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**GVRA Newsletter**  
**Volume 1, Issue 3**  
**May 2013**

**Greetings From Greg**

Photo of Executive Director Greg Schmieg with U.S. flag in background

When I was in the US Navy, I served as a navigator on the USS Hitchiti. And as a navigator, one thing you always do when you're out at sea is to scan the horizon. You always need to know what's ahead so you can chart a safe passage to your destination. As you can imagine, the further out the horizon is, the more difficult it is to see. On the ocean, a clear horizon is about 10 nautical miles ahead. In many ways, this year of transition has been a lot like sailing – and we have certainly faced our share of storms. The good news is that when I scan the GVRA horizon, I do see calmer seas ahead.

July 1 will begin a new state fiscal year, and my belief is that it will be a better year than this year has been. For example, we will have one complete year of financial information to rely on, and with that we should do a better job at predicting our expenses and sticking to the budget. Likewise, policy changes this past year will lead to cost-savings that can directly translate into client services. In all the programs, there will be some organizational changes and hopefully greater efficiencies. And we will begin this coming year with several new and exciting partnerships that will create new service opportunities, such as those with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), the Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the Department of Education (DOE). So I picture a much calmer sea ahead.

However, a good sailor never stops checking the horizon. At sea, every sailor has a specific job to do to ensure a safe passage, and GVRA is no different. Each one of us has a specific

job to do, and we must be accountable to do that job to the best of our ability. Starting July 1, to be better than this year, I will rely on each one of us, myself included, to stay focused on the task at hand, and to hold each other accountable. GVRA will sail the smoothest when we can safely rely on each other to do our jobs.

Our destination as an agency is to be the best rehabilitation agency in the country. We are underway, we have weathered some stormy seas, and I can see a brighter horizon. So I thank each of you “holding steady as we go”, and here’s to better sailing ahead.

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## **In the Spotlight: Jimmy DeFoor (GVRA Board Member)**

Photo of Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Chair James “Jimmy” Defoor posing with Governor Nathan Deal.

After signing legislation creating the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), Governor Deal appointed James “Jimmy” DeFoor to the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board for a term that expires in 2015. One of the first actions the Board took was to elect him Chair. Jimmy was an excellent choice for that position since he spent his entire career in VR and the Rehabilitation Services Programs assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. After earning his Bachelor’s degree in Education, Jimmy joined VR as one of eight Counselor Interns statewide. While working with VR, he earned his Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Georgia.

Jimmy has many professional highlights including that as the 1995 President of the Georgia Rehabilitation Association (GRA) and President of the Georgia Rehabilitation Counselors Association, a division of GRA, he helped write and advocate for the legislation that established the Licensed Professional

Counselor state licensure requirements. That important legislation established professional credentials and standards for ethical practice in Georgia for counselors, including requirements for continuing education and a state composite licensing board to approve applicants for licensure and review citizen complaints. Jimmy is also gratified that he was one of the original individuals in the nation to achieve the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification. For more than a decade now, Georgia VR requires the CRC as the qualification to be a VR Counselor.

Jimmy and his wife, Aurena, are proud parents of three children and eight grandchildren who love to visit their Gainesville home. Jimmy and Aurena have been active members of the First United Methodist Church of Gainesville for over 40 years, including being members of a very active Sunday school class for over 35 years. Jimmy enjoyed singing in the church choir for more than 25 years although he cannot read a note of music.

He laughed as he observed the “choir advanced further than he did”, so he just enjoys listening to them now.

Contributed by Daronne Patterson

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## **Vocational Rehabilitation Client Success**

### **Story: Lewis Tankersley**

Photo 1 is Lewis Tankersley using JAWS in his work settings

Photo 2 is Larry at the Awards Luncheon standing L to R: Jack Gilson, Gigi Taylor, Lewis Tankersley and Gail Tankersley.

Lewis Tankersley was born with a rare form of albinism resulting in a loss of sharpness of his vision. Lewis worked hard to be accepted to the University of South Carolina where he earned an Associate’s Degree in commercial education and business in 1979. He became a licensed optician (LDO) in South Carolina and Georgia. Lewis is also an American Board of

Opticianry Master in Ophthalmic Optics (ABOM). His career took him through several different companies until a major interruption for two knee replacement surgeries and a cataract procedure.

So, in 2008, Lewis began the process to restart his career when he met VR Counselor Beth Frey who encouraged Lewis to learn new skills and to explore the relatively new field of assistive technology for persons with disabilities. Beth referred Lewis to the Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI) in Atlanta for computer and customer service skills training. She also referred him to Rehabilitation Technologist Gigi Taylor of the VR Assistive Work Technology (AWT) Unit who analyzed Lewis's needs and made recommendations that Beth purchase assistive technology to enable Lewis to succeed on the job. These recommendations included items such as magnification computer software and devices.

With the help of VR counseling, job readiness services and

AWT, along with skills he developed at CVI, Lewis got a job with Briot Visionix as a Technical Service Representative in June, 2012. His primary responsibilities involve assisting customers by telephone to quickly resolve equipment and technical problems. Lewis troubleshoots over the phone, orders replacement parts or schedules field technicians on site as needed. Company President Matt Cevasco said, "It's not about the disability, it's about the person getting the job done. Lewis has the technical knowledge. It (his visual challenge) has all been completely transparent."

On May 8, 2013, Lewis received the "All Star Award for Outstanding Employee" at the annual Galaxy of Stars and Tommy Awards Luncheon, sponsored by Nobis Works of Marietta.

Contributed by Jack Gilson

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**HR CORNER**

# WELCOME

## DISABILITY ADJUCATION SERVICES

Shirley Wilson

Thomas Sigman

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Dawnn Johnson

Lisa Zaccaro

## ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS

Christy Cloudt

Renee Gentry

Sunette Payne

Karon Sheely

Anna Ogletree

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Jaleassia Edgerton

Alex Lee

## GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

Kenneth Davis

Thomas Hayes

Christina Jones

Cynthia Mitchell

Rixon Smith

Gary Stephen

Woodall

## FACILITIES

Mark Muzii

In our June newsletter we will provide a complete listing of GVRA retirees. If you have pictures or memories you would like to share, get them to [Kevin.harris@gvra.ga.gov](mailto:Kevin.harris@gvra.ga.gov).

## **BEST WISHES**

### **DISABILITY ADJUDICATION SERVICES**

Sharon Baker

Regina Bishop

Vivian Epps

William Fleming

Ava Johnson

Cheryl Quarterman

Kenyetta White

Dale Womack

### **BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM**

Celestina Nwizu

### **ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS**

Kim Allen

Cynthia Campbell

Chuck Robert Chapman

Wanda Davis

Gerald Eugene Erkhart

Andy Henderson

Brenda Howe

Johnson

Elaine Jones

Richard Charles McDaniel

Stacey McLain

Kristen Moore

Richard F Quesenberry

Nancy Suggs

Paige Lee Trone

Cheryl Brown

Jennifer Cargile

Gail Cranshaw

Crystal Ware Dukes

Nancy Ellen Gibson

Pamela Hill

April Womack

Shannon Kincade

Tarlisha McPerson

Bhavin Mehta

Jackie O'Hara

Emma Searcy

Sharon Tidwell

Sherri Watt

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM**

Piyush Bareria

Walter Benefield

Joy Bryan

Jerry Cain

Tjuana Callahan

Jessica Greene

Michelle Guy

Whitney Hewitt

Carol Hollis

Coretta Houston

Laura Jones

Kelli Littlefield

Demetria McCrary

Jamaica Miles

Ann Wesley Pruitt

Brian Spillers

Angelique Wade

## **GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND**

Cherie Jarrell

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# **Vocational Rehabilitation Staff Become Farmers for a Day**

Photo 1 is three cows lined up in a field looking toward the

camera

Photo 2 is Andy Carter of Agribility leaning on farm equipment as he talks with Vocational Rehabilitation staff

Photo 3 is Scott Karlan, a Newnan Region Counselor, petting a baby calf

Counselors from all over the state converged on Tifton, Georgia to be farmers for a day. From tending calves to picking strawberries, VR personnel experienced firsthand many of the jobs that are available in agriculture.

Agriculture in Georgia is big business. From the mountains to the coastal plains, Georgia's geography and climate provide perfect conditions for growing diverse commodities.

Agribusiness is Georgia's largest industry, accounting for \$71.1 billion of the state's \$763.6 billion economic output. One in seven Georgians work in agriculture. It is estimated between 25,000 and 35,000 Georgians that live in an agricultural households have some type of disability. Yet, very few of these

individuals have accessed VR services.

Through an interactive workshop, the counselors learned about farm culture, farm equipment, assistive technology, and VR policy related to farmers returning to work. The workshops are part of a new partnership between VR and The University of Georgia's AgrAbility project. AgrAbility is funded by the USDA and aides farmers and ranchers with disabilities that are employed in production agriculture. From work site modifications to assistive technology, the staff with AgrAbility has vast expertise to contribute to the VR team.

"How AgrAbility helps us is that we have the rehab knowledge and the information about the person's physical limitations and needs, but we didn't understand the needs of the agricultural business like AgrAbility did," said Kathy Joule, Region 1 manager.

Cindy Newsome, Region 10 counselor, has also worked with

AgrAbility. “It’s a win—win situation for everybody,” said Newsome. VR is able to count successful employment outcomes, and farmers reap the benefits as well.

You can learn more about the AgrAbility project in Georgia by visiting their website at [www.farmagain.com](http://www.farmagain.com). There you will find farmer stories, examples of assistive technology and a wealth of other information. AgrAbility in Georgia is managed by staff at the University of Georgia Athens and Tifton Georgia campuses. It is a joint initiative between the College of Family & Consumer Sciences and the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences. Call 1-877-524-6264 or visit [www.farmagain.com](http://www.farmagain.com) for more information.

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**GIB Delegation Discusses Employment Issues  
Affecting Blindness Community  
During Annual Public Policy Forum**

Photo 1 is Luis Narimatsu, Dr. Jim Hughes, Kevin Kelley and several others presenting the AbilityOne Champions Award to Congressman Austin Scott

Representatives from GIB met with members of Congress and their staffs in Washington, D.C. as part of the annual Public Policy Forum, hosted by National Industries for the Blind (NIB), the nation's largest employment resource for people who are blind, and the National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind (NAEPB).

The GIB delegation consisted of Dr. Jim Hughes (retiring CEO), Kevin Kelley (newly announced CEO) and Luis Narimatsu, (Public Relations Coordinator). In addition, Luis is one of the 14 "Advocates for Leadership and Employment" who for the past two years have represented their agencies and NIB on employment issues affecting the blindness community. The GIB delegation met with staffers from the office of both Senator Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson along with a meeting with

US Representative Lynn Westmoreland . The day culminated with the presentation of the AbilityOne Champions Award to US Representative Austin Scott for his support of the AbilityOne<sup>®</sup> Program and the employment of people who are blind.

The Public Policy Forum, held May 13-15 in the Washington, D.C. area, featured educational sessions for NIB associated agency participants and public policy advocates who learned about engaging lawmakers and their staffs on a variety of employment issues facing the blindness community.

2013 marks the 75th anniversary of NIB and the Wagner-O'Day Act, the legislation that established a federal government initiative that creates employment opportunities for people who are blind. The program, known today as the AbilityOne<sup>®</sup> Program, requires federal government agencies to purchase certain products made by people who are blind or have severe disabilities.

## **GIB SUCCESS STORY**

Photo is Deon Jones at his work station at Warner Robins Air Force Base

GIB been creating employment opportunities that enable blind employees such as Deon Jones to be promoted into jobs traditionally held by sighted individuals. Deon Jones began working at the GIB Griffin plant in March 2008. He worked as a J-spoon machine operator for over 2 years. This machine placed J-spoons into their protective sleeve which was then ship to the military for use as an extremely sturdy biodegradable utensil in the field. At the end of 2009 Deon responded to an internal job posting for a position in GIB's first Service Project at Robins Air Force Base (RAFB). In July 2010 he transferred to RAFB as a box reclamation Operator. This job consisted of removing labels and markings off of shipping boxes so they could be re-use. Several months later he received a promotion to alternate lead worker and ran the operation in absence of the supervisor. In December 2012, due to his dedication and performance, he

was promoted to site Supervisor. Deon now runs the operation, including staffing needs and reporting daily weekly and monthly production as well as supervising 2 other blind employees. Deon Jones is a real asset to the GIB team and to the success of the service project at RAFB.

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### **PROJECT SEARCH**

Photo is Meranda with her counselor, Jaime Herbster  
Meranda Morton was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) while in her senior year at Windsor Forest High School. Her employability was impacted by deficits in the areas of reading comprehension, math reasoning, written expression and short-term auditory memory. Meranda's counselor referred her to the Project SEARCH Program, which provides training, job placement and supported employment services in a collaborative effort between the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, St. Joseph's/Candler, the Coastal Center

for Developmental Services and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Meranda was selected to participate in the program due to her strong motivation to work, excellent interpersonal skills and her desire to live a successful, independent life.

During her participation in Project SEARCH, Meranda attended the driver's education training offered by the Vocational Rehabilitation Savannah office's Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialist, Jamie Herbster. Meranda worked diligently to become the first Project SEARCH intern to pass the written portion of the driver's test. The same day that Meranda passed the driver's test, she was hired by the Sam's Club in Pooler to work in the bakery. This was a culmination of a dream job that she embraced while taking a culinary class with Chef Steve of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. Through the collaborative efforts of the school system, the Project SEARCH Program, the VR Program and Meranda's own hard work as well as determination, Meranda is well on her way to having the successful and independent life she desires.

Would you like to submit an article or photos for the June Newsletter? The Deadline is Friday, June 7, 2013.

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## **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)**

### **PROGRAM: REGIONAL NEWS**

#### **CSRA Hosts Transition Fair**

The Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Transition Resource Fair was held on Saturday, April 20, 2013 at Evans High School. The event was hosted by the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Richmond County Special Education Department, Columbia County Special Services Department and East Georgia Learning Resource System. This fair provides parents, students with disabilities, and professionals in the field of special education the opportunity to locate appropriate community services and resources.

Thirty-two vendors from the CSRA attended this event. A few of the participating vendors included Easter Seals, Goodwill Industries, Parent to Parent, Richmond Burke/Job Training Authority, Walton Options, Serenity Behavioral Health System, Department of Behavior Health and Developmental Disabilities.

Three informative sessions available for the participants were Now and Comp Waiver/Georgia Medicaid Waiver, Social Security Benefits, and Transition - "Where Do We Go From Here..."

## **Waycross Receives Community Partner of the Year for 2012**

Photo is Eryn Carter (RES), Kelley Wright (CRC), and Edgar Alamo (Case Manager, Goodwill of the Coastal Empire) holding the Community Partner of the Year award

The Waycross Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency received an award for Community Partner of the Year for 2012

on Friday, May 3, 2013 at the Goodwill Annual Community Partners Awards luncheon held on St. Simons Island, GA. Kelley Wright, Counselor, and Eryn Carter, RES, from the Waycross VR office were present to receive this award.

When asked about the award recipient, Edgar Alamo, Case Manager for Goodwill of the Coastal Empire responded, “We chose the Waycross GVRA to receive this award because of the work and dedication that staff exhibit with people with disabilities. Since we are on the same mission to help people with disabilities obtain employment and to live independently, we were very delighted to have chosen hard-working, dedicated staff such as Kelley Wright and Eryn Carter. Their mission is very evident when setting up referrals to us for job training, at staffings to meet with clients, and as we observe their care and passion in helping clients achieve independence. Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are the first step in helping clients. They know how to help clients and where to send them for job training at the Goodwill Job

Connection/Goodwill Stores. Thank you for considering Goodwill Industries of the Coastal Empire.” (Edgar Alamo, Case Manager, Goodwill of the Coastal Empire)

## **Regions 10/11 Success Story**

A photo of Gabriel Shulz, the April 2013 Client Success Story for Regions 10/11

Gabriel Shultz is a 21-year-old male who recently gained successful employment. He was a self-referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, having difficulties in obtaining a job. Mr. Shultz graduated from Berrien High School in Nashville, Georgia in May 2008. Mr. Shultz is a single male who was trying to start his life after completing school, very motivated to work, and willing to take the necessary steps to obtain and keep a job.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Valdosta assisted Mr. Shultz by providing work readiness/job retention, counseling, guidance, and ultimately a direct job placement at Lowes’ Distribution Center in Valdosta, GA. VR provided Mr.

Shultz with a uniform and job coaching was used to assist him with learning job tasks. He continues to work full-time with benefits at Lowe's Distribution Center. Mr. Shultz has a 52 mile round trip commute from Nashville to Valdosta every day. He began working at Lowe's on October 22, 2012 and has not since been late or missed a day. Mr. Shultz's self-esteem has improved tremendously and he has lost 40 pounds since starting his job at Lowe's.

## **HIGH SCHOOL HIGH TECH-COLUMBUS**

Photo shows one of the luncheon tables with people including Regional Director Denine Woodson and Regional Unit Manager Lauren Knox

The Columbus High School High Tech Awards Luncheon was held on May 1, 2013 at the National Infantry Museum in Ft. Benning, GA. The event was a culmination of the events of the program for the 2012-2013 school year and was attended by over 60 Muscogee County high school students, along with teachers, and representatives from the Georgia Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Muscogee County

School District, Georgia Department of Labor and other community partners. Vocational Rehabilitation staff members in attendance included Regional Director Denine Woodson, Unit Manager Lauren Knox, CRC Shannon Barnhill and RES Paul Workman.

The Georgia High School High Tech Program (HSHT) is a community-based program that provides youth with disabilities a link to academic and career development experiences that enable them to meet the workforce demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This year, the students toured local institutions of higher learning as well as businesses, including St. Francis Hospital, Total System Services and AFLAC. In addition HSHT awarded 11 laptop computers to students who participated in the computer competition.

Five students from three different schools (Jordan, Northside and Shaw High Schools) gave testimonies about how the HSHT program had assisted them to make informed choices and

plans for post-secondary education and/or employment after graduation. They also praised the HSHT program for connecting them with community partners such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Services at post-secondary institutions.

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## **DISABILITY ADJUDICATION SERVICES (DAS)**

### **Congratulations to Dr. Ndiya Nkongho**

Photo of Dr. Ndiya Nkongho

Congratulations to Dr. Ndiya Nkongho, this Quarter's DDS Anti-Fraud Award Recipient for the **Atlanta Region**. Dr. Nkongho has been with the Georgia DAS since August 2009. Since that time, she has been vigilant in detecting fraud in disability claims.

In August 2011, she assisted with training of the new Kentucky CDI unit, providing excellent insight into the benefits a CDI

investigation has in documenting a claimant's true functional ability. She encouraged Kentucky to train their medical/psychological consultants on fraud so they can improve referrals of suspicious claims.

An example of these false claims is a 44-year old female, who had alleged a chronic head injury, memory loss, depression and anxiety after sustaining a motor vehicle accident. The claimant's daughter reported she was unable to function and could not leave the house since the accident. The claimant reported she could no longer drive and suffered from panic attacks three times weekly when out in public. Her medical evidence from Grady Hospital noted Somatoform Disorder/Fictitious Disorder and Malingering suspected due to a pending lawsuit.

Dr. Nkongho's investigation, however, found the claimant was friendly and outgoing and suffered no panic attacks when out in public. She was observed driving a Mercedes and going out

with her boyfriend regularly. Also, she did not appear to be lost, confused or have any mental problems. Moreover, she had two driving citations for DUI and speeding. Therefore, her claim was denied for a Non-Severe Mental Impairment.

Because of her award, Dr. Nkongho will also be featured in the Regional Anti-Fraud Newsletter. Thank you, Dr. Nkongho for your hard work in detecting fraudulent activity!

## **DAS EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

Congratulations to **Tammy Hernandez** for her selection as the May 2013 Employee of the Month. The following nomination was submitted by Rita Wcwhorter in the category of Teamwork:

“Tammy has always made herself available to adjudicators, medical/psychological consultants, GBI investigators, etc. to ensure proper and timely processing of CDI cases. She never hesitates to offer new ideas and ways of getting the work done more efficiently and she has a great eye for ensuring that investigations are warranted before accepting the referral.

As a former adjudicator, Tammy knows what to look for in the case and how to determine whether more development is needed rather than a CDI investigation. Her goal is to make decisions that are overall best for DAS, the claimants and SSA. Her hard work is evidence of her commitment as a team player.”

Way to go, Tammy!

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## **ROOSEVELT WARM SPRINGS (RWS)**

### **Roosevelt Warm Springs Holds Employee Recognition Luncheon**

Photo 1 is Bill Bulloch presenting a framed photograph of Georgia Hall to Lisa Waddell, the RWS Employee of the Year

Photo 2 is Bill Bulloch presenting the annual Leadership Award to Kathy Clark, Associate Nurse Executive for the RWS Hospital

Roosevelt Warm Springs held its 86<sup>th</sup> annual employee recognition luncheon on April 24. Yearly gatherings to give thanks and celebrate the accomplishments of the staff have been a tradition at Roosevelt Warm Springs since the Franklin D. Roosevelt days. Roosevelt established the tradition of annual celebrations back in the 1920s when RWS was serving polio patients as the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation.

Employees Kathy Clark and Lisa Waddell received the top honors at this year's luncheon. Clark, associate nurse executive for the RWS Rehabilitation Hospital, received the Leadership Award for her work facilitating a multidisciplinary team that achieved certified stroke rehabilitation program status for the hospital from the Joint Commission, an independent organization that ensures healthcare organizations meet best practice standards. Only four hospitals in Georgia have achieved this certification.

Waddell received the Employee of the Year Award for her work as RWS conference coordinator and manager of the volunteer program. In her job, Waddell serves as the face of RWS for many customers that use the facility for meetings, training sessions or special events.

During the luncheon, RWS Executive Director Bill Bulloch also presented service pins to 51 employees celebrating employment milestones at Warm Springs. Since 2006, RWS has given “Legacy” pins to employees with an image of historic Georgia Hall modeled after pins given by the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation in the 1950s. Among those receiving “Legacy” pins this year are Sue Chapman, who received her 30-year pin, as well as Rufus Braddy, Connie McDaniel, and Shawn Mustacchio, who each received 25-year pins. A donation from the Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation Development Fund paid for the luncheon and the awards. The Development Fund, an independent 501(c)3 charitable corporation supports the patient and student programs at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

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**Calhoun Jobs and Resource Fair a Definite**

**Success**

**Excitement Builds around TEAM 26**

The third installment of the TEAM 26 Jobs and Resources Fairs for veterans with disabilities rolled into the Senoraville Recreational Complex in Calhoun on May 16, 2013. TEAM 26 Champion, Paul Ray (Rehab Unit Manager) and Ed James (Regional Director) were leaders in forming TEAM Calhoun, the regional team of volunteers working on the Calhoun event. This group of passionate volunteers was instrumental in beating the pavement to drum employer and community support the synergy for an enormously successful fair.

The veterans who identified themselves as having disabilities will be referred to the local TEAM 26 Champion for follow up activities.

Since TEAM 26 launched its first fair, over 56 veterans who attended that event have received jobs. Scores of local businesses and community partners co-sponsored the event by donating refreshments for the participants of the Fair. Retired Captain Chris Hayden was the keynote speaker at the launch program and he emphasized the importance of everyone getting involved in service to our veterans. A value added component of the Jobs and Resources Fair held in Calhoun last week was the fact that everyone was asked to bring a non-perishable food item which was donated to a local shelter for distribution to those in need.

Through the Jobs and Resources Fairs, **TEAM 26** is matching veterans with potential employers and other resources. While the services offered by the VR program focused on veterans with disabilities, these Jobs and Resources Fairs are open to all veterans. The next Fair will be held on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at the Goodwill of Southern Rivers (Behind Longhorns Steakhouse) 2601 Cross Country Drive Columbus GA 31906 beginning at 10:00 a.m. and ending at 2:00 p.m. Pre-conference activities begins at 9:00 a.m. including resume prep and interview skills training.

Contributed by Carl McRae

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May 6-May 10 was Employee Recognition Week for people employed by the state of Georgia. Across GVRA, the programs celebrated in different ways. There were meals, snacks, special events, and activities throughout the different programs.

Pages 15-19 captured some of the events and moments that occurred during the week's activities.

In the VR program, they had scheduled days:

Marvelous Monday-team members brought in their favorite desserts

Terrific Tuesday-team members wore their favorite hat

Wacky Wednesday-team members wore their ugliest belt and shoes

Casual Friday-team members wore more casual clothing and shared desserts and snacks with their fellow VR employees

Photo 1 is Region 4 staff sporting their favorite hats

Photo 2 is Kenneth Mann wearing a wig and posing with his arms crossed for the camera

Photo 3 is Lynn Tallent and Mike Haffey with a BEP mouse pad

Photo 4 is Teresa Eggleston and Chris Okoyo standing left to right

Photo 5 is Teresa Eggleston and Raj Gandy standing with a bag with the BEP logo on its side

Photo 6 is Al Beline sitting at his desk with several BEP items

Photo 7 is Liz McGary sitting and Diane Dailey standing as she holds a bag with the BEP logo on its side

Photo 8 is Raymond Jacobs, Anne Aplin and Danny Murr-

BEP Program standing left to right holding apples ready to begin bobbing for apples

Photo 9 is Region 7 staff sporting their favorite hats

Photo 10 is Region 9 staff wearing their favorite hats

Photo 11 shows GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg and Deputy Director Keith Horton modeling wigs that were provided for them during the celebration at 2 Peachtree

Photo 12 shows Mike Hartley complete with his Scottish attire

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### **GVRA FORMS ADA/504 COMPLIANCE TEAM**

Leading by example is important for GVRA. Before its first birthday, GVRA has already launched efforts to establish a team responsible for ensuring the agency's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Act. A project outline has developed following planning and several meetings with Mike Galifianakis. Mike is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator for the Georgia State Financing & Investment

Commission. He is responsible for developing and implementing programs and activities to advance and monitor agency compliance with the ADA statewide.

At the agency level, Travis Salley was selected to serve as the Agency's Coordinator for the ADA/504 project. Executive Director Greg Schmieg and Deputy Director Keith Horton will join the following GVRA ADA Team members in developing and implementing the plan:

Lee Brinkley Bryan	Russell Fleming
Richard Eskridge	Raj Gandy
Kevin Harris	Deidre Jackson
Kevin Kelly	Rita McWhorter
Raj Pagadala	Terri Rushing
Travis Salley	Jimmy Wilson

The new team is now working with the State ADA Coordinator's office to complete four phases:

Phase 1: Planning for 504/ADA Compliance

Phase 2: Conducting an Updated 504/ADA Self-Evaluation

Phase 3: Implementing the 504/ADA Plan

Phase 4: Maintaining and Updating the 504/ADA Plan as  
Necessary

Phase I is well underway, and phase II should be completed  
within the next 30 days.

## **Friends Helping Friends take Students to Braves Game**

Photo shows all of the Friends Club trip participants in their  
seats before the Atlanta Braves game

Friends Club, sponsored by Mrs. Sandy Adams, recently  
attended an Atlanta Braves game as a result of State  
Representative Tom McCall contacting the Braves Reach Out  
Program. Several Braves players generously contributed to the  
"Reach Out, Be Our Guest Program" making this trip  
possible. FHF members, who pay their own way on all FHF  
trips, invited EC Primary, EC Elementary, ECMS and ECCHS  
students in Mr. Eubanks, Mrs. Mindy Black, Mrs. Chrystal

Thomas, Mrs. Pam Brown & Mrs. Daniele Frankin's classes to go to Atlanta to Turner Field where they watched the Braves play Kansas City during the exciting afternoon game on Wednesday, April 17th. Thanks to Jamie Colvard, ECCHS alumni, former Braves Cheerleader, and cousin to FHF Founding Officers Committee member Amy Turner, the Braves Girls, including Elberton native Jennifer Bennett, joined the Elberton group for pics and gave each student a free Braves cap. FHF provides all funds for transportation for FHF trips so that there is no cost to the school system. Friends Helping Friends is dedicated to the memory of Bud McCall.

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## **Facilities Management Update**

Facilities Management Support for GVRA is located at 2 Peachtree Street, Suite 6.395. The team consists of six staff members including: Paul Bryant and Kenneth Mann (Project Managers), Debra Barnes-Homer (Property and Fleet Coordinator), Daryl Blake (Telecom) Mark Muzii (Risk Manager)

and Precious Davis (Leasing coordinator/Building Coordinator).

There are also several coordinators directly attached to three of the six programs within GVRA. These staff are directed by Richard Eskridge who serves as the Facilities Management Director for the agency. Working with all six of the program directors and the Executive Staff, the team of staffers works to ensure the day-to-day operation needs are addressed. Below is a brief listing of some current activities underway around the state and contact information for the Director.

#### Current Activities:

- Relocation of the Perry VR staff
- Relocation of the Memorial Drive/Commerce Drive VR staff
- Consolidation of the Savannah VR offices
- Relocation of the Macon RO and Hub offices
- Office signage updates around the state
- Relocation of the Bainbridge VR staff
- Relocation of the Carrollton VR office
- Relocation of the Cleveland VR office
- Relocation of the Blue Ridge VR office

- Consolidation of the Dublin RO and Hub offices
- Relocation of the Monroe VR office
- Expansion of the Tifton VR office

\*\*\* This is only a snapshot of the full portfolio of activities\*\*\*

Contact Information: Richard Eskridge, 2 Peachtree Street-Suite  
6/395, Atlanta, GA 30303

Office Number: 404-232-1884

**TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GVRA NEWSLETTER OR TO THE GVRA  
DAILY EMAIL UPDATES, PLEASE SEND YOU SUBMISSIONS TO  
KEVIN HARRIS, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND  
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR. THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT  
NEWSLETTER IS FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2013. EMAIL:  
KEVIN.HARRIS@GVRA.GA.GOV**