

May 2003

Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

Virginia's Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

Volume III, Issue I

VOICES & VISIONS

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

Message from the Director

It's hard to believe that I have now been at "the helm" of the Board for nearly three months. It has been a whirlwind of activity. Coming in at the tail end of the legislative session and at the beginning of a new grant cycle was a challenging experience made easy as a result of the unwavering support and assistance I have received from Board Chair, Bill Cherry, the great VBPD staff, our Board members, and Secretary Jane Woods and her staff. I also want to thank former VBPD Director, Brian Parsons, for his support as I moved into this position.

I am very excited about the challenges and opportunities facing the Board. I look forward to a long, productive relationship in which we learn from each other, grow together, and work together to effect the systems change envisioned in the Developmental Disabilities Act. As inspiration, I keep in front of me not only our VBPD mission statement, but the federal purpose and mission for DD Planning Councils:

The purpose of state councils is to engage in advocacy, capacity building, and systems change activities that...contribute to a coordinated consumer and family centered, consumer and family directed, comprehensive system of services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that enable individuals with DD to exercise self-determination, be independent, be productive, and be integrated and included in all facets

of community life. This is done through: outreach, training, technical assistance, supporting and educating communities, barrier elimination, system design/redesign, coalition development and citizen participation, informing policymakers, and demonstration of new approaches, services, and supports.

Working together toward the achievement of this purpose is what should guide all of our activities and decisions. VBPD is in a unique position of being able to provide funding for innovative, capacity building programs and services, in a time of severe economic downturn and budget cuts. These grants, along with our well known Partners in Policymaking program and Youth Leadership Forum are key components of our work. But we are more than just a "checkbook". We--our Board members and our staff who support the work of the Board--are a collection of committed consumers, family members, advocates, and professionals, from all walks of life, who can and must influence the nature and direction of public policy in the Commonwealth so that we can achieve our common vision that persons with developmental disabilities--our children, our siblings, our friends, our coworkers--can and will, with appropriate services and supports, have satisfying jobs, live where and with whom they choose to live, engage in recreational activities of their choice, and make community inclusion not just a dream but a reality. I look forward to working with all of you towards achieving that reality. ✍



VBPD's New Director, Heidi Lawyer



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Statewide Transition Forum - "The Best Ever!"

Dr. Barbara Ettner



Virginia's 2003 Transition Forum, held in Roanoke March 17-19, drew a

record-breaking 700 participants to over 90 breakout sessions dealing with diverse topics related to the provision of transition services. The theme of this year's Transition Forum was "Shared Responsibility for the Educated Employee" to emphasize the importance of collaboration and continued professional development among transition professionals throughout the Commonwealth. Of the 19 Transition Forums held in Virginia thus far, this one, held at the Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center, was often cited by participants as being "The Best Ever!"

In addition to numerous presentations, workshops and displays on diverse topics relating to transition, no less than five of the Board's Education Committee grant projects were featured in special presentations at the Forum, including:

- Statewide Assessment of Accessibility at Virginia's Community Colleges
- Statewide Assessment of Transition Services in Virginia from the Consumer Perspective
- Upperclassmen with Disabilities in Higher Education in Virginia: Academic Goals, Challenges and Triumphs
- Facilitating Successful Transition to College (Nottoway County Public Schools)

- College Quest -- A Transition Web Site Development Project (George Mason University)

The Board's "Southwest Transition Project -- Training Our Youth for Tomorrow" -- was also showcased at the Forum as a successful model (implemented by Mt. Rogers CSB and Carroll county schools) with positive outcomes transitioning high school youth to meaningful and productive employment using appropriate workplace and academic supports. In addition, the Board's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) and Partners in Policymaking programs were featured in a session jointly hosted by Lisbet Ward, VBPD Board member and YLF faculty, and Sarah Burgess, YLF Graduate of the class of 2002. Finally, Board members Lisbet Ward and Barbara Gilley presented a session at the Transition Forum entitled "Living Independently--What Students Need to Know" on preparing students to acquire independent living and housing support services through their local Centers for Independent Living. ✍

VBPD
Board Meeting
June 11, 2003
9-4:30
Holiday Inn
Koger Center

Ardent Community Activist Selected for Wheat Award

Nan Pemberton

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities selected Raymond F. Burmester as the 2003 year's James C. Wheat, Jr. Award recipient for his significant achievements in enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth. The award was presented to Mr. Burmester at the Board meeting in March by Mrs. James C. Wheat, Jr., wife of former business executive and philanthropist Mr. James C. Wheat, Jr., for whom the award is named.

Mr. Burmester's work on behalf of people with mental disabilities is well known throughout the Commonwealth, and his influence on improving service delivery systems for people with disabilities has had local, statewide and national impact. In supporting the nomination of Mr. Burmester for the award, Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources Jane H. Woods noted, "For the past thirteen years, Mr. Burmester has been an

unwavering advocate by sharing his expertise on numerous boards and commissions, including a gubernatorial appointment to the Board for Protection and Advocacy and a senatorial appointment to the Joint Commission on Behavior Health



Secretary of HHR, Jane H. Woods, Mrs. James C. Wheat, Jr., Raymond Burmester, Mrs. Jessica Burmester

Care." Recently, in his role as Co-Chair of the Coalition for Mentally Disabled Citizens of Virginia, Mr. Burmester successfully advocated with his Coalition partners to reduce or eliminate proposed state budget cuts to mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse services.

Burmester is active in numerous volunteer positions in advocacy and community service organizations including the Hartwood Foundation, the Fairfax-Falls Church CSB, the National Academy of Mental Retardation, The Fairfax County Human Services Council and the Arc of Virginia. In accepting the award, Burmester observed, "We must develop and maintain a strong organized advocacy effort across the state in order to let our friends, our neighbors, and our legislators know that people with disabilities exist and that they need public support in order to live productive lives in their community. We must persuade our legislators that reducing services for people with disabilities during an economic downturn is not good public policy and that a strong organized advocacy effort is the reason why nearly every other state ranks ahead of Virginia in state funding for people with disabilities. If we don't do it, no one will do it for us," he concluded. ✍

Project ACE Concludes Board-Funded Employment Project in Tidewater

Amy Wright

In a rousing presentation to the Board's Employment Committee at their March 2003 meeting, Project ACE (Advocates for Community Employment) participants shared successful experiences in learning to self-advocate for community-based employment. Lynn Weiss, Hope Bress, David Stinebaugh, and project coordinator, Melva Mallison shared different

components of the basic advocacy training (BAT) curriculum that are essential for effective employment advocacy. Based on feedback from participants, Support Staff BAT and the Friends and Family BAT were rated highest.

Despite encountering challenging set-backs, such as key staff turnover, the successful achievement of product outcomes

included reaching 435% of the goal of a minimum of 200 people trained to concepts of self-advocacy and Project ACE by reaching 871 consumers and staff. Project director, Karen Tefelski of VA ACCSES praised the work of Ms. Mallison who "brought enthusiasm to this project" and the participants themselves, who dedicated so much of their time to working with others. ✍

Employment Committee Welcomes New Members, Focuses on Goals

Amy G. Wright



Marilyn Riddle, Joe Ashley, Gail Broughton, Joe Bowman, Ron Lanier, Melissa Edmonds, Linda Miller, Monica Smyth, Kathy Vesley

The process of becoming familiar with the employment opportunity infrastructure in Virginia is no easy task. The Employment Committee of the Board is charged with strengthening that infrastructure and expanding knowledge and awareness throughout the state of employment possibilities for people with developmental and other disabilities. Because they develop projects to enhance employment success, increase job opportunities, and promote awareness of abilities of people with disabilities, the committee has been diligently working to focus on their charge and examine the Board's State Plan in this area to accomplish their mission.

In January, the committee had an opportunity to welcome some of its new members (Marilyn Riddle, Monica Smyth, and Kathy Vesley) to an informational session held at the Board's offices. All members of the

committee had an opportunity to make introductions with VBPD Policy & Program Section staff and veteran Board members, examine grants administration, hear about sponsored programs and review the State Plan development process. Other topics included the committee's role in supporting and learning from the Medicaid Buy-In Initiative and the Olmstead Employment Issue Team reports.

With a strong sense of purpose and the realization that there are significant employment issues for people with disabilities in this state, the committee decided to also meet in May to examine the State Plan and strategize on where to focus their efforts in the next planning year. As expressed by many members, it is important to get to know each other better, share personal life stories and experiences as stakeholders in Virginia's developmental disabilities environment, and meet together to effectively work on Board projects and issues. The committee welcomes any data assessments, suggestions for examination and improvement and other feedback from the community. Please contact Amy G. Wright, staff support to the Employment Committee by phone at (804) 786-9375 or by email at wrightag@vbpd.state.va.us to convey information. ✍

The Graduating Class of 2003

William H. Cherry



This June the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities graduating class of 2003 will face decisions that are very similar to those experienced in the academic world - am I through with my learning experience or do I want to continue on?

The following Board members make up the Graduating Class of 2003: Carol Adelaar, Sandra Bowman, Gail Broughton, William H. Cherry, Virginia Clayborne, Allison Coles-Johnson, Janice Goldstein and Johnnie Hogue. I want to take this opportunity to thank each member for their participation during this

memorable four years. Their dedication over this span of years has truly made a difference to the Board and the countless individuals who have benefited from the work of the Board.

For those of us who were appointed to the Board in 1999, these past four years have been a real learning experience. We struggled with learning the inner workings of the Board and State government, as well as the personalities of 39 similarly minded individuals seeking ways to "make thing better". The experiences during the past four

years have been rewarding and fulfilling. Some of us have forged friendships that will last the rest of our lives, and the shared memories will flicker in our subconscious long after we forget what some of our co-members look like. For those of you who anticipate reapplying for another four year term, I wish you good luck with your reappointment. For those of you seeking another challenge, I wish you good luck also. And finally to those Board members who are not part of the Class of 2003, wish us the best in whatever endeavor we choose and think of us often, as we will you. ✍

Board Votes to Fund CD Development Through An Innovative Grant , "All of Us"

Katherine Lawson

In March, Hope House Foundation, a private, non-profit organization that provides supported living services to people with disabilities in Hampton Roads, was awarded an innovative grant from the Board to develop and distribute an interactive CD describing success stories of people with developmental disabilities who are living successfully and independently in their communities. The Board-funded project is an extension of an ongoing initiative of Hope House Foundation to produce a documentary video that educates the public, service providers and other people with disabilities about the possibilities and opportunities available to people with disabilities for successful community inclusion. The CD component, "All of Us", is a collaborative initiative of Hope House Foundation and Third Sector Media, a new company that specializes in innovative media development for non-profits, to produce a CD version of the video documentary and distribute it via the internet.

Hope House Foundation to produce a documentary video to educate the public for successful community inclusion

The "All of Us" project is based on successful distribution of similar video documentaries developed in other states. In the Virginia project, Hope House Foundation and Third Sector Media have collaborated with the Film and Media Department of Regent University to produce a video documentary that examines the lives of several developmentally disabled people who are currently living successfully in community based settings. The documentary contains testimonials and descriptions of the challenges and

opportunities of living in communities by people with disabilities as well as interviews with service providers, neighbors, employers and other individuals instrumental in facilitating full community inclusion for people with disabilities.

In extending the project to include expansive distribution of a CD version of the documentary, the Board's Community Inclusion Committee intends to enable additional audiences statewide to benefit from hearing consumers' success stories -- told in their own words and presented in their own homes -- through proactive distribution and using the internet and other video technology outlets available in the Commonwealth. It is the Board's belief that greater understanding and awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities can be achieved through visual media featuring consumers, family members, advocates and support service personnel who can attest to the successes in community living that have already been achieved by people with all types of disabilities in diverse settings.

In addition to production and distribution of the video and CD, the project will also include a half-hour broadcast documentary -- a volunteer effort of Hope House, Inc., Third Sector Media, and Regent University -- that will be made available to public television stations for airing throughout Virginia. Visit the Board's web-site (www.vaboard.org) later this year to learn more about "All of Us." ✍

Disability Mentoring Day -- Save the Date
 Disability Mentoring Day -- slated for October 15th -- is a national effort to promote the employment of students and job seekers with disabilities. In Virginia, the event will be sponsored by the Virginia Business Leadership Network in conjunction with national sponsors including the American Association of People with Disabilities and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. Mark your calendars now and visit <http://www.vabl.org> for updates on Disability Mentoring Day. ✍



Virginia College Quest: A Guide to College Success for Students with disAbilities web site is now online: www.VaCollegeQuest.org

Guardianship Issues Explored in Virginia

Katherine Lawson

The VBPD Community Inclusion Committee formed a new study group in January to consider guardianship issues and to become better informed about viable alternatives presently available to meet the diverse supportive needs of differing groups of people with disabilities. Included in these categories are persons presently living in the community and others who are waiting for community-based living placements. The study group met on March 12th and reviewed a video from Michigan where efforts to "prevent" guardianship are underway. The study group found this to be an interesting perspective, i.e., that guardianship was presented as the action of last resort, giving people the least amount of control over their lives.

The guardianship study group plans to hear from a panel of experts on guardianship issues at their next meeting in May 2003. The guardianship panel will include a representative of the Attorney General's Office, an expert in public guardianship programs, an attorney from the Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy and a speaker from the Virginia Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. The study group will review materials which reflect other states' activities and recommendations concerning the issue of guardianship.



Mark Russell, a new VBPD appointee noted, "I look forward to improving the opportunities for individuals who want to live outside of institutions. There are thousands of individuals in the community and institutions who will need improved protective factors such as improved community supports, circles of support, or micro boards so they can live successfully on their own." ✍

Sponsored Programs Alumni Are Making a Difference

Teri Barker-Morgan

The Board's sponsored programs, the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) and Partners in Policymaking (PIP), provide participants with state of the art information, resources and skill building opportunities. The programs are unique in many ways; however, there is one strong similarity. Upon graduation from the YLF or PIP, participants become members of an alumni network. As an alumni the leadership and advocacy skills learned are put into practice -- and the work really begins. Here are some of the achievements of program graduates.

Youth Leadership Forum



Reagan Cecil (YLF 2000) Reagan was awarded the John Philips Sousa Band Award at her High School in spring 2001. Reagan was hired to work at a movie and volunteered to sing in her church choir. She returned to the YLF 2002 as a staff. Reagan made the decision to donate blood and to be added to a database of potential bone marrow donors. Reagan is now attending college and receives A's and B's.

Ashley Hamilton (YLF 2002) Ashley made the honor role for the third nine weeks in a row. She's written letters to her principal offering suggestions to improve the journalism program and to Governor Mark Warner about what she's done since the 2002 YLF. Ashley's actively involved with her school newspaper and has had many articles published. What does the future hold for Ashley? Well, she's applied to three state universities, and will be attending Christopher Newport in the fall.

Partners in Policy Making



Tracee Garner (PIP 1998) Since participating in Partners in Policymaking Tracee has been actively involved in advocacy on a local, state and national level. Tracee was appointed to the Disability Services Board in Loudon County, she was involved with the YLF as a coordinating committee member and participated as a staff in 2000, 2001 and 2002 and she was an active member of the National Youth Leadership Network. Tracee has experienced success as a novelist, and has two books published with a third coming out in February 2004 (www.teegarner.com).

Vicki Beatty (PIP 2002) All Partner participants are required to do a final project that involves advocacy within their local communities. Vicki's final project was to be appointed to her local Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and to make a difference from within, and has done just that. Vicki has been appointed to the Richmond SEAC and is now actively involved in its continued evolution. The number of members has grown, as has the attendance at meeting.

Youth Leadership Forum and Partners graduates are motivated and eager to give back what they learned to their communities and to others who experience a disability themselves or in their families. ✍

A Brief Reflection on "Olmstead"

Katherine Lawson



The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is actively involved in many aspects of the development of Virginia's Olmstead Plan. This summary provides a brief update on Olmstead related activities in Virginia.

In 1999, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 119 S. Ct. 2176 (1999). In their decision, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Georgia had violated the ADA by forcing two women to remain in a state mental hospital after their treating professionals had determined them to be ready for discharge.

In the decision, the Court held that a State is required under Title II of the ADA to provide community-based treatment for persons with mental disabilities when: 1) The State's treatment professionals determine that such placement is appropriate; 2) The affected persons do not oppose such placement; and 3) The placement can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the State and the needs of others with disabilities. The decision applies to all persons with disabilities who are covered under the ADA.

In Virginia, the General Assembly directed the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services to convene a Task Force to develop a plan to implement the recommendations of the Olmstead decision.

The Task Force was convened July 31, 2002 and plans to submit final recommendations to the Governor, the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, and the Chairman of the Joint Commission on Health Care by August

31, 2003. The Task Force, which has 65 members, is chaired by Secretary of Health and Human Resources Jane Woods.

Virginia's Olmstead Task Force is organized into eight issues teams developed to study and report on critical topics including: Accountability; Educating the Public, Consumers, and Families; Employment; Housing; Prevention and Transition Services; Qualified Providers; Waivers; and the recently-formed Transportation issues team.

The full Task Force met recently on March 26th to discuss the interim reports from the Issue Teams. Issue team reports will continue to be fine-tuned and will ultimately be woven into a full Olmstead Report containing information from all the issues teams. Plans are for a preliminary draft of the Olmstead Report to be released for public comment in mid-April and a subsequent draft released for public comment in June, 2003. Readers are urged to visit the Olmstead web site for current information on the status of the Olmstead Report (<http://www.olmsteadva.com>)

Board member Fred Orelove, Director of the Partnership for People with Disabilities, commented on the Olmstead Report, "I urge fellow Board members, and citizens of the Commonwealth, to pay close attention to the interim Task Force Report and to respond. Read the recommendations and write or speak to them. Become informed." He observes, "Olmstead is more than a court decision, more than a concept. It represents the potential greater choice and freedom for thousands of Virginians who were never given a choice. Your voices are needed." ✍

"Olmstead is more than a court decision, more than a concept. It represents the potential greater choice and freedom for thousands of Virginians who were never given a choice. Your voices are needed."

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*"Voices & Visions" is
 available in
 accessible formats*



Meetings of Interest



Board of Medical Assistance Services

Tuesday, May 13, 2003, 10:00 am
 Depart. of Medical Assistance Services
 Suite 1300
 600 East Broad Street
 Richmond, VA
 For more information, contact Nancy
 Malczewski at (804) 786-8096,
 Fax (804) 371-4981

IDEA Partnerships 2nd National Summit on the Shared Implementation of IDEA '97

June 19-21, 2003 Sponsored by IDEA
 Partnerships Projects
 For more information contact IDEA
 Partnerships, Council for Exceptional
 Children, 1110 N. Glebe Rd, Suite 300,
 Arlington, VA 22201-5704 or by phone
 at (703) 245-0615.

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