

# Joy

On giving it  
and receiving it

**able**georgia™  
Dec. 2016

*“If everyone is moving forward  
together*

*then success takes care of itself.”*

*~ Henry Ford*



## *Moving Forward with Grace*

By Executive Director Sean T. Casey



The year is almost over, and the holidays are in full swing. Many of us are traditionally extremely busy this time of year, booked with parties, shopping and celebrations with family, friends and colleagues.

In the midst of the rush of the season, there's also value in taking time to reflect. We think about what we've learned, both from each other and about ourselves, and evaluate how we've changed. Change is hard, but it is also necessary for progress and personal growth. And progress doesn't happen in a vacuum. We need each other for that.

As this organization grows in its mission and we focus on ways to serve more people to the absolute best of our ability, let's pause this season to recognize how blessed we all are. I am particularly thankful for your warm welcome as I have begun this journey with you serving Georgians with disabilities. While we are in a place of transition, we have a bright future ahead, and it holds many

possibilities for innovative ways to lift our peers up to vibrant careers and living independence. Just knowing that we are together on this path, moving forward with grace, brings me joy, and I hope it does you as well.

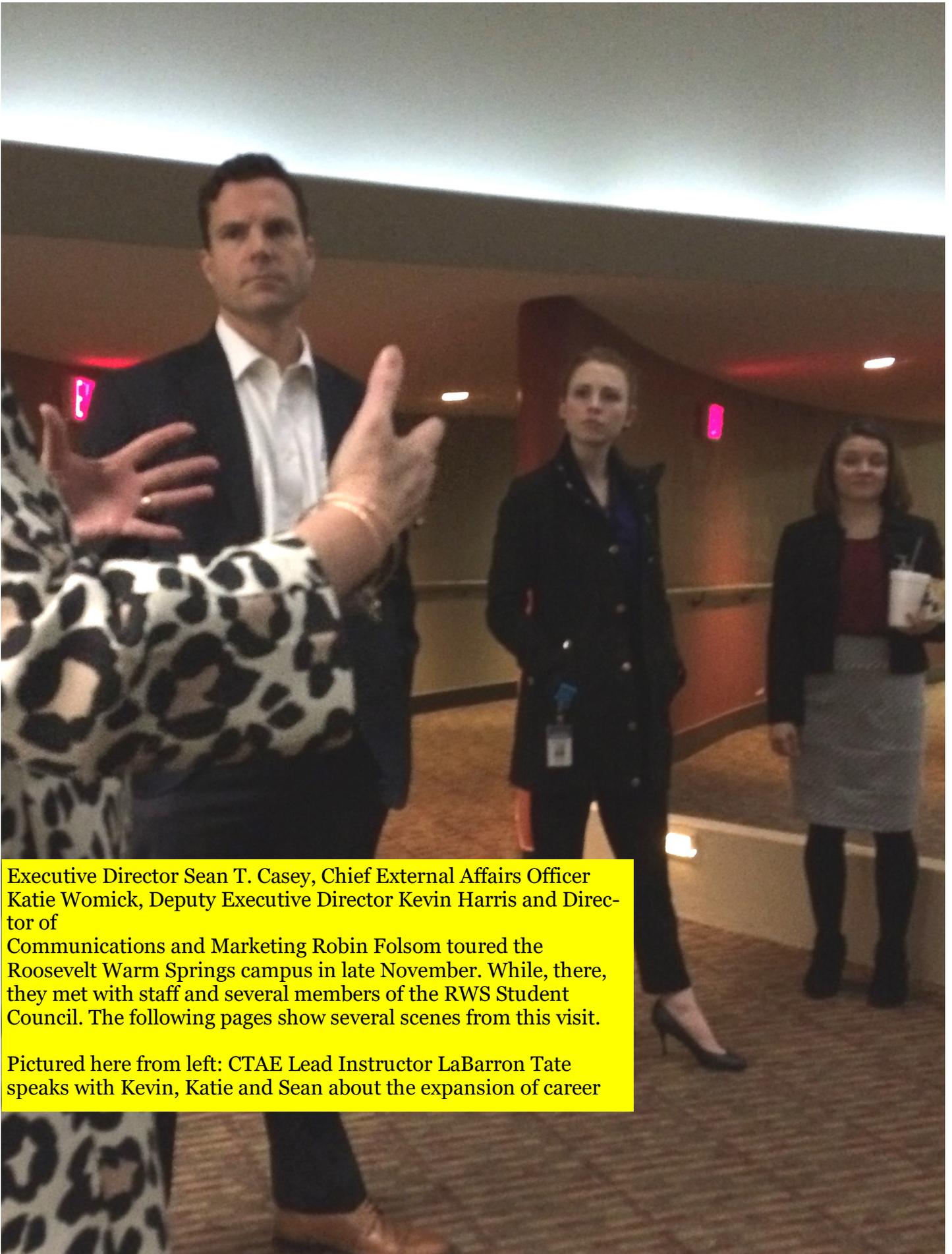
And so this season, regardless of where you'll be celebrating, remember to allow joy into your life. Take pleasure in time spent with family, friends, and your work family too. You have already given me so much through your contributions here, and they do not go unnoticed nor unappreciated.

Merry Christmas to you and yours.

Sean T. Casey

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. T. Casey".

Executive Director



Executive Director Sean T. Casey, Chief External Affairs Officer Katie Womick, Deputy Executive Director Kevin Harris and Director of Communications and Marketing Robin Folsom toured the Roosevelt Warm Springs campus in late November. While, there, they met with staff and several members of the RWS Student Council. The following pages show several scenes from this visit.

Pictured here from left: CTAE Lead Instructor LaBarron Tate speaks with Kevin, Katie and Sean about the expansion of career







**RULES OF THE CLASSROOM**

1. We will listen to others in class when they speak.
2. We will take care of our equipment, and not use anything unless we are given permission.
3. We will put away all technology unless directed to use it in the classroom.
4. We will respect others in our classroom.
5. We will participate in class as directed by the teacher.

# *A Posthumous Award*

## Carrie Wilcox Remembered at RWS



The Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) community was saddened by the loss of Residential Advisor Carrie Wilcox on Sept. 27.

In just a few short years, Carrie made an irreplaceable mark on the lives of the many students served through the Residential Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In this program, Carrie taught classes in leadership and citizenship, coordinated the activities of the student council and organized numerous recreational events.

In recognition of her many contributions to Roosevelt Warm Springs, the staff and students conferred posthumously the November Employee of the Month Award to her during a student assembly on Nov 9.

Among the activities for which Wilcox was best known was her establishment of the student book club. The assembly also included a ceremony in which the book club was renamed the "CW Book Club" in her honor.

"Carrie Wilcox's death was a tremendous loss to our program, but her sudden passing reminded us all of the potential positive impact that we can have each and every day on students at Roosevelt Warm Springs," said Dr. Lee Brinkley Bryan, Senior Manager at RWS. "Carrie was here first and foremost for the students and her commitment to them never wavered. The way in which the students have honored Carrie since her death has been a testament to the bond that she formed with the them and her positive impact on their development as young adults."

Several members of Carrie's family attended the student assembly including her mother Marcella Stapleton, her uncle Gene Wiseman, her aunt Jenny Wiseman and her cousins Heather Scarbrough and Kolby Scarbrough.

Her friend Michelle Payne also attended. The assembly concluded with a quiet walk from Roosevelt Hall to Lake Dream. At the dock, Heather Scarbrough spoke briefly about Wilcox's love for the students, and Carrie's supervisor Mitchell Sanders spoke about how she always went above and beyond her expected duties whenever she saw a need. A dozen purple balloons were then released over the water.

"When I hear the statement, the 'Spirit of Warm Springs,' Carrie Wilcox is who I think about. She was always willing to talk with, assist or support any student that may need it," Mitchell said. "I now understand how much Carrie did for our students and staff members on a daily basics. She made it all seem easy. She will truly be missed by all she came in contact with."

A native of Ashland, Kentucky, Wilcox had a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Trevecca Nazarene University and a Master's degree in Counseling and Psychology from Marshall University.

Before accepting her position at Warm Springs, she worked for the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services in Glynn County. She entered the Georgia District Nazarene Clergy Development Program in 2008 and received her ministry license the following year. Consequently, she was able to fill in for Roosevelt Warm Springs Chaplain Thomas Hines at Roosevelt Memorial Chapel when he was ill and presided over his memorial service in 2013 along with Rev. Gene Wiseman and Rev. Heather Scarbrough.

After completing her ministerial training in March 2013, Wilcox was ordained an elder in the Church of the Nazarene. At the time of her death, she was serving as associate pastor of counseling and educational ministries at Harmony Church of the Nazarene in Woodbury, Georgia.



RWS students released 12 purple balloons in honor of staff member Carrie Wilcox who passed away in late September. She will be remembered embodying the “spirit of Warm Springs.”

# *E3 Expands*

## The program adds the Georgia Academy for the Blind



By Andrea Honaker for the Macon Telegraph

Students at the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon recently let their career ambitions fly, as they released balloons bearing labels with their job interests. The launch Nov. 10 celebrated a new program that aims to help them find their place in the working world.

GVRA has partnered with the Macon school to provide enhanced transition services for the E3 (Explore, Engage, Employ) pilot program, which comes from a U.S. Department of Education Career Pathways grant. Three other states also received the grant funding.

Georgia Academy for the Blind, along with the Georgia School for the Deaf and Atlanta Area School for the Deaf in the same district, and four other districts across the state were invited to participate in the five-year initiative and accepted, said Lauri Tuten, Assistant Director of Transition Services.

The first year of the program was for development, and the second and current year started the school implementation stage.

The program will provide students ages 14 to 24 with the education, resources and training to get a job in the community. Georgia Academy for the Blind has about 70 students in middle and high school that the program will reach, school Superintendent Cindy Gibson said.

An E3 workplace learning site and app will be developed so students can stay engaged both on and off campus, said Shelley Kraft, a career pathway specialist for the organization.

GVRA is working on ways to make the site accessible to students with significant visual disabilities.

They will be able to go through career assessments and virtual job training online in a variety of fields, Tuten said.

Faculty members and job specialists teach students work skills in the classroom as well. For example, the school hosts three-hour “Ready for the World” job skills classes on Fridays, with a different theme every month, said Katherine Edger, a certified rehabilitation counselor for the academy.

After students have discovered their career interests, the school can help place them in internships and job shadowing opportunities that could lead to full-time employment, Gibson said.

The idea is for everyone to get real-world job experience while they’re still in school, and to also increase the high school completion rate.

“It’s our job to find what work matches the right person and to train the person for it,” Gibson said. “If you let a child grow up and not look into careers and not give serious thought and get some serious experiences, then of course they don’t know what they want to do. The point is to take every person to their potential.”

While only five districts in Georgia are now participating in E3, GVRA plans to eventually provide the transition services across the state.

The pilot program will help determine how the program is delivered in the future.

# Seen at RWS



*“We rule with the heart of a servant,  
but we serve with the heart of a king.”*



## *Working for You*



### How the Customer Care Unit can be a staff resource

As the organization continues to take a proactive approach to ensuring clients receive the best services possible, the division formerly known as Constituent Services will now be called the Customer Care Unit.

While it's often seen as a one-way street in that it reports issues with counselors without providing support to those counselors, in reality, that couldn't be further from the truth.

While the unit does handle client issues and concerns, that's a very small part of what they do. The vast majority of the calls they take consists of pointing people in the right direction and explaining how the VR process works. In simple terms, they get many phone calls from people wanting to know what the organization does and how it's done.

The unit also fields calls from people who don't need GVRA services, and staff will refer them to another agency or organization that can help them.

As it stands, there are four Customer Care Specialists, formerly known as Constituent Advocates, who answer the 844-FOR-GVRA phone number.

In addition to receiving phone calls, the unit also fields inquiries that are sent through an online form in which constituents can briefly state what they need help or assistance. Regardless of where it comes from, all client information is then logged in Client

Relationship Management (CRM) software, Salesforce. Salesforce allows the unit to collect data in order to identify improvements in processes that may need to be addressed as time goes by.

Good data, after all, can drive policy and shore up outdated or underutilized service techniques.

When a person calls or submits an online inquiry to express concern on a certain matter a case is created in Salesforce and then the software sends notice to the Field Services Director, Rehabilitation Unit Manager and the counselor.

Usually, the manager of the office will forward the case to counselor of the client and the counselor and/or manager responds to the case and that response is then logged in Salesforce, at which point—from the perspective of the Customer Care Unit—the case is closed.

Of course, some cases are not that simple, but this outlines the protocol that is followed.

And perhaps the most underutilized aspect of the unit is that they exist to be a resource to staff as well as clients. Internal customer service is just as important as its external counterpart, and if staff ever need help with anything (a phone number, identifying relevant agency personnel etc.) he or she should absolutely reach out to the unit.

# Save the Date

## *Calendar of Events*

Don't miss out on these upcoming opportunities!

### December

#### **GVRS Board Meeting**

December 14

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

995 Roswell St NE

Marietta, GA 30060

#### **Roosevelt Warm Springs Graduation**

December 15

1 p.m.

6135 Roosevelt Highway

Warm Springs, GA 31830

### January

#### **Georgia Winter Institute 2017**

Jan. 22-25

Columbus Convention and Trade Center

Columbus, GA 31901

### February

#### **Georgia Hall Society Ball**

Feb. 25

6135 Roosevelt Highway

Warm Springs, GA 31830



Executive Director Casey is in the process of visiting local offices and meeting staff from around the state. Above, Sean is pictured with staff of the Waycross office, and below that he is pictured with Thomasville staff. In the bottom picture he is pictured with Valdosta staff.



# Recent Promotions



## Executive Director Announces New Promotions

I am pleased to announce several promotions that will help advance our ability to serve clients and build productive relationships with our statewide partners. These team members have a combined 55 years of VR experience.

### **Kevin Harris – Deputy Executive Director of GVRA**

Kevin has served GVRA since shortly after the organization obtained independence from the Georgia Department of Labor, most recently as Chief External Affairs Officer. In his years of dedicated employment, he has represented the interests of Georgians with disabilities at the state legislature and proved instrumental in developing concrete relationships with boards, councils and other stakeholders. A man of integrity, he will honor the mission of this organization in his new role, helping to oversee agency-wide operations and continuing to foster strong connections for the betterment of our clients' lives and careers. Kevin is a native Georgian and has extensive political experience, including a leadership position in a U.S. presidential campaign. He also taught at the college level for 17 years. Kevin lives in Blue Ridge with his wife and children.

[Read the full release here.](#)

### **Minerva Nixon – Chief Financial Officer**

Minerva has spent more than seven years in public service and more than 24 years in the financial service and budget field, managing multi-million dollar budgets and accounts. Prior to joining GVRA, she was a Grant Financial Manager with the Georgia Department of Human Services, handling accounting for federal, state and special projects totaling more than \$1.2 billion in financial awards. She was an assistant controller for a private corporation with more

than \$60 million in annual sales, a financial management consultant for travel management firm, the director of financial planning for Atlanta Independent Schools, and the plant controller for Cooper Automotive grossing \$61 million in annual sales. Minerva lives in Austell, has two daughters, and a dog named Coco.

[Read the full release here.](#)

### **Katie Womick – Chief External Affairs Officer**

Katie recently joined GVRA as Deputy Chief External Affairs Officer after several years in the administration of Governor Nathan Deal, where she served as a Policy and Legislative Affairs Coordinator. She also held a role on the Georgia Children's Cabinet, working with First Lady Sandra Deal and state agency leaders to identify state strategic priorities in child welfare and juvenile justice issues. Katie understands the importance of creating lasting relationships under the Golden Dome and beyond and is a true servant leader. She has the wisdom, energy and strategic vision to set priorities and develop a solid agenda for External Affairs. Katie is from Roswell and currently lives in Atlanta.

[Read the full release here.](#)

### **Ken Hise – Director of Employment Services**

Ken brings to his position 45 years of VR and business experience. In his newly-created role within the client management program, he will lead staff who help connect clients to employers and develop relationships within the business community. Ken's sense of ingenuity and innovation plus his strong relationships within the system of local offices will serve us well as we equip customers with the tools needed to transition into the workforce. He filled the roles of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Regional Unit

Manager and Field Services Director for the East Quadrant, and owned his own successful flooring business. He maintains a current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Certificate. Ken has three children with his wife of 50 years.

[Read the full release here.](#)

*Note: Ken Hise and his Employment Services Team will lead business relations efforts previously handled by Business Development. Deputy Executive Director Kevin Harris will temporarily oversee Georgia Industries for the Blind. Luis Narimatsu and Mike Jackson will continue to serve as Co-Directors at GIB. The Business Enterprise Program and its Director Charlie Garrett will be moved under Raj Gandy's Strategy and Innovation Team.*

**Dr. Lee Brinkley Bryan – Director of Residential Services for Roosevelt Warm Springs/Cave Spring**

Lee brings to the position 35 years of experience in vocational rehabilitation and evaluation, program development, extensive time behind the podium as an educator, as well as experience providing rehabilitation services in the private rehabilitation sector. September marked five years with this organization in a leadership position at Roosevelt Warm Springs. She is a Certified Vocational Evaluator and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. In Lee's new role, her duties expand to include oversight of all residential services across Roosevelt Warm Springs and Cave Spring Center, leading staff and supporting clients across both campuses. She lives in Warm Springs with her husband, Ed.

[Read the full release here.](#)

**Robin Folsom – Director of Communications and Marketing**

Robin joined GVRA in February 2016 in a newly created marketing role with the goal of providing information and career resources to as many Georgians as possible. Under her

oversight, the organization established a strategic marketing plan, began multimedia advertising and developed promotions for the new Able Georgia brand. Robin has spent twenty years in government outreach, campaign management, workforce and economic development and television news. She currently lives in Midtown, Atlanta.

**Dale Arnold – Chief Client Management Officer**

Dale is a 28-year veteran of service to state government and has spent 19 years with GVRA. His prior positions include Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Unit Manager, Policy Appeals Advisor, Regional Director, Director of Operations and Field Services Director and Transition Services Director. He currently holds an active Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certificate. Under Dale's leadership, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency was awarded \$4.7 million dollars by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to fund the E3: Explore, Engage, Employ program, which now includes seven school districts. He and his wife, Leslie, currently live in Harlem, Georgia. Their family includes their son, Ky, and daughter-in-law Jessie, and their daughter, Chandler.

[Read the full release here.](#)

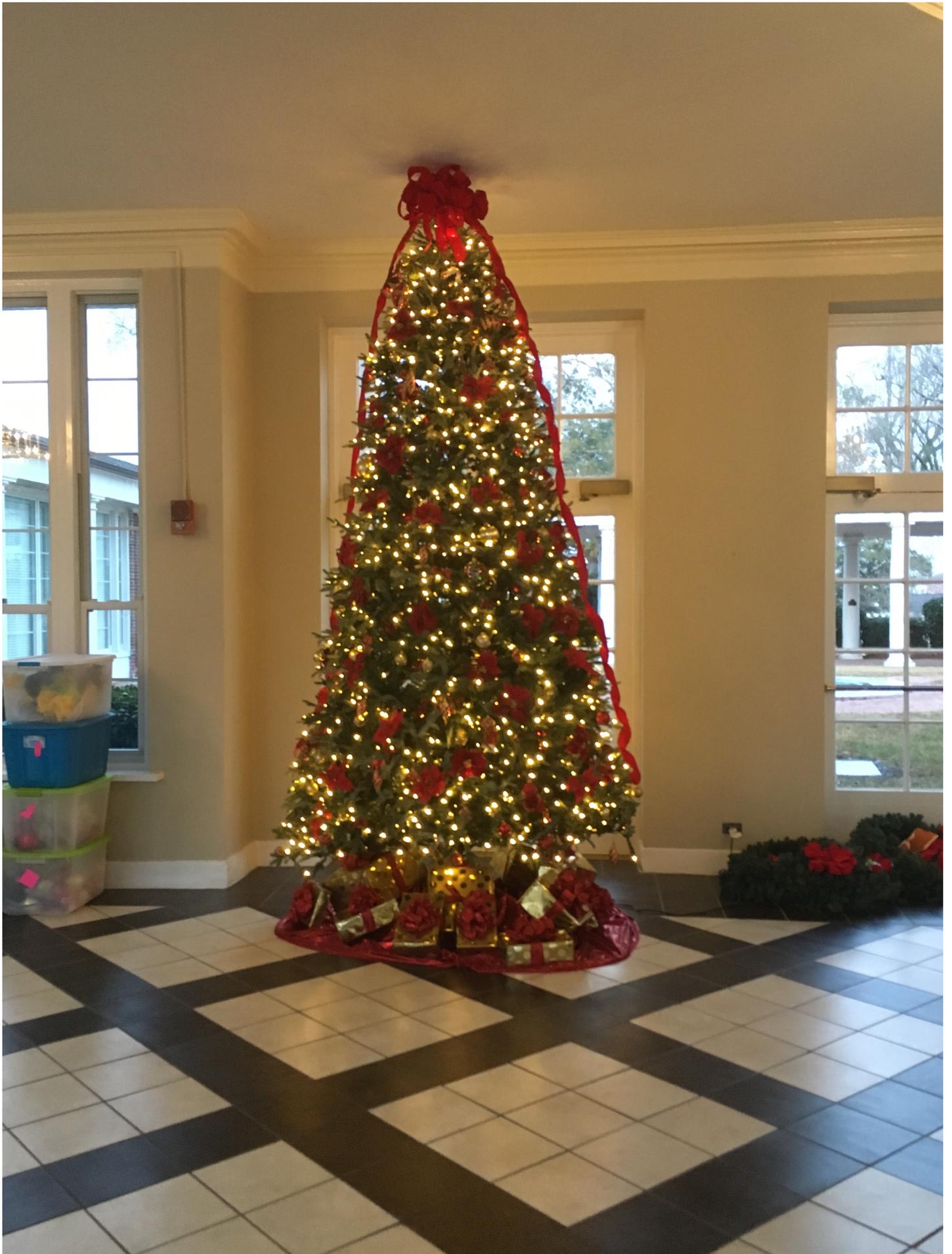
I want to take a moment to thank all GVRA team members for their dedication to the clients and the mission. Your focus on what matters and willingness to go the extra mile does not go unnoticed nor unappreciated. Thank you for your commitment to the good work we're doing together.

Sean T. Casey

Executive Director



**"A focus of this organization is... We want to make sure you have the skill sets to climb as high as you want. If you want to be a VP of marketing or a partner at a law firm, you can do it." - Executive Director Sean T. Casey**



*Success is not final,  
failure is not fatal;  
It is the courage to continue  
that counts.”*

## *About this publication*

It's your newsletter, and we want to hear from you.

Written by Communications Coordinator John Boan

Thanks again for taking the time to read this newsletter. It's one of many vehicles we have to make our agency as open to the public and as transparent as possible. It's also a great opportunity for the organization to show the progress it's making and to showcase some of the inspiring men and women we serve who are succeeding in careers around the state.

That said, this isn't an internally-facing document, and like everything else this agency—and namely, the External Affairs Department—does, it in part belong to you, the taxpayer.

So here's what I ask of you: think about what you'd like to see in future editions. Think

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about you like that you've seen in past editions and would like more of, and perhaps most importantly, think about what we do that you'd like to learn more about.

I'll be the first to admit that the VR process is complicated, and my goal is to ensure that any Georgian who wants to know something about our organization has the tools to do so.

If you ever need anything from me or anyone else in the organization, don't hesitate to ask. We are but public servants.

Until next month,  
JPB

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Springs**