

GVRA

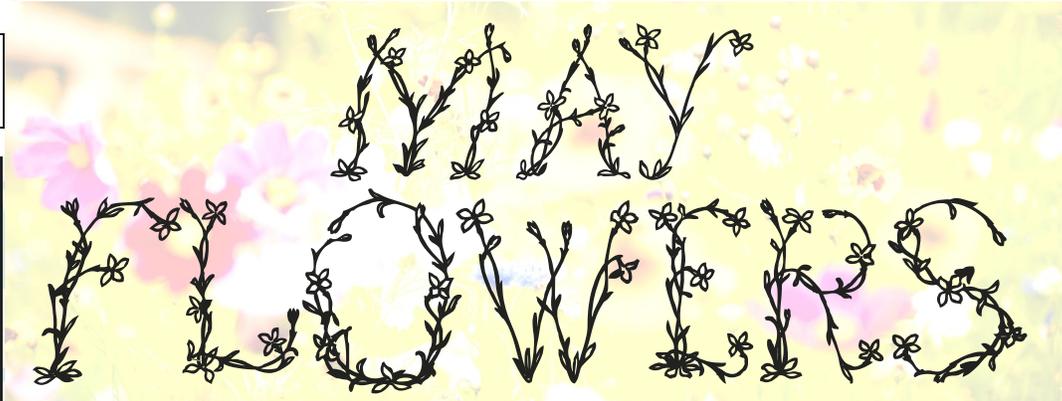


May 2014

Georgia's Economic Recovery & Growth MUST include Employment for Citizens with Disabilities – GVRA is good for business.

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Spring is in the air. Everything is blooming. But at Cave Spring Center (CSC), the latter can be said about any season of the year.

Throughout the year, the center operates two large greenhouses, with 90 percent of the work being done by CSC clients.

Flowers and plants are sold to the public at wholesale prices, but in addition to generating enough revenue to stay sustainable, the greenhouses also provide valuable work training and experience for the individuals with disabilities who work

there, said Denise Puckett, work adjustment coordinator and greenhouse manager at CSC.

"We are a competitive business but we also train our clients there. It's a business and a classroom," she said. "They learn job skills and social skills. You have to get along with other people. They learn conflict resolution. They learn customer service. It's just a great tool to help them."

The different varieties of plants and flowers that flourish in the CSC greenhouses run the gamut

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Greg's Greetings

"Spring Fever"

Now that the weather is getting warmer and the trees are turning green, it's hard not to get "spring fever", that wonderful sense of new beginnings and things beginning to blossom.

Mother Nature is amazing in how this cycle of life seems to work and it is always inspiring to see how things grow when they are nurtured. So since I've got "spring fever", I decided to use that as my theme for this month's newsletter.

Let me share my thoughts about the importance of nurturing. If we trust in the example that Mother Nature gives us, and then we can assume that just like plants, humans need to be nurtured as well if we are to grow and blossom. We too need healthy soil, the right amount of sunshine, water and all the other nutrients.

To me, the healthy soil means a strong foundation, something we can rely on that will support us as we grow.

The warmth of the sunshine is the appreciation, the pat on the back, and the acknowledgment that we are doing a good job – the more of that we get, the better we feel and the more we unfold to do even greater things.

Water is most like knowledge. We thirst for information, communication, understanding, clarity, etc. so we know how to push forward and how best to grow. If I imagine GVRA as a garden with all the unique vegetation and flowers and plants, it must be cultivated to produce the very best. That responsibility lies with me and with every other manager within GVRA to constantly cultivate the garden and provide the nutrients needed.

To every manager within GVRA, let me ask you to consider the needs of your staff, each one of them; and to give them a daily dose of the essential nutrients of healthy growth. Support them, thank them, and keep them informed. It is because of the flowers in our garden that Georgians with disabilities will have a bright future. Thank you.

Greg Schmieg
GVRA Executive Director



Cleveland VR Means Business

Many GVRA offices go the extra mile to let our clients know why we exist. This sign was recently spotted in the Cleveland, Georgia reception area. Kudos to RUM Kenneth Hise and all the staff in the Cleveland office for their ommitment to putting people to work! Does your office show our purpose? If so, send your photos to john.boan@gvra.gvra.ga.gov an maybe your office will be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

SRC Meeting at Warm Springs



Pictured above

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council are led through several games and team-building exercise by students from Roosevelt Warm Springs. The SRC had their regular meeting at RWS several weeks ago.

Save the Date

The next meeting of the GVRA board is on May 14 at 1 p.m. It will be at Jacobs Ladder Neurodevelopmental School and Therapy Center in Roswell.

New Hires and Retirements

Please welcome Antonio Bridges (RWS Housekeeping), Jessica Carter (VR Valdosta Office), Katelyn Crawford (VR Lafayette Unit), Marissa Denson (RWS Housekeeping), Jasmine Dyal (RWS Inpatient), Maria Elrod (DAS Dalton), Lori Gales (RWS Patient Reassessment), Alina Garcia Ravelo (GIB Bainbridge), Andrew Henderson (RWS Therapy), Richard Jordan (GIB Corporate), Danielle Louis (RWS Inpatient), Jennifer Meadows (RWS Inpatient), Nancy Neely (RWS Housekeeping), Justin Richardson (DAS North), Michael Riley (GVRA IT), Tasha Singleton (VR Deaf Services), Tommy Stainton (DAS Thomasville), Demetria Thompson (RWS Inpatient), Christina Viljoen (VR Canton Office), Doreen Ventus (VR Marietta Office), Amber Wade (RWS Inpatient) and Kay Williamson (RWS Administration).

Happy trails to Deborah Brown (VR Norcross Office), Laura Burns (RWS Health), Cynthia Faircloth (DAS North) Mary Grant (RWS Procurement), Virginia Hudson (RWS Clinical) and Annie Pauldo (VR Dublin Office).

DAS Employee of the Month



Disability Adjudication Services
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

This month, Vanessa Bodden was named Employee of the Month for Disability Adjudication Services. She came to the Athens DAS office through a transfer from the Miami, FL DDS. Vanessa has been an asset since her arrival, coming to the office needing only a few hours of training on GA's business practice.

While in the process of building her initial workload, she would write reports for other Adjudicators, as well as review and order materials as needed.

She is able to do all case types. She was a key player on the Task Force Team in the Athens office that worked to reduce caseload sizes in 2013.

Extra duties include assisting co-workers with Spanish calls and occasionally translating documentation. She also listens, reviews and transfers Spanish messages to the appropriate Adjudicator. You may have never spoken with her, but chances are you have heard her voice as she is the voice on the GA DAS main voice messaging, both for the Spanish and the English.

She was awarded the following awards for the Athens office at the end of 2013—highest number and percentage of cases cleared, lowest percentage of Initial aged cases, lowest processing time and lowest caseload size.

Many of the Adjudicators use Vanessa as a resource for questions on policy and guidance on how to complete casework.

She is always willing to assist with helping to get the right decision for the claimant, be it her case or someone else's. She is a willing volunteer to help with any kind of project.

And on top of everything she does so well, she is a VERY kind and compassionate person; her smile alone is a morale builder in itself.

Please recognize Vanessa for her OUTSTANDING work here at DAS...thanks!!

From VR Director Ed James

The following are definitions of identity, and I think they apply well to what we do.

"The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known."

"The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group."

First, "the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which is definitely

recognizable or known." How are we known statewide and locally? Over the last few months, I have traveled around the state, and I have been troubled by the signage in our local community offices. Some are outdated. Some are pieces of paper stuck to a door. I believe we can do better for both the consumers we serve and the staff housed in those locations. As you know, pictures have been taken of all the offices, and the hope is we can produce some conformity and instill pride in our local office appearance for all.

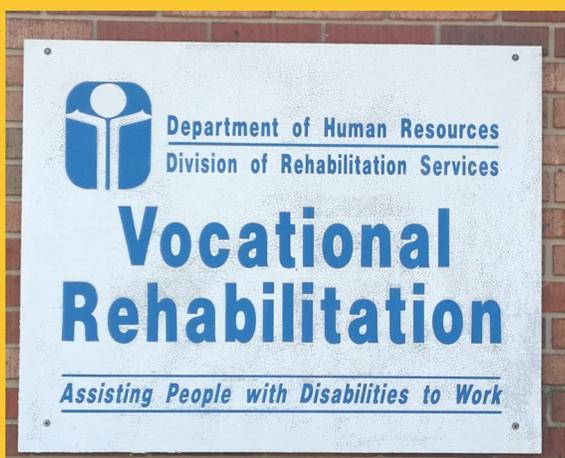
Ed James Continued

I believe you are the most important piece of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division, the local field staff who touches the clients directly. You are the agents of change and hope for the people we serve. I want you to be proud of your office. It will take some time, but the first step towards righting the signage has been taken. Second, "the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group." For me, this speaks to the heart, the calling, the passion I see in each of you as we serve our collective clients. We've had some rough times in the past, but we have endured and stood to the test.

Over the next few months, we will have some challenges and make changes to the VR program as we continue to develop our identity. The foundation is strong and on course. I am confident your resolve, your heart and your passion to serve will remain constant, consistent and firm. Thank you for that. I want us to build from these times and create a program that is accountable, results oriented and has the capacity to fulfill its mission. The mission: Employment and independence for Georgians with disabilities. Stay the course.

Ed James

Signage Changes and Agency Branding



In the coming months, GVRA will change all the signage at all division locations around the state.

It will feature the new agency and division logos, respectively. This will not only help unify the image of GVRA across the state, but it will also provide brand awareness for our clients and for anyone who passes by our offices.

This comes in conjunction with the full branding campaign, which includes all agency collateral materials, email signatures, badges and anything that bears the GVRA logo or name.

Georgia Department of Labor

If you have a question or notice something that is improperly branded, please contact John Boan at john.boan@gvra.ga.gov. Thank you.



GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

New Financial Manager at GIB

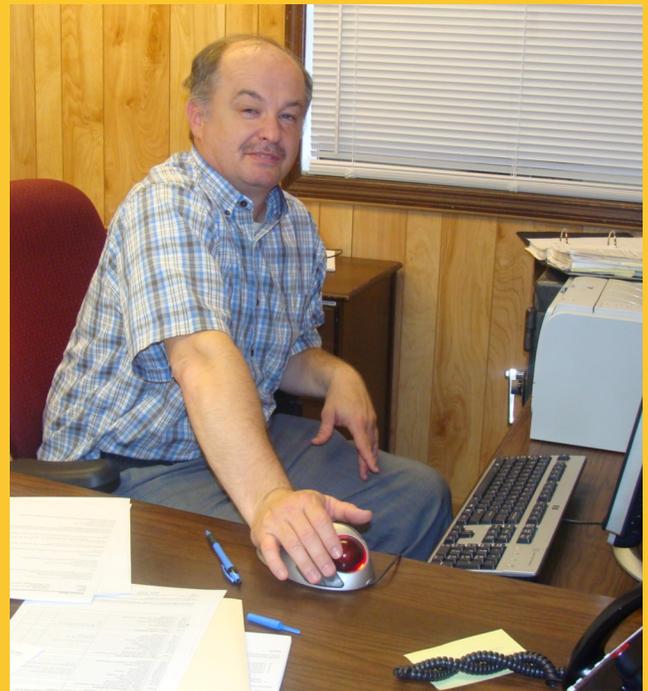
Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) is pleased to introduce Richard Jordan as its new financial services manager. Richard brings 13 years of experience in private sector accounting to his current role with GIB.

Previously, Richard was the comptroller for Georgia Pipe Company, a \$60M a year manufacturer of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) piping products. His roles and responsibilities expanded across multiple areas such as forecasting, budgeting, cost accounting, weekly projection updates, inventory, fixed assets, payroll, receipts, accounts payable and accounts receivable.

Prior to Georgia Pipe Company, Richard was the Divisional Finance Manager for Simmons Outdoor Company, an \$ 80M a year distributor of rifle-scopes, binoculars and other sporting optics.

Richard earned his Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.) with a concentration in Management from Valdosta State University and his Masters of Business Administration (M.B.A.) from Georgia College & State University.

Richard's responsibilities at GIB will include managing a comprehensive accounting/fiscal management program, which integrates Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), Governmental Accounting Standards, statutory accounting requirements and agency fiscal policies and procedures. Please help us welcome Richard Jordan to Georgia Industries for the Blind.



Get Office Supplies from GIB

When ordering or restocking office supplies, remember GIB produces an assortment of folders and report covers at its Bainbridge and Albany Plants. Certain styles are available in an assortment of colors; light blue, royal blue, light green, moss green, earth red, deep red, and yellow. Styles range from a manilla folder with no fasteners up to a 3 divider, 8 part, 3" capacity file folder and almost anything in between. File

folders are available in both letter and legal size.

Purchase quality, blind made products at an affordable price! Contact Lesia Walker or Tina Boyett @ 1-800-605-7260. So think twice when ordering your office supplies and support one of the agency's divisions.

Flowers at CSC Continued



from ferns to Christmas cactuses to butterfly bushes, with the available flora and fauna changing with the seasons. Prices, however, only range from \$1 to \$25 for even the largest plants.



More than anything though, Denise said, it shows clients what they're capable of, at the same time preparing them for the challenges of the working world.

"It's beneficial. It really is," she

said. "It builds their self esteem to see that they can do something, and that really is priceless."

State of Georgia employees get a discount on plants. Employees and members of the public are encouraged to head to CSC and pick up some flowers to brighten up their house or yard.

Employee Recognition at RWS

Staff members were praised for their hard work and dedication recently during the 87th annual Employee Recognition Luncheon at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Dr. Ashish Dhungel, a physician in the Long Term Acute Care hospital, received the 2013 Employee of the Year Award.

The 2013 Leader of the Year Award was given to Janet Greene, a nurse manager in the RWS Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital.

In addition to these two major awards, the following employees were recognized for their years of service at RWS:

25 Years of Service: Kathy Clark, Bobbie Dukes, Morreese Horton, Tina McClendon, Ann McGraw, Theresa Searcy and Larry Willis.

20 Years of Service: Clara Chaney, Gray Couch, Glenn Kersey and Michael Swetnam.

15 Years of Service: Lynn Betts, Robert

Burbank, Bruce Dukes, Rhonda Fuller, Jeffrey Goodin, Daniel Owens and Kimberly Wells.

10 Years of Service: Sherry Akins, Gary Baker, Nancy Bradshaw, Kevin Bunkley, Angela Caldwell, Brenda Holt, Rosemary Johnson, Mark Kurtz, Kimberly Lawson, Mark Malone, Beth Mitchell, Jesse O'Neal, Lynne Patterson, Oliver Lee Snelling, Chloris Stanford, Delwanda Thurmond and Reenae White.

5 Years of Service: Lewistine Andrews, Gary Bradley, Kenneth Brock, Felice Cameron, Bobby Cassey, Maureen Cox, Leonard Crane, Deborah Hall, Michelle Heath, Jane Jaudon, Delphine Leonard, Karen McDaniel, Lyndel Pettis, Robyn Pynenburg, Tammy Howe, Tina Rutherford, Deisy Saumell, Larry Shuler, Meg Sturdevant, Quardez Warrior, Lametta West and Gayle Whitehead.

RWS Students Help Out

Three current students at Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) developed their leadership skills recently by facilitating a series of team-building exercises for the Georgia State Rehabilitation Council.

The Council met at Warm Springs on April 23, and the students led the council members in the cup game, the card tower game, the tank game and the minefield game.

Two of the students, Taylor Phillips and Alma Valencia, are currently participating in a leadership program at RWS called "Step Up and Be a Leader." The third student, Dakota Dir, participated in the previous session of the "Step Up" program designed to help young

people become leaders in their careers and in their communities.

The leadership class taught by Buffy Mitchell, Director of Staff Education at Warm Springs, is just one of many opportunities for personal growth available to students at RWS.

Other opportunities include serving on the student council, being a "First Buddy" to new students, being a student fire marshal to help all students escape the dorm in case of an emergency and being a member of the nutrition council to learn about good nutrition and healthy eating and sharing that information with other students.

Friends Helping Friends Go to the Ballpark

Nearly 150 Braves tickets were recently donated to the Elbert County Comprehensive High School Friends Helping Friends (FHF) Club thanks to State Representative Tom McCall and the Braves Reach Out Program.

Several Braves players generously contributed tickets to the "Reach Out, Be Our Guest Program."

CSX provided funds for shirts, transportation and meals, making this wonderful trip possible.

CSX Regional Vice President & State Government and Community Affairs Craig Camuso joined the group for the game along with Tom and Jane McCall who presented

teachers backpacks to give to their students.

FHF members, who pay their own way on all FHF trips, invited Elbert County primary, elementary, and middle and high school students along with young adults from Advantage Day School to the game.

There is no cost to the school system for all FHF trips.

FHF, dedicated to the memory of Bud McCall, provides exceptional educational opportunities for Elbert County students who have special needs.