



2014

LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE

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

A Dream Realized

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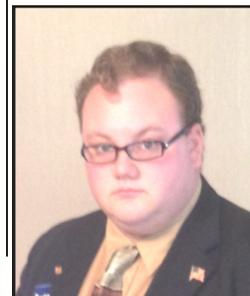
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The old adage is true. With the right attitude and a little help, anyone can accomplish anything, and that includes working for the highest ranking member of the Georgia General Assembly. Take Stephen Aaron.

In high school, Stephen knew he wanted to work in Georgia politics, but like any good success story, there were obstacles in his way. Namely, Stephen has a neurological disorder that makes it hard for him to write. But Stephen had a goal. He wanted a degree in political science, and he wanted to help people by working in the political arena. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) was ready to give him just the help he needed to accomplish his goal. The first step was figuring out what kind of assistive work technology was right for him. Following this initial assessment, his VR Counselor

Kenneth Atkins recommended he take notes and write with the help of a computer. VR purchased Stephen a computer as well as various software packages to help him both in his education and the job that would hopefully follow. In addition, VR paid for some of the expenses that come with higher education. And Stephen did the rest.

He recently accepted a position as a campaign manager for Speaker of the House, David Ralston. The lesson is clear: work hard, get help when you need it, and the sky's the limit.



Stephen Aaron serves as a campaign manager for Speaker of the House David Ralston.



Greg's Greetings

The Bottom Line

In any organization or business, you always hear them refer to "the bottom line". Most of the time, the bottom line they are referring to is about how much profit they will make. In other words, do our actions add or subtract from the bottom line. I worked for a long time in the private sector for a Fortune 25 company. That company was investor-owned, and their bottom line was measured by the value of the company stock. The investors want to see the value of their stock go up – that's their bottom line. Thankfully, we are different. Our bottom line is not how much profit we make, or how much our stock goes up. In fact, our bottom line is not about money at all. Now I know a lot of you probably just gasped when you read that, as we certainly have had some budget challenges and money has been at the heart of a lot of discussions. But it is NOT our bottom line. Please allow me to elaborate a bit. GVRA state office administration exists to support our five programs: VR, BEP, GIB, RWS and DAS; and our five programs exist to serve our consumers. Simply said, our bottom line as an agency or as a program within the agency is the individual we serve.

Notice I said "the individual" we serve. I have a strong belief that every single person we serve, whether it's VR, BEP, GIB, RWS or DAS, should receive the very best that we can offer. No exceptions. To me, it's not about the total numbers of people served, although that is certainly important, but it's more about each single person we serve and their experience with us. For me, the bottom line is truly how well we do with every person, their outcome and their satisfaction with how we served them. We have been given a great opportunity – an opportunity to make a positive difference in someone else's life. In my opinion, that is the reason we exist and that is the beauty and honor of our profession. Just like any other business that asks: do our actions add or subtract from the bottom line, I ask the same question. Does what we do in VR, BEP, GIB, RWS and DAS add or subtract to our bottom line – the outcome and satisfaction of every single person we serve. So I only have one request for each of you and that is this: every day ask yourself is what you are doing at that moment adding or subtracting from the bottom line. I want all of us to work for a Fortune 1 company, where our service to others is truly their fortune. As always, thank you for what you do.

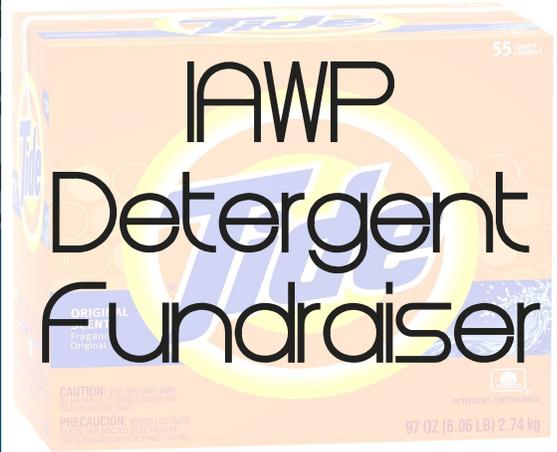
Think BIG. **Serve** MORE.
Do BETTER.



Disability Day At The Capitol



The next meeting of the GVRA board is on March 12 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. It will be in the 5th floor boardroom at 2 Peachtree St. in Atlanta.



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.

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

New Hires and Retirements

Let's welcome these new hires to GVRA. They include Marya Calhoun Garner (GVRA HR), TaLora M. Johnson (GVRA HR), Youlanda D. Little (GVRA HR), Yasmine Jackson (GVRA Financial Services), Theresa Ann Cristensen (GIB Bainbridge), Janet Brawley (RWS Housekeeping), Heather McRae (RWS Housekeeping), Christina Cole (RWS Inpatient Unit), Lucille A. Marmion (RWS Inpatient Unit), Carol J. Lacy (RWS Pharmacy), Monique S. Wood (VR Business Coordinator), Alyssa Jolley (VR Blindness Services North GA) and Tara Wojtkunsk (VR Blindness Services North GA).

And happy trails to Glenn R. Abrams Jr. (GIB Bainbridge), Patsy J. Cloud (GIB Bainbridge), Khadija Yakini (DAS North Units), Charlotte Voak Zubowicz (RWS Expense Management), Twyla J. Crump (VR Program Director) Michael W. Harrell (VR Macon Unit), Deborah Brandon (VR Americus Unit), Jenny M. Scott (VR Brunswick Unit) and Louellen McMillan (VR Deaf Services North GA).

Meet Marya Calhoun

Marya Calhoun was recently named the new GVRA Human Resources Director. We sat down with her in order to get to know her a little better.

Q: So what did you do before you joined GVRA?

MC: I worked with Vericom, a healthcare solutions firm. Prior to joining Vericom in 2007, I held various HR positions in healthcare, consulting, distribution and the financial services sectors of business.

Q: Why'd you decide to make the move to GVRA?

MC: For me, I was looking for a challenging position where I could use my knowledge and skills to help the organization but also to give back to the community. Working in the state rehabilitation program, I figured it'd be

something that'd be good for me and the organization in the future.

Q: Is there anything you hope to accomplish in the near future?

MC: Our goals right now are to recruit and hire in a more timely manner and help us provide the resources we need from a people perspective to help GVRA continue to grow and succeed. We're going to put in some training and develop programs as well.

Q: Tell us something most folks probably don't know about you.

MC: I have a ten-year-old son. I'm on the board of his football association. I'm more of a sports mom. I really love it.

Zach's Snacks



Business Enterprise Program
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Monday, February 4, 2014 marked the beginning of the much anticipated renovations of Zach's Snacks located on the 2nd floor of 2 Peachtree in Atlanta.

A temporary facility is set up on the 2nd floor that formerly housed the vending machines. Renovations are expected to last for two months. Upon re-opening, expect a larger snack bar with enhanced hot and cold food entrees, a salad bar, deli sandwiches, Community Coffee service and more!

In other news, BEP Director Raj Gandy was a presenter at the Randolph Sheppard Vendors of America's (RSVA) 2014 Business Enterprise

Program Sagebrush Training conference in Nevada from February 11-14th. The theme for this year was "Lets Embrace Change-Change is the Steel We Can Forge a New Future". At least eight blind vendor managers and two additional BEP staff attended the conference.



DAS Feb. Employee of the Month



Disability Adjudication Services
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Award Winner

The following nomination was submitted by Ayanna Conley in the category of Customer Service:

"As of the mid-year evaluation, Sylvia Eberhart's performance has been simply first rate! Her production exceeded expectations at 116.72%. She has processed her cases within an average of 59 days with only 8.8% aged case percentage.

She achieved 97.22% substantive quality while maintaining a caseload size of 142. Her fiscal management exceeded expectations as well. Performance at this level clearly demonstrates the delivery of outstanding customer service to both internal and external customers.

Sylvia is a valued member of Unit 52 and GVRA and is to be commended for her hard work. For these reasons, I am delighted to nominate Ms. Sylvia Eberhart for employee of the month."

DAS is pleased to announce that Lisa Asher, Supervisor of the Quality Assurance Unit, was one of the recipients of an Associate Commissioner Honor Award for FFY 2013 from the Social Security Administration's Office of Disability Determinations.

Lisa was nominated by David Crozier, Quality Assurance Manager, and she was recognized for a wide variety of contributions and achievements in assisting DAS staff in making the highest quality determinations on disability claims. Her citation says:

"In recognition of extraordinary dedication to public service by providing sustained, timely, competent, and compassionate service above and beyond assigned job responsibilities."

2.1 Billion Dollars

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. Please share this with as many folks as possible. It's important for Georgians to realize how much the mission of GVRA can impact the state economy as a whole.

DAS Tops Nation

It was recently announced that the Georgia Disability Adjudication Services processed the most claims per adjudicator of any DAS in the nation for the week of February 23 through March 1. They processed 3,347 cases last week. DAS staff really worked hard to push out the cases after the prior week's ice/snow storm, and they did it while also producing a high quality product. Way to go, everyone!

DAS March Employee of the Month

Joellen Chapman excels at collaborating effectively with others to accomplish training goals.

Joellen maintains excellent relations with subject matter experts such as medical consultants, quality assurance reviewers, supervisors and adjudicative officers who are asked to train or assist with a wide variety of training initiatives.

This was especially important when critical training during the Adjudicator Basic Training (ABT) for the recent Trainee class in Dalton had to be suspended during the federal government shutdown. Joellen worked closely with her training team member and the numerous presenters to pre-plan a new schedule for when ABT could be resumed so that there was a

seamless restart of training. Another example was when she was preparing for the recent Continuing Disability Review Refresher training. First, preparation for the training was interrupted by the recent snowstorm. Then we found out that nationwide SSA systems updates were going to prevent adjudicators from making determinations on claims the first day of training, so the decision was made to train as many Stone Mountain staff as possible on that day. Originally, the plan was to train them in four sessions.

Joellen came in on a Saturday, recruited assistance from other units, and successfully got all the training materials prepared and the training room ready to accommodate the exceptionally large group.





GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

GIB Tapped for National Award

Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) was honored by National Industries for the Blind (NIB), the nation's largest employment resource for people who are blind, with the 2013 Employment Growth Award.

The award recognizes GIB's efforts to increase employment retention, growth and upward mobility for people who are blind.

"We are proud to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind in our five sites, Albany, Bainbridge, Griffin, Pendergrass and Robins Air Force Base," said Kevin Kelley, Chief Executive Officer. "Our employees are talented and dedicated professionals, and we are honored to serve as an example in the state of the capabilities of people who are blind."

The 2013 Employment Growth Award recipients are awarded cash payments from a fund created to recognize and encourage NIB associated nonprofit agencies that grow or sustain employment for people who are blind. Emphasis is also placed on efforts to increase job placements and upward mobility in the workplace. "It is an honor for me to recognize Georgia Industries for the Blind with a 2013

Employment Growth Award," said Kevin Lynch, President and CEO of NIB. "Georgia Industries for the Blind continues to lead the way in creating employment and high-growth career opportunities for people who are blind."

About GIB

Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) is a state of Georgia not-for-profit organization whose mission is "to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind" and has been accomplishing this mission for over 65 years. GIB employs nearly 110 people who are blind. In order to generate the necessary financial resources to continue to provide continuous direct employment opportunities for people with vision loss, GIB has and continues to maintain its self sufficiency by manufacturing and selling a variety of products that are competitively priced. GIB receives no funding through state or federal sources nor any grants or donations. GIB has received ISO 9001 certification and has been recognized as having the premier safety program in the state of Georgia. For more information on GIB, visit <http://gvra.georgia.gov/gib>.

Constituent Services Manager

Tangye Teague was recently named the new Constituent Services Director for GVRA. From Tangye: I am excited about serving in Constituent Services. At GVRA, we are about the people we serve; and as employees of this agency, we should all consider ourselves as constituent advocates. In our profession, we have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive impact on those we serve. Our focus should be

on how we can best serve our customers, never looking for reasons why we cannot serve. We should be pro-active in our work, while being the best team member we can be. As we provide excellent customer service, the Constituent Services Unit should be considered an additional layer of good quality service.

Elbert County HS Goes to the Capitol

Friends Helping Friends (FHF) club senior officers Committee members recently assisted Elbert County Comprehensive High School (ECCH) students in Pam Brown and Daniele Franklin's classes on a trip to the Georgia State Capitol.

The trip was on Thursday, February 20th during Disability Day at The Capitol.

After special photos in Governor Nathan Deal's office, the group observed the many interesting historical flags and statues adorning the interior of the capitol as well as portraits of Georgia governors that were displayed throughout the building's rotunda wings.

Governor Deal and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Executive Director Greg Schmieg both spoke at this event in support of the disability community.

Following the program, FHF treated students to lunch at the Hard Rock Café near the Capitol before returning home.

A special thanks to State Representative Tom McCall and his assistant Pat Harris for scheduling the annual visit and for providing students and teachers with backpacks filled with treats. Also, a special thank you to Greg Hall for generously volunteering to drive the bus.

Friends Helping Friends, sponsored by Chrystal Thomas and founding sponsor Sandy Adams, is an ECCHS service club dedicated to the memory of Bud McCall, boasting 300 middle and high school members committed to providing exceptional educational opportunities to students who have special needs.

Visit www.FriendsHelpingFriendsClub.com.

