



VIRGINIA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

Rose Williams

2007 Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership

For more information on the
Virginia Board for People with Disabilities,
its Community Service Awards,
and other activities,

visit

WWW.VABOARD.ORG

Mission Statement

To enrich the lives of Virginians with disabilities by providing a **VOICE** for their concerns.

Vision of communities that welcome people with disabilities
Outreach to individuals, families, and advocates
Innovation through grant projects and sponsored programs
Collaboration with providers of disability services
Education of policymakers on disability issues

About the Board

Created in 1985 by the General Assembly, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities serves as the state's Developmental Disabilities Planning Council under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the state Virginians with Disabilities Act. Since 1992, the Board has been an executive branch agency within the Secretariat of Health and Human Resources.



The Governor appoints 31 of the Board's 40 members, who represent specific constituencies such as individuals with disabilities, their families, and various professions. The remaining nine members represent key state agencies engaged in providing disability services. Principal funding for the Board's activities, including its Community Services Awards, is provided by the Administration for Developmental Disabilities, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Board advises the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, legislators, and other constituent groups on issues related to people with disabilities in Virginia. It also engages in advocacy, outreach, systems and needs assessment, education and training, technical assistance, barrier elimination, system design/redesign, coalition development, support of citizen participation, and the demonstration of new and innovative approaches to the delivery of community-based services.



Collectively, the Board's capacity-building and system-change activities contribute to a coordinated, comprehensive, consumer—and family-centered and directed system of services and supports that enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, be productive, and be integrated and included in all facets of community life.



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

BACKGROUND

In 2004, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities voted to annually acknowledge a self-advocate who demonstrates excellence in leadership with the Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership.

The four stars on the award logo represent *Independence, Productivity, Inclusion, and Self-Determination*—the four values of leadership and qualities exemplified by Jackie Crews, a Partners in Policymaking graduate who passed away in April 2004. Those values are also the cornerstones of Partners in Policymaking, a nationwide advocacy and leadership training program for adults with developmental disabilities and parents of children with developmental disabilities.

The Board is honored to recognize Jackie Crews by naming this award after her and is excited to acknowledge excellence in leadership among self-advocates who work to create a better Virginia for all Virginians. Recipients of the Jackie Crews Award receive a \$1000 stipend as a part of their award.

ELIGIBILITY

- ❖ Nominee must be a person with a Developmental Disability and be willing to self-disclose that disability,
- ❖ Must be over the age of 18,
- ❖ Must be nominated by someone or self-nominated, and
- ❖ Must have three references/letters of support.
- ❖ The accomplishments, achievements, or service on which the nomination is based must have occurred during the past twelve month period defined by the award and
- ❖ Must have been performed on a volunteer or advocacy basis, without pay.

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Nominee complies with/meets eligibility criteria.
2. Nominee demonstrates Excellence in Leadership and promotes the values of independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination.
3. Nominee's leadership actions have benefited others and/or his or her community.
4. Nominee's leadership inspires others and demonstrates the responsibility, empowerment and influence self-advocates possess to create real lives full of hope and opportunity.

Nominations for the Jackie Crews Award are accepted during September and October each year. The panel responsible for selecting the award recipient is comprised of alumni of the Virginia Board's Partners in Policymaking program.

"I very much believe that God created us all equal and no one person or persons should be excluded. We are all human beings and we should all be considered with respect and human decency whether we are on the job, in school, at church, or gathered together at a public place."

Jackie Crews



Who was Jackie Crews?

Jackie Crews was a committed advocate on behalf of full inclusion in society for all individuals, especially those who, like her, had or have disabilities.

Jackie was born in 1959 in North Carolina. After finishing high school and dropping out of college, Jackie moved to Richmond, where she lived the last 23 years of her life in a nursing home. Shortly after moving to the nursing home, she became a tenacious, effective advocate on behalf of all the facility's residents on a variety of issues.

In 2002, Jackie was accepted to participate in Partners in Policymaking, a program sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities that trains adults with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities in advocacy techniques, systems change, and disability issues. Immediately, she made a deep impression with her grace and style. Her articulate framing of the importance of inclusion for individuals with disabilities led to her eloquent testimony before Virginia state legislators and a profile in a documentary on the Partners in Policymaking program, which aired in January 2005 in most major media markets around Virginia.

Jackie had Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a condition similar to muscular dystrophy. This condition required her to use a wheelchair to get around and made her dependent on close medical monitoring for her survival. Jackie came to desire a life in her own home in the community, even as she acknowledged the kindness and friendship of most of the staff and fellow residents at her nursing home.

She never realized her dream of leaving the nursing home, but through her work as a self-advocate, she initiated changes and inspired others who will realize her dream. On the morning of March 15, 2004, she passed away after a brief illness. The Jackie Crews Award is awarded annually as a tribute to her willingness to confront both her own physical limitations and those of the community around her.



Rose Williams

Poet, Community Leader,
and Advocate for People with Disabilities

Recipient of the 2007 Jackie Crews
Award for Excellence in Leadership



Born in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1950 with athetoid cerebral palsy, Rose Williams has never let her disability stand in her way. From the very beginning, her family set an example for achievement and advocacy encouraging her to try everything and fighting to ensure that she would attend school in regular classrooms with full access to the general curriculum. She graduated from high school overcoming physical accessibility and other barriers and obtained a drivers license operating her own car without special modifications. After first volunteering to prove her abilities, she worked at the University of Virginia Medical Center for eighteen years. Along the way, Rose purchased her own home, has served on many volunteer boards, and is an active leader in her church's outreach and pastoral activities.

In 1994, Rose enrolled in college to study computer science, creative writing, and public speaking, then began a new career as a writer and motivational speaker. She enjoys art and photography, participates in community recreation activities, and teaches poetry workshops. In 2000, she joined with others in her community to found the Charlottesville and Albemarle County district of VSA arts. Her poems have appeared in all seven VSA collections of writings by individuals with disabilities and their caregivers. In 2005, she published her first book, *Strike a Pose Rose*, and is currently working on a memoir entitled *A Rose By Any Other Name*. The Charlottesville Parks and Recreation Department recognized her as one of five disability advocates to have their portraits publicly displayed as a part of its "Ability Series" in 2006. In 2005, she became a participant in the Ms. Wheelchair Virginia competition and was third runner-up in 2007.

After two falls and other serious health complications, Rose became completely dependent on a wheelchair for mobility in 2001. In early 2007, after realizing that wheelchair users such as herself could not address the Charlottesville City Council from the microphones provided for public speakers, she successfully spearheaded accessibility changes to the Council Chamber. Rose worked with city planners for several months to have a barrier half-wall removed and an automatic door to the Council Chamber installed. Later that spring, Rose again worked with city planners to have automatic doors installed at Charlottesville's recently opened Downtown Transit Station, which also serves as the city's Visitors Center. She now serves as a member of the county's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory Board.

Rose is described by those who nominated and recommended her as "quiet, gentle, well tempered, insistent for architectural improvements and barrier removals in the City of Charlottesville." She is commended for her "ability to challenge and change the public mindset about persons with disabilities in a positive way."



Acclamations from colleagues and friends for **Rose Williams**, recipient of the 2007 Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

“Rose’s actions in 2007 further chronicle her lifetime of seeing changes that need to be made for our town to allow everyone independence and inclusion and her doing something about them...not just for [her]—but for everyone who has a disability that makes access and independence difficult. Rose’s work makes Charlottesville/Albemarle a place to be proud to live, and a place to be proud we know Rose M. Williams who works quietly everyday of her life to make it so!”

Mary T. Miller
Co-Chair
VSA arts of Charlottesville & Albemarle

“What I admire most is [Rose’s] gentle spirit to advocate for change through kindness and love to everyone she meets on a daily basis in spite of her own daily challenges.”

Mildred W. Spicer
Therapeutic Recreation Supervisor
Charlottesville Department of Recreation & Parks

“My husband and I truly admire someone like Rose who opens the minds of the community to the possibilities of [people with disabilities]. We are all part of the same community and learn from each other. We are truly appreciative of Rose and her accomplishments. She is a clear example of excellence in leadership.”

Jeanie P. Arnold
Former Teaching Assistant for Albemarle County Schools,
Community Volunteer, and Friend

“Rose...has taken a leadership role in all the activities that [VSA arts] has pursued. She has been able to do this because of her strong determination to overcome her disabilities...and become an independent productive individual...Her life is an excellent example of ‘Independence, Productivity, Inclusion, and Self-Determination.’”

Jean Osborne Wilhelm
Board Member
Piedmont Council of the Arts



Poetry of Rose Williams, Recipient of the 2007 Jackie Crews Award For Excellence In Leadership



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

Overdue Tip

Dear waitress
If you only knew
What I can do
you would give me that menu
I'm smart
And I can speak
So, please ask me,
"What would you like to eat?"
Dear waiter
Don't be shy
Just look me in the eye
And bring me a piece of apple pie
Tell your peers
They need not fear
Nor shout in my ears
I can hear very clear
About my difference
Dear servers, let me explain
It's a problem with my muscles
Not my brain
Now that you know
I'm like the average Joe,
Next time you see me,
Just say, "Hello"
Take it from me
It's a sure bet
This is the best tip
You'll ever get

February, 2001



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Poetry of Rose Williams, Recipient of the 2007 Jackie Crews Award For Excellence In Leadership



Smile & Inspire

Smiling is something I naturally do
It brings me joy and encourages many
An open door to love and respect
An avenue to hope and inspiration
I love to see happy faces
Overcoming challenges and fear
By writing a poem, singing a song
Displaying art and being in a skit
Promoting artistic value, a highlight of my year
Lots of hugs and affection, fun and adoration
Talking, laughing and mentoring others
A natural talent with rewards unending
My passion and my heart
I love to smile & inspire

April, 2007

Poetry of Rose Williams, Recipient of the 2007 Jackie Crews Award For Excellence In Leadership



Things That Make Me Happy

Grandma's hugs
Playing together
Best friends
Telling jokes, laughing and smiling
Singing and dancing
Being with loving and caring friends
Music and computers
Playing catch with my dog
Bowling
Ice cream
Playing football with my brother
Fishing with my Dad
Spending time with Family
Being at Post High
And Grandpa's kisses

*A group poem composed with her students
at Albemarle Post High School*

JACK M. BRANDT

**Scholar, Artist, Community Leader,
Advocate for People with Disabilities, and
recipient of the 2006 Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership**



Recent James Madison University political science and philosophy graduate Jack Brandt has never let youth or his disability stand in his way, especially when it comes to advocacy for himself and others with disabilities. Despite a brain injury at birth and cerebral palsy, Jack has enthusiastically pursued education, achievement, and opportunities to help others.

An alumnus of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council's Partners in Policymaking advocacy and leadership program, Jack is an active board member at Valley Associates for Independent Living in Harrisonburg where he plays a vital role in establishing and advancing the agenda of its advocacy group and serves as a role model for others. At VAIL, he initiated a "get out the vote" campaign, issues action alerts on important issues, develops policy positions, and encourages others to become more active in the political process.

At JMU, Jack was recognized for his academic achievements, studied the impact of disability legislation on the formation of advocacy groups, and identified and developed grants for the university. As an American Association for People with Disabilities' Congressional Intern for U.S. Senator Michael Enzi of Wyoming, Jack analyzed new federal regulations that affect people with disabilities. At Jack's urging and with his assistance, the university restructured its lecture-based health policy course into a program of self-directed study, which became a regular offering during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Jack has petitioned the state and federal legislatures for policy changes expanding community supports, including full implementation of the U.S. Supreme Court's "Olmstead" decision calling for greater self-determination and opportunities for people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive environment. Turning his words into actions, Jack serves as a peer mentor and counselor at VAIL, helping to identify, encourage, and support individuals with a desire to transition to community-living settings.

During his tenure as a 2006 Governor's Fellow, working with the Office of Community Integration, Jack further distinguished himself as a scholar and advocate with broad knowledge and skills in local, state, and federal policy. He drafted a large portion of Virginia's annual community integration status report, analyzed the state budget for its impact on people with disabilities, and participated in the Governor's Hurricane Preparedness Task Force. Jack remains very active in state policy as a community volunteer and advocate, assisting in the development of Virginia's emergency response plans for people with disabilities and helping to draft Virginia's interagency "Money Follows the Person" proposal to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Jack has also found the time to develop his skills as an artist and use his artwork in his advocacy, encouraging others to fully develop their abilities and pursue their dreams. He takes advantage of frequent opportunities to address disability professionals and advocates across Virginia and the nation and has already won numerous awards for his dedication, enthusiasm, and achievements.



ED TURNER

**Counselor, Educator, Trainer, Writer,
and Advocate for People with Disabilities
Winner of the 2005 Jackie Crews
Excellence In Leadership Award**



Ed Turner with 2005 Virginia Board Chair, Sandy Hermann

The first annual Jackie Crews Excellence in Leadership Award was presented to Ed Turner at the New Voices "Our Lives, Our Vision" conference on October 6, 2005.

A native of Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore, Ed was educated in the era before laws guaranteed children with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education. Under those circumstances, secondary and post-secondary education was extremely challenging, but Ed persevered, and his experiences inspired him to live his life fully and independently and to become an example and mentor for others.

After completing his education, Ed joined the staff of the Endependence Center in Norfolk, one of Virginia's first centers for independent living, as a peer counselor, and launched his career as an out-spoken advocate and community leader for people with disabilities. With an interest in expanding the reach of his advocacy for individuals with disabilities to live and work independently in the community, Ed later joined the staff of the Board for the Rights of People with Disabilities (now the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities). Then, in collaboration with a colleague who also has a significant disability, he co-founded Connections Plus Consulting, to promote disability rights.

Elected as president of a statewide cross-disability coalition in the 1980s, Ed began to work as a trainer and writer on disability rights and as a public policy advisor, particularly in the area of employment. Since then, as a member of numerous statewide advisory and work groups, Ed has played a key role in helping individuals with disabilities exercise choice in where they live and in expanding opportunities for their employment. In his current position as a training associate with Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, Ed continues to expand opportunities for the employment of people with disabilities, specializing in workplace accommodations and the use of workplace personal assistants.



Aware of the importance of the participation and visibility of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, Ed has also been active in the political arena. His work with Governors Mark Warner and Tim Kaine on various public service and disability-related initiatives led to his appointment in 2006 as the Governor's Special Advisory on Disability Issues.



VIRGINIA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Outstanding Achievement Award

GOALS

In 2005, to fulfill specific goals stated in its federal Five Year State Plan, the Virginia Board established an annual Outstanding Achievement Award to:

- ❖ Recognize outstanding individuals or organizations that have provided exemplary service and support in collaboration with or on behalf of people with disabilities;
- ❖ Recognize new approaches and best practices in service for and relationships with people with disabilities;
- ❖ Increase knowledge, understanding, and support of people with disabilities;
- ❖ Increase and broaden awareness of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, its many partners, and their work; and
- ❖ Encourage others to join the Board's and the award recipient's efforts to improve the service system for people with disabilities through commitment, creativity, and innovation.

SELECTION CRITERIA

To be nominated for and receive the Outstanding Achievement Award, an individual or organization must have demonstrated achievements which have:

- ❖ Resulted in a better quality of life for individuals with disabilities;
- ❖ Improved performance or effectiveness of the disability services and support system;
- ❖ Overcome barriers and positively changed the status quo;
- ❖ Had lasting impact and permanently changed lives for the better; and
- ❖ Involved extraordinary effort above and beyond what is normally expected and required.

If the recipient is a disability services professional, these achievements must have been outside of his or her normal area of responsibility. If the recipient is an organization, these achievements must have involved significant service within Virginia.

These achievements may have been a single act of significance or an accumulation of good works. They may have had statewide or local impact.

If an individual, the recipient may be of any age and may or may not have disabilities his or herself, but if so, these achievements must have had impact beyond individual needs or interests. If self-nominated, the recipient's nomination must have received strong community support and endorsement.

Nominations for the Outstanding Achievement Award are accepted during September and October each year. A special Selection Committee of the Board reviews nominations and recommends a recipient who best meets the award criteria to the full Board for approval at its December quarterly meeting.

TECACCESS LLC

A Leader in IT Accessibility and Employment for People with Disabilities and recipient of the 2006 Outstanding Achievement Award

When her daughter, who has Down Syndrome, reached middle school, Debra Ruh realized just how limited job opportunities are for people with disabilities and decided to start a business that would focus instead on their abilities and increasing their access to employment. Applying her entrepreneurial drive to knowledge and experience gained from a long and successful career in information technology, Debra created TecAccess LLC, which has quickly grown to be an internationally recognized leader in the creation and testing of electronic and information technology accommodations and accessibility for people with disabilities.



A unique and fundamental part of TecAccess' mission and of its success has been the training and employment of a diverse and skilled professional workforce comprised of individuals with a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and other disabilities. Making up the majority of the TecAccess team, they bring the realism and practicality of their own daily experiences to the challenges of IT accessibility.

To best support and develop their abilities, TecAccess emphasizes flexibility and accommodation in the workplace and in employer-employee relationships. Work arrangements are as diverse and creative as the employees themselves, combining on-site work with "telework" as best meets the needs of the employee and the client.

As a result, the TecAccess workforce, its client base, and its reputation continue to grow. It has developed "Section 508" compliance guidelines used by the federal government and has advised and assisted with IT needs for public and private clients ranging from local nonprofit organizations to major corporations, state and federal agencies, the military, universities, and others. In addition, TecAccess has been asked to speak on Section 508 compliance, IT accessibility, and other technical and disability issues before the European Commission in Brussels and at other professional and public service gatherings all over the world.

TecAccess' latest innovative initiative, DVETs, supported by a discretionary grant from the Governor's Office, will provide IT training and guaranteed employment placement for veterans with disabilities, particularly those injured in the line of duty in the recent Middle East conflicts.

Through their business and advocacy activities, Debra and her colleagues strive to stimulate creativity and encourage others to expand opportunities for individuality, freedom, and autonomy.

Numerous awards as well as testimonials ranging from Virginia's senior Senator, John Warner, to federal and state agencies, to local and national business employers and IT providers, to local disability support and advocacy organizations testify to their success in achieving those goals.





MAX AND GARTH LARCEN

Max's Positive Vibe Café

Recipients of the 2005 Outstanding Achievement Award

In July, 2002, Garth Larcen and his son Max, who has muscular dystrophy, formed the nonprofit **Get Lost MD Foundation** and began assembling the support needed to open a restaurant fully accessible to individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities for job training and employment as well as for dining. To be successful, they needed to build a team of community volunteers, raise capital, design and equip an appropriate facility, recruit workers interested in food service careers, train them, and come up with a restaurant concept which would attract enough customers, in an extremely competitive market, to sustain both its dining operations and the training program.

Local restaurateurs and chefs volunteered to provide guidance and training. A local church offered its banquet kitchen as a training location until the restaurant could be built and equipped. State agencies, community and advocacy organizations, the area's center for independent living, and local schools referred potential trainees. Training began, and its first graduates began to find employment in other food service operations before the Larcens could even open their restaurant. Meanwhile, a campaign of creative fundraising activities began to assemble the capital needed to open the restaurant.

On January 15, 2005, **Max's Positive Vibe Café** opened in the Stratford Hills Shopping Center in Southside Richmond. Today, the Positive Vibe Café is a popular neighborhood restaurant that draws diners from far and wide. Its automatic door opens on a comfortable and attractive dining room subtly adapted to be accessible to everyone. Wheelchair users pass easily through wide aisles to booths with fold out tables or to a lowered bar. The décor is complimented by the work of artists with disabilities. Several nights a week, live entertainment is provided, sometimes featuring musicians with disabilities. Lunch and dinner menus feature critically-acclaimed fare emphasizing variety, fresh wholesome ingredients, rich flavors, and attractive presentation.

Training is provided in food preparation, customer service, and restaurant management with an emphasis on accommodating each individual's needs. Bartenders, servers, and entertainers include volunteers who work for tips and serve as role models for the trainees. Many of the Café's staff are graduates of its training program. Additional graduates find employment in other food service operations. A catering service—supported in-part by start-up funding approved by the Virginia General Assembly following their receipt of the 2005 Outstanding Achievement Award—is growing, and ways of expanding that operation and the additional training and employment opportunities it provides are being explored. Restaurant and catering revenues support the training programs, and the Café expects to be self-sufficient in just a few years.

Max's Positive Vibe Café has attracted attention and awards from groups engaged in expanding services and supports for people with disabilities as well as from hospitality industry organizations. Local media coverage led to national newspaper and television attention. Resulting inquiries about duplicating Max and Garth's training and employment model have come from across the country and as far away as New Zealand.

