

CITIES, COUNTIES RECOGNIZE NDEAM

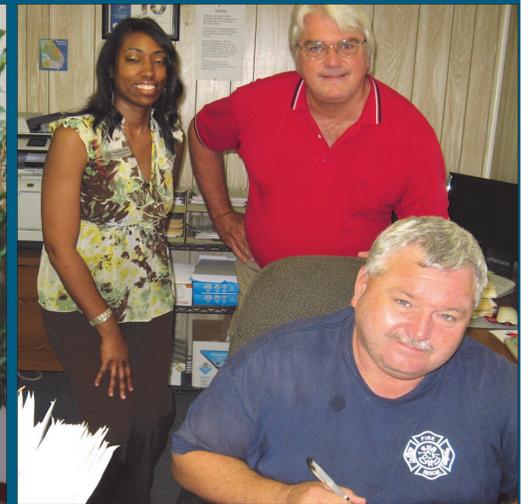
2014 LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE

Georgia's Economic
Recovery &
Growth **MUST** include
Employment for citizens
with disabilities –
**GVRA is good
for business.**



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Board feature on Greg Kirk
- Project L.I.F.E a success
- Friends Helping Friends basketball academy
- BEP success stories
- DAS employees of the month
- GIB employees help make beep ball a boon
- RWS students shine at transition fair
- VR success stories
- Jim Hughes selected to Georgia Sports Hall of Fame
- SRC board members sworn in



Clockwise from top left: Elected officials from Albany, Dawson, Calhoun County, Leesburg and Dahlonega proclaimed October to be National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Throughout the month, these locations and many others across the state both recognized employees with disabilities and engaged in dialogues about how we can work together to help all Georgians go to work.



GREG'S GREETINGS

“Lessons Learned”

As you may have gathered by now, I like doing these newsletter articles around a “theme” – something that can apply to the entire agency and all of us. The big issue in October was the federal government shutdown, and so I thought to myself—what can be learned from it? There are a few lessons that jumped out at me that I would like to share with you.

The first lesson learned from the federal government shutdown is to not be totally dependent on any one thing because it takes away our flexibility and in this case, potentially the ability to operate at all. If we always rely on a sole source that is beyond our control, we risk closing down shop. None of us would ever want that, and the lesson here is to diversify and to build in as much flexibility as we can to maintain some level of independence.

what our Congress did not seem to demonstrate – the art of collaboration. I am reminded again that we are all on the same team—the “what is good for those we serve” team—and we should act like it. As programs and as an agency, we tend to do best when we collaborate.

Collaboration sometimes includes compromise, but most of all, it involves the inclusion of everyone’s perspective for the good of all. Thankfully, this month’s federal government shutdown was resolved in the eleventh hour, but it could have been avoided if the lessons above had been a priority. As we build GVRA, I certainly recognize the need for flexibility and collaboration, and I will do my part to ensure that we work from those positions. I would love to hear from you about other lessons that you may have learned from this month’s experience that will help GVRA as we move forward.

A second and even more important lesson for me is Thank you for all your diligence and hard work.

BOARD FEATURE: GREG KIRK



Pictured: GVRA Board Member Greg Kirk prides himself in serving others and the community at large. Service, he says, should never stop.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board Member Greg Kirk provided excellent leadership throughout GVRA’s first year, and he will certainly be an asset in meeting the challenges and opportunities in our second year as an independent agency. Greg and his wife Rosalyn live in Americus where they enjoy time with their blended family of six children and three grandchildren (with another one on the way). Greg brings special insight to the Board as a blended parent of a son with Asperger’s Autism, and he has experienced some of the hurdles families of individuals with disabilities overcome to help them succeed in school. Greg is happy to note that their son will

graduate from high school and head to college in 2014. Greg received a bachelor’s degree in Theology from Florida Baptist Theological College and completed a Master’s degree in Counseling Psychology at Troy State University. Greg is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a past president of the Licensed Professional Counselors Association of Georgia. Also, he served four years on the board of directors for the Georgia Association of Community Care Providers.

For over 15 years, Greg was the Chief Executive Officer of Professional Counseling Services of Americus Inc. (PCSA), as well as Kirk Properties, LLC. PCSA provides case management services

GREG KIRK CONTINUED

for over 3,200 consumers with developmental disabilities in DeKalb and Clayton counties as well as 14 southwest Georgia counties. While being a hands-on executive and providing case management and counseling, Greg gained a broad perspective of the needs of these individuals and their families, understanding that those with differing socio-economic backgrounds have different needs. Greg also gained a deep understanding of the issues that service providers face to meet the needs of these consumers. During this time, Greg became somewhat of a “troubleshooter” with the state and regional offices of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. Greg notes that he is most proud of working with people like Annette Bowling and Beth English to personally assist individuals with disabilities to move from state mental health hospitals to community services.

While providing services, running companies and raising a family, Greg also was pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in Americus where he and his family still attend today. Recently Greg sold one of his companies to work with Rosalyn in establishing Better Angels Ministries, a 501 (c) (3) private non-profit. They will focus on developing services for families with loved ones with disabilities. They plan to hold retreats for families with children born with disabilities to help the families understand the disabilities and learn early interventions and skills to help their children set and achieve goals for full participation in the community.

He likes the agency message: “GVRA is good for business.” Greg added “GVRA is good for business, good for people with disabilities, good for the disability community and good for Georgia!”

SUCCESS WITH PROJECT L.I.F.E.

On Friday, Sept. 27, Project L.I.F.E kicked off its next big initiative, “Mentor a LIFE.” Project L.I.F.E is a joint program of Cumming VR, Siemens and the Forsyth School System, altogether aimed helping young people find employment and get their careers off to a great start.

The initiative pairs students with a mentor at Siemens USA—one of the Project’s corporate partners—allowing the students to have someone to go to should they come up with a work problem that they don’t feel like they can solve on their own. This is yet another step in the Project’s six year road to help students with disabilities succeed in the working world, and Project L.I.F.E. organizers are excited about what lies in store.



Members of the Project L.I.F.E team smile at the camera. The program partners with businesses like Siemens to help high school students with disabilities get workplace experience and, more importantly, a job.

IAWP FUNDRAISER

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.

Also, there will be 3.5 gallon jugs of Clorox Bleach available for \$9. For an idea of how much you'll save by taking advantage of this fundraiser and buying in bulk, see the graph below. It's a savings of nearly \$40 if you buy the detergent, and for a large family, that would really make a difference in savings at the end of the year.

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

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS BASKETBALL ACADEMY

The Annual Friends Helping Friends Students (FHF) vs Coaches Basketball Assembly packed out the Elbert County (EC) High School gym and raised \$1,000 the day before fall break.

EC High School students and the public had the opportunity to attend the game for a donation of \$1. The Student Team Captain and local team hero presently attending Emmanuel College on a golf scholarship was our very own FHF Founding Officer Katie McCall.

At the game, there were visiting students from Primary, EC Elementary, EC Middle, and Advantage Health Care.

The undefeated FHF Student Team, consisting of middle and high school students who have extra special needs, dominated the game with an overwhelming shutout victory of 120 to nothing.



BEP

Business Enterprise Program

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

SUCCESS STORIES



On Sept.23, the BEP re-opened a coffee bar managed by licensed blind vendor manager Tim Richardson. Tim previously operated a Starbucks coffee bar in a rented modular unit at the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Brunswick for over a year. Following the removal of asbestos from building #262, the space designed for the coffee bar was ready to open.

The employees and students of the FLETC were very excited about the upgrades in the new facility. It is equipped with Wi-Fi, seating for over 25 and has extended hours of operation from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. It will soon offer weekend hours as well.

The remodel design of the snack bar was successfully completed in consultation with former BEP Counselor Michael Harrell and BEP Equipment Coordinator Danny Murr.

Pictured top: Blind Vendor Manager Tim Richardson goes through the cash register at the Starbucks location in the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Law Enforcement Training Facility in Brunswick.

Pictured bottom: Balarie Walker stands with some employees from her snack bar at the Albany Marine Base. The snack bar just started serving hot food.



On Sept.24, licensed blind vendor manager Balarie Walker held a grand re-opening of Balarie's Café at the Albany Marine Base snack bar. Balarie has been a licensed blind vendor manager at the snack bar since 1999.

In early 2007, BEP began a renovation project with the Marine Corps that was finalized the second week of September 2013. During the renovation, the BEP upgraded Balarie's former snack bar—which sold only pre-packaged snacks—to a café that sells chicken wings, burgers, sub sandwiches and fresh salads, among other things.

During the grand re-opening celebration, Balarie and her staff furnished free hotdogs, fountain drinks and cake slices to all her customers from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Balarie also held a drawing for a free Marine-engraved rocking chair.

All customers were really excited about the addition of hot foods, as all of her customer base has only 30 minutes for lunch, and there is no available hot food elsewhere within the building.

This BEP vending site is assigned to BEP Counselor Al Belin who is stationed in the Valdosta Career Center.



Disability Adjudication Services
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



Songhay Parham, Disability Adjudication Services employee of the month for October, accepts the award from DAS Director Awilda Danko. Songhay was recognized for, among other things, a commitment to excellence day in and day out. Way to go Songhay!

“I would like to nominate Songhay Parham for Employee of the Month. Songhay does an outstanding job managing a very complex caseload, which includes all claim types. She is very knowledgeable but does not hesitate to seek assistance when needed. Songhay strives to complete cases promptly and accurately. She is always willing to provide assistance to others in need. She accepts all feedback in a positive manner. Her commitment to excellence is reflected in her overall performance.

Processing Time: 81.6-days (Exceptional), Aged Case Percentage: 9.50% (Exceptional), Case Processing Development: Four lags for the performance period (Exceptional), eCAT Case Processing Accuracy: No eCAT errors noted (Exceptional).

In addition to her strong commitment to her work performance, she also treats others—both internal and external customers—with dignity and respect; she always maintains a pleasant and friendly demeanor. In addition, Songhay serves as one of the unit's social coordinators, recognizing birthdays and special events among the unit members. She is an asset not only to Unit 48, but to Disability Adjudication Services. It is my honor to nominate her for this award.”
~ Dick Gonter, Program Support Director

DAS NEW HIRES



Disability Adjudication Services is pleased to announce the recent hiring of one Adjudicator and eleven Associate Adjudicator Trainees for the Dalton office. The Trainees are (back row L to R) – Amy Perez, Tammy Stainton, Lynne Straney, Dei Elrod, Maria Fraire, Tammy Harrington, (front row L to R) – Modupe Erogbogbo, Tiffany Beasley, Jamarri Rollocks, Rosio Hujion, Kim Hammonds and Adjudicator Alicia Wilson. Welcome to DAS, everyone!



GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

BEEP BALL A BOON!

On Aug. 19, Albany Mayor Dorothy Hubbard signed a proclamation recognizing members of the newly formed Albany Vipers beep ball team.

Beep Ball, the adaptive version of baseball, allows individuals who are blind, visually impaired and legally blind, to compete as professional athletes in a unique style of America's pastime.

To play, a sighted pitcher throws a beeping ball to a batter. If hit, the batter must tag a base before a fielder touches the ball. This counts as a run, and games last six innings unless there is a tie.

GIB Albany plant employees LeQuinton Burner, Antonio Williams, Adrene Tamplin and Tim Chappell were part of the Columbus Midnight Stars a team that in June won a gold medal for its first place finish in the Georgia State Beep Ball Championships.

This first-place finish allowed the Stars to participate in the 2013 National Beep Ball Association (NBBABeep Ball) World Series held in Columbus. The World Series Beep Ball competition faced the unranked Stars against 19 teams from around the US and as far away as Taiwan. The stars ended the tournament with a record of 3-2, finishing 17th out of the teams participating.

Tim Chappell was named Defensive MVP and named to the All-Star Team after finishing among the top five players in batting average.

Antonio Williams, a production worker at the GIB Albany plants said "We are excited to join forces with local athletes to bring Beep Ball and the Vipers to the Albany Community."

On the whole, everyone had a great time, and it was a good opportunity to introduce the community to the sport of beep ball.



Albany Mayor Dorothy Hubbard stands with members of the Albany Vipers Beep Ball Team. Players shown are: (left to right) LeQuinton Barner, Tracy Jackson, Antonio Williams, Adrene Tamplin and Tim Chappell. The team recently participated in the annual Beep Ball World Series, finishing 17th out of 19 teams.

RWS STUDENTS SHINE AT TRANSITION FAIR

Students at Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) demonstrated leadership in representing the program at a record-breaking transition fair held Oct. 3 at the Ruzycki Center for Therapeutic Recreation. High school students, teachers, administrators, family members, GVRA field services staff and others traveled to Warm Springs from as far away as Statesboro to tour RWS and learn about programs, services and campus activities.

A record 340 people participated in the event, which has been held twice since the fall of 2011. This event offers an interactive opportunity for a potential referral to learn the scope of vocational services available at RWS.

“RWS students have always participated in the Transition Fairs,” said Sue Geer, Co-Coordinator of the event with Mary Jane Wadsworth. “But this time the students participated to a greater degree than ever before by greeting the guests as they arrived, interacting with them at the display tables and leading tours of the RCTR and the new dormitory.”

Sue and Mary Jane are instructors in the Business Information Technology Program at RWS. Students in this program receive training toward work readiness in administrative assisting, customer service and data entry.

“Our students were involved in this event from the beginning,” Sue said. “We could not have done it without them.”

“Helping organize an event like the transition fair is a tremendous opportunity for our students,” Sue said. “They learn about logistics, about working as a team and about working with people. We hope the experience

gives them confidence in their abilities that they can take home and use on the job. We also hope that seeing their peers operate the displays and sharing their experiences of Warm Springs will inspire the participants to set out on their own career goals.”

“We could not have been more proud of our students,” said Dr. Lee Brinkley Bryan, RWS Vocational Rehabilitation Director. “During this past year, RWS instructors and staff have put a lot of focus on goal setting and the power of self-determination in our work with students to support becoming causal agents in their own lives. Leadership, self-awareness and self-advocacy development are elements of self-determination, and the students provided excellent examples throughout the Transition Fair of young adults who are realizing self-determination and pride in what they have accomplished at RWS.”

Bill Bulloch, Executive Director at RWS echoed his pride in the student involvement at the event and emphasized “the positive impact RWS students may have had on those high school students facing transition from high school with uncertainty in future planning.”

Both Lee and Bill also expressed appreciation to the students, as well as the staff who spent many hours planning the event.

The next RWS Transition Fair has not yet been scheduled, but it is anticipated to take place in April 2014.

PICTURES FROM RWS TRANSITION FAIR





SUCCESS STORIES

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

Townsend Brown Jr.
Savannah

When Townsend Brown Jr. first started with VR in Savannah, he didn't know what he wanted to do, and worse yet, he didn't know what he could do. Townsend has both a cognitive disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. His skills were limited, and prior to starting with VR, he was told by multiple companies that he was unemployable. VR changed all that.

His VR counselors helped Townsend navigate his way through supported employment services, assigning him a job coach to help him sharpen the skills he needed to succeed. And it worked.

Last November, he graduated from the program with 90 days of employment as a lobby attendant at Chick-Fil-A. He still works there today.

Luz Fraire
Dalton

It's always rare for people in their early 20s to suffer a stroke, but it does happen, and for Luz Fraire, it was a life-altering event.

Roughly a decade ago, Luz became pregnant when she was in high school in Dalton. While giving birth, she suffered a stroke that partially paralyzed her left side, and for the next seven years, she didn't know what to do. She could walk using a leg brace. She could take care of her child, but she couldn't work.

In 2011, Luz made the decision to get help. From VR she received job readiness training where she learned how to handle herself in a job interview and how to write a resume. Yet there were still pieces missing. Many companies wouldn't hire her because she lacked a high school diploma. Working with VR counselors though, Luz was able to realize her true passion: translation. As a

bilingual speaker, Luz was able to open up a world of career possibilities, and with VR's help, she was able to receive specialty training.

After much searching and with the implementation of assistive work technology through the VR program, Luz found work as a translator at Dalton Public Schools, and she's still there today.

Louise Hill
Athens

On Feb. 19, 2011, Louise Hill was tired, but she thought nothing of it. Everybody gets tired from time to time. But the next morning, she knew something was terribly wrong. She couldn't use her legs, and she didn't know why.

It turned out to be idiopathic transverse myelitis, a very rare neurological disorder that impairs mobility.

More than anything else, Louise was afraid that she would lose the independence of living alone and traveling for work at the University of Georgia's J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development. After a stint at Atlanta's Shepherd center, she returned to her home in Athens and sought VR services with the goal of maintaining the independence she had before.

The first time talking to her VR Counselor, Louise made it clear that if he could help her, she would be a lifelong advocate for disability services. With the help of VR, Louise was able to modify her van with the necessary conversions to allow her to resume her independent life six months to the day after waking to the loss of her legs.

She has served on the GVRA Board since its inception in July of 2012.

HUMBLED HALL OF FAMER

Coach Jim Hughes Selected to Georgia Sports Hall

Republished from The Thomasville Times-Enterprise
Sept. 26, 2013

It wouldn't have even made Jim Hughes' bucket list.

The former Thomasville High and Colquitt County coach holds the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in such high esteem that he never considered himself necessarily worthy to enter those hallowed halls. But on Wednesday, the Hall of Fame announced that Hughes' 247-102-4 overall record, three state championships and one national title indeed merited inclusion.

He will be joined in the 2014 induction class by James Brooks, Bobby Cremins, Homer Rice, Hollis Stacy, Frank Thomas, Chester Webb and Scott Woerner. The induction ceremony is scheduled Feb. 22 at the Macon City Auditorium.

"I don't think if I'd ever have put together a bucket list, that I would have been arrogant enough to put that on the list," Hughes said. "But it's a very, very nice way to be recognized for the career I spent coaching and teaching.

"It's very gratifying to be recognized by that group. For anybody who works in that profession, to be recognized in that way it's very nice."

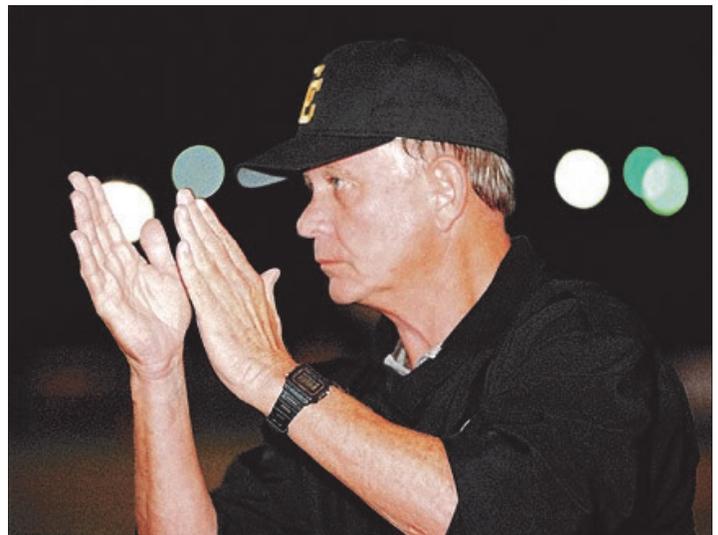
Those humble feelings come from understanding not only the legacies of those that preceded him into the Hall, but also those of coaches that haven't received that call. That knowledge of how prestigious the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame has left Hughes grateful for the privilege of becoming a member.

"There are some outstanding high school coaches in the sports hall of fame in a number of different sports," he said. "I know a lot of excellent coaches who do not have that recognition. As difficult as it may sound, that makes me very humble. I've know guys who have put together a tremendous body of work and to this day have not been recognized."

Hughes certainly built a resume worthy of Hall consideration during his 30 seasons guiding the Bulldogs and Packers. Taking over the reigns of Thomasville's program in 1970, Hughes led THS to 107 wins over 13 seasons and directed the Bulldogs to state championships in 1973 and 1974. After the unbeaten title season in 1973, the Bulldogs followed with their national championship campaign in 1974 when they finished 12-1.

After leaving THS, Hughes moved to Moultrie and proceeded to win with the Packers. In his 30 seasons as a head coach, only one Hughes team finished with a sub-.500 record, his first at Colquitt County. From that 4-6 finish, Hughes built the Packers into a state runner-up in 1991 and an undefeated state champion three years later. Colquitt made two more state semifinal appearances under Hughes, who won 140 games with the Packers.

"It's a tough ticket, there's no question about that," Hughes said. "Just when you consider outstanding high school coaches and players then you step to the collegiate level and then to the professional level in all sports, it's a tough ticket."



SIGN UP FOR THE DAILY UPDATE

Some of you may have received this newsletter from a friend. If you'd like to receive further newsletters in your inbox or the daily update, please contact GVRA Government Relations and Communications at 404-232-1978 or at John.Boan@gvra.ga.gov.

SRC Board Members Sworn In

On Oct. 24, Governor Nathan Deal swore in members of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in his office in the Capitol.

Those sworn in include Robin Blount, David Cole, James Radford, Liza Leiter, Lewis Wheaton, Peggy Venable, Steve Oldaker, Kathy Carlisle, Jennifer Page, Joy Norman, Chris Moder, Dana Skelton-Sanders, Kip Slade, John Hall, Kayla Wilson and Deanie Fincher.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a federally mandated council composed of Georgia citizens from across the state appointed by the Governor to represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities and stakeholders. They collaborate with GVRA to develop plans for services and make recommendations to assist individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals.

