

GVRA Monthly Newsletter

September 2013

Read Only

Greg's Greetings

Photo: GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg smiles at the camera.

Let me begin this month's greetings by saying a very big thank you to everyone who wished me well or said a prayer for me during my surgery and recovery. I cannot put into words how touched I was and honestly how much it meant to me. When I first got home from the hospital, your well wishes were my "encouragement"...you kept me going, helped me do my breathing and walking exercises and helped my determination to get better. You helped me so much that the word "encouragement" has left a lasting impression on me, and I think it is a great way to think of our agency. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be known as the agency that is encouraging? You give people hope. You show those we serve compassion in a way that encourages them to seek and find a better life. What a great reputation that is.

I have now been back at work for six weeks and it is very good to be back. Being away from work and now being back at work has certainly reminded me of the value of work. Not only do I feel better physically, but mentality and emotionally I am back to being who I am – my identity is large found in what I do. This experience has reinforced the importance of our agency mission for me, and I really feel good about it. Of course, we still have challenges and we have a long way to go, but I am so proud of

what this agency is about and what you all do everyday.

Moving the agency forward is very similar to my post-surgery recovery. It takes doing something that will help us everyday. Progress comes slowly, and sometimes it is one step forward and two steps back. That's how it seems to work. Above all, it takes a willingness and determination and discipline to keep doing the little things that make a difference and make us better. My progress was measured by gradually moving from a walker to a cane to walking on my own. We can do the very same at GVRA, and one day I hope all of us can look back at how much progress we've made. Thank you.

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Art by GVRA Employee on Display at Georgia State

Photo: GVRA employee Becky Giquel stands with her art at Georgia State University.

GVRA employee Becky Giquel recently had her artwork featured in a show at Georgia State University.

The show, "100 at 100" featured one hundred works of art by Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design Alumni. The exhibit celebrates the breadth and accomplishment of Welch School Alumni and the Georgia State University Centennial. It runs until September 27.

Giquel works in Region 17 – Metro Blindness Unit as an RA based at Gwinnett Career Center.

Her piece on display is called "conceal/disclose (deterioration/possibility)." It is mixed media. The fabric was dyed with natural dyes like tea and turmeric and was printed by pounding leaves. The piece is an examination of the process of fading and disintegrating that happens to

natural materials.

Board Feature: Marsha Farrow

Photo: GVRA Board Member Marsha Farrow has enthusiastically represented the GVRA on the board for the past year.

As Secretary of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board, Marsha Farrow has enthusiastically participated over the past year in monthly meetings, teleconferences, GVRA conferences and the Georgia Rehabilitation Association annual training conferences. She lives in Summerville with her husband Bob where they enjoy time with their two children and three grandchildren. Marsha is on the board of the Georgia Council of the Blind (GCB) and is a past member of the American Council of the Blind Board. Only she and one other person from Georgia have ever been elected to the American Council of the Blind Board. She is the current President of the Chattooga County chapter of GCB. Also, she is a member of the American and Georgia Blind Lions and the Trion Lions Club.

Marsha brings special insight to the Board as a person with low vision who benefited from VR services. She began gradually losing her vision as a child, so she understands the issues and challenges individuals with disabilities face in their families, school and work.

Marsha earned an Associate degree from Floyd College, a Bachelor of Organizational Management from Covenant Presbyterian College, and a Master's degree in Visual Rehabilitation from Florida State University. VR assisted her with low vision aids and in going to college among other services. Marsha has used low vision aids for many years and says that she can remember just like it was yesterday when VR provided her first video magnifier because it was "life changing – the closest thing in her life to a

miracle healing!”

Additionally, Marsha believes that her experiences working for 25 years as a Counselor in the State Mental Health Division providing a wide variety of services in all types of programs helped her come to the GVRA Board with an understanding of the needs of those consumers. She worked as a Job Coach in Supported Employment and is excited about the new VR initiatives for Customized and Supported Employment with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. In her current position with Vision Rehabilitation Services of Georgia, Marsha provides a variety of services to seniors who have low vision or who are newly blind. She provides skills training in activities of daily living, adjustment to blindness and consumer and family education. She teaches Braille and many other low vision skills.

All of these experiences contribute to Marsha being an exceptional asset to the GVRA Board. She said Board members and all staff at GVRA are “not in this for the accolades or rewards or public recognition; but we are in it because we care about the private successes of our clients. Our greatest concern is for the consumers we serve.”

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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 up front 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.

You can also place an order at the reception desk on the 6th floor at 2 Peachtree.

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Linda J. Miller High School High Tech Scholarship Fund

Photo: Kids jump for joy in their graduation caps and gowns.

First of all, I want to thank Annette Bowling for presenting the Linda J. Miller Scholarship Fund at the GRA meeting last month, and I would like to thank GRA for providing the venue. I had hoped to be at the meeting, but unfortunately, my personal health did not allow me to travel. However, my son Robert was able to join Annette.

GRA members may remember that Linda spoke at GRA in 1998 to thank the vocational rehabilitation community for their assistance in her recovery from traumatic brain injury. In November, 1992 Linda was struck by a car while on a moped in Hamilton, Bermuda. She had surgery on injuries other than other those associated with TBI and was then was air ambulated to Florida where she was diagnosed with bilateral temporal and parietal closed head injuries, remained in a coma for several months and then went

through six months of hospitalized rehab before I was able to bring her home in December of 1993. Her doctors had encouraged me to "pull the plug" claiming she would never come out of coma and if she did, she would never proceed beyond a vegetative state. Linda proved them wrong.

After returning to Georgia, Linda was admitted to Warm Springs in January, 1994, evaluation and treatment, underwent three surgeries at nearby LaGrange and then was readmitted to Warm Springs to address her left side paralysis, gait training and ADLs. She graduated from her wheelchair and came home with a walker and a quad cane.

To return thanks for Linda's miraculous recovery, and with the help of Annette Bowling, the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, a nonprofit was formed and began serving high school youth with abilities. Linda announced one day that she had adopted Annette as her "second mama." Their relationship continued for close to 20 years. In 1997, again with Annette's help, Georgia High School/High Tech, the first state-wide HS/HT was formed. Local, state and national grants and contracts enabled the program to provide statewide services.

In September 2010, Linda was diagnosed with a particularly virulent form of ovarian cancer. I joined Linda in Florida as she underwent major surgery and four months of chemotherapy. We received a great Christmas present when we were told in late December that Linda's cancer was in remission. Sadly, it returned in October of last year, having metastasized to another area.

I again joined Linda in Florida where chemo was stopped after four months because what was successfully killing the cancer was also destroying Linda. After two more sessions of different chemotherapies, her doctors advised us that there was nothing more they could do for Linda, recommended

Hospice and pain management and placed Linda in a Hospice hospital unit.

She was able to return home with private duty assistance for a short while, and then in late May returned to the Hospice Hospital unit. During those latter months, Linda was able to share her personal thoughts decisions and plans, and, when I told her that as a result of the GA Committee and GA HS/HT close to 9,000 high school students with disabilities had received transition services that helped increase graduation rates and decrease dropouts, she said she wanted to continue to make a difference and asked to me set up a Scholarship Fund for our HS/HT students. I followed her wishes and now tax deductible donations can be made in her memory to:

GA Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc.,
Linda J. Miller Scholarship Fund
PO BOX 1090
Fortson, GA 31808

In June, one month before her 52nd birthday, Linda lost her battle. I was privileged to be holding her hand as she passed to her eternal rest.

I so much appreciate that GRA is distributing this information so that our youth with disabilities can be given the opportunity to prepare for gainful employment.

My sincere thanks,

Lee Miller, CEO

Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc.

Inside the Georgia Rehabilitation Association

Photo: Ed James, Highlands member and GRA President, Regina Watts, Membership Chair, Angie Rhudy, Highlands President, 2012 (Hope Welch was President of Highlands in 2011), and Lynda Lovett, Highlands member and GRA Board member.

The members of this association represent professionals in the rehabilitation field that include those who work in the private, public and education sectors. They help provide counseling services, job placement, job coaching, assessment and evaluation services, independent living services, disability benefit counseling, youth to work services, assistive technology services, job readiness services, administrative support, training, leadership, advocacy and many others.

Benefits of belonging to NRA and GRA include opportunities to collaborate, network, advocate and increase awareness of issues and skills through professional development, all in the name of promoting self-sufficiency, removing barriers, ensuring quality services and gainful employment for individuals with disabilities.

GRA invites all employees of GVRA to join our successful state chapter of NRA.

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BEP Vendors Renew Fort Gordon Contract

Photo: Luther Holmes, Project Manager, Raj Gandy, BEP Director, Franklin Hulsey, Licensed Blind Contract Manager, Lynn Tallant, BEP Contract Specialist, and Joe Blackstone, President of Blackstone Consulting, Inc.

Congratulations to licensed blind vendor manager, Franklin Hulseley and his Hulseley & Blackstone (H & B) staff for successfully obtaining another five year (one year with four renewal option years) foodservice contract at Fort Gordon Army Post in Augusta.

Mr. Hulseley began his military foodservice at Fort Gordon on March 1, 2007 after a long fight to exercise the BEP's federal food service priority. Within the first 5 year contract, H & B Foodservices was able to compete for and be named runner up in 2009 and 2010 for the Phillip A Connelly award. This award is given to the best Army foodservice provider in the world. By 2011, H & B finally reached its pinnacle and was officially honored in San Diego for the Army's best foodservice provider for 2011.

Mr. Hulseley's prior experience operating the foodservice contract at the Warner Robbins Air Force Base in Warner Robins from 2003-2006 gave him the much needed experience to win such a prestigious award. In 2006, the H & B foodservice team won the Goldplate award in 2006. The Goldplate is given to the best Air Force foodservice provider in a region.

Mr. Hulseley has been a licensed blind vendor of the Business Enterprise Program for the last 51 years! During that time, Mr. Hulseley served as the Finance Chairman of the Committee of Blind Vendors (CBV), was voted runner up for Best Vendor in America from the General Service Administration (GSA) in 1995 and 1996 and won Best Vendor in America in 1997 while operating a small café in the downtown Summit building. He was a founding member of the licensed blind vendor Retirement Committee, and he has sat for numerous terms as a member of the Committee of Blind Vendors (CBV).

Mr. Hulseley currently employs over 360 people while operating his firm fixed price food service contract. He employs another 14 employees at

the National Security Administration (NSA). At both of these locations, Mr. Hulseby ensures he offers viable employment opportunities to qualified individuals who have disabilities. For the 2013 fiscal year, Mr. Hulseby employed over 88 individuals who worked with reasonable accommodations. Job well done Mr. Hulseby and the H & B foodservice team!

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DAS Employee of The Month

Photo: DAS Program Director Awilda Danko presents the DAS Employee of the Month Award to Tanya Hunt.

Tanya Hunt is an Adjudicator in Unit 52. She processes all disability claims types, including Expedited Reinstatements (EXR) and Pre-Hearing (PH). She received an EXR claim for which complete development had not been completed by the field office. She suspected the claimant's benefits had been ceased in error and notified the field office caseworker.

She returned the claim to the field office, but because the claimant was on dialysis, she worked with the claimant and the caseworker at the field office to make sure an initial level claim was filed. This was so that the claimant, who was in a dire need situation because he was no longer covered by health insurance, could receive timely benefits in case the EXR claim was denied.

Tanya remained in regular contact with the claimant and the FO caseworker, although the claim was no longer assigned to her, to ensure that the appropriate development was completed in a timely fashion. Because of Ms. Hunt's tireless efforts on behalf of this claimant, it was determined that the claimant's benefits were ceased in error and they have been reinstated. The

claimant sent her a thank you note stating "We need more people in the world like you that are willing to go above and beyond. You are truly a gem!" I couldn't agree more.

It is my pleasure to nominate Tanya Hunt for Employee of the Month for her excellent customer service on behalf of this claimant.

DAS Morale Building Committee

Photo: Morale Building Committee members Carol McChesney, Shelia Baskin, Kathy Beatty, Susan Lloyd, LaQuanda Harper, Sandra Richards, Tonya Scott, Takeeya Lee and Tommie Pippen smile at the camera.

On September 10, 2013, the DAS Morale Building Committee (MBC) sponsored a Meet and Greet in an effort to inform staff of the Committee's mission, goals and accomplishments.

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DAS Donates Equipment to Non-profit Education Org

Do you ever wonder what happens to the old computers and monitors when you get new equipment? DAS started a donation process in June when the Information Systems Unit sent employees an email asking for referral information on Non-Profit Educational facilities that might want some surplus equipment.

As a result of this feedback, DAS was able to donate surplus equipment to over 55 non-profit education organizations. These agencies received 623 computers, 623 monitors, seven laptops, 48 network printers and 21 fax machines.

Prior to distributing the equipment to charitable organizations, equipment was transferred within GVRA to other divisions, including 71 computers, 10 network printers, three servers, 35 Cisco switches and the supplies to go with them. DAS is always glad to help.

Sen. Burke Visits GIB Plant

Photo: Government Relations Director-Kevin Harris, GIB PR Coordinator-Luis Narimatsu, GA State Senator-Dean Burke and GIB CEO- Kevin Kelley.

On August 14, Georgia State Senator Dean Burke, District 11, toured the GIB ISO 9001-2003 certified Bainbridge manufacturing plant. The tour was held in conjunction with the 2013 National Industries for the Blind/ National Association for the Employment of People Who are Blind (NIB/ NAEPB) Grassroots Forum. GIB CEO Kevin Kelley, GIB PR Coordinator Luis Narimatsu and GVRA Government Relations and Communication Director Kevin Harris were on hand to welcome Senator Burke.

A presentation explaining the history, mission and the goods and services produced was conducted by GIB CEO Kevin Kelley, followed by a tour through out the different departments of the Bainbridge plant.

GIB, a Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) program, is one of 90 associated NIB agencies, that produce SKILCRAFT® products and provides services for federal government customers through the AbilityOne Program.

Throughout the months of August and September, NIB associated agencies across the country will be hosting visits by local, state and federal officials to increase awareness of the shared mission to create, sustain and improve employment opportunities for people who are blind.

CNA Training at RWS

Photo: Instructor Connie Bonnette shows students how to put on a stocking to at RWS.

Photo: Assisting with patient feeding is one of many skills students learn during the CNA program at Roosevelt Warm Springs. This is one of the many skills the CNA students learn through the classes at RWS.

For the fifth year in a row, the Certified Nurse Assistant training program at Roosevelt Warm Springs has received a perfect score from the Georgia Medical Care Foundation (GMCF), the organization charged with certifying CNA training programs across the state. “The GMCF looks at every aspect of our program, including the books used, the handouts distributed, the tests given, the lesson plans made and the instructors used,” explained program coordinator Lynn Arndt, RN. “They conduct interviews with the students as part of their inspection and observe class sessions all in an effort to ensure that citizens of Georgia receive quality care in hospitals, in nursing homes, in assisted living centers and in the home.”

This successful recertification comes just as RWS prepares to expand the program and make it available to a greater number of people with disabilities in Georgia. “We are very proud of our CNA program,” said RWS Executive Director Bill Bulloch. “We want to open it to as many GVRA clients as possible. As part of the new way we are doing business, field counselors may send clients here specifically for this program. We hope to double that number in the months ahead.”

The CNA training program at RWS includes 118 hours of classroom training, 65 hours of hands-on lab work and 44.5 hours of clinical experi-

ence. The curriculum and lesson plans take into account the variety of learning styles and needs of GVRA Vocational Rehabilitation clients. “We teach by repetition,” Ms. Arndt explained. “By the time a student finishes the program at RWS, they will have learned a skill by hearing about it, by seeing it done and by performing the task many times.” For those students living on the RWS campus, the program also includes mandatory evening study sessions and an opportunity to participate in other RWS programs like Drivers Education.” Since the CNA program was established in 2009, 75 students have successfully completed the CNA course, and 68 students have successfully completed the Home Health Aide course. More than 95% of program graduates who have taken the state CNA exam have passed. “We see this program as a great training opportunity for people with disabilities. Nursing school now often require attendance at a CNA.”

Registration has closed for the next session beginning Sept. 30, but students have until December 18 to register for the first session in 2014. The next session will begin on January 6. If you would like more information about the program, please contact Ms. Arndt at 706-655-5138.

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CNA Training Continued

Photo: The current class of CNA students at Roosevelt Warm Springs includes: Kayla Anderson (left), Casmine Traylor, Jessica Hall, Instructor Connie Bonnette, Kristie Kelly and Deion James. The next class will begin on Sept. 30.

Registration has closed for the next session beginning Sept. 30, but students have until December 18 to register for the first session in 2014. The next session will begin on January 6. If you would like more information about the program, please contact Ms. Arndt at 706-655-5138.

Old VR Student Photographs Found at RWS

Photo: Old student photographs are on display at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

A significant collection of RWS vocational student photographs is now being preserved in the Roosevelt Warm Springs Archive.

The RWS vocational rehabilitation program opened in 1964. Beginning with the first student admitted to the program, an unknown employee at Warm Springs meticulously collected photographs of the students and arranged them in a series of binders with their names and their consecutive numbers. The eight binders in the collection contain approximately 5000 photographs of the earliest participants in the RWS VR program, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2014.

The Roosevelt Warm Springs Archive contains information about Warm Springs going back into the 1920s when Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation to provide rehabilitation services to polio survivors like himself.

“These photographs and names are among the best historical records acquired by the archive in recent years,” said RWS archivist Mike Shadix. “They compliment other unidentified photographs of student activities in the archive and may enable us to help former students and their families find information about their experience in Warm Springs.”

“We are regularly asked for information about former polio patients,” he said, “and we do our best to provide what we can. This new collection of photographs may help us to do the same about former students. I really appreciate the VRU’s gift of these records to the archive.”

The binders were in storage in the RWS vocational training building. Staff members discovered them while preparing for the impending relocation of several RWS departments to different locations on campus.

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Documentary On Former RWS Client

Photos: Tanaquil LeClercq is being featured in a new documentary. She was once a patient at RWS.

A new documentary film about prima ballerina Tanaquil LeClercq will premier September 30 at the 51st annual New York Film Festival.

Born in 1929 in Paris, LeClercq began dancing at an early age. After her family moved to New York, she auditioned and won entry into the School of American Ballet in 1941. When she graduated from the school at age 17, George Ballanchine, invited her to be a founding member of his new “Ballet Society,” an organization that would soon rename itself the New City Ballet.

LeClercq was a star dancer in the ballet company for a decade before contracting polio while on tour in Europe in 1956. She was never able to walk or dance again. She came to Warm Springs for treatment in late April 1957 and stayed for several months. Eventually she returned to the dancing world as a teacher. She also wrote several books and created crossword puzzles, some of which were published in the New York Times. She died on December 31, 2000.

The documentary, “Afternoon of a Faun: Tanaquil LeClercq,” includes film and photographs from the Roosevelt Warm Springs Archive and original footage shot in Warm Springs last year by director

Nancy Buirski and cinematographer Rick Rodgers.

The world premier of the film will take place at 6 p.m., Monday, Sept. 30, in the Walter Reade Theater, New York, New York.

The DVD release date has yet to be announced.

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RWS Employee of the Month

Cherry Chapman, hospital patient registration supervisor, is the September Employee of the Month at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Chapman, a native of LaGrange, became a resident of Meriwether County early in her life and has been there ever since. She started as a mail clerk at RWS 16 years ago. Since then she has worked as a program assistant in the inpatient therapy department, the brain injury program and outpatient services. She acquired her current position in the Admissions Department about one year ago.

Any RWS employee may nominate a colleague for the Employee of the Month Award. According to Chapman's nomination read during the presentation ceremony, she "excels as a leader. She doesn't simply tell us what to do but leads by example, doing the work and learning firsthand of the challenges we face as employees. When the volume of work increases dramatically, she...rolls up her sleeves and works beside us to help accomplish the goal of getting patients admitted and providing revenue for Roosevelt Warm Springs."

Chapman is now eligible for the 2013 Employee of the Year Award which will be given in the spring of 2014.

VR Success Story

Photo: VR Client John Linch sits at his desk at Macy's. VR worked with Linch to establish a work plan and achieve his professional goals.

Have you ever bought a shirt at one Macy's and then returned it to another? These transactions are important to John Linch. He tracks buying trends and reports on enormous volumes of data moving between stores. He uses technology and computers to do his work.

When John's eye disorder, caused by Retinitis Pigmentosa, started to interfere with his vision, he reached out to a colleague and then to the Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI), who referred him to VR. John was immediately impressed with VR Counselor Beth Frey, "Beth called me on a Tuesday, and came to my office with a team on Thursday." John was referring to Employment Specialist Nakisha Sheppard and AWT Rehabilitation Technologist Gigi Taylor, "who brought with her an array of vision equipment."

The team listened to John speak of his challenges. Based on his goals, Beth put a work plan of services and trainings together, including an ADL (Activities of Daily Living) Assessment with training, a home assessment and O&M (Orientation & Mobility) training, an AWT (Assistive Work Technology) Assessment with recommendations for computer technology, software, and tools, and a TAT (Technical Assistance Training) Assessment and training, to teach John to use the recommended technology.

John was an integral part of his VR success before, during, and after the VR process. Before VR got involved, John had arranged a carpool to get to work. He had also changed his computer settings to utilize existing built-in accessibility features. During the VR process he ventured to CVI to try out products and when he had questions he called product manufacturers. As the VR

process came to a close he enthusiastically expressed his gratitude, contributed to an article, and allowed for photographs and an interview.

Today John utilizes all of the training provided by VR. Because of O&M, he is far more confident to move around Macy's and his community. He says, "I trust the cane." He pointed to the 2" Roller Ball cane tip which extends 2 ½ steps ahead of him. "I no longer run into people." He smiled and added, "I know where people are.... I may not know where people's heads are, but everybody's ankles are in the same spot." AWT and TAT enhanced John's existing computer abilities by adding Magic and JAWS software to his computer. Features included magnification, screen reading, and contrast. John also uses a Transformer to magnify printed documents and a portable video magnifier (Pebble) to view small print in a variety of situations - such as to see where to sign his name on work documents, or when considering a purchase at a store. John continues to watch, monitor and report on Macy's stores' activities. So the next time you're in Macy's and you're making a transaction, you're contributing to John's daily work -- and he loves it!

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Project SEARCH Interns begin at Hamilton

Photo: Ana Guerrero, Savannah Davenport and Kristina Smith. In the back are Karen Hutchinson, Cesar Martinez, Esteban Araiza, Jonathan Williams and Lorin Cameron.

Six Project SEARCH interns recently began their school year at Hamilton Medical Center.

This year's Project SEARCH interns include: Savannah Davenport, Northwest High School; Kristina Smith, Northwest High School; Jonathan

Williams, Northwest High School; Esteban Araiza, Dalton High School; Cesar Martinez, Dalton High School; and Ana Guerrero, Coahulla Creek High School.

Interns rotate through jobs at Hamilton in environmental services, food services, hospice, laundry services, maintenance and materials management – directed by Karen Hutchinson, instructor and Lorin Cameron, job coach.

Project SEARCH is a high school transitional program to help students with disabilities learn transferable job skills, some of which may lead to employment at Hamilton.

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Changes to GVRA Website

Photo: A screenshot of the GVRA main website.

You may have noticed some new additions to the GVRA website in recent days. The changes may seem small, but they're part of a larger effort to rebrand the agency, and as part of that, you'll notice some pretty sweeping modifications to the site in the coming weeks and months.

One of the things we're most excited about is the creation of a GVRA YouTube channel. You can see the first video we've added to the channel on the top picture rotator on the GVRA homepage. Because accessibility is crucial for what the agency does, all videos uploaded to the channel will offer closed captions. In addition, we'll be adding sign language to the videos in the future.

We've also rolled out photo galleries in the media section of the site. These galleries allow us to showcase some of GVRA's employees as well as the agency's clients who are working towards employment. If you have pic-

tures you'd like to submit to the website, please email them to John.Boan@gvra.ga.gov. All clients pictured in the photos must have previously signed a release form allowing for use of their image.

Perhaps the biggest change to the website in the coming months will be a redesign of pages. The redesign will feature all new logos for the agency and its programs. While the logos and branding effort have yet to be finalized, you'll notice the logos lining the bottom of the pages of this newsletter as well as on the program-specific pages.

We at GVRA are always trying to improve and move forward, and feedback is a large part of that. If you see something on the website you like or would like changed, please let us know. Again, accessibility is key to what we do as an agency, so if you're having trouble accessing a feature of the website, the daily update or the monthly newsletter, please let us know as soon as possible so we can remedy the problem.

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VR Category A Reopened

ATLANTA - GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg announced today that the waitlist for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients whose disabilities fall under Category A, or those with the most significant disabilities, will open Oct. 1.

This is a significant announcement for GVRA, its partners and its clients. Prior to the decision to open Category A, the waitlist for new clients needing services had swelled to more than 3,000 in Category A alone.

These Category A clients have been deemed to have the most significant disabilities which limit both their functional capacities and thusly their employment possibilities. Now, after roughly a year since the category was

first closed, their wait is over.

Beginning Oct. 1, VR counselors will begin working their way through the waiting list.

“This is a big deal for the agency,” Schmiege said. “We’re in the business of helping people, and this is going to allow us to help more people find jobs and contribute to the Georgia economy.”

The agency was still in its infant stages when the initial decision to close Category A was made. Three months after the formation of the GVRA on July 1, 2012, the fiscal realities at the time came to light, necessitating the temporary category closure. The move to open Category A to those on the waitlist speaks both to the renewed financial stability of the program as well as to its unceasing desire to help clients with disabilities find work and contribute to the larger Georgia economy, VR Director Twyla Crump said.

“We are excited about opening PC A so we can get our clients to work,” Crump said. “Individuals with disabilities are a significant part of potential employees across the state, and they are a valuable resource in meeting the workforce needs in Georgia.”

About the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program

VR provides services to help eligible persons with disabilities prepare for, start, and maintain competitive employment, thus becoming productive and independent citizens in their communities. VR has 15 regional offices statewide, as well as more than 50 local offices with expert teams who work in the community and have in-depth knowledge of both the marketplace and the support services available. Customers are therefore able to benefit from opportunities tailored to their specific needs.

About the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA)

GVRA operates five integrated and interdependent statutory programs that share a primary goal - to help people with disabilities to become fully productive members of society by achieving independence and meaningful employment. The largest of the programs are Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, Disability Adjudication Services, and the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation. Two other unique programs serve consumers with visual impairments: the Business Enterprise Program and Georgia Industries for the Blind. To learn more about GVRA and its efforts to maximize employment opportunities and independence for Georgians with disabilities, visit www.gvra.georgia.gov.

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Human Resources Hosts Training

GVRA Human Resources recently conducted a training seminar on employee relations. It covered the issues of progressive discipline and how best to work through employee issues or problems. In the pictures below, Travis Salley, Employee Relations Manager, discusses the ins and outs of employee relations.

Human Resources will host further training in October at a yet-to-be-determined time and place.

Upcoming Board Meetings

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

GEORGIA VOCATIONAL

REHABILITATION

SERVICES BOARD

JULY 2013 – MAY 2014

BOARD MEETING CALENDAR

TIME: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

October 9, 2013

November 13, 2013

January 8, 2014

March 12, 2014

May 14, 2014

*Additional meetings may be scheduled as the fiscal year progresses. Please contact GVRA Communications and Government Relations with Board meeting inquiries at (404) 232-1788. Thank you.