



VOICES & VISIONS

A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A PROMISING VISION FOR TOMORROW

Outstanding Achievement Award Presented to Positive Vibe Café

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Board Chair, Sandy Hermann,
 Garth and Max Larcen

Father-son team, Garth & Max Larcen, recognized for innovative employment and training model.

In fall 2005, the Board inaugurated a new award to

recognize outstanding achievements resulting in a better quality of life for Virginians with disabilities. Award recipients must have creatively overcome barriers to improve services, demonstrated extraordinary efforts and permanently changed lives for the better.

The number and quality of nominations received exceeded expectations. All regions of Virginia and the full spectrum of services were represented. The nominations reflected tremendous commitment and achievement.

After careful consideration, a special Board committee recommended Max and Garth Larcen of Max's Positive Vibe Café as recipients of the 2005 Outstanding Achievement Award. The full Board confirmed the recommendation at its December meeting. The award was presented to the Larcen's at a reception on January 29, 2006, celebrating the Café's first anniversary and recognizing supporters who helped make it a success.

The story of how Max's frustration in finding employment led to the creation of the Positive Vibe Café has attracted national attention. Shortly after Max was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy (MD) at age eight, Garth left the restaurant business for a new career to have more time with his family and help care for his son. Nearly twenty years later, Max and Garth decided

to open a new restaurant to expand job opportunities not just for Max, but for others with disabilities.

In 2002, Garth and Max formed the Get Lost MD Foundation and began assembling community support for a restaurant fully accessible to individuals with disabilities for job training and employment as well as dining. On January 15, 2005, Max's Positive Vibe Café opened in the Stratford Hills Shopping Center in South Richmond. Today, the Café is a popular neighborhood restaurant, comfortably adapted to be accessible to all. Wheelchair users pass easily through wide aisles to booths with fold-out tables or to the lowered bar. Works by artists with disabilities compliment the décor. Live entertainment features musicians with disabilities. The critically-acclaimed menu emphasizes variety, wholesome ingredients, rich flavors, and attractive presentation.

Training in food preparation, customer service, and restaurant management emphasizes accommodation of individual needs. Volunteer servers work for tips and serve as role models for trainees. Many training graduates are members of the Café's staff. Additional graduates find employment in other food service operations. A catering service is growing, and ways of expanding that operation and its additional training and employment opportunities are being explored. Restaurant revenues support the training programs, and the Café expects to be self-sufficient in just a few years.

To learn more about the Outstanding Achievement Award and Max's Positive Vibe Café visit the Board's website. ♡♡



Letter from the Chair

Sandy Hermann



As I write this message, the 2006 General Assembly session is in full swing. Our elected officials are determining the Commonwealth's future priorities and individuals with disabilities and their families continue to be concerned about whether needed funding will be appropriated to provide for services necessary to support their ability to lead full and independent lives. How do these items for funding get determined? Do we fund what people with disabilities say they want? Do we do what is philosophically right?

As the parent of a daughter with significant disabilities, I realize the importance of advocacy. Advocacy is how change is made possible. Advocacy is merely vision with a VOICE -- a vision born from personal experience that is spoken and shared with others. It is important that we allow our vision and dreams of full, included lifestyles and the services that support this to guide our funding priorities.

Many decisions are routinely made by or on behalf of individuals with disabilities on where they will live, work, or recreate based on the current services, supports, and funding available to them at the time. Obviously individuals with disabilities and their families must make decisions utilizing the current service options presented to them. Would the same lifestyle decisions be made if other service or support options were available? Are the supports currently available those that people with disabilities need and want to live the lifestyles they envision and dream of for themselves?

As decisions are made on where to place our tax dollars, the right of all individuals to be included and have access to their communities should be the primary consideration and guiding principle. Should the Commonwealth be providing additional funding that promotes a continued vision of segregated

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VBPD Seeks to Fill Upcoming Board Vacancies


Nan Pemberton

The Board is currently seeking candidates to fill upcoming vacancies that will occur July 1, 2006 (FY '07). Individuals interested in committing time and energy towards accomplishing the Board's mission, "To enrich the lives of people with disabilities by providing a VOICE for their concerns..." are invited to seek appointment to the Board for the designated slots described below. Board appointees must be able to commit time to attend a minimum of four full Board meetings a year (usually held in Richmond) and to engage in other Board related activities including attending additional meetings and participating in ongoing work regarding grant review and oversight, policy development, education and outreach, and other activities designed to enhance the service delivery systems for persons with developmental disabilities.

Board appointments are made by the Governor and vacancies must be filled in accordance with federal and state statute. Effective July 1, 2006, the Board will have the following anticipated vacancies comprising the statutory "slots" of:

1. Person with developmental disability -- 1 slot
2. Parent or guardian of a person with developmental disabilities --1 slot
3. Immediate relative or guardian of a person with mentally impairing developmental disabilities --3 slots
4. Banking Representative --1 slot
5. Public Transit Representative --1 slot

To apply for one of these upcoming vacancies send the required nomination form posted at <http://www.vaboard.org/> along with your resume and a letter of interest (via fax, or mail), by April 14th, to: Sandra Smalls, VBPD, 202 North 9th Street, 9th Floor, Richmond, VA 3219, Fax: 804-786-1118. You may also submit your materials by e-mail to Sandra.Smalls@vbpd.virginia.gov. In your application, you must indicate the "slot" or "slots" for which you are eligible.

Please also remember that persons with disabilities, family members and advocates are also encouraged to apply for appointments to Boards and Commissions which are not specifically within the disability arena. Diverse voices and viewpoints are needed in all areas of the Commonwealth's work. Information on how to apply for a gubernatorial appointment other than the Board is available on the VBPD website and on the website of the Secretary of the Commonwealth at www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/ 

DD Network Update

Heidi Lawyer

It's an exciting time in Virginia. We have a new Governor and the General Assembly is well into its session. One of Governor Kaine's first official acts was to sign Executive Order 2, continuing the Office of Community Integration along with the Implementation Team and Oversight Advisory Committee. Senate Bill 182, supported by the Governor, would establish the Office in statute. The Governor's commitment to persons with disabilities, including those needing significant supports, is clear, and we look forward to working with the new Administration.

Although the DD Network partners have different roles, we are all engaged in monitoring bills that affect people with developmental disabilities. Of prime interest this session is the DMHMRSAS Mental Health/Mental Retardation restructuring initiative. This proposal uses funds for development of community based services and supports, and proposes capital outlay for the rebuilding of four state facilities, including two training centers. All three agencies are closely monitoring developments on this initiative. The VBPD Board Chair testified before the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Resources and, consistent with the tenets of the DD Act, expressed the Board's strong concern on the portion of the plan related to rebuilding new MR institutions. A training center has not been built in the U.S. for over 20 years.

Legislation monitored by our agencies is too comprehensive to list, but listed below are some bills that are still alive in the Assembly as of print date. The key patron is listed after the bill number.

HB 24 (Purkey): Makes it a class five felony to violate the provisions of law relating to assisting people with disabilities in voting.

HB 76 (Hamilton): Authorizes financing for building projects at Central Virginia Training Center, Southeastern Virginia Training Center, Eastern State Hospital, and Western State Hospital.

HB 437 (Griffith): Requires DMAS to seek a Medicaid waiver to establish a program for long-term support of children with autism, including treatment using applied behavior analysis. The bill is contingent upon appropriations.

HB 1398 (Hamilton): Changes the list of crimes that would constitute a barrier to employment in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day care, and home and health hospice care.

HJ 31 (Cosgrove): Studies the benefits of relocating the Southeastern Virginia Training Center.

SB 182 (Puller): Establishes the Community Integration and Implementation Team to assist in ongoing progress by all Executive Branch state agencies toward community integration of Virginians with disabilities (*Passed by the House*).

SB 208 (Edwards): Creates an Office of Children's Services Ombudsman, under the Legislative Branch.

SB 400 (Hanger and Edwards): Establishes an Economic Development for Virginians with Disabilities grant program which would assist qualified organizations with capital costs of constructing retail stores and other employment facilities. (passed Senate)

SB 421 (Hanger): Increases the penalties for failure to do criminal background checks by providers for children, the elderly, or persons with disabilities.

SJ 125 (Martin): Asks the Department of Education, the Board of Education, and the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services to improve the education and treatment of individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

The DD Network Partner agencies include: the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (Heidi Lawyer, Director), Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy, (Colleen Miller, Director), Partnership for People with Disabilities (Fred Orelove, Director). ♡♡

Welcome Aboard!

The Board would like to welcome Darius Johnson, our newest Board member. Darius was appointed in November to serve out the unexpired term of the Board's banking representative slot. He comes with extensive experience in the banking industry and currently serves as the Senior Vice-President, Chief Lending Officer for the Consolidated Bank & Trust Company in Richmond, Virginia. Darius is active in his community and serves on numerous boards and commissions. His term will expire June 30, 2006. ♡

Partners in Policymaking Update

Teri Barker-Morgan



Partners in Policymaking is an eight session competency based program that trains advocates to become effective systemic change agents in Virginia. This is accomplished through a continuum of curricula topics from the history of the disability movement and legislative process through employment and family support issues.

Each session is packed with information, skills, and strategies to help prepare future advocates for the challenge of continuing to empower Virginians with disabilities. The fourth session of the 2005-2006 Partners in Policymaking class met the weekend of January 20 - 21, 2006 at the Holiday Inn Koger Center in Richmond, VA. The January weekend focused on Special Education Law, Medicaid and Medicaid Waivers, and Legislative Advocacy.

Learning how to effectively communicate with legislators and to participate as an advocate for systems change and capacity building is one of the core competencies of the Board's Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program. The PIP class of 2006 will have an opportunity to put their skills to the test when they deliver testimony to legislators during a mock public comment session to take place on April 8, 2006 at the

General Assembly building. The testimony is intended to be a learning experience; however, the issues and opinions discussed will express the real concerns of PIP participants.

We are now recruiting for the Fall 2006 Class! Applications may be downloaded from the Board's website, www.vaboard.org, or contact John Richmond or Teri Morgan at (800) 846-4464. **VV**



Presenter
Maureen
Hollowell



Donna
Dayton



Fran
Pinizzotto



John
Kelly



Kristina
Patterson

YLF Update

Teri Barker-Morgan



The Youth Leadership Forum's goals are to educate students with disabilities about the principles of leadership, to build their self-confidence and advocacy skills, and to better prepare them for future career choices. Rising high school juniors and seniors who want to become leaders in their schools and communities are strongly encouraged to apply for the rewarding and privileged honor of serving as a YLF delegate. **The deadline for receipt of applications for the 2006 Forum, taking place from July 10 - 14, is February 25, 2006.** Applications can be downloaded from the Board's website, www.vaboard.org.

While at the YLF, delegates experience an environment that focuses on their strengths, gifts, and talents. They learn effective strategies to maximize their leadership opportunities. The high caliber organization and planning of the 2006 YLF, coupled with the positive energy and enthusiasm of student delegates and volunteer staff, provide the optimal environment for

the YLF to achieve it's mission of "training new leaders...".

After the YLF, Virginia's student delegates are committed to making a difference in their schools and communities, challenging themselves, building on their successes and accomplishments. Alumni speak up and share their experiences with others - on March 12th, four YLF Alumni will participate as panel presenters at this year's Virginia Transition Forum taking place March 10-12 in Roanoke. The alumni will each discuss their transition planning experiences as well as their ideas on how to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. The session is titled "Young Leaders Share."

Visit the Board's website this spring for our announcement of the YLF 2006 student delegates. **VV**

Public Comment Helps Reshape Biennial Report

Lynne Talley

In March 2005, the interim draft of the Board's Biennial Report on Virginia's Disability Services System was released for comment. Over a three month period -- by telephone, fax, post, e-mail and face-to-face at six Public Comment Forums across the state, consumers, advocates, service-providers, and policy-makers spoke out on how the Report could be improved. Although the Board received much praise for the Report's content and usefulness, omissions were identified, and additional critical issues were voiced.

Readers also suggested that the format of the Report be changed to make it more reader-friendly, particularly for those with less governmental and academic experience. In August 2005, a special committee of the Board met to consider changes to the final draft of the Report. They recommended to the full Board that the Biennial Report adopt a more person-centered format and that it include specific Board policy positions on the critical issues identified in the Report.

After additional research and rewriting as well as related data contributions and fact-checking by partner agencies, the final draft of the Biennial Report is near completion and will be released in the Spring 2006. The Report will identify critical issues across the serv-

ice system and include targeted Board recommendations. Chapters in the new and reorganized Report will reflect basic service needs across the life-span: early intervention, education, housing, transportation, employment, health and wellness, community and institutional supports. Each will pull together services from multiple providers and report sources of information and access, eligibility requirements, services provided, how they are paid for, critical issues, and Board recommendations for improvements. The new format will make it easier to see the full range of services, areas of overlap and collaboration between providers, and gaps in the system.

Following final Board approval, the Biennial Report will be distributed in print, on-line, and in other accessible formats to the Governor and executive branch agencies, legislators, consumer and advocacy groups, service-providers and other key constituencies. Anyone desiring a copy may request one by contacting the Board's staff. ♡♡



Next Steps: the 2007-2011 State Plan

Board activities, authorized under the national Developmental Disabilities Act, must comply with a required five year state plan. The current plan expires on September 30, 2006, and development of a new plan began with an intense two-day Board retreat last October.

At the retreat, Board members reviewed accomplishments under the current plan and determined the areas where it could most effectively direct its resources in the future. Board members also reaffirmed their common vision for more inclusive and supportive communities and greater self-determination and independence for people with disabilities.

Goals developed at the retreat reflected the Board's emerging focus on more selective grant-funding efforts as available resources become tighter and growing involvement in influencing public policy and raising general awareness of issues important to people with disabilities. Since the retreat, Board committees have developed specific objectives for each of the Board's 2007-2011 goals.

At its March quarterly meeting, the Board will review and approve an initial draft of the state plan. The proposed plan will then be available for public comment for forty-five days. The Board will approve a revised plan which reflects that comment in June and submit it to federal regulators in August. The new plan will go into effect on October 1, 2006. Specific details on availability of the plan and how and when to submit comments will be forthcoming this spring. ♡♡

Next Board Meeting

March 9, 2006
Wyndham Richmond
Airport Hotel
4700 S. Laburnum Ave.
Richmond, VA

Upcoming meetings:
June 15, 2006
September 13, 2006
December 8, 2006

Virginia's "Visitability" Tax Credit

Tom Driscoll



Tax season is approaching and many Virginians are not aware that they can receive a state tax credit for making their homes more accessible. The Home Accessibility Credit applies whether they do the work themselves or hire someone else to do it, and it is not required that anyone living in the home have a disability.

The intent of the credit program is to make all Virginia homes "visitible" by people with disabilities.

Improvements not otherwise required by law such as no-step entrances, wider doorways, bathroom or electrical modifications, and other universal design

features prescribed by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code which improve access for people with disabilities are covered. Up to 25% of the cost of the modifications, up to a limit of \$500, can be deducted directly from the amount of taxes owed. If less tax than the available credit is owed, the excess can be carried forward from year to year for up to five years.

Application for and certification of the credit must be completed in advance of filing state taxes. There is also a limit on the amount of credits which can be claimed statewide in a single year. For more information, deadlines, and forms, visit the Virginia Department of Taxation's website at www.tax.virginia.gov/site.cfm?alias=TaxCredit2#accessibility. A one-page flyer on the Home Accessibility Credit can also be obtained from the Virginia Department for the Aging's website at www.aging.state.va.us or a local Area Agency on Aging office. **VV**

Federal income tax credits are also available for small businesses as an incentive to encourage them to serve and employ people with disabilities more proactively. While the American with Disabilities Act mandates that all "public accommodations" be accessible, small businesses are often slow to comply due to perceived cost considerations, real or not. Additional information and a printable flyer on these federal tax incentives provided by the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention can be found at www.worksupport.com/research/viewContent.cfm/584.

Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005 is Introduced (12/19/05)

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) has introduced the Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005. This legislation addresses the needs of individuals with disabilities in emergency planning and relief efforts. "Hurricane Katrina's aftermath has shown us that we need to have a better emergency response plan, especially one that includes preparations for assisting people with disabilities," said Harkin. This bill is an important step to ensure that the needs of disabled Americans will be addressed in case of an emergency. Under this legislation, a Disability Coordinator would be created in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, who will report directly to the Secretary. The Emergency Preparedness and Response for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2005 will also require that 30 percent of temporary housing for disaster victims be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities, and would provide incentives to create more accessible housing during reconstruction efforts. **VV**

VBPD Welcomes New Staff Member

The Board is delighted to announce that Linda Redmond joined the Board on February 10 as Research, Evaluation, and Program Manager. Linda has been with DMHSMRAS since 1993, most recently serving as a program administration specialist in the Facilities area. Linda has been a participant on the MR Special Population workgroup and has participated in a variety of activities designed to enhance and transform the service system. Her professional career and other activities demonstrate a lifelong commitment to serving and advocating on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Linda is a licensed clinical social worker and has a Ph.D. in Public Policy from VCU and a BA in Psychology from William and Mary. In addition to her research, evaluation and policy responsibilities, Linda will serve as staff liaison to the Board's Education committee. **VV**



Improving Community Living Options Grant

Katherine Lawson

In June 2004, the Virginia Board funded a grant to the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS). The overall goal of this \$250,000 project, one of the largest grants the Board has ever awarded, is to increase community living options for individuals with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. DMHMRSAS is working to accomplish the goals of this project through the administration of the following two exciting subgrants.

- **Community Opportunities, Blacksburg - Project Duration:**

8/1/05 - 7/31/07

The projected outcomes of this subgrant of \$84,151 are (1) to increase consumer direction of services in the community through the use of traditional and non-traditional partnerships and resources and (2) to address issues of guardianship/authorized representation that prevent people from moving into the community, particularly for people without strong family support. Collaborators with the project include Wall Residences, Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC), and New River CSB.

- **Region Ten CSB, Charlottesville - Projection Duration:** 1/1/06 - 7/31/07

Region Ten CSB and the Partnership for People with Disabilities received a grant in the amount of



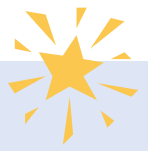
\$155,800. They will work with several collaborators to develop individualized and choice-driven community living alternatives for a selected group of individuals with disabilities. Selected individuals will either be leaving CVTC and/or will be moving from the urgent waiting list into MR Waiver slots. Project collaborators include the Center of Housing and New Community Economics, the Virginia Housing and Development Authority, the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), the Piedmont Center for Independent Living, and the Benefit Planning and Assessment Outreach contact.

Mark Russell, VBPD Board member, commented on this initiative in January, 2006, stating that there are multiple benefits for the Board and Virginia's citizens in this initiative. Mr. Russell stated, "By funding this partnership with DMHMRSAS, there is a direct beneficial impact on improving choice, and on finding creative solutions during difficult budgetary times." He further stated, "The system of services will move from an emphasis upon quality of care to quality of life, as well as illustrate how individuals with the most challenging behaviors can live in community." He indicated that a final result will be that the myths that surround institutionalization can be addressed and true human enlightenment result. ♡♡

Letter from the Chair (continued from page 2)

service options for many Virginians with disabilities, or should we be providing appropriate funding in assisting all individuals in being fully included in their communities? Is separate but equal a standard that should apply to people with disabilities? What is our vision? What do people with disabilities want for their lives? Now is the time to understand that the most basic of all civil rights- the right of being fully included- is the most important right of all. Virginia continues to operate and advocate within disability silos instead of focusing advocacy efforts on the individuals, regardless of their specific disability. Services are designed that limit choice, and people with disabilities and their families scramble to make their vision and dreams fit into the matrix of available support options. Individuals with disabilities deserve a real choice of supports and lifestyle. Virginia must move forward guided by a shared vision of equality and full inclusion.

Now is the time for each and every one of us to step up to the plate in those arenas of influence that are uniquely ours, and advocate for what individuals with disabilities truly deserve... the opportunity for FULL INCLUSION and full access into all aspects of society! We must advocate for what is right: the right for individuals with disabilities to have real choice over their lives, and full inclusion into their home communities. The choices we make now set our course for years to come. Let's rethink how we design services. Choices first; services follow. Virginia's citizens with disabilities deserve an equal playing field and a chance at the vision and dream they have for their lives. Let's listen to their vision for Virginia's service delivery system. ♡♡



Meetings of Interest

Virginia Transition Forum 2006: Leadership Through Change

March 20 - 22, 2006
VDOE Special Education Instruction Services, Career & Technical Education & T/TACs and DRS
Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, Roanoke, VA
<http://www.radford.edu/~conf-serv/> (540) 831-5357

Virginia Public Guardian & Conservator Advisory Board

March 23, 2006 10:00 am
Virginia Department for the Aging, 1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100, Richmond, VA

50th Annual VAECE Conference Today's Children - Tomorrow's World: Helping Children Reach Their Dreams

March 23 - 25, 2006
Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education
Marriott Hotel, Richmond, VA (888) 228-2323
www.vaece.org/futureconference.html

The 2006 Joint Conference, Virginia Elder Rights Coalition & the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the National Association of Geriatric Care

April 3 - 4, 2006
Woodland Hotel & Suites, Williamsburg, VA,
www.VGAvirginia.org

Disabilities Advisory Council

April 12, 2006 10:00 am
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Contact Lisa Shehi or lisa.shehi@vopa.virginia.gov
or call (800) 552-3962 for meeting location

Wide Open Doors Conference

April 22 - 24, 2006
Through the Roof Ministries of Woolridge Road Church
5130 Woolridge Rd., Moseley, VA
tammyburns@woolridgeroad.org (804) 639-4777
www.woolridgeroad.org

Board for Protection & Advocacy

April 25, 2006 9:00 am
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Contact Lisa Shehi at lisa.shehi@vopa.virginia.gov
or call (800) 552-3962 for meeting location

Fourth Annual State Infant & Toddler Connection Conference

April 25 - 26, 2006
Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, VA.,
Contact: Debbie Billodeaux, 703-246-7191, Fax: 703-246-7307
Debbie.Billodeaux@fairfaxcounty.gov

PAIMI Advisory Council

May 18, 2006 10:00 am
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Contact Lisa Shehi at lisa.shehi@vopa.virginia.gov
or call (800) 552-3962 for meeting location

World of Possibilities Expo

May 19 - 21, 2006
Caring Communities
Maryland State Fairground, Timonium, MD
<http://expo.caringcommunities.org/>

Staff

Executive Director - Heidi Lawyer

Teri Barker-Morgan, Tom Driscoll, Shannon Hamm, Katherine Lawson, Karen Lindley, Jennifer Peers, Nan Pemberton, Linda Redmond, John Richmond, Sandra Smalls, Henry Street, Lynne Talley

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People with Disabilities
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