Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
ANNUAL REPORT
2012

Education
Employment

Virginia Department for Aging
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
Our Mission
The mission of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and in collaboration with advocacy groups, consumers and their families, is to ensure that Virginians with disabilities receive quality services while seeking to achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

Our Vision
All Virginians with disabilities will have access to quality services leading to meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.
On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), it is my pleasure to share our 2012 Annual Report with you. This report informs the federal and state officials, as well as all Virginians, of the great work and accomplishments of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) vocational rehabilitation (VR) program.

The theme of this year’s report is Postsecondary Education. This includes completion of programs after high school, i.e., trade schools, community colleges and/or two-year or four-year colleges and universities. With the completion of these programs, VR consumers can become employed in a chosen career based on their knowledge, ability, skills and interests. As data in this report show, completion of postsecondary education and training can lead to competitive employment at a higher salary. This is the goal of DARS’ VR program.

The SRC continues to support the VR program and advocate for Virginians with disabilities to become employed and to live independently in their communities. The SRC and DARS share a collaborative relationship. I would like to recognize the work of the SRC and the commitment the members have in working to ensure quality services for Virginians with disabilities.

I have truly enjoyed the opportunity to serve as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Sandra A. Cook

“ar would like to recognize the work of the SRC and the commitment the members have in working to ensure quality services for Virginians with disabilities.”

SRC Chair Award

Three council members were honored by Chair Sandra Cook (center), from left, Matthew Deans, Karen Gregory-Williams and Anthony Lineberry.
MESSAGE FROM DARS COMMISSIONER JIM ROTHROCK

In prior SRC annual reports, we have featured stories on our successful clients and partnerships that allow us to be successful in meeting our mission.

Project SEARCH, supported employment and assistive technology are some of the themes that we have highlighted in past reports.

This year we are sharing stories on some of our clients who have found work after being prepared through postsecondary education experiences. Whether going through one of our Commonwealth’s exceptional colleges or universities, community colleges or business or trade schools, DARS clients have met the grade and are now experiencing exciting and rewarding careers.

Each of these members of our Commonwealth’s workforce demonstrates that Virginians with disabilities can reach high levels of both responsibility and earning capacity. In fact, when these individuals make their mark, we at DARS are able to approach their employers and expand our partnering to offer other candidates from our caseloads who can also be contributors. As in most enterprises, our clients are our most effective marketing tool.

Thanks to all of our staff, partners and schools that train and educate our clients—preparing them to become models of success.

James A. Rothrock

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) was created by legislation signed in 2012 by Gov. McDonnell to take the programmatic units of the former Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and the Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA) and create a new entity with a wider menu of service options. In 2013, the adult services units from Virginia’s Department of Social Services will become part of DARS.

Teena Carter hugs Commissioner Rothrock at the WWRC June graduation. Read more about her achievements on p. 16 of the 2012 Annual Report.

“DARS clients have met the grade and are now experiencing exciting and rewarding careers.”
The Virginia State Rehabilitation Council was established in 1992 to provide advice to and work in partnership with DARS to enhance services to the agency’s many programs including Vocational Rehabilitation. The SRC’s federal and state mandated responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the effective delivery of services to eligible Virginians with disabilities and reviewing and analyzing the performance of the VR program.
- Working in partnership with DARS to set goals and priorities, report on program effectiveness, provide advice on policies, measure consumer satisfaction and assess the needs of Virginians with disabilities.
- Providing an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the VR program.

SRC MEMBERSHIP

SRC members are appointed by the Governor. The membership reflects a representation of individuals with disabilities and disability advocacy groups; current and former consumers of vocational rehabilitation; representatives of business and industry; education; and Employment Services Organizations. Members serve on the Virginia Workforce Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Virginia Assistive Technology Advisory Council.

Visit us online at www.va-src.org
Elizabeth Alcazar-Zepeda did not let her deafness stop her from achieving her goals of attending college and securing a successful career in accounting.

While a student at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind in Staunton, Elizabeth worked with DARS for transition planning and services. The agency provided Elizabeth and her family with guidance and counseling for college admissions and assisted her in applying for financial aid, scholarships and grants. In fall 2005, Elizabeth entered Gallaudet University in Washington, majoring in accounting.

“There were very great people at DARS who helped support my attendance at Gallaudet University,” says Elizabeth.

At Gallaudet, Elizabeth was involved in a student organization, Keeping the Promise of Educating Latino Students. While raising a daughter, she maintained high academic standards, earning recognition as a President’s Cum Laude Scholar, an honor reserved for undergraduate students whose cumulative degree grade point averages are 3.4 or above for the preceding semesters and who have earned at least 15 degree credits at Gallaudet, as well as Outstanding Academic Achievement for Summa Cum Laude. In 2011, she graduated at the top of her class.

Elizabeth credits much of her job search success to her collaborative efforts with her rehabilitation counselor. “She provided consistent support, direction and encouragement along the way. All of the experiences combined assisted in my effort to master the skills needed to ace my job interviews,” says Elizabeth.

Elizabeth obtained a paid internship in the Gallaudet Department of Business Interpreting Service, commuting every work day from home while continuing to meet with her counselor and other DARS staff to work toward securing a full time position with benefits. During this time, Elizabeth says, “I learned networking was my best friend.”

In June, she was interviewed and offered a job as an accounting assistant with Deaf-REACH (also known as the National Health Care Foundation for the Deaf), in Washington. “I love my job and I am enjoying the challenges involved. I am eager to learn more.”
• Attended the annual Champions of Disability Employment awards ceremony to recognize companies that excel in hiring VR consumers and the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center Life Skills and Vocational Training Service graduation program.

• Hosted the Region III SRC Learning Community meeting in Richmond, sponsored by the George Washington University (GWU) Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center. The meeting was attended by SRC chairs, vice chairs and liaisons from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania.

• Members of the External Affairs Committee served on the Steering Committee to develop the agency’s Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

• Assisted in conducting an orientation program for newly appointed SRC members.

• Through the Internal Affairs Committee, entered into a new Memorandum of Agreement with the agency for the administration of the VR consumer satisfaction survey and reviewed and approved the annual consumer satisfaction survey report.

• Held their annual planning retreat facilitated by GWU TACE, which included a presentation by council member and VR counselor Matthew Deans on a “day in the life” of a VR counselor.

• Communicated support to the Governor for his legislation to create a new state agency to include DRS, the Virginia Department for Aging and the adult protective services division of the Department for Social Services, helping to ensure that the legislation did not affect the integrity of the VR program.

• Through the Internal Affairs Committee, reviewed and approved VR policy changes concerning the VR consumer appeals process and notification of avenues of appeal requirements.

• Presented the annual SRC Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Award to three deserving agency employees.

• Attended the Independent Living Conference on May 1-3, 2012 and sponsored an informational exhibit table with the Statewide Independent Living Council.
• SRC Chair Sandra Cook emailed the 2011 SRC Annual Report along with a personal note to all members of the General Assembly to inform them about the SRC and the accomplishments of the VR program. Other SRC members also shared the report with their respective legislators.

• Chair Sandra Cook attended the SRC leadership training and meeting of the National Coalition of SRCs in Bethesda, Md.

• SRC member Cheryl Johnson provided the SRC with an educational program on the history of The Arc and services provided by The Arc of Northern Virginia.

• Four public hearings were held to receive public input for the development of the 2013 State Plan for VR and Supported Employment and SRC members participated in these hearings.

• Through the Internal Affairs Committee, reviewed drafts of the 2013 State Plan attachments: Attachment 4.2(c), Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Attachment 4.11(c), Goals and Priorities; and Attachment 4.11(d), States’ Strategies. A motion to approve the attachments as amended by the committee was made and unanimously passed.

• Chair Sandra Cook presented the 2012 SRC Chairperson’s Leadership Recognition Award to Toney Lineberry, Karen Gregory-Williams and Matthew Deans. Sandra Cook and Sarah Liddle received certificates in recognition of their years of service on the SRC.

• SRC Chair Sandra Cook and Vice Chair Toney Lineberry attended the DARS Board and Council Leadership Summit in June 2012 to learn about the responsibilities of the different boards and councils.
SRC RECOMMENDATIONS

At the SRC’s annual retreat in November, the members received information about the performance of the VR program during FFY 2012. Information shared with the members included the successes, challenges and trends during the past year. Based on this information, the SRC made the following recommendations to the department:

1. Continue to support more visible coordination between VR and independent living programs in providing services for Virginians with disabilities.

2. Continue to work to expand outreach to and meet needs of people with disabilities from different cultural backgrounds and those with limited English proficiency.

3. Project SEARCH is recognized as an outstanding program to assist youth in achieving successful employment. Therefore, the Council continues to support the efforts of the agency to expand the Project SEARCH program across Virginia with continued collaboration with the Department of Education.

4. The Council is pleased with the continued improvement in the competitive employment rate achieved by the Department’s VR consumers and supports the goal to continue to increase this rate, particularly in geographic areas where the rate has been traditionally lower than the state average.

5. The Council supports the agency’s efforts to enhance consumer involvement in their VR program. The need for enhanced consumer involvement has been documented in the consumer satisfaction survey over the years. Therefore, the SRC recommends that the agency continue with these efforts and evaluate their effectiveness.

6. The Council is impressed with the agency’s efforts to better understand and make use of client data and trending in management of the VR program. With strategic decision making, the Council hopes that the agency will be able to once again open the Most Significantly Disabled priority category under Order of Selection in the coming months.

7. The Council supports the agency’s plan to conduct systemic evaluations of certain service provision areas to assist in strategic planning about these programs, most notably the vocational evaluation, Self-Employment Enterprise and rehabilitation technology/assistive technology service areas. The Council looks forward to being apprised of the results of these evaluations.
In June, the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council announced the Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Recognition Awards for outstanding service and contribution to the field of vocational rehabilitation and the disability community.

The award honors DARS vocational rehabilitation staff who distinguish themselves by the quality of service they provide their clients as well as their contributions to advance the employment and independence of people with disabilities. Recipients provide leadership to local, state or national organizations and bring expertise to community or agency-based initiatives that enhance vocational rehabilitation services and develop future leaders in the field.

The award is named after Roy J. Ward, a longtime leader in the disability community, former member of the SRC and former board chair for the then Department for Rehabilitative Services. He passed away in October 2011.

The 2012 recipients are:

John “Jack” Ballurio, lead counselor in Fishersville. For nearly four decades, Ballurio has been on the front lines as a rehabilitation counselor. He has received numerous accolades for helping citizens with disabilities find employment and improve the quality of their lives. In 2001, he was named Counselor of the Year by the Virginia Rehabilitative Counseling Association.

Robin Sexauer, rehabilitation counselor in the Eastern Shore office. Counselors in this small office must serve many different roles and Sexauer lives up to the challenge. She recently developed a new job placement database for Eastern Shore clients and worked to secure job leads for the NASA Wallops Flight Facility.

She also is an active leader in community activities.

Karen Kahn, program support technician senior in Chesterfield. She is known for her technical savvy and eagerness for professional growth. Kahn established two job clubs—one for youth and one for adults—and has worked in programs with ex-offenders. She also organized for clients a Learner’s Permit Preparation class that has been replicated across the state. She is known for going above and beyond the call of duty, including becoming a notary public so she can help notarize necessary paperwork for clients.
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Vocational Rehabilitation services are provided to assist Virginians with disabilities to reach their desired employment goal. Eligible individuals with disabilities work in partnership with a VR counselor and other Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) staff and service providers. Services may include assessment, vocational evaluation, counseling and guidance, restoration, training, job development, assistive technology and supported employment. Mutually determined services and service providers are developed into an Individualized Plan for Employment to achieve a vocational goal and meaningful employment in accordance with the personal needs and objectives of each individual.

2012 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

VR Outcomes

DRS operated under an Order of Selection in Federal Fiscal Year 2012 because there were not sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals. Therefore, new applicants who were determined eligible for services were placed on a waiting list according to disability categories. At the conclusion of FFY 2012, there were 1,580 individuals on the waiting list.

A total of 28,889 consumers were served in FFY 2012, which was a slight decrease from the previous year. Of those served, 78 percent were most significantly disabled (three or more serious functional limitations) and required multiple services over an extended period of time.

Other program highlights include:

- 5,090 Individualized Plans for Employment were written.
- 2,726 consumers became employed after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.
- 95.8 percent of these consumers were employed in a competitive job.
- The average hourly earnings were $10.22, an increase from $9.75 from last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Categories FFY12</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supported Employment Services</td>
<td>$9,369,267.66</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training including Tuition</td>
<td>$1,851,027.84</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Therapeutic</td>
<td>$638,362.32</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel, Travel and Transportation</td>
<td>$627,649.48</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-medical Supplies and Services</td>
<td>$598,491.17</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance - Room and Board</td>
<td>$512,454.87</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable Medical Equipment</td>
<td>$349,769.82</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendant Care and PAS Payment</td>
<td>$345,360.85</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications - home, vehicle and rehabilitation engineering</td>
<td>$333,070.96</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Services</td>
<td>$330,024.25</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostics</td>
<td>$120,211.71</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Incentive Services</td>
<td>$67,930.60</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employment</td>
<td>$47,686.60</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services to Family Members</td>
<td>$41,647.97</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Services</td>
<td>$18,901.12</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$15,251,857.22</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DRS’ consumer satisfaction survey captures data for vocational rehabilitation consumers who were served through DRS and closed with or without an employment outcome. The survey provides a systematic method of learning the point of view of DRS consumers. Participants provide their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding services, staff and various aspects of the VR process.

While consumer satisfaction for DRS has remained fairly consistent for the prior eight federal fiscal years, the division experienced a decrease in satisfaction for FFY 2011. This decrease was due primarily to consumers without an employment outcome. Consumers with employment outcomes continued to report high satisfaction (above 90 percent) on most survey questions. Highlights for consumers served are provided below:

- Overall satisfaction was 77 percent, five percentage points below the agency target of 82 percent. The prior eight-year average for overall satisfaction was 81 percent.
- Of the consumers whose cases were closed with competitive employment, 83 percent expressed satisfaction with their jobs.
- Consumers’ perception of their relationship with their VR counselor was high despite a downward trend from FFY 2010. Eighty-five percent of consumers felt their counselors did not rush them and clearly explained services available to them. Satisfaction ranged between 78 and 82 percent for meeting to discuss timetables, having knowledge of available programs in the community, and taking the case seriously.
- Satisfaction with the consumer’s involvement in developing the Employment Plan was 73 percent and satisfaction with the time it took to develop the Employment Plan was 71 percent.
- DRS continued to receive high ratings from consumers regarding their perception of how they were treated by staff (90 percent), their willingness to refer a friend to DRS (83 percent) and their willingness to come back to DRS (81 percent).
- Satisfaction with receiving the information they needed was 79 percent and somewhat higher than consumers’ perception of receiving the services they needed (75 percent) and benefiting from the services they received (74 percent).

### Impairments Served in 2012

- Cognitive/Other Mental Impairments: 8%
- Psychosocial Impairments: 5%
- Orthopedic, Neurological, mobility/dexterity: 10%
- Physical, Respiratory, Fatigue: 27%
- Deaf/Hearing Impairments (includes deaf-blind): 48%
- Communicative Impairments Expressive/Receptive: 5%
- Blind/Vision Impairments: 1%

Consumers with employment outcomes continue to report high satisfaction with the VR process.
This year’s annual report highlights the value of post-secondary education or training for VR consumers to help them develop the knowledge, skills and credentials they need to achieve a successful career and enhanced independence. Postsecondary education or training may be attendance at a public or private college or university or at a private vocational institution. DARS’ Division of Rehabilitative Services provides a number of coordinated services to assist consumers in obtaining postsecondary education. These services may include financial assistance with tuition and fees, room and board, textbook and supplies. Additional services may be vocational guidance and counseling, assistive technology, transportation, personal assistance services and interaction with the educational institution to ensure that the consumer receives any necessary accommodations to assist in overcoming barriers imposed by individual disabilities. Not every consumer receives the same services, as they are based on the specific needs of each individual.

To assist in delivering postsecondary education services, DARS’ Division of Rehabilitative Services maintains cooperative agreements with the Virginia Community College System and with individual Virginia colleges and universities. These agreements address the provision and payment for vocational rehabilitation goods and services for enrolled students with disabilities who are also served by DARS, and they ensure that all parties work together to benefit students with disabilities.

The consumers featured in this year’s report illustrate the outstanding success that may be achieved for those who seek to further their education and training following high school. Each of these consumers is an outstanding example of commitment, perseverance and the desire to attain their personal employment goal with the assistance of postsecondary training.

Postsecondary education may be a lengthy service spanning many years. Therefore, many of the 2,018 individuals are still receiving services and are not yet ready for employment.

### Facts at a Glance on Postsecondary Education

- 2,018 (7%) of the 28,889 consumers served during FFY 2012 received some form of postsecondary education or training at some point during their vocational rehabilitation.

- 335 of the 2,018 consumers became successfully employed, with 97% being competitively employed.

- The average hourly earnings for 2012 was $11.31.

- The average cost per case for those receiving postsecondary services and who became employed was $9,482.
Damon Anderson’s interest in physics and computer science had him reaching for the stars in pursuing postsecondary education and a related career.

When he is determined, he works hard and “doesn’t mess around,” he says. As Damon, who has muscular dystrophy, transitioned from high school to college, he worked with DARS to explore his options for higher education. After considering Virginia Tech, University of Virginia and University of Richmond, he decided to attend the University of Mary Washington. At UMW, he majored in computer science and physics and made the Dean’s List for two semesters.

The University of Mary Washington was very accommodating and responsive to his wheelchair accessibility and mobility needs, Damon says. The school refurbished the bathroom in his dorm and made sure entry into classrooms, elevators and other buildings were suitable.

Through the ACCESS program (Achieving Competence in Computing, Engineering, and Space Science) conducted by NASA in partnership with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Damon completed an internship at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in August 2007 and received a Certificate of Achievement.

During the program he worked on an X-ray polarimeter, using the results to study the internal structure of astronomical objects such as black holes. Damon enhanced a simulator for the instrument, to be used with the upcoming James Webb Space Telescope.

After graduating in 2010 in a tough economy, Damon worked with a job coach through DARS and widened his job pursuit to include information technology jobs. “For many years, my counselor and DARS have been there for me as I’ve tried to become more independent,” Damon remarks.

His grandmother, a teacher, put him in contact with a computer specialist whose company, Manus Dei, provides IT work for many Catholic schools and churches. Damon interviewed and was hired as a technology specialist at Manus Dei, working on computer servers and developing web pages. He telecommutes from home, where he lives with his grandmother.

In September, Damon took the driver evaluation at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and was recommended for adaptive driver training. He says he is determined to obtain his driver’s license and buy an accessible van so he can pursue greater opportunities in his career and life.
Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center is DARS’ comprehensive rehabilitation center located in Fishersville. The center provides medical and vocational rehabilitation services, all under one roof, to help people become independent and employed. The center’s vision is to become the preferred provider of comprehensive vocational rehabilitation for Virginians with disabilities. On any given day, more than 300 clients are on campus and every year WWRC serves approximately 3,000 rehabilitation clients.

Vocational training is facilitated through the Woodrow Wilson Center for Employment. Vocational training programs are designed to successfully prepare clients for employment, higher education, and/or other career development goals by maximizing their employment, occupational and self-sufficiency skills.

In addition to numerous vocational evaluation and transition services, WWRC offers seven training tracks:
- Auto Mechanics
- Building Trades
- Business and Information Technology
- External Training Option (Community-Based Training)
- Food Service
- Health Occupations
- Materials Handling

Clients also have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills by completing an internship near the end of their training program. The duration of each program varies and graduation ceremonies are held four times a year. In 2012, 228 students completed these programs. A Certificate of Attainment bearing the accreditation seal of the Council on Occupational Education was awarded to 193 graduates.

The center increased its Career Readiness Certificate programming this year. CRC is an assessment-based credential that measures key workplace skills in math, reading and locating information. Clients receive one-on-one instruction from a certified teacher in the CRC lab over a six-week period that concludes with an exam. Since its start in 2008, WWRC has issued CRCs to more than 400 clients, with 112 in 2012 (33 Bronze, 64 Silver and 15 Gold).

Number of DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers Served By WWRC Service Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FFY 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Evaluation (VE) Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE (Non-PERT*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERT Transition Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training - Fully Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills Transition Program (9 weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Rehab Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Medical Rehab Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program

Notes:
- Some individuals may be served by more than one service area.
- Vocational Evaluation has three classifications of clients:
  - clients referred to as “adults” (or non-PERT)
  - PERT clients
  - PERT clients attending a three-day Transition Academy.
Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center Highlights

Teena Carter's Vocational Success

Teena Carter came to WWRC with multiple obstacles to employment having been unable to keep a job. She says that she lacked the confidence and skills necessary to reach her goal of working and lived with family members for support. While at WWRC, she completed the Life Skills Transition Program and Vocational Training in Health Occupations, which prepared her to successfully obtain her state license as a Certified Nursing Assistant. She also received medical therapy and driver's education training at WWRC and obtained her driver's license.

Teena is now employed as a full-time CNA at Spring Arbor Residential Assisted Living and Alzheimer Dementia Care of Leesburg. She lives on her own and has a newfound confidence and employment skills that support her independence.

Teena's supervisor at Spring Arbor said, “She is a great employee and the center obviously did a good job of preparing her to become a CNA.”

The WWRC Life Skills Transition Program was named the recipient of the Commissioner’s Award for Rehabilitation Excellence at the State Rehabilitation Council’s awards luncheon in June. Teena Carter, one of WWRC’s standout LSTP graduates, accepted the award from Commissioner Rothrock and is pictured with Roy Nelson, LSTP Coordinator, and Mike Kelley, director of WWRC Residential Services.
The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services honored eight recipients by presenting them with the annual Disability Employment Champions awards on Oct. 17. Approximately 132 employers, agency partners and DARS employees attended the event. Read more about the Champions awards.

The statewide Disability Employment Champions award recipients are:

- **Busch Gardens**, Williamsburg
- **CW Resources** at Fort Lee Commissary
- **Carilion Clinic**, Roanoke
- **The Home Depot**, Ashburn
- **T.J.Maxx**, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg and Staunton stores
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **Christopher Coleman**, owner of Performance Pet Care Inc., Reston
- **William Francis Vineyard**, Colorado Award winner, Charlottesville

**Self-Employment Enterprise Award**

**Christopher Coleman**

Christopher Coleman received the Self-Employment Enterprise Award for achieving success starting a business, Performance Pet Care, part of his larger company, The Performance Group, in Reston, Va. Coleman’s long-term goal is to re-establish himself as a motivational speaker and trainer, a business he had conducted successfully for more than 20 years prior to experiencing a series of disability-related setbacks.

**DARS Colorado Award**

**William Francis Vineyard**

In addition to the Champions awards to employers, the DARS Colorado Award was presented to William Francis Vineyard, a former client now employed as deputy code official and plans examiner for the City of Charlottesville. The Colorado award honors DARS clients who have maximized their employment opportunities, independence and full inclusion into society. The award was created in memory of Aileen Colorado, a long-time agency employee and former client.
“If it hadn’t been for the help of DARS, I wouldn’t have been able to go to college,” proclaims Matt Shelor. Matt first met with a rehabilitation counselor at DARS while in high school. She suggested he attend Patrick Henry Community College to “get his feet wet” in a more challenging environment. He then applied to Radford University, where he received a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s in counseling and human development.

As an undergraduate student, Matt was active in student government and was elected student body president in 2008. “That experience taught me the value of human service and gave me the drive and motivation to pursue my master’s degree.”

As a graduate student, Matt had two graduate assistantships—one in the Office of the Dean of Students and the other in the Disability Resource Office. He was required to complete 600 hours of internships. After graduate school, Matt worked with his vocational counselor to update his resume and participated in mock job interviews to prepare to enter the workforce.

He gives much of the credit for his educational success to his rehabilitation counselor. “She played a big role in helping me get my goals in line.”

He originally sought a job involving student affairs or administration in higher education. He responded to a posting for a position as an independent living coordinator at the Blue Ridge Independent Living Center and was hired in January 2012.

Now he works with others who face similar challenges. Matt often hears clients say, “I don’t know if I can do this.” He tells them that when he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth, the doctor told his parents he would be lucky to walk and talk. He says, “Don’t let your circumstances dictate what you do in life.”

Matt’s job is to make the New River region accessible for people with disabilities. He may make house calls to see what home modifications are needed, get approval and schedule contractors.

He also serves as a work incentive specialist to help individuals who are ready to work, but need to learn how it will impact their disability benefits. He shows them how their situation will improve when they go to work.
The State Rehabilitation Council seeks your input to help improve services to Virginians with disabilities

Contact Us

Call:
Voice: (800) 552-5019 toll free | (804) 662-7000
TTY: (800) 464-9950 toll free | (804) 662-9040
Fax: (804) 662-9532

Write:
Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Henrico, VA 23229

Email: dars@dars.virginia.gov

Online: www.va-src.org

Attend a Meeting or Public Hearing:
The State Rehabilitation Council meetings and public hearings are open to the public. SRC meetings are held in January, March, May, August and November. The public hearings generally are held in February and March. The meeting locations, dates and times are posted on the SRC website at www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2, on the DARS website at www.vadrs.org/events.aspx and on the Commonwealth Calendar at www.virginia.gov/connect/commonwealth-calendar.

Apply for Membership:
If you are interested in becoming a member of the SRC, you may obtain an application form by calling the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office at (804) 786-2441 or online at www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/StateGovernment/Appointments/appointments.cfm.