luncheon. Several guests from GVRA and SSA were invited to the awards ceremony. This included Executive Director Greg Schmieg, who was unable to attend. Awilda Danko, DAS Director, then presented awards to numerous individuals and work groups that made the most significant contributions to the successes that DAS achieved. Below are the categories and

individuals or groups that were recognized:

Claims Processing – **Amber Henderson, Shay Hansford, Robbie Davis, Miranda Thomason, Vicki Tanaka, Dorothy Cason, Vanessa Bodden, Tawanta Williams, Roger Boyd, Jay Sellars, Zach Brewer**

Accounting – **Michelle Coleman and Temera Graham**

Case Control/Pre-Development – **Joylette Brown-Swaby, Gina Wilson, Dana Williams**

Cooperative Disability Investigations (Fraud Unit) – **Tammy Hernandez and Carmen Henley**

Claimant Examination Scheduling – Outstanding

Teamwork Award

Electronic Medical Evidence – **Ann Simmons and Elaine Baker**

Hearings – **Sally Tidwell and Meg Anderson-King**

Information Systems – **Luana Cesar**

Mail Services – **John Malone and Jamandra Manson**

Medical Support – **Drs. Paul Crank, Warren Hinson, William Render, George Ude**

Morale-Building Committee – Outstanding Dedication and Teamwork Award

Professional Relations – **Lisa Townsend and Katherine Thomas**

Program Support – **Joellen Chapman, Samandra Collins, Kim Carlyle**

Quality Assurance – **Paul Nettle and Vanessa Taylor**

Trainers – **Lisa Asher, Dianna Scherer, Lisa Swindler**

The End of Year Celebration Committee members were Floyd Cox, Dick Gonter, Gaynell Nicholas, Tonya Scott, and Chaterica Williams. Also assisting with the celebration were the Morale Building

Committee, and Georgia Association of Disability

Examiners (GADE), Terri Daniels, President.





GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

On Nov. 6, Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB), division of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), held a ceremony at its Bainbridge plant in honor of the contributions and service of its Veterans.

The Bainbridge plant, whose mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind, currently employs seven talented veterans in the production of high quality products for its customers.

This year's speaker was US army Major Veronica Carroll, an Intelligence Planner who is currently deployed with III Corps in support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Major Carroll, who addressed the Bainbridge plant from Afghanistan via Skype, said "First and foremost, I would like to say that it is a tremendous honor to have been invited to your [organization's] Veterans Day event. It is a privilege to be able to speak to you today, to celebrate and remember so many heroes to our nation and thank those of you who continue to work to support our service members. The armed forces are the strength of the nation, and it is our veterans and local citizens who contribute to that strength – for without you, we could not persevere."

"Veteran's Day is a day to remember those who have served and who are still serving; Veterans like – Tom Henderson, Frank Williams, Charles Dragovich, Lionel Thomas, Reggie Crosson, Robert Scott, Gerard Kwilecki, and anyone else I may have missed, who are amongst us today -- thank you for your service. It is your service to our great nation that paved the way for those of us that came after you."

Major Carroll, a veteran of operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom is a highly decorated officer. Her awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the

GIB Recognizes Veterans Day

Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Joint Service Achievement Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge, the Knowlton Award and various other campaign medals, ribbons and unit awards.

She concluded by saying "Veterans symbolize what it means to be a citizen. Look around you. There are Veteran's serving in service and leadership roles, and to the rest of you – thank you for your service and support, as well. It takes a village, and everyone's contribution is extremely important – and today we not only honor veterans but the supporters of veterans. So -- thank you to Georgia Industries for the Blind for everything you do to support veterans, past and present. You are an amazing bunch of people, and it is you that makes my service to our great nation unequivocally successful and further reinforces my desire to serve and preserve democracy. Deeply we appreciate everything you do for us – for the support from home. As soldiers, we literally couldn't do it without you."

Georgia Industries for the Blind joins the rest of the country in honoring all veterans, past and present, for their patriotism, sacrifice and love of country.



Roosevelt Warm Springs

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Cave Spring Center

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

RWS Employee of the Month

Physician Ashish Dhungel received the November employee of the month award at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Although he has only been on the RWS staff since February, Dr. Dhungel has made a great impression on his coworkers for the professional way he interacts with patients, patients' families and other healthcare professionals. The employees who nominated Dr. Dhungel spoke highly of his dedication to his work and the clients.

Dr. Dhungel received his medical degree from the University of Science and Technology in Bangladesh, his native land. After completing residencies in internal medicine and nephrology at St. John's Hospital & Medical Center, Dr. Dhungel earned board certification in those fields in 2008 and 2010 respectively.



Pictured: Dr. Dhungel with RWS Executive Director Bill Bulloch and David Mork Executive Director of Hospitals for Georgia Regents.

CNA Course Schedule

Roosevelt Warm Springs Vocational Rehabilitation program is pleased to announce the 2014 training schedule for the Certified Nursing Aide (CNA) and Home Health Aide (HHA) program of study. To meet the needs of GVRA field clients, the program has prepared to increase capacity for enrollment and also offers a new "direct entry" admissions process that allows those students meeting special admissions requirements to directly enroll in the program without participation in the traditional residential program. Special lodging is also available to these students to insure streamlined admissions and program participation. For those students participating in the traditional vocational rehabilitation program, now known as the Roosevelt Academy, entering the CNA program can be an excellent post-secondary goal.

Established in 2009, the 9-week training program was specially designed for individuals with disabilities.

	Start Date	End Date	Reg. Deadline
Class 1	January 6, 2014	March 7, 2014	December 18, 2014
Class 2	March 10, 2014	May 23, 2014	March 5, 2014
Class 3	May 27, 2014	August 1, 2014	May 21, 2014
Class 4	August 4, 2014	October 3, 2014	July 30, 2014
Class 5	October 6, 2014	December 12, 2014	October 1, 2014



A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

VR Success Story



John Dowdy came to VR at the end of 2011 with a host of orthopedic problems. His first concern was getting healthy again in order to return to work, and that's what his VR counselor worked with him to solve. John was determined to be eligible for VR

services based on Degenerative Disc Disease-Lumbar and Degenerative Joint Disease and was found to be in need of physical restoration services in order to return to work.

John participated in several months of physical therapy and began feeling stronger. After completing his PT, he began community work adjustment training with VR's partner Goodwill where he began to build his work stamina. That training, combined with the PT, got John to the point where he was ready to begin preparing for work.

Unfortunately, during his period of unemployment, John actually became homeless. He stayed in a shelter for several months. However, John never lost sight of his goal of becoming successfully employed, always making sure he attended his appointments with VR staff.

John was very motivated and worked closely with Job Readiness Specialist Kim Jordan and Employment Specialist Larry Tucker to become job ready, develop a good resume, practice interviewing and pursue job leads. John was given a record of work search sheet to record his job contacts each day and was encouraged to spend 32 hours a week looking for a job. He was provided transportation assistance through bus passes allowing him to actively participate in his job search and attend scheduled appointments with VR staff.

At the end of 2012, all his hard work paid off. He applied at a new restaurant that was being built in downtown Athens—Herschel's Famous 34 Pub

and Grille. Since John's work history and skills were primarily in the restaurant industry, he was interviewed and hired. When the restaurant opened its doors in February of 2013, John began working as a kitchen helper, primarily washing dishes. After going to work at Herschel's in February, John was able to save money and eventually secure an apartment for himself and his family.

John said he loves his job and the people he works with. He also said he appreciates VR's help and support to get him where he is today.

John is an excellent example of how clients have benefitted from VR services to return to work and how working has allowed him to be a productive and responsible citizen of the community again.



NDEAM Pictures from Across GA.



ABOVE: Representatives from Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation in Albany, Georgia met with Mayor Christopher Wright of Dawson for signing a proclamation to kick off the celebration of NDEAM. Standing behind Mayor Wright pictured from left to right, Arleather Perry (Middle/High School Representative), Tom Connelly (Rehabilitation Employment Specialist); Cassandra Terry (Rehabilitation Employment Specialist); and Barney Parnacott (City Manager).

BELOW LEFT: The Brunswick Glynn County Mayor's Committee on Services for the Disabled, Inc., held their 24th annual Employer of the Year Awards Luncheon on Oct. 15. Pictured below are left to right, Scarlett Decker and Chris Caracciolo with Chartwells Higher Education and Steve Oldaker, Chairman of the Brunswick Glynn County Mayor's Committee on Services for the Disabled, Inc.

BELOW RIGHT: City of Cairo mayor and council members recognize NDEAM.

