

The VR

Report



The Director's Report, Ed James

Happy Fall Everyone,

Let me begin with giving you an update on the VR report as we have recently changed from a monthly report to a quarterly report. So this is our first attempt at the Fall 2015 edition. The information and data represented is from July 1, 2015 through September 30th, 2015. I hope you find the information useful as we highlight our staff's accomplishments and our consumer's success. If you have comments or suggestions, please feel free to email me at ed.james@gvra.ga.gov. Let me say a quick Thank You to all of you who serve Georgians with capabilities each day. Enjoy this edition.



STAFFING – Nancy Shreve, Administrative Operations Manager

Staff Update: As of September 30, 2015

New Hires:

- Angie Baldwin, PRC, Brunswick
- Jennifer Barlar, Receptionist/Admin Assistant, SQI
- Katerell Barnes-Keenan, Counselor Assistant, Marietta
- Sandra Dardy, PRC, Milledgeville
- Marc Houston, BRS, Business Relations, College Park
- Carolyn Kay, CRC, College Park
- Andrea Lamb, Office Assistant, Tifton
- Mellisa Matheson, BRS, Business Relations, College Park

- Kristen McNally, Rehab Technologist, AWT
- Victoria Tarver, Counselor Assistant, Cumming
- James Tolliver, BRS, Business Relations, College Park

Transfers:

- Doreen Ventus, BRS, Norcross
- Lois Harris, RWSIR
- Allison Walker, Atlanta

Promotions:

- Itohowo Ekanemesang, RUM, College Park
- Ken Hise, Field Service Director, East Quadrant

Resignations:

- Juanita Butler, CRC, Atlanta
- Michael Edwards, BRS, Thomasville
- John Powell, Counselor Assistant, College Park
- Tiffany Williams, BRS, Statesboro
- Sara Willis, CRC, Tifton

Retirements:

- Debra Lee, Counselor Assistant, Waycross, 11-1-15
- William Mitchell, CRC, Rome 10-1-15
- Angie Johnson, CRC, Waycross, 10-1-15

October Report 2015

Quadrant					Positions Filled	Total # of Vacancies	Total Pos	Vacancy Rates	Total # Recruiting
	New Hires	Attrition	Transfers	Promotions					
Metro	2	2	2	1	113	32	145	22%	32
East	2			1	102	25	128	20%	22
West		1	1		79	35	114	31%	18
South	2	3			88	20	108	19%	16
VR Division Office					4	0	4	0%	0
SQI	1				10	3	13	23%	3
Fiscal Services					19	1	20	5%	0
AWT	1				23	5	28	18%	5
Business Relations	3	2			35	14	49	29%	14
Policy					2	0	2	0%	0
Transition					1	0	1	0%	0
Business Application					7	2	9	22%	

*Overall Vacancy Rate = 22% Figures updated as of 9-30-15 and includes paid counselor internships

VR Division Updates



METRO – Bernadette Amerein, Field Services Director

Big “Thanks” to all Metro staff!

Thanks to all metro staff for working so hard during state fiscal year 2014-2015 for assisting our clients with reaching their employment goals.

This month we want to acknowledge our amazing Counselor Assistants and Office Assistants! They’ve had lots of changes this year, especially in their day to day work. They have willingly attended all the training provided for their new roles and taken on their responsibilities with excitement. (See picture below for staff attending recent “sighted guide” training).

The CAs and RAs have contributed so much to all the units and their hard work is paying off with more clients getting into the VR program and receiving our awesome services. Thanks for your flexibility and enthusiasm.



From left to right: Tucker OA, Shakera Webb assisting Tucker CA, Travonna Perkins; Norcross OA, Beverly Lewis guides CRC, Wysteria Tooms; Marietta CA, Sandra Felder guiding Marietta, CA, Aminatah Camara.

disAbility Link celebrates 25 year anniversary of the ADA.

disAbility Link, the center for rights and resources, hosted their ADA open house on Friday, July 17, featuring ADA trivia, games, food, prizes, and a chance to learn more about the work of disABILITY LINK and the community they serve. VR staff joined with other visitors and staff to enjoy the day in celebration of the anniversary of the historic ADA legislation. To learn more about disAbility Link, check them out at: <http://disabilitylink.org>



L-R: Jocelyn Goss, Shirley Robinson, Bernadette Amerein and Garrick Scott

Provider Fair

Metro hosted a Provider Fair on October 7 at the College Park VR Office. We had a fantastic turnout with approximately 40 providers and 60 VR staff. It was a great opportunity for VR staff to meet with our providers and learn about their programs and opportunities for our clients. The feedback from providers and staff was so positive. Thanks to Joanne Lannan, Linda Belt, Miranda Lemon, Yashica Finch, and Andrea Bryant for organizing and setting up the event and to Metro managers: Rose Demakos, Karen Lynn Dominy, Itohowo Ekanemesang, Joanne Lannan, Jessica Gordon, Cheryl Gosier, Theora Powell, Shirley Robinson, Debbie Slaton and Aimee Williams for all the wonderful donations! Enjoy these fun pics from our Fair!



Metro staff join in Reality Fair

-Creative Community Services (CCS) hosted its first annual “Practical Matters” Reality Fair at the Atlanta Civic Center on Friday, July 17, 2015 from 10am – 3pm. This was an exciting event for youth which allowed them to navigate “the real world” for a day to expose them to life as an independent adult.

VR was invited to host a table at the College and Career Fair which was held during the Reality Fair from 1pm – 3pm. Since there are many CCS youth who would benefit greatly from VR services, we jumped on the opportunity to volunteer. Thanks so much to Rums Aimee Williams and Theora Powell for

heading it up. Thanks also to counselor volunteers: Katelyn Napier, Rachel Perry, Juanita Butler and Johnesha Harris.



L-R; Theora Powell, Katelyn Napier, Rachel Perry, Aimee Williams, Juanita Butler, Johnesha Harris.



L-R: Theora and Aimee assisting some students and Katelyn, Rachel and Johnesha in the “Grocery Store”

Aimee wrote, “We had a great time!” She said Katelyn, Rachel and Johnesha worked with the youth at the “grocery store.” Juanita was a floater delivering gifts of t-shirts, water, snacks, and whatever else the hosts asked her to help out with. “They made an awesome team!”

During the College and Career Fair, Juanita, Theora and Aimee introduced VR to all of the academic vendors and passed out VR goodies. The others held down the VR table, engaging the youth and the other vendors to educate them on VR services.

Kennesaw State Inclusion Academy

VR and Kennesaw States’ inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) program staff have been busy this month with activities to support our ongoing partnership.

With the new policy supporting VR’s involvement in the Certified Transition Programs, VR staff met with the KSU staff, students and parents at the Academy. Karen Lynn Dominy, Rum in Canton, participated in training on job coaching for the Student Mentors on August 11 with Counselor Assistant, Joye Carroll. The program was highly informative and well received and appreciated. Bernadette Amerein, Field Services Director, met with parents to provide updated information on the VR partnership with KSU and to answer questions. VR Director Ed James has been very involved with the development and progression of the partnership with Ibrahim Elsayy, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of the KSU IPSE program and his staff.

Another benefit of the Collaboration is the announcement of two Transition Teacher positions for the KSU Certified Transition Program. These Academic Transition Teachers will provide quality education to students in the IPSE program. Their major responsibilities will include creating, modifying and adapting university-level course content for individual students; working with peer mentors to ensure curricular access; assisting students to understand and master skills required to meet workplace expectations; and working with students, their families, and IPSE program staff to support student success. Interviews are being held in October for these positions. With Transition teachers and VR counselors working together, the goal is the Academy graduates will be even more prepared to enter into and be successful in the work force.

Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns Conference

Katavia Sloan (pictured below on the left) attended the 2015 NAMRC (National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns) Conference in Charlotte, NC on July 22-25, 2015). Katavia,



a CRC in the Tucker office, reported on the conference: “This year’s theme was “Winning the Race: Abilities, Social Justice, and Inclusion.” Much of the conference focused on social justice issues within rehab including increasing minority representation in State VR funding and participation. Research was presented showing direct correlations between successful outcomes and money spent on services for VR clients. In looking at diversity initiatives, research findings overwhelmingly concluded that minority clients were being underserved and underfunded, comparatively. Responses to this trend include targeted outreach to minority and underserved populations and professional development on spending initiatives. Other topics included trends in Rehabilitation—serving aging, international and LGBT Clients.

A formal call to action was announced to ensure all Americans with disabilities are being served in accordance with RSA guidelines.

With regard to the rehab profession, it was noted that staff retention and hiring should be a major focus in the field as a large percentage of current professionals would be eligible to retire soon, and even if all current rehab students were to enter the field, there would not be enough rehabilitation counselors to cover the retirees’ former positions. Recently, Rehabilitation Counselors were named one of the Top 10 Most Meaningful Jobs in America (Business Insider, July 22, 2015). Each of you play a major role in helping our clients reach their employment goals. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed!”

Tucker Unit Temporary move

The Tucker unit moved in with the Business Enterprise Program on July 30. This is a temporary location until we find a new office space. We had to move because the old office is scheduled for demolition to

make room for some new construction. Thanks so much to BEP Director, Raj Gandy and her staff for making room for us at their site. A special thanks to GVRA Facilities project manager, Kenneth Mann. Kenneth worked diligently to make sure the move happened smoothly. He didn't have any control over the 95 degree temperatures, however everything else went off as planned and staff are settling into their temporary home.

The new Tucker unit address is: 5238 Royal Woods Parkway Suite 200, Tucker, 30084

STEP for Success Programs

As CRPs continue to move to the STEP program, we have been busy training staff in the program. Managers spent a day training on the STEP process and actually were able to initiate referrals and approve payments for clients from their units. We are excited to have all the CRPs moving to the Pay for Performance program. The feedback from managers and staff is positive.



EAST – Ken Hise, Field Services Director

ATHENS

Janice Cassidy and Jean Newson, CRCs from the Athens office were integral in the planning and implementation of the GRA conference held in Augusta, GA. They participated in several planning meetings and then were actively involved in setting up & preparation of conference bags, and registration throughout the conference.

- At the GRA conference in Augusta, GA the East Chapter received the following awards/accolades:
 - Local Chapter of the Year 2015
 - Above and Beyond Plaque and \$100 gift card for exceeding the goal for Advertisements for the 2015 GRA Training Conference
 - A Certificate and \$100 gift card for recruiting the most new members.
- Staff from the Athens office attended training in September at various locations on Supported Employment to learn of upcoming changes and gain a better understanding of the various types and levels of Supported Employment.
- On September 2, 2015 Shari Kaplan, RUM participated in the first Northeast GA Transition Team meeting for the school year. The mission of NEGATT is to help families, schools, agencies and communities work together to enable students with disabilities to achieve their potential as adults. The focus of this initial meeting was completing a self-assessment of NEGATT's vision, mission, and guiding principles, as well as plan for future meetings.
- On September 18 and 22, 2015 several staff from the Athens VR office met with Sandra McGill, a journalism student at the University of Georgia Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, to provide her insight on the VR process and services to assist with an assignment she had on what happens to special-needs students once they graduate from high school, specifically students with mental health diagnosis.

- On September 24, 2015, Shari Kaplan, RUM and Rebecca Williamson, CRC presented at a Lunch and Learn for Athens VR and Goodwill Industries of North GA (GING) staff. The purpose of the Lunch and Learn was to discuss how GING staff can make effective recommendations for VR, how VR utilizes Goodwill and CRPs to serve clients, and provide updates and changes related to the STEP program.
- On September 28, 2015 Leon White and Shanti Aaron came to the Athens Unit meeting to review the recent changes with the WIPA project and answer any questions staff may have about the new referral process and services in general.
- On September 28, 2015 Jeff Allen came to speak to Transition Counselors and other VR staff about various transition related topics and to answer any questions staff may have about the status of Transition Services within VR.

CUMMING

Attending the GRA Conference in Augusta, GA was: Almas Shikari, Mary Wareham, Miracle Adkins, Keita Alston, and Donna Wood. These staff assisted with registration.

Keita's awards: 2015 Janice Black Spirit Award
 2015 President's Award Recipient
 2015 Professional Achievement Award

RUM Corin Morgan, PRC Miracle Adkins, and CA Victoria Tarver met with Lynn Sennett (Life and career Coalition Coordinator) and Rick Nelson (Board Member) to discuss how VR and the Place can coordinate services. The Place is the Forsyth County agency that provides social services, emergency aid, food bank, and a new employment placement program.

CRC Mary Wareham and RUM Corin Morgan presented VR services to parent of high school aged students from Forsyth Co. who are interested in the Project LIFE programs. These programs are a collaboration between VR and the school system to provide intensive vocational training and internships at 3 business sites in Forsyth County.

AUGUSTA

Certified Peer Support Training

Thursday September 24, 2015, Mr. Elijah Carter, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (Augusta) along with Mrs. Sandra McBride, Counselor Assistant (Statesboro) had the distinguished pleasure and privilege to facilitate a meaningful seminar in downtown Atlanta. The audience consisted of 12 individuals whose life experience was marked with resilience and a passion for helping others overcome the struggles of substance abuse, and shake off the stigma of chronic mental illness or a combination of these two diagnoses. Each of the participants had a unique story to tell about how they have accomplished stability and maintained hope amidst the adversity often coupled with mental illness and addiction.

Members were given the opportunity to learn pertinent information about the benefits of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and how collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability and similar community resources, that persons living with chronic and persistent mental illness could prepare for, secure, and obtain a satisfying employment outcome. The procedures and eligibility requirements for participation in the VR program were presented in detail and then examples of potential services and supports were fully explained. The IPS model of Supported Employment was then outlined; questions and comments were then addressed to ensure clarity of understanding.

Because the pursuit and attainment of meaningful work has been found to positively correlate with recovery from substance abuse and to act as a coping mechanism for those with disabilities, three sessions aimed at identifying aspects of job readiness and appropriate professional presentation were discussed. Exercises focusing on interviewing skills, resume development, and positive attitudes associated with job retention were demonstrated. Group members were encouraged not only to ask questions but also to present their own ideas, uniquely suited for the needs of those whom would likely receive peer counseling.

At the close of this event, feedback was welcomed and a catered lunch was graciously provided during which lively conversations took place, much of it, focused on the value of work preparation and job development.

HSHT held the annual Kick Off at the Augusta State University. Approximately 250 students were in attendance from Columbia, Richmond, Burke, McDuffie and Wilkes Counties. Representatives from theClubhou.se gave a technological presentation and information about their group. theClubhou.se encourages students to appreciate science, technology, engineering, art and math. Motivational speaker & interpretive dancer, Eddie Slowikowski, presented to the students, a show which encourages students to continue in school, maintain a positive attitude and seek assistance. The students were receptive and interacted with the presenters.



WEST – Denine Woodson, Field Services Director

LaGrange:

- LaGrange VR Team was well represented in several local community meetings, including the Heard/Meriwether and Troup Family Connections Collaborative.
- LaGrange hosted SDA 4 & 8 IPS CRCs, Supported Employment Providers and DBHDD Technical Advisors for a presentation by Linda Garrett, Work Incentives Navigator.
- CRCs/RUMs participated in SDA 4 & 8 Transition Resources Day Event, which featured the following topics and Subject Matter Experts providing information and training on various high school transition programs to CRCs and DOE Local Coordinators & Superintendents:
 1. Medicaid Waiver Program – Mable Stemper;
 2. High School High Tech – Karen Royston;
 3. College Inclusion Programs, Project Search, & WIOA – Jeff Allen;
 4. IPS & Supported Employment – Lee Davis & Kate Brady;
 5. AWT – Curt Moreen;
 6. Benefits Counseling – Penelope Powell;
 7. Sensory CRC Services – Tasha Singleton

Americus:

- New RUM, Gloria Barrett, met with Denine Woodson, Alicia McClain and Lisa Webb for general orientation.
- RUM attended training on Time Keeping
- All staff participated in SE training
- RUM and CRC Sally Boyd attended Transition & Collaboration Initiative Training
- Darlene Middleton and Natalie Stoner have been working diligently following up with cases in extended status
- With school starting back, Sally Boyd provided services to help direct students in their career path
- Easter Seals has opened a new location in Americus, GA which will assist to serve our clients

Newnan:

- Tasha Singleton also attended 2-day training “Reaching for Stars” working with Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind individuals. Networked with community partners in Douglasville to obtain referrals & share GVRA services.
- CRC/RCD Tasha Singleton attended “State of Poverty” sponsored by Coweta County Family Connection on 9/17, where Newnan GVRA received a Certificate of Appreciation from Coweta County Family Connection.
- Newnan CRC’s attended the following trainings and event during the month:
 - ✓ 8/27 – CRCs Amber Wiggins & Carlton Brooks attended Job Fair at Coweta County Fairgrounds. They received 13 referrals for Newnan GVRA Office. Way to go Amber and Carlton!

Griffin:

- RUM Deborah Carson attended and presented GVRA services to Upson and Thomaston Rotary Club
- CRC Casey Carlile met with the Director of Southern Crescent Technical College of Continuing Education in regards to programs and certifications that may benefit our VR customers
- Counselor Janice Withrow gave a presentation at McIntosh Trail in Henry County, a site visit to McIntosh Trail Peer Support Spalding County, and also attended training for the STEP Program & STARS –Veterans
- Counselor Casey Carlile and Janice Withrow - Instructed CRC University on 9/15-16/15
- Newspaper article published about the VR Program in Griffin Daily News Tuesday September 29, 2015

Dalton:

- Counselor Cjeska Howard received her CRC. Lisa Townsend obtained her MA in Rehabilitation Counseling from Auburn and her CRC. She left her BRS position and is now a transition counselor
- RUM attended Project Search conference and brought back new ideas for current programs. P.S. Provider Cross Plains was recognized for achieving 100% placement in two of their sites
- Both Gilmer High School and Mountain Education Center have signed agreements to participate in High School High Tech program. Counselors Scott Jackson and CWAA Tina Duncan led this effort
- CWA Duncan and CA Connie Wilson have begun offering self advocacy training to students 14-16 to begin meeting WIOA requirements
- CRC Andrea Taylor and CA Tammy Terry have been busy marketing VR to a variety of community forums and conferences to include an Autism Conference in Chattanooga and a Developmental Disabilities Forum in Dalton

Carrollton:

- Goodwill, GDOL, VR and other Partners hosted a joint Job Fair
- Carrollton VR Team Members participated in an Open House Presentation and Steering Committee with the Carroll County Technical Career Academy
- BRS & Carrollton VR Team participated in a presentation to Wal-Mart.Com for Disability Awareness Month

Dallas:

- Yearly celebration on 7/24 of SDA 1 recognized Darlene Stevens as Transition Counselor of the Year
- RUM met with Tallapoosa Circuit Re-entry Committee at the Floyd County Prison and learned about the “FIRE” (Focusing Impact on Re-Entry) program that is offered at that facility
- Georgia DOE will be implementing State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) this year. Focus of the improvement plan will be to improve graduation outcomes for students with disabilities
 - ✓ Polk School District is 1 of 50 districts selected to receive Technical Assistance provided by a Regional Team as a local plan is developed to address the graduation rate for Students with

Disabilities. The Special Education Director of Polk School District asked Celeste Harris, C.R.C., to serve on their District Level Team. Darlene Stevens, C.R.C., assisted clients with registration for college and also attended first IEP meeting on 8-27 on a possible VR client. Ms. Stevens met with new lead special Ed teacher/CTI @ HCHS

- Darla Guiden, Polk County V.R. counselor, addressed employees for *Highland Rivers* (provides mental health services for Polk County) on 9/16, on how the VR program helped disabled Georgians obtain employment
- Vanessa Taylor, V.R. Counselor who serves Paulding County Schools, gave a presentation about the VR program with students/support staff about how to make referrals and participated in a parent transition night in September

Rome:

- September 8 staff was provided Active Shooter Training by Homeland Security and participated in an Active an Active Shooter Simulation with Homeland Security, and local Law Enforcement
- Krista Mitchell, OA completed Procurement Training and is now able create a requisition/purchase order
- Traci Brown, CRC participated as one of the Supported Employment Trainers
- Paul Ray, RUM voted Chair of the Disability Committee for the Northwest Georgia Workforce Development



SOUTH – Lauren Knox, Field Services Director

DUBLIN



Dublin/Laurens Area High School High Tech Youth Motivational Training Seminar

The Carl Vinson Veterans Affairs Medical Center hosted a rousing kick off for the Dublin/Laurens Area High School High Tech program, denoting the third year collaboration between the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, local school systems, and the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc.

The Youth Motivational Training Seminar welcomed 63 students from the Dublin City School system, East Laurens High School, West Laurens High School, and Bleckley County High School, along with teachers, administrators, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency staff, and representatives from the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc.

The celebration featured informational, motivational, and inspirational speeches by Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency staff, Karen Royston, Executive Director of the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc., and Derrick Tennant, nationally known comedian/motivational entertainer. The staff of the Dublin office of GVRA presented two lively

enactments demonstrating an example of a good job interview and a bad job interview. After each role play activity, students answered questions about the skits and provided feedback as to what they saw done right or wrong.

Alfred Wheeler, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor spoke to the students about working through adversities and turning failures into stepping stones for success. As the Transition Counselor for the Laurens County School System, Mr. Wheeler encouraged the students to take advantage of opportunities offered by the High School High Tech program and the services offered through the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Karen Royston, who administers the High School High Tech program introduced Carmen Cates, HSHT Outreach and Program Development Coordinator, welcomed the students, and reiterated the purpose of the HSHT as a transition program for in school youth which encourages graduation from high school, post-secondary education, and employment. Ms. Royston promoted the incentives of participating in the HSHT program, by stating, “Georgia’s High School High Tech program is the second largest in the nation and last year we served over 849 students, provided over 4376 transitional activities to students to encourage and help students be more successful after graduation from high school, awarded 135 laptop computers statewide, and presented 8 scholarships.”

Angie Watkins, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Transition Counselor for Bleckley, Dodge, Montgomery, Telfair, Wheeler, and Wilcox counties, provided an overview of the services and benefits of student partnering with Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation. Ms. Watkins explained by connecting with GVRA, students have an additional partner in their network, which can provide support as part of their high school transition plan.

Derrick Tennant, who was the keynote speaker, kept the audience laughing as he shared his life story. Mr. Tennant, who was a promising high school athlete, suffered an injury that left him in a coma. After brain surgery, years of rehab and life in a wheelchair; he ultimately got on his feet again. During the performance, he explained the difficulties he experienced as a result of his injury and answered questions from the audience. Mr. Tennant, who is paralyzed on his left side, encouraged everyone to look on the “right” side of things. In order to explain how to look on the “right” side of situations, he used an ABC metaphor. He said the “A stands for Attempt the Impossible, B stands for Be Generous, and C stands for Choose Love.” He shared personal anecdotes from his life which demonstrated how the ABC’s help him look on the “right” side of life and urged everyone to try them in their lives. With the use of humor and magic, he incorporated his disability into both his jokes and motivational message of turning obstacles into opportunities.

Sandi Dixon, Counselor Assistant and coordinator for the local High School High Tech program provided an overview of activities planned this year for all of the students. Some of the upcoming events planned for the 2015-2016 school year include Oconee Fall Line Technical College site tour, job shadowing in their career choice, GA 411 presentation, job readiness training, and the ability to participate in the statewide computer competition with the opportunity to win a laptop.

THOMASVILLE



CRC Catherine Beaty and RUM Marilyn Mason attended Albany Easter Seals 2015 Annual Awards Banquet. CRC Catherine Beaty was awarded the Distinguished Service award by the Vocational Services Department of Easter Seals Southern Georgia. Catherine's client was also awarded Client of the Year and his employer, Cintas, received Employer of the Year. See attached photo of CRC Catherine Beaty and Kimberleigh Moore-Willis, Director of Vocational Services with Easter Seals Southern Georgia, Inc.

Ucher Thomas-Dent, SA Counselor with the Department of Corrections Thomasville Day Reporting Center and Alisha Barnes, Probation Officer, met with Thomasville VR staff to share information about services offered through their facility. The Reporting Center in Thomasville is one of Georgia's new sentencing alternatives. This new sentencing alternative offer judges viable, most cost effective options for high-level, drug and property crime offenders. It's a non-residential drug and mental health treatment and restitution center designed to rehabilitate offenders ranging in ages 17 & up. DOC and Thomasville VR staff developed an action plan to work together to assist VR eligible offenders with disabilities to work.

CRC Sheila Lamons, Karen Royston and Gena Kay had a second meeting with Thomasville City Schools and Thomas County High School to discuss High School High Tech. It looks as though both of these school systems will be coming on board to participate in HSHT this year. CRC Sheila Lamons and Gena Kay will be meeting with them again to assist with planning their HSHT program.

Thomasville Counselors, Counselor Assistants and RUM attended Supported Employment Training.

PRC Laneika Thomas and RUM Marilyn Mason participated in four separate Employee Information Sessions for Shaw Industries. This is a Rapid Response Event for Shaw Industries Plant employees. The purpose of this event is to connect the employees with local resources during this transition from employment to unemployment and, help them get back to work as quickly as possible. This service is provided by the Southwest Georgia Workforce Development Board Rapid Response Unit. Laneika and Marilyn provided the Shaw employees with information on GVRA services. Several VR referrals were received during the event.

VRC Regina Thompson and RUM Mason met with the Cairo High School Special Education Director and teachers to share information on GVRA. The group developed an action plan to serve more students with disabilities to assist them to transition from school to productive post-secondary options.

VALDOSTA



LC Industries Inc.
Supply Store Kings Bay Naval Base

Pictured above are Kim Wagner-Bass, CRC
and Terri Seaward, Store Manager

Building Partnerships

CRC Wagner-Bass was recently invited to tour the supply store on Kings Bay Naval Base to determine how people with visual disabilities could become successful employees. LC Industries Inc. manages this base supply store.

LC Industries, <http://www.lcindustries.com/about-us> "Since 1936 LC Industries has provided meaningful employment opportunities for people who are blind. As the nation's largest employer of people who are blind, LC Industries operates in 14 states, including 8 manufacturing facilities

that produce well over 2000 items. With 2 distribution centers and 31 retail stores operating on military bases, LC Industries serves all branches of the armed forces. “

LC Industries operates base supply stores at several military sites in Georgia and North Florida. Mrs. Wagner-Bass and Ms. Seaward analyzed the customer service representative job duties and accommodations that would increase employment success for visually impaired employees. Wanda McLeod, an auditory with National Industries for the Blind also contributed to the conversation regarding how other locations use accommodations to increase employment of blind individuals.

Mrs. Wagner-Bass and Ms. McLeod discussed real problems blind clients face when employed at military bases. The lack of fully auditory software on the cash registers at these military sites limits employment of totally blind individuals. Ms. McLeod was able to obtain valuable information from a VR counselor perspective regarding common obstacles to employment for totally blind applicants. Ms. McLeod will bring this information back to the National Industries for the Blind; who awards federal contracts to LC Industries and other companies/agencies.

As a result Mrs. Wagner-Bass is currently working with LC Industries HR department to employ a blind candidate at Kings Bay Naval Base. Several other locations in North Florida and Georgia are potential employment sites for applicants with visual impairments.



A Seminar for Georgia Employers Overlooked Talent: Employees with Hearing Loss

The Overlooked Talent seminar was held on October 2, 2015 in Valdosta Georgia at the Career Center. Attendees included Kimberly Moore-Willis, Ronald Davis Jr., April Stokes, employers/managers from T-Mobile, Lowe's Distribution Center, Easter Seals, and GACHI. Contributors to the seminar were the Georgia Association of the Deaf-Blind (GADB) and Georgia Association of the DEAF (GAD). Exhibitors were from the Georgia Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program and EduCaption, Heidi Thomas. The Seminar Committee included Rebecca Cowan-Story, Mary Reed, Marianne Kitchens, Ronnie Mae Tyson, Catherine Beaty and Jennifer S. Gillard. The Purpose of the seminar was to enhance the awareness of the potential of deaf employees among business owners, human resources personnel, managers and supervisors.

TIFTON

The Economic Development Conference was hosted by the Georgia Department of Education and the Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Division (CTAE) to connect with business and industry partners for economic development. The participants considered regional workforce needs to determine how partners can work together to ensure these needs are met for Georgia's future workforces. One goal of the conference was to help plan a meeting to assist schools to match their instruction to local employment needs. The Governor is encouraging use of this program to eliminate the need for businesses to import workers from outside Georgia for "high demand" jobs. Cook High School is currently implementing the GeorgiaBEST curriculum which was referenced by both Jamie Jordan, Georgia Department of Workforce Development, and Jamon Williams, Georgia Department of Labor. Cook High School had 108 students earn GeorgiaBEST certification last school year. Cook will work closely with their CTAE program for additional job shadowing and internship opportunities for the students. Johnny Hayes, Tifton Unit CRC, attended the meeting in Waycross.

SOUTH QUADRANT SUCCESS STORY THOMASVILLE UNIT



STONE HARRISON

Stone Harrison applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services in 2009 as a high school senior at Colquitt County High school. Stone has a bilateral hearing loss and uses his hearing aids for communication along with lip reading. Stone met his counselor, Catherine Beaty, while in middle school when she worked in the school system. She later became his counselor in 2009 and plans for him to attend the National Technical Institute of Deafness (NTID) and Rochester Institute of Technology commenced. Stone expressed an interest in computers and business at the time. The supports and academic programs offered at NTID/RIT matched Stone's accommodation needs and his assessed vocational interests. NTID and RIT provided accommodations in every class he took during his time there. Each class offered sign language interpreting, note-taking services and live closed captioning. His personal favorite was the captioning, especially for large lectures. On campus, they have a Hearing Aid Shop that he utilized for hearing aid maintenance and health check-ups for his ears. Stone was financially support for two years of his post-secondary training by Vocational Rehabilitation and received hearing aids as a part of his work plan. After the financial eligibility changes with the agency, Stone and his counselor Catherine kept his case open. Catherine provided counseling and guidance along with encouragement for Stone as he finished his impressive education at RIT.

Stone was chosen to give the commencement speech at his graduation for the college of business. The introduction given before his speech by the Dean of his business college captures his accomplishments “Stone Harrison graduates with a BS in management information systems. He completed co-ops at Lenel Systems International and at USAA. At RIT, he worked as a database analyst in the Sponsored Programs Accounting office. Stone studied abroad in China and Dubai and served as a student ambassador for the Saunders College Alumni Advisory Board. He is the recipient of Turri & Browne Business, Joseph Dyer, NTID Merit, and NTID Presidential scholarships. Stone will work as a software developer with USAA in San Antonio, Texas, following graduation.”

Stone is now employed with USAA software developer and integrator III in the Financial Crimes department at USAA in San Antonio, Texas. He is still active with his alma mater as he serves on the Saunders College of business advisory board as a national member representing the Texas Saunders college alumni.

Catherine has continued to provide follow up services and support with his new employment in regards to adjustment and hearing loss. Stone’s successes represent what a strong work ethic, appropriate accommodations, family support and vocational rehabilitation services can do to launch a young man into a life time of success. When asked if his story could be shared he said “You have my permission to share, thank YOU for everything you've helped me with! From supporting me since middle school, to helping me get into RIT, and keeping in contact over the years to continue offering support. You have made a significant impact on my life and I want you to know that I cannot express my thankfulness enough!”

Quadrant Report

Quadrant	Applications		Plans		26 Closures		Total Served
	Quarter	SFY	Quarter	SFY	Quarter	SFY	
Metro	859	859	524	524	163	163	2,829
East	835	835	560	560	195	195	2,651
West	641	641	460	460	204	204	2,368
South	625	625	396	396	181	181	2,306
Statewide	2,960	2,960	1,940	1,940	743	743	10,154



ASSISTIVE WORK TECHNOLOGY – Raj Pagadala

AWT would like to welcome **Kristen McNally**, Rehab Technologist to the team. Kristen will be serving SDA 1 along with Melissa Freeman. Kristen has almost 10 years of assistive technology background with a bulk of her experience being an assistive technology trainer for VR client.

Ravi Waikar (Rehab Engineer – Metro) and **Bill Barnes** (Rehab Engineer – West) attended the ADED 2015 (Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialist) Annual Conference.

Raj Pagadala was a part of a GVRA delegation that was invited to attend the Georgia Department of Highways Safety Annual Conference in Savannah, GA.

April Evans (OT – East), **Doris Chadwell** (Technologist – SDA 2) and **Melissa Freeman** (Technologist – SDA 1) presented at the GRA conference in Augusta. **Gigi Taylor** (Technologist – SDA 3) volunteered her services as an auctioneer for the GARL auction at

GRA. **Curt Moreen** (Technologist - SDA 4) is working with the VR Business Unit on evaluating the durable medical equipment reimbursement rates. **Scott Barr** (Rehab Engineer – South), **Sean Zeller** (Technologist – SDA 10) and Raj Pagadala are collaborating with the VR Business Relations Department on assisting PharmaCentra and Concentra Solutions of Americus GA identify accommodations in the work place to hire people with disabilities. Raj Pagadala also collaborated on a presentation on VR services along with Shelley Kraft, RUM (Macon) and Laurie Tuten, RUM (Augusta) to Navicent Health (formerly Medical Center of Middle Georgia).



Vehicle Modifications: When a VR client and a counselor discuss vehicle modification as a potential option to pursue, it is important for the VR counselor to advise the client to not purchase a vehicle without first having been evaluated by the rehabilitation engineer. There have been several situations where the client bought a vehicle such as a Scion XB that did not have any available mobility equipment or adaptive driving solutions resulting in the client having to take a loss on the vehicle when trading it for another vehicle that could be adapted. The age, mileage and the mechanical condition of a vehicle are also factors in considering vehicle modifications and installation of adaptive driving equipment such as hand controls.

It is important to note that it would be best for the client to purchase a minivan that has already been modified with a lowered floor from the VR approved QAP certified vendor. Most vendors have several brands and price points to choose from. The counselor needs to inform the client that if he or she prefers to buy a minivan or a full size van from a local car dealership, the vehicle will have to be shipped to one of several vehicle modification sites in the Midwest, Southwest or the West coast and that the client will be responsible for the freight charges (approximately \$1800.) In addition to dealing with out-of-pocket expenses, the client will also lose time as it takes several weeks to a couple of months before the vehicle is shipped back to Georgia after which adaptive driving equipment such as zero-effort steering, 6-way power seat and hand controls and secondary controls have to be installed.

AWT also discourages clients from putting down payments on vehicles that they may have seen at a vendor's showroom before the VR vetting process has been finalized. The vehicle modification process is very complex and time consuming. It may take several months to a year from start to finish. Some of the unforeseen delays include clients not having proper financial documentation, delay in getting medical releases, scheduling of appointments with the driver rehab specialists, obtaining of permanent license by the client or health setbacks.

There have been many cases where the client has put money down on a vehicle and is making monthly payments on a vehicle that he or she may not get to use for six months or more. The counselors need to let their clients know that adaptive mobility vehicle dealers receive a constant supply of vehicles at various price points throughout the year and that it would be in the best interests of the client to work with VR and the AWT rehab engineer with the vehicle selection process.

Finally, some adaptive driving equipment such as high-tech driving equipment require periodic maintenance that cost of several thousand dollars. The client needs to complete the vehicle modification financial consideration worksheet to help demonstrate that he or she has the potential to save for maintenance costs. The rehab engineer will assist the counselor in filling up the form. Counselors should also advise clients that they will have to provide a copy of their insurance policy that shows coverage for the vehicle and the vehicle modifications/adaptive driving equipment along with additional equipment such as the wheelchair that may be transported in the vehicle before the keys to the vehicle are turned over to the client at the time of final inspection of the vehicle by the rehabilitation engineer.

I encourage all Unit Managers to schedule a presentation on rehab engineering processes with their respective quadrant rehabilitation engineers.

AWT by the numbers: Jul 2015 – Sep 2015				
Service Delivery Area	New Referrals	Individual Clients Served	AWT Referrals 14 – 22 Age Group	AWT involvement in Closures (26s)
SDA 1	59	39	32	22
SDA 4	20	27	17	0
SDA 8	33	35	1	8
WEST	112	101	50	8
METRO	33	49	10	10
SDA 2	78	122	65	10
SDA 5	15	60	7	0
SDA 6	49	49	20	0
SDA 7	20	27	6	2
EAST	162	258	98	12
SDA 9	31	43	12	0
SDA 10	12	29	1	4
SDA 11	14	19	11	1
SDA 12	29	26	7	0
SOUTH	86	117	31	5
TOTAL	393	525	189	57

TECHNOLOGY TIP – Contributor: Shandra Spear (Rehabilitation Technologist – Athens)

PhotoMath App (FREE)



<https://photomath.net/en/>

This FREE app for both Android and iOS devices has gone viral. This app can be helpful for Client’s with learning disabilities but is also useful in helping parents check homework. PhotoMath reads and solves mathematical problems by using the camera of your mobile device in real time. It educates users on how to solve math problems by showing the steps. It currently supports arithmetic expressions, fractions and decimals, powers and roots, simple linear and quadratic equations, and inequalities. Instructions are available in several languages and the application is being updated to handle even more math problems.



STATEWIDE QUALITY & INNOVATION DEPARTMENT – Kate Brady

Behavioral Health Data:

Individual Placement and Support is growing in GA. IPS counselors attended a BH Symposium via partnership with DBHDD. IPS teams also received excellent training at GAPSE this month.

Service development for transitioning youth with first episode psychosis is underway and this initiative will allow IPS services to be delivered to a new population in new ways.

The introduction of expanded supported employment rates and extended services planning also promise to grow the scope of IPS statewide.

Blindness Services:

September 2015 was another busy month for Blindness Services. Some of the highlights include the coordination and facilitation of the Center for the Visually Impaired/VR Advisory and the Savannah Center for the Blind & Low Vision/VR Advisory meetings. These meetings are essential in keeping the lines of communication open between the agency and organization.

Paul Raymond and Jared Patton were invited to present at the West Quadrant Managers meeting. This was a great opportunity to share resources and answer questions that the local management had. As a result of this meeting, Paul Raymond and Jason Williams collaborated to develop a section in the onboarding manual specific to blindness.

The 3rd Blindness Community Gathering was conducted with a great turnout. Rossany Rios was the guest speaker at this meeting and she did a fantastic job. At the previous meeting the group expressed a desire to know what her team was doing and how all stakeholders could collaborate with her team. Many thanks to Rossany for doing this. Also at this meeting the Employment sub-committee and the Transition sub-committee reported out their work to date and the top 3-4 priorities that they had identified and will be working on.

Deaf/ Deaf Blindness:

This month GVRA State coordinator for the Deaf-Blind met with a new University of Cincinnati Sign Language Interpreting Intern that will be assisting Georgia Deaf-Blind interpreting needs become more aware of the use of Haptics, touch signaling, and Pro-tactile communication systems. This collaboration will be focused on bringing these new nationwide trends into Georgia for use within the Deaf Blind community to increase communication effectiveness for these clients and consumers with in our state. This will also be partnership with the Helen Keller National Training Center for hosting this workshop.

A CA training event was conducted in the Southern region at the Valdosta office focusing on serving consumers with hearing loss and conducting intake and needs assessments with clients that have any degree of hearing loss.

The State coordinator of Deaf Blind Services completed the planning to host the Employer Seminar in the Valdosta Area on October 2nd. This will be an opportunity to present to HR professionals about the hiring concerns of people with Hearing loss. This partnership will include many community partners and bring awareness to the area of Thomasville and Valdosta to increase the hiring potential of people with Hearing loss as an Over looked talent pool! This workshop will be followed by a job readiness workshop for potential employees that are VR clients of the Southern RCD's clients with Hearing Loss. The second component will take place on October 16th at the Valdosta DOL office.

A second SSP provider was recruited for VR dual sensory loss clients out of the Stone Mountain area. This provider is being added to GRACI at this time. A Support Service Provider workshop was taught in collaboration with Valdosta State University Interpreting Program on September 12th with 18 members of the Interpreting community and students in attendance.

T.E.A.M. 26:

- 16 VA Intakes taken at Ft. McPherson
- Consultation w/GWI Veteran Program on veteran referrals and services
- Team presented at the Atlanta VA Mental Health Summit
- Represented Veteran and Rehabilitation issues at the Dekalb Workforce meeting
- NDEAM Employment Expo planning and facilitation

SQI Data:

Specialty Area/Disability Label	Applications		Plans		26 Closures		Total Served
	Month	SFY	Month	SFY	Month	SFY	
Autism							
Behavioral Health	242	489	192	363	64	98	950
Blind or Low Vision	52	125	29	97	16	37	259
Deaf-Blind	2	15	2	16	0	6	60
Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing	23/25	636	17/22	478	18/17	146/208	957/1175
Intellectual Disability							
Veteran	35	81	37	81	10	28	190



Fiscal Services Director – Ronnesia Barker

Budget Unit – REMINDER we have now entered into Federal Fiscal Year 2016 as of October 1st. Please ensure you are coding your expenses correctly using the FFY2016 project codes. If you have questions about how to properly code expenses please contact the Budget Staff.

Business Unit – REMINDER Invoices and receipts are necessary and required when processing payments. Please ensure proper documentation accompanies your authorization submitted for payment. Time is of the essence so please be timely with your authorization processing. Business Unit staff is always available for questions and technical assistance please utilize them as a resource.

Imprest Accounts training was conducted statewide in the month. We received lots of good feedback on the training. This will be an annual training required for custodians and check writers. It's important to follow the guidelines set forth for checks and balances and plus it keeps us out of audit trouble.

Provider Relations – The new roll out of the Fees and Codes for Supported Employment services and Customized Supported Employment began October 1st. Many service providers are anxiously awaiting these changes as well as the impact they will have on service delivery. If providers have questions please direct them to your assigned Provider Relations Specialist.

Social Security Initiative – Adrienne Williams joined the Fiscal Services team in September. Adrienne will head up the Social Security Initiative staff (RICs). She joins us from DAS and brings a wealth of management and SSA knowledge which will be used to increase Social Security revenue and claims stats, build partnerships with other Employment Networks, and increase the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

QUESTIONS??? *Please contact the fiscal staff*

Metro

Budget – Mintewab Hailu
Provider Relations – Justin Jones and Mavis
Rossell
Social Security Initiative – Adia Brown

West

Budget – Camala Ball
Provider Relations – Quinn Phelps
Social Security Initiative – Adia Brown

East

Budget – Mintewab Hailu
Provider Relations – Sheeinee Goss
Social Security Initiative – Veronis Williams

South

Budget – Camala Ball
Provider Relations – Pamela Eaton, Nakitha
Jamerson
Social Security Initiative – Adia Brown

Business Unit – Kim Worrell-Head and Eduardo Martinez serve all quadrants