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FOR IMMEDIATE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Virginia Board for People With Disabilities to Present 2007 Leadership Award to Charlottesville Advocate

On Tuesday, April 1, 2008, at 12:00noon, in the Charlottesville City Council Chamber, Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, will present the Board's **2007 Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership** to advocate and community leader **Rose Williams**. The Honorable Dave Norris, Mayor of Charlottesville, and Mary T. Miller, Co-Chair of VSA arts of Charlottesville and Albemarle, will join Ms. Lawyer in the presentation.

Colleagues described Ms. Williams in her nomination as "quiet, gentle, well tempered, insistent for architectural improvements and barrier removals in the City of Charlottesville." They further commended her "ability to challenge and change the public mindset about persons with disabilities in a positive way."

Born with athetoid cerebral palsy, Ms. Williams became dependent on use of a wheelchair for mobility in 2001 after two falls and other serious health complications. In 2007, after realizing that wheelchair users could not address the Charlottesville City Council from the microphones provided for public speakers, she successfully spearheaded accessibility changes to the Council Chamber. Later that year, she worked with city planners to have automatic doors installed at the new Transit Station and Visitors Center nearby on the downtown pedestrian mall.



These accomplishments were just the latest in a lifetime of personal and professional achievements and advocacy on her own behalf and for others with disabilities. In 2005, Ms. Williams 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, she teaches workshops to help others express their thoughts and dreams, and in 2005, she published her first book, *Strike a Pose Rose*.

Guests invited to attend the awards presentation include family and friends of Ms. Williams, members of the Virginia Board, senior officials from state and local government, state and local disability services providers, and representatives of support and advocacy groups. A reception will follow the presentation at Charlottesville Community Design Center's new CitySpace overlooking the downtown mall and, most fittingly, its "Freedom Wall" dedicated to the right and opportunity for all to be able to engage in public discourse. BreadWorks Bakery & Deli, a WorkSource Enterprises provider of job training and employment for persons with disabilities, will provide catering.

The Jackie Crews Award recognizes Virginia self-advocates who excel 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 graduate of the Virginia Board's Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program who passed away in April 2004.



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

Nominations for the award are solicited by the Board annually from across the state, must meet detailed eligibility standards, and must be strongly supported by their communities. Recipients are selected by a panel of PIP graduates. The award includes a \$1000 stipend.

Previous recipients include Jack Brandt of Harrisonburg in 2006 and Ed Turner of Richmond in 2005. Mr. Brandt, a community leader and policy analyst, served as a Governor's Fellow with the Office of Community Integration in 2006 and currently works with the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. Mr. Turner serves as Senior Advisor to the Governor for Disability Issues and is a trainer with Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities serves as the state's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Planning Council. DD Councils are in every state and territory of the United States. They work for the benefit of individuals with DD and their families, identifying needs and helping develop policies, programs, and services that will meet those needs in a manner that respects dignity and independence.

To learn more about the Virginia Board, its Community Service Awards, and their recipients, please visit www.vaboard.org or contact Tom Driscoll at thomas.driscoll@vbpd.virginia.gov or 804-786-9380.

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