

# GVRA



May 2014

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

## TRANSITION AT RWS

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A new nonprofit has been established by Georgia Regents Health to continue medical services at the hospitals at Roosevelt Warm Springs, marking the one of the final steps in the transition of the hospitals from the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to GRHealth. The nonprofit is Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation & Specialty Hospitals.

GRHealth assumed management of the rehabilitation and acute-care services at Roosevelt Warm Springs in June 2013, in conjunction with GVRA.

"This is a great, sustainable partnership," said GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg. "This allows GVRA to continue our vocational efforts at Warm Springs while at the same time ensuring that the quality care that the hospitals provide is maintained for decades to come."

The new entity will become operational July 1, pending approval from Gov. Nathan Deal, the Georgia

Legislature, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, and the Board of Directors of GRHealth.

The hospitals' staff, or approximately 182 full- and part-time employees, will maintain their current positions in Warm Springs, Ga., but will become employees of the new non-profit corporation.

All employees will be paid for accrued annual leave prior to the transition and new benefits will become effective on the individual's first day of employment with Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation & Specialty Hospitals.

"Our employees are what make us so successful in our mission," said RWS Executive Director Bill Bulloch. "We appreciate the service of the hospital staff and know that they will continue their good work under GRHealth."



# Greg's Greetings

## "Love What You Do"

It's hard for me not to write articles about the big picture kind of stuff. You know, the themes of what I consider important for our agency. I usually try to connect the theme to either the season of the year, or a particular challenge, or things that I hear around the state.

I also try to pick themes that inspire me, although I realize that sometimes I may be an audience of one. So this month, I could not find the right theme to do this article about...at least until Friday evening.

I was driving home Friday evening when Bill Bulloch at Roosevelt Warm Springs called me to tell me about a vocational student whom he was hiring to work at Warm Springs on Monday. Bill shared with me the horrific story of this young man's life and in spite of that, what a great young man he was. Then he told me about the young man's VR Counselor, and how hard she had worked to help this young man. Bill shared with me that he was so impressed with everything the VR Counselor had done, and in many cases, had gone way above and beyond on behalf of

this young man. Bill asked me if I would call the VR Counselor to express our thanks, which I did. So Friday evening, I spoke with the VR Counselor for about 15 minutes while she was on her way home.

We talked mostly about the young man, and she kept saying that's why she loves what she does. She thanked me for calling her, which was so ironic because she was the one who needed to be thanked.

I relate that story because when I hear stories like this one, I am reminded about the individuals out there who do their job because they just love it. I believe that there are a lot of you who do your job, just like the VR Counselor in my story, because you love it. It really has nothing to do with the budget situation, the challenges of a new agency, the lack of advancement and pay increases – to some degree, none of that matters to you.

You simply do your job because you love what you do. So to that VR Counselor, and all the others out there today who do your job because you love it, I am truly grateful. Thank you.



## Remembering Charles Ingram

Georgia Industries for the Blind employee Charles Ingram recently passed away, and all of GVRA mourn his passing.

"We are all is saddened by the loss of Charles Ingram. He was a joy to work with," said GIB Director Kevin Kelley. "Charles was truly concerned about GIB, his work and his co-workers. He was a great person and he will be missed."

Continued on page 8

# GIB Repped at Policy Forum

The 2014 National Industries for the Blind (NIB)/National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind (NAEPB) included attendees from GIB and GVRA. All activities surrounded this year's theme: "Safeguarding Employment Opportunities for People Who Are Blind".

The attendees included GIB's CEO Kevin Kelley, GIB's Public Relations Coordinator Luis Narimatsu and GVRA's External Affairs Director, Kevin Harris. During their time, they participated in the NAEPB board and business meetings, participated in the forums and panel discussions .

During their at the Capitol, they met with members and key staff from Georgia's Congressional delegation. One of the highlights of the forum included a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Mara Liasson.

Mara is a political analyst for Fox News and national political correspondent for National Public Radio (NPR) and provided attendees with an assessment of the current federal landscape and potential implications of the 2014 election cycle.

Currently, 93 agencies associated with NIB, in addition to consumer groups and business partners, engage NAEPB to maximize opportunities for people who are blind.

During the activities, GIB's own Luis Narimatsu was recognized as being an inaugural member of the NIB Advocates.

Luis was in the inaugural class of advocates last year and this year presented Congressman Austin Scott with the AbilityOne Champion Award.

The "advocates" for Leadership and Employment program targets qualified, high-potential employees of NIB associated agencies that are blind and interested in learning more about the public policy process and communicating the NIB message to legislators.

The advocates are selected through a competitive process, have approval from their agency CEO and serve a two-year term.

They must be available to participate in webinars and travel to Washington, DC . The Advocates will be tasked with duties in support of the public policy team and in return will receive training and attend any formal public policy event as a guest of NIB.

This program is a great opportunity for employees to learn to be effective advocates and to enhance their communication and relationship building skills.

The employee's agency benefits by having a trained advocate working on behalf of our mission and working directly with the NIB Public Policy Team.

This program is a win-win for the employee, the agency, and our community at large.

# GIB Goes to DC



Top Left: Congressman Collins represents Northeast Georgia's 9th Congressional District. He serves on the House Committees of Judiciary, Foreign Affairs and Oversight & Government Reform.

Bottom Left: Congressman Tom Graves represents Georgia's 14 Congressional District and serves as Chairman of Georgia's Republican Congressional Delegation. He was selected as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, with seats on the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies as well as the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittees.

Top Right: Congressman Bishop serves Southwest Georgia, including GIB's Bainbridge corporate headquarters. He is an Appropriations Committee and serves as the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies.

Bottom Right: Congressman Austin Scott represents Georgia's Eighth Congressional District. He serves on the important House Armed Service Committee, with subcommittee assignments on Military Personnel, Readiness, and Oversight & Investigation.

# BEP Graduates

Congratulations to the recent graduates of the Business Enterprise Program's (BEP) training program!

Zachary Thomas-Macon  
 Heather Lopez-Augusta  
 Regina Scott-Atlanta  
 Ami Refoua-Valdosta  
 Depalma Strong-Fort Valley

Having successfully completed 10 weeks of on-the-job training and coursework and having passed the Serve Safe Certification as well as an end of the year final exam, all of these applicants are now eligible for the BEP bid process for facility vacancies statewide.

Many thanks to the BEP Training staff, Elizabeth McGarey and Diane Dailey for all their hard work. BEP would also like to thank to all the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors who worked to ensure these candidates had what they needed during their training. Kudos to Kim Wagner and Priscilla Peters-Ward.

BEP Blind Vendor Training Mentors who assisted in the successful completion of these candidates include: Louise Pearson (IRS), Wayne High (GDOL), Bob Matuszak (CDC), Zach Snow (GVRA-#2) and Tim Richardson (RBR-Atlanta).

Job well done everyone!

## Photos From State Employee Appreciation Week



The week of May 4th marked state employee appreciation week for all Georgia employees.

Governor Deal signed a proclamation noting it as such, and GVRA and all its programs planned special events throughout the week.



# DAS Employee of the Month

The employee of the month for Disability Adjudication Services was submitted by Lisa Asher, Quality Assurance Unit Supervisor, in the category of Customer Service.

Although Alean Levine has been in the Quality Assurance Unit a relatively short time, she has progressed quickly. She quickly learned to provide clear and accurate feedback on case reviews. Alean is now relied upon to review returns from the quality review offices in the Social Security Administration. She works independently and has excellent analytical ability. Alean has submitted successful Request for Program Consultations (RPC) as well as informal rebuttals.

This has saved the agency both time and money by reducing unnecessary development costs. Alean always displays the most professional demeanor. She is ready and willing to consult with adjudicative staff and the Medical Support Unit to provide guidance and assist on claims that are more difficult. Alean often makes corrections on claims herself in order to relieve overburdened operations staff.

Alean consistently produces quality work while maintaining a high level of productivity.

For outstanding customer service to internal and external customers, I nominate Alean Levine as employee of the month.



## 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 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.

# Nurse of the Year at RWS

Patricia Flowers of LaGrange has won the Ruth Massengale Nurse of the Year award at Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS). Cathy Harbin, RWS Chief Nursing Officer, made the announcement during a reception on Tuesday, May 13. Staff members nominate other employees for the Massengale Award, and Harbin read from the nomination during the reception:

"Ms. Pat Flowers," Harbin said, "is one of the nicest nurses I have had the pleasure to work with. She always has a smile and a positive attitude. When I've seen her with patients,

she is great with them ... If she tells you she's going to do it, she does."

Flowers, an RN in the RWS Long-Term Acute Care Hospital for the past four and a half years, expressed surprise at her selection. "I just try to treat people the way I would like to be treated," she said. Roosevelt Warm Springs has given a nurse of the year award annually since 1982. The other nominees for the award this year were Kathy Eubanks, Glen Kersey, Jane Jaudon, Michelle Boykin and Tim Smith. The winner is determined by a vote of the RWS nursing staff.

## VR Client of the Month

James Strickland lives in beautiful bluffs of Pine Mountain where he runs a successful beef business. His herd of 80 cows requires feeding and care on a daily basis. To overcome his mobility limitations, it was necessary for UGA's AgraAbility (a federal program that specifically works with farmers and ranchers) to partner with GVRA in order to effectively overcome the barriers that limited his ability to care for his cows. James' capacity for extended endurance is limited by his cardiovascular disease and knee health.

To prevent job loss, two areas of the farm needed attention. One was the securing of the animals and the other was the feeding of those animals. With the help of AgraAbility and VR's own Assistive Work Technology (AWT) Specialist Bill Barnes, VR was able to identify and recommend multiple technologies to eliminate those barriers on the farm.

It was recommended that in order for Jim to continue on the farm, a custom mobility LIFT

would be fabricated to his John Deere 4040 tractor which eliminated the need to hoist himself up into the tractor. Without the specialized custom welders at Custom Mobility in Athens, this would not have been possible.

The second piece of the AWT puzzle was the installation of automatic gate openers for the access points into the pasture. The gate openers were purchased from Gate Openers Incorporated located in Tallahassee, Fla.

Throughout his life, James has worked in agriculture, and he plans on farming with the equipment purchased by VR as long as he is able. These accommodations enhanced his capacity to perform the essential responsibilities for his farm operation.

James is very appreciative of VR and all those that helped him get back to work.

Without VR, it wouldn't have been possible.

# Charles Ingram Continued

"From the very first day that we spoke on the phone, Charles was one of the nicest individuals I could have been blessed to work with. He was always kind and thoughtful to all that he came in contact with. I looked forward to our conversations because they were always so enlightening. I would never have imagined receiving that email on the morning of May 20th, 2014 telling me that he was gone. I still can't believe it.

The pain is strong but our friendship was stronger. Charles was always concerned about how I was. He didn't complain, he fished. He adored his family very much. We embraced each other because we all had lost someone special. We were family and friends for six years, but it seemed like a lifetime.

Rest in Paradise Charles & save a spot at the fishing hole for me," said friend and agency employee Shenique Raines.

Mr. Ingram was born October 15, 1951, in

Bainbridge, GA, the son of Charles Henry ("C.H.") Ingram and Bernice Faircloth Ingram.

He was a graduate of Bainbridge High School, Class of 1969, was a purchasing agent for the Georgia Industries for the Blind, and a member of Antioch Baptist Church. Hunting, fishing, and golfing were his favorite hobbies. He dearly loved his family.

Survivors include his wife, Sharon Hitson Ingram of Climax, GA; his children, Charles Wesley Ingram and his wife, Christy, of Tucker, GA, Sena Hitson Finklea and her husband, Jody, of Tallahassee, FL, Bill R. Hitson of Attapulgus, GA, and Le e D. Hitson of Bainbridge, GA; his siblings, Karl Ingram and his wife, Melba, of Brinson, GA and Susan Lambert and her husband, Dennis, of Climax, GA; and his grandchildren (who loved being with their Papa), Landen Ingram, Kolten Ingram, Alexis Hitson, Andrew Hamner, Ashton Sconyers, Caden Sconyers, Sharon-Clare Finklea, Decater Finklea, and Trason Finklea.

# From VR Dir. Ed James

As we enter the summer season, we continue to move forward with enhancing the VR structure.

We welcome Denine Woodson and Dale Arnold as our Directors of Operations for the VR Program. Denine will cover the west part of the state while Dale will cover the east part of the state.

We also welcome Kate Brady as the Special Populations Director and she will oversee the special population areas.

Carol Sumner will serve as my Administrative Assistant. These staff along with Ronnesia

Barker, our Fiscal Services Director, will lead the VR Services Directors, RUMs and all other staff as we move forward in assisting our clients to obtain/maintain employment.

I want to thank each staff person individually for your continued support as we enhance the lives of persons with disabilities each day.

My hope is that you will take some time to enjoy the summer with your family and friends.

Ed James