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HORIZONS

SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT



Lowder



Evatt



Baum



Presha

The South Carolina Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation has a new chairman and three new board members. See story, page 4.

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SCVRD wins Silver Achiever Award

SCVRD's focus on continuous improvement and exceptional customer service gained statewide recognition in September when the South Carolina Quality Forum named the department as a Governor's Quality Award Silver Achiever winner.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Department is only the fourth state agency to be honored among the 35 winners since 1995. These prestigious awards typically go to private business and industry. A Bronze Achiever last year, Dana Corporation's WIX Filtration Division in Dillon is the recipient of the Governor's Quality Award this year.

Gov. Jim Hodges will present the awards Oct. 29 at the forum's conference in Columbia.

The awards recognize organizations for their implementation of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. The Baldrige criteria track an organization's effectiveness and improvement methods by charting seven categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management and business results.

For many years the department has led its counterparts nationally in productivity and cost-effectiveness. However, seven years ago SCVRD's leadership recognized that to build on that success through continuous improvement would require a much sharper focus on customer service excellence.

"We adopted the theme 'Making the Best Better,'" said P. Charles LaRosa Jr., SCVRD commissioner. "It was time for a thorough self-examination to determine what needed to be done to give our state's people with disabilities the very best chance to succeed in the workplace."



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Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

Around VR...

Berkeley-Dorchester

Career Planning and Employment and Job Placement services were the focus for an Open House on April 26. The Dorchester Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) staff attended an in-service VR training on July 19. Sandy Townsend addressed the Goose Creek Rotary Club on Sept. 18 and Tom Jackman of Rehabilitation Technology joined her on Sept. 19 for a presentation to the Summerville Rotary Club.

The Fruits of Labor Celebration on Oct. 11 spotlighted Rehabilitation Technology.

Columbia

Jennifer Unekis participated in a health fair for the S.C. Department of Health and Human Services on May 1. Jennifer and Gena Atkinson attended a community resource breakfast May 9 at Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Sheila Arnold gave a presentation on VR case management services to the Master's Rehab Counseling Program Case Management Class at the University of South Carolina on July 30.

Sheila also gave a presentation on stress management to the Midlands Regional Council of the S.C. Society for Respiratory Care on Aug. 14.

Conway

Jewel Anderson and Sally Daniel gave a presentation to the Conway Lioness Club on July 9 and Sally addressed the Georgetown Hospital Rehabilitation Services staff on July 10.

Alton Bryant from the

Georgetown Office staffed a "Health Awareness Day" health fair and wellness walk on July 14.

Sally and Pat Gilliard of the Kingstree office gave a presentation to the Children's Rehabilitative Services Waccamaw District staff on Aug. 16.

Maya Lenyou of the Brain Injury Alliance of South Carolina gave a special presentation Aug. 24 to Conway area staff.

Greenville

The Greenville area office held a breakfast and "job fair" on June 20 for local employers to introduce them to VR and our clients. Leading the tours of the work training center were placement consultant Lewis Stewart and CPE team members Julie Saifullah, Shannon Caldwell, Libba Shelton and Gary Jones.

Staff members attended two job fairs sponsored by *The Greenville News* and a number of Business After Hours events sponsored by the Greenville Chamber of Commerce during May and June.

Linda Looper and Kathleen Brady visited the New Horizons Community Health Center on July 11 to explain vocational rehabilitation and facilitate an efficient referral and billing process.

Lancaster

Lancaster staffers attended a job fair involving Lancaster, Andrew Jackson and Indian Land high schools in April. Staff members also gave presentations in May and June to the DayBreak Rotary

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'Caring, commitment' turn life around

Jeff Voitel was only trying to be a nice guy that May afternoon in 1996.

It changed his life forever.

Voitel, then an engineering student at Greenville Tech, was pulling into a grocery store parking lot when a camera fell off the cab of a pickup truck that was pulling out. Voitel stopped to pick it up, hoping to catch its owner.

The camera was in the street, right next to the curb. As he picked it up and began to straighten up, a car that had crossed three lanes to make a right turn struck him. Voitel was thrown 60 feet, coming down head first into the windshield of the car that hit him.

His right leg was broken in three places, his head, neck and shoulder were injured and the ligaments and muscles around his right elbow were torn, exposing the joint.

Fortunately for Voitel, paramedics and other emergency personnel were just across the street because of a bomb threat that turned out to be false. They saved his life.

Voitel, who had spent 11 years in the Air Force as an aircraft technician, was working toward an engineering degree so he could go into research and development for F-22 fighter jets.

His injuries shattered that dream.

To compound matters, he had no health insurance, which put his education in jeopardy. He had little to rely on but his determination.

Two months out of the hospital, he went back to school in a

wheelchair. The hospital had agreed to sponsor a good portion of his medical bills, but he needed help in other ways.

He found out about vocational rehabilitation from calling around, looking for assistance. He made an appointment at SCVRD's Greenville area office.

"I thought they would work on the premise 'what we feel you need to do,'" Voitel said. "Instead they said 'what do you want to do?' They listened to what I wanted to do.

"They gave me the encouragement to keep on—that was the turning point," he said.

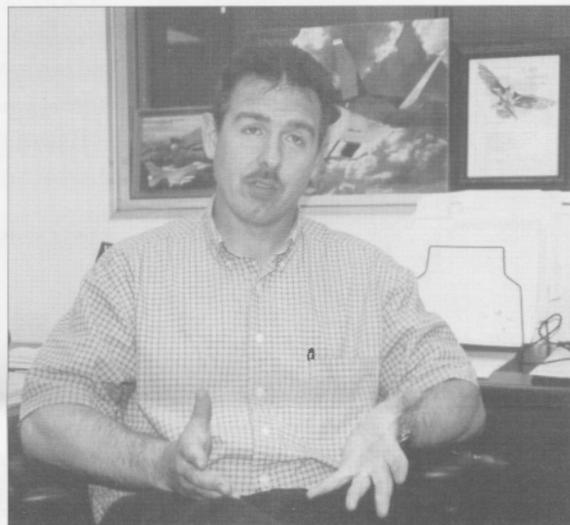
With tuition and transportation assistance from SCVRD, Voitel graduated from the University of South Carolina—Spartanburg in 1998 with a business management degree.

Nathaniel Simmons, Voitel's counselor, said they talked a lot about job searching and how to go about it, but Voitel found a job on his own. When nearby Lockheed Martin advertised a position for someone with background experience in F-16 aircraft and business, Voitel was a perfect fit.

He's had two promotions since then and is now a logistics analyst, providing "after-market" support to Lockheed's international customers if they have trouble with their planes.

His experience with SCVRD was very positive, he said.

"Even after I completed my college education and found a good job at Lockheed Martin, I still received calls from Nathaniel Simmons to check on my progress," he said. "This shows that S.C. Voc Rehab is concerned



Jeff Voitel talks about the future

about the person and not just the process.

"Voc Rehab followed through the entire rehab process with a sense of caring and commitment."

Lockheed also has been extremely supportive and understanding about his situation, he said.

Although the job is going well and Voitel walks without a limp, he's in constant pain from his elbow, which needs an intricate, expensive operation that can't be done locally. He's trying to work through the insurance restrictions and find funding to pay for it.

New chairman, three new members give new look to agency board

Three new members began working with the department's governing board in August. Bernard Baum of Little River, Timothy Evatt of Pendleton and Rhonda Presha of Elgin were appointed to the State Agency of Vocational Rehabilitation by Gov. Jim Hodges.



Lowder

Roy Stone Jr., who served as chairman from 1967 until his death earlier this year.

Lowder, a public accountant, has served as vice president of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Association, as chairman of the Sumter VR Work Training Center board, and on the

Derle Lowder Sr. of Sumter, a board member since 1997, was elected chairman. He succeeds E.

Sumter County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

"Long before Derle became a board member he had a very thorough knowledge of the vocational rehabilitation program," said P. Charles LaRosa Jr., SCVRD commissioner. "He instills a lot of enthusiasm and is extremely dedicated to the agency mission."

Baum represents the 1st Congressional District on the board.



Baum

Investment Board.

Presha, representing the 2nd District, is senior training instruc-

He works in hotel sales and management for Strand Development Company in Myrtle Beach. He serves on the Waccamaw Workforce

tor for SCANA Services Inc. in Columbia. She is a Business Advisory Council member for the department's Computer Training Program.



Presha

Evatt is the attorney for the Anderson County Department of Social Services. A former Client of the Year for the



Evatt

Anderson area VR office, Evatt is active with the Anderson Mayor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and has been chairman of the Anderson County Disabilities and Special Needs Board.

Award

continued from page 1

The result was a re-engineered service delivery system that shifted the emphasis from "process" to "outcomes." The system puts the client at the center of a team-based program of vocational rehabilitation services geared specifically to provide the individual attention needed for the client to reach the best possible employment outcome.

"A lot of staff roles were redefined, and it wouldn't have

worked had our employees not embraced the idea of change," LaRosa said. "It worked also because our customers and staff had input in the planning process and continue to have input as the system is refined."

Last year 9,099 people with disabilities became successfully employed after receiving SCVRD services. The latest comparisons show that the department rehabilitates nearly three times as many people per capita as the national average among state vocational rehabilitation pro-

grams. SCVRD accomplishes this with an average cost per rehabilitation that is just over half the national average cost.

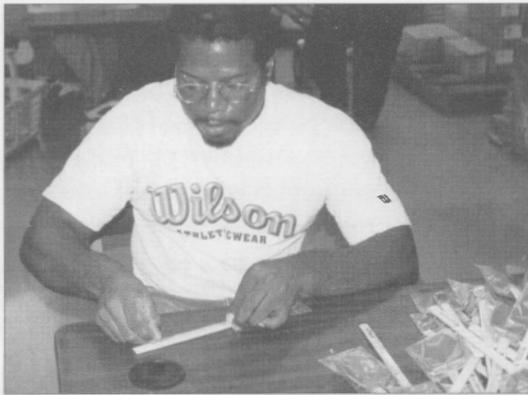
"We are truly honored to be recognized by the South Carolina Quality Forum," LaRosa said. "The process is quite challenging, from self-assessment right on through site visits by examiner teams.

"This experience will help us continue to improve as an agency and confirms our belief that excellence is a journey, not a destination."

Walterboro clients please Le Creuset

Keith Altman needed a little convincing before he agreed to send some contract work to SCVRD's Walterboro Work Training Center.

Today, four contracts later, he's a cheerleader for VR clients and their work.



Albert Siden replaces labels on spatulas

Altman is logistics director for the Le Creuset plant in Early Branch near Walterboro. Le Creuset makes cast-iron cookware and kitchen accessories.

Temporary help had been a problem for Altman before Kathy Shider, Walterboro VR center manager, and Richard Chapman, production coordinator, paid him a visit last year.

"It takes time to search out temporary labor," Altman said. "Most people are not motivated for a short term."

And then there were the training costs for people who weren't going to be there for long.

On the other hand, Le Creuset sells its products to a very broad customer base.

"We sell to mom and pop stores as well as Williams-Sonoma, Bloomingdales and Macy's," Altman said. "Everyone

wants exclusive packaging; everybody has their certain color," so it's very labor intensive.

And, he said, if there's an error in the packaging "it could cost us \$25 a box."

So when he decided to give clients at the Walterboro Work Training Center a chance, "I was very cautious at first," he said.

Clients at the center package Screwpull corkscrews and foil cutters, gift wrap boxed lever-model corkscrews and relabel heat-resistant spatulas.

About 12 clients a day work on the Le Creuset contract, Shider said.

Altman is willing to pay premium prices for

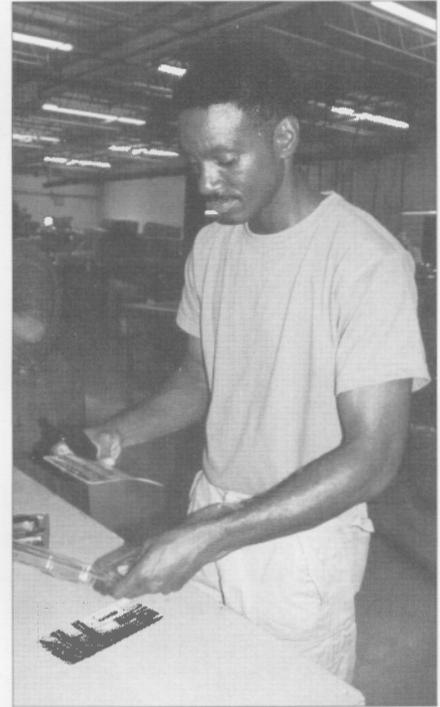
quality work, which benefits the clients, she added.

Altman is pleased with the results.

"I get [the merchandise] back in better shape than I send it over there," he said, noting that center personnel are always willing to make an extra effort when necessary.

Plus, "you can't beat the labor costs and the turnaround time."

"We have a



David Rhames packages corkscrews

good working relationship," Shider said. "And it has the potential to really grow."



Production coordinator Richard Chapman shows Margaret Stewart how the gift boxes are to be wrapped.

Our Agency

How do you make a comparison to an Agency that is already rated number one in America? You find something that is very similar and compare it. How about a tree?

A tree has many attributes:

- ◆ Its root system gives it a strong footing and foundation, very indicative of our Agency Board with its strong support of our system.
- ◆ Its strong trunk is its main support, just as our State Office provides strong leadership and support.
- ◆ Its limbs are the major part of the tree, very similar to our training centers and area offices that furnish us with many major elements of diversification.
- ◆ Its leaves and flowers add to its beauty, just like the employees who do such a wonderful job and make this agency look so good.

What a tree! Keep on growing Tree.

Derle Lowder Sr., Chairman
South Carolina State Agency
of Vocational Rehabilitation

Informed choice involves clients in rehabilitation

SCVRD clients are active participants in their rehabilitation, encouraged to research their options and make their wishes known.

Under the new "informed choice" policy, staff members provide clients with information and the client makes choices with the help of a counselor, with the help of someone outside the agency or alone.

Informed choice has always been informally in place at SCVRD, but recently it evolved from a concept to a policy.

The 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act mandated that clients not only take an active role in their rehabilitation, they must be provided with information to make informed choices.

Clients are given opportunities

to make informed choices at application, when their Individualized Plan for Employment is developed and at closure, said Kerry Mandeville, director of staff training and development.

"We're basically asking, 'what does this person want?'" Mandeville said. "And the upside of that is we can't rehabilitate clients by ourselves. The client has to be an active participant. So if the client has a vested interest, his rehabilitation is apt to go better."

Mandeville facilitated a KRA committee last year that developed methods to ensure that clients can take full advantage of their informed choice alternatives.

"Of course we can't extend choices that violate our policies and we can't provide things we're not mandated to do," Mandeville said.

"We're teachers; guiders."



Staff members assigned new duties

Commissioner P. Charles LaRosa Jr. has announced several staff changes:

Bob Oppermann has moved from Holmesview Center to assume the area supervisor's position in Anderson. He succeeds Danny Mize, who retired.

Assistant Commissioner **Pete Howell** has, for personal reasons, been reassigned to Holmesview as the project supervisor.

Assistant Commissioner

Lucerne Iseman will be responsible for Program Evaluation, Client Relations and Workforce Investment Act initiatives and the State Plan, as well as other assignments. She will continue to be responsible for the Center for Comprehensive Programs on the main campus.

Barbara Hollis will oversee Holmesview and Palmetto centers and off-campus Statewide Facilities, including MUSC,

Mental Health, Corrections, DJJ and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School. She will retain responsibility for the Ticket to Work and Pathways Toward Employment initiatives as well as involvement in Case Service policy.

Linda Lieser will be responsible for maintaining and reporting data to internal and external customers, a responsibility formerly managed by Howell.

Workshops explore significant disabilities

SCVRD has established a Significant Disabilities Institute to help staff members work with people with significant disabilities and strengthen the role of the Center for Comprehensive Programs.

Assistant Commissioner Lucerne Iseman, who coordinates the institute workshops, said the goal is to offer support for difficult cases along with some creative approaches to handling them.

Each institute follows roughly the same format, she said.

"First we deal with the disability issues and how they affect work, family and social issues," she said.

Then, experts are invited to discuss the disability from a medical and/or psychological standpoint and a panel made up of people with the disability or family members gives a first-hand perspective. The workshop wraps up with a discussion of VR services and resources available.

"We started with the Spinal Cord Institute because we knew it would be pretty popular and there were a lot of people [with spinal cord injuries] who were not being served," Iseman said.

She said the workshops are also an opportunity to familiarize field staff with facilities at the Comprehensive Center, including the Evaluation Center, the Muscular

Development Center, the Pain Management Program, Rehabilitation Technology, the Computer Training Program and the Barrier-Free Model Home.

The second institute was on Traumatic Brain Injury. It was done in collaboration with the S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, which has a grant to assist SCVRD with staff training.

The third, scheduled for late November or early December, will be for training center staff. Iseman said it will focus on several disabilities that are difficult to serve, especially in the training center, such as significant mental illness or TBI.

Around VR...

continued from page 2

Club, the Lunch Rotary Club and the Diabetic Education Center.

Oconee-Pickens

Linda Reece and Lillian Rochester participated in a health fair Aug. 7 sponsored by the City of Central Police. Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, and Sen. Thomas Alexander, R-Oconee, attended the fair.

Orangeburg

On July 26, the Orangeburg area office, with assistance from the work training center's advisory board, was host to the Orangeburg Chamber of Commerce's "Leadership Orangeburg" team training. Chamber leaders received a tour

of the work training center and heard a presentation by VR staff on services available to clients and the local business community. The Orangeburg County United Way held its monthly meeting in the Orangeburg office conference room, giving community leaders a chance to get acquainted with the program.

Spartanburg

Richard Cain, Janice Roberts, Jim Hawkins and Alva Young attended a May 16 seminar entitled "What's In It for My Company?" sponsored by the Spartanburg Mayor's Committee. The seminar targeted potential new employers.

Shealy Painter and Tina Stevens participated in the Community Health Awareness Day on June 2 at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church where they provided information

on VR services.

Bessie Black attended the Union One-Stop Career Center dedication on July 26.

Jim represented VR at a Community Fair at Westgate Mall on July 28.

Alva assisted in establishing a local Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group for the Spartanburg area. The first meeting was Aug. 7 at the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System.

Rehabilitation Technology

Kit Heinritz gave a job site accommodation presentation May 1 at an Americans with Disabilities Act workshop sponsored by the S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. Tom Jackman spoke to the Berkeley-Dorchester Rotary Club on Sept. 19 about assistive technology.

From the mailbox...

A client from Patrick B. Harris Hospital sent this to Elaine Childers:

I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your kindness. Also the kindness I've received from all the Voc Rehab staff. When you first met me I had given up on life. I now feel that life is a precious gift to be honored and enjoyed. ...You are a great example of people who really do care. I hope you like your job because you are great at it.

A client who went through the Evaluation Center wrote to thank supervisor Freda King and the recreation, PT, OT, MDR, PSA, VE, psych nurses, pool, nutrition and kitchen counselors, the irreplaceable Al, and all of the other clients who show great knowledge and

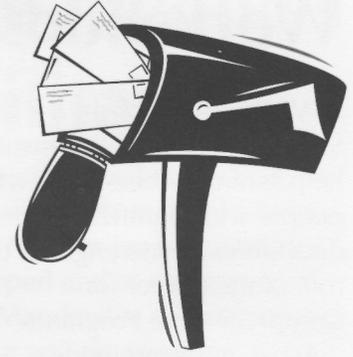
compassion. Unveiling each individual's abilities is not an easy task.

Every nuance is so well thought out and executed. Getting lessons on how to deal with pain and overcome obstacles, physical, mental, social and professional, are truly effective.

...Perhaps you will consider calling yourselves Voc Re-Fab, because you are all Fabulous!

Commissioner P. Charles LaRosa Jr. received this from Christy Baker, mother of former client Gary Little:

We are celebrating our ninth anniversary, Gary and I, and what a time it has been!! I was just reflecting back on these past nine years and thinking of all the things we have been through. The reason for this letter is to let



you know, one more time, how I know in my heart we would not have made it without Vocational Rehabilitation.

Each day I look at my son, I am so humbled by the counselors at Voc Rehab in Camden. There is no way to express my gratitude for the faithfulness of these people who strive so hard for the client's best interest, knowing success may not happen, but they keep trying and working so hard for the client.

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department reports that it printed 5,000 copies of this newsletter at a cost of \$316.07, or about \$.06 per copy.

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