



VOICES & VISIONS

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

Board Sponsors "Nurturing Innovation" Workshops Around the State

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In August, 2004, the Board sponsored four statewide creative thinking and skill-building training sessions titled "Nurturing Innovation." The purpose of the day-long workshop sessions was to stimulate creative thinking among human service providers. The goal of the project was to help them develop innovative approaches that will assist them in their work with people with disabilities, especially to solve problems better, to address issues more effectively, and to build the capacity of the organizations and agencies in which they work. Public and private providers, advocates, special educators, transition specialists and human service professionals attended sessions held in




Virginia Beach, Charlottesville, Roanoke and Fairfax.

Mr. Greg Brittingham, Training Associate at the VCU

Center for Public Policy, facilitated all of the "Nurturing Innovation" sessions. In consultation with Board staff, he developed an interactive and skill-enhancement based curriculum to teach participants, through experiential learning, concepts of creativity, innovation and problem solving.

Workshop evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Participants reported benefiting greatly from the information and the skill-building exercises held during each training. They also offered valuable insights into future training needs that the Board may wish to explore in the area of service provider professional development.

Since this was a new venture for Board staff, project developers were gratified to see the excellent response by service providers to this unique training opportunity. For more information about the work of the Board, visit www.vaboard.org. For more information about the VCU Center for Public Policy, visit www.vcu.edu/cppweb/cpphome.html 

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Letter from the Director: Year in Review

Heidi Lawyer



2004 has been a synergetic year for the Board. Following a planning retreat in the fall of 2003, the Board examined new opportunities to promote systems change and influence public policy affecting the lives of individuals with developmental and other disabilities. New

Board initiatives have enhanced opportunities for citizens to find accessible and affordable housing -- through the Virginia Accessible Housing Registry, to navigate the Medicaid Waiver Services arena -- through the Medicaid Waiver Technical Assistance Center, and to transition from school to work, or from school to higher education. The Board's transportation initiatives have demonstrated that strides can be made to improve accessible and available transportation. New partnerships and coalitions have resulted from increased Board outreach activities with businesses, advocacy organizations, self advocates, and family members. The Board now has over 200 Partner in Policymaking graduates and more than 100 Youth Leadership Forum graduates who are building collaborative networks throughout Virginia. The Board has strenghtened collaboration with its sister DD Network agencies, VOPA and the Partnership for People with Disabilities, and Virginia's DD Network was recently recognized by federal reviewers as a true strength in Virginia.

In 2004 the Board invested in numerous initiatives designed to enhance public awareness of the diversity potential and life circumstances of individuals with developmental disabilities. New outreach activities included distribution of the 2004 and 2005 VBPD Calendars, and the distribution of the Board-funded interactive CD, "All of Us." These initiatives have been complimented by the production of the Board's first video documentary: "Partners: The Fight for Inclusion for People with Disabilities," which aired locally in Richmond on NBC affiliate station and will be airing on PBS in January.



The Board continues to forge new initiatives in the policy arena, including submitting public policy recommendations to the Governor and Secretary of Health and Human Resources, serving on the Commonwealth's Olmstead Implementation Teams, and participating on the MR Waiver Task

Force and numerous other systems-change work-groups. As the largest Governor appointed Board in Virginia, we have the daunting mission of improving the quality of life for Virginians with developmental disabilities. We are encouraged by the Board's inclusion in so many state-level and statewide initiatives and the significance given to its input.

As staff, we are privileged to support the Board and its mission to provide people with developmental disabilities a VOICE. As Director, I thank the Board and staff for sharing their vital energy and commitment and for providing the differing perspectives that are essential to creating and sustaining change. Please share in our excitement, by letting us know your thoughts as we prepare to develop our next generation state plan. You are invited to visit our website, review our materials and comment publicly at our quarterly board meetings and through voice and e-mail formats. The Board relies upon your voices to be informed about the directions we pursue.

Stay tuned as we continue our work on behalf of citizens with disabilities and their families in Virginia. We continue to learn from each other and from you and together we will make an impact and create positive change. ♡♡

Staff Notes: Board's Grants Administrative Manager Accepts New Position

Ms. Amy G. Wright, the Board's Grants Administrative Manager and staff to the Board's Employment Committee, accepted a new position in October as Director of Grant Administration with Culpeper (VA) Human Services. "In my work with the Board I have had an incredible opportunity to learn about the service system for people with disabilities. I appreciate the committed work of the Board and staff, first, as the Board's 1999-2000 Disability Policy Fellow and then as Grants Administrative Manager for the Board. Also, the Board could not do its systems change work without incredibly skilled grantees who, everyday, are changing systems and changing lives." Ms. Wright will continue her grants administrative management duties with other human service professionals in local government who are committed to innovation and responsiveness in service delivery. The Board wishes her well in her new endeavors. ♡♡

Board Awards Funds for Two New Projects

Barbara Ettner

At its September, 2004 meeting, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities approved funding for two new initiatives brought forward by the Education Committee: 1) the "On Campus Transition Program" was awarded under the Board's Innovative Grants Program, and 2) the "Improving the Effectiveness of Local Special Education Advisory Committees" grant which was awarded under the Board's Competitive Grants Program.

The "On Campus Transition Program" seeks to utilize innovative strategies for serving students with disabilities, including students with developmental disabilities, aged 18-22. These students often remain in high school settings in order to receive "postgraduate" services after their same-aged peers have left secondary school following graduation. Because they remain in high school settings, they often miss out on meaningful social, educational and employment experiences available to their young-adult peers. The Board's grant provides funds for a collaborative project that will enable Montgomery County Public

Schools, Radford University and Virginia Tech to establish an on-campus transition program - at a local university - for eight to ten students; to develop an Implementation Guide for use by other schools and localities interested in replicating the model; and to conduct a mini-conference on effective transition services in the Southwest region of the state.

With Board funding, the Partnership for People with Disabilities and the Virginia Department

of Education will collaborate on training and the provision of technical assistance designed to improve the effectiveness of local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) throughout the Commonwealth. Board funds will be used to develop a needs-based training curriculum, to provide custom-tailored technical assistance for local SEACs, and to conduct a series of workshops for disability stakeholders interested in improving the critical functions of local SEACs. The overall goals of the project are to improve services and enhance the academic success of students with disabilities in Virginia's public schools. ♡



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DD Network Partners Educate Legislative Assistants About DD Activities in Virginia

In October, the three Directors of the DD Network agencies (Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy, and the Partnership for People with Disabilities) provided training on their activities to Virginia Senate legislative assistants. Efforts to provide information about the DD Network to General Assembly members and their staff began in 2003 with the distribution of an Olmstead "primer" to all legislators. In 2004, the DD Network furthered its educational efforts through a 2 hour presentation to key legislative staff.

The 20 legislative assistants who attended were provided background information on the three DD Network agencies as well as an overview of key laws affecting persons with disabilities, including IDEA, ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Virginians with Disabilities Act (VDA). The presenters also provided an overview of the Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L. C.*, and discussed Virginia's response and activities to date regarding Olmstead Implementation. A portion of the Board funded interactive CD, "All of Us," produced by Hope House Foundation, was shared with the audience so that they could see how access to community living options affects real peoples' lives. The legislative assistants were interested in the information presented and asked many questions. The DD Network partners hope that this educational experience will assist Senate staff in effectively responding to constituent inquiries and providing guidance to Senators in Virginia's General Assembly regarding Olmstead-related votes and issues. ♡

Partner's Session Highlights DD Network Activities

Teri Barker-Morgan



The October 2004 session of Partners in Policymaking (PIP) highlighted Virginia's DD Network - The Partnership for People with Disabilities, The Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA) and The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD). Under the Developmental Disabilities Act (DD Act), these three agencies work in collaboration to implement programs designed to improve services, knowledge and policy in the disability arena. The work of the three "DD Partners" is always of interest to the Partner's participants.

Fred Orelove, Ph.D., Executive Director of The Partnership for People with Disabilities, described to the 2005 PIP class the varied services and programs provided by The Partnership. Following Dr. Orelove's presentation, Jonathon Martinez, staff attorney with VOPA, gave an overview of that agency's mission. He also described the legal services and supports VOPA offers to people with disabilities in Virginia and discussed the importance of advocacy.

Heidi Lawyer, VBPD Director, ended the DD network presentation with information and insight into the Board's organization, mission and current projects and grants activities.

Partners in Policymaking participants and staff were excited to learn about information and networking resources available to them. At the November PIP session participants will receive a comprehensive overview of Medicaid and Medicaid Waivers in Virginia. The session, "The Medicaid Maze," will be presented by Maureen Hollowell of the Norfolk

Independence Center. ♡♡



Left to Right:
Marsha Batten,
Tim Nicodemus,
Martin Powell



Youth Leadership Forum 2005 Student Delegate Recruitment is Underway!

Teri Barker-Morgan

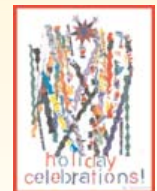
The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) has begun recruitment for Student Delegates for the 2005 class. Application packets have been mailed to high schools, service providers, and appropriate agencies and organizations throughout Virginia. Additional YLF recruitment packages are available by contacting the Board (see below).

The 2005 YLF will take place from July 11 - 15, 2005, at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. The deadline for the receipt of application materials is 5:00 p.m. Friday, February 25, 2005.

PLEASE, HELP GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT THE YLF OPPORTUNITY - applications can be downloaded and printed off the VBPD website www.vaboard.org, or individuals may contact Jennifer Peers at 1-800-846-4464 (voice or TTY) or at jennifer.peers@vbpd.virginia.gov for application materials. ♡♡

Second Annual YLF Greeting Cards Now Available

The YLF Alumni Association is selling holiday greeting cards, created by YLF alumni, as a fundraiser.



To order your Holiday cards visit the Board's website at www.vaboard.org. ♡♡

Board Members and Staff Attend Annual DD Conference

Katherine Lawson

Entitled, "Race to a New Tomorrow," the 2004 Annual Developmental Disabilities Conference (DD Council Conference) was held at the Hyatt Regency in Lexington, Kentucky October 3-5th. In attendance at this year's conference were Sandy Hermann, Chair of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities; Norma Draper, Chair of Education Committee; Thomas Leach, member of the Community Integration Committee; and Katherine Lawson, the Board's Outreach and Planning Manager and staff to the Board's Community Integration Committee.

Greg Smith, the conference keynote speaker and former presenter at the Board's Youth Leadership Forum, discussed his diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis and his many years of struggling with mobility issues. He inspired the audience with his great sense of "I can do it - ness" and his unwavering commitment to finish school, attend college, and to become employed in a career of his choice. He described encountering many challenges - from teachers, peers and the general public - and how he overcame them to become a successful book author and radio show host. Mr. Smith is also the subject of a PBS documentary that will be airing February 2005 during Black History month. As "The Strength Coach," he provided a motivational message to the session participants, focusing on how to build inner strength for peak performance in the "game of life." As a media figure, Mr. Smith discussed the critical role of television and radio in shaping the general public's perceptions of people with disabilities, noting that devaluing stereotypes and misconceptions generated by broadcast media are the most difficult "handicaps" to overcome.

Conference workshops addressed diverse and highly-relevant topics of great interest to Virginia DD Council board members and staff, including: exploring alternatives to

guardianship as a first step for states seeking to replicate "best-practice" models developed in other states; assuring quality services through

development of a competent direct support workforce; and reviewing "Asset Development" strategies that improve the financial independence and economic security of people with disabilities. Other workshops examined diverse, successful approaches that other DD Councils have taken in workforce development. Alaska's Works Initiative, for example, utilized the development of close collaboration between the state's Medicaid and Vocational Rehabilitative agencies and the DD Council to create improved employment opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities.

Norma Draper, Board member and conference attendee, said, "The NACDD conference... was a great opportunity to meet and learn from other Council members from other states. For instance, in Hawaii there are no institutions, and in Illinois a previously closed institution has been reopened. Alternatively, the state of Washington is downsizing their five institutions. One of their institutions previously had 1100 and is now down to 190. In the area of self advocacy, the state of Washington is connecting self advocates with their legislators and want to encourage all states to do the same." ♡♡

Disability Policy Fellowship and Internships Announced for 2005

Applications are currently being solicited from Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond) graduate and doctoral students for the Board's 2005 Disability Policy Fellowship. Information about the fellowship, including deadlines and application information are available on the Board's web site (www.vaboard.org), or by calling 1-800-846-4464.

The Board is also soliciting applications from undergraduate and graduate students attending colleges or universities in the Richmond metro area for two 10-week Disability Policy Internships - one available starting in February, 2005 and one available starting in August, 2005. Information about internship opportunities, including application requirements and deadlines are available on the Board's web site (www.vaboard.org) or by calling 1-800-846-4464. ♡♡

Future Board Meetings

December 9, 2004
March 17, 2005
June 16, 2005
September 1, 2005
December 2, 2005

Holiday Inn Richmond
6531 W. Broad St.
Richmond, VA

Board Grantees Achieve Success Meeting State Plan Goals

Katherine Lawson

Several grantees working on Board-funded projects in areas of community inclusion, employment and education have successfully met key goals of the agency's Five Year State Plan, significantly improving the lives of people with disabilities in Virginia.

In the area of community inclusion, the recently-concluded Medicaid Waiver Technical Assistance Grant (Medicaid Waiver TA Grant) and the innovative project, the "All of Us" interactive CD, achieved project outcomes that demonstrably increased the independence and inclusion of people with disabilities in Virginia.

The Medicaid Waiver TA Grant promoted improved utilization of Medicaid Waivers throughout Virginia by establishing a statewide network of mentors trained to assist consumers and family members obtain and use waivers. The project created the Medicaid Waiver Technical Assistance Center, located at the



Independence Center in Norfolk, Virginia, with a toll-free number (1-866-323-1088), that can now be readily accessed by individuals seeking accurate, up-to-date waiver information.

The project also expanded the VAWaiversL@Handinet.org website that provides education and technical assistance regarding waivers. The "All of Us" interactive CD, a project of the Hope House Foundation, was designed to improve public and professional awareness of the capabilities and potential of people with severe developmental disabilities to live independently in communities. To date, hundreds of copies of the CD have been distributed statewide to individuals and organizations, increasing public and professional awareness of the importance of community inclusion in the lives of people with disabilities.

The Strategic Partnerships in School Systems grants demonstrated the importance of building strategic partnerships between employers and school systems to help students with disabilities achieve competitive employment goals. Recently-concluded grant projects conducted in Carroll County and in Bland County resulted in competitive employment for many students who would otherwise have had only limited job opportunities. The

success of these projects was made possible through development of long-term collaborative partnerships among employers, school systems, Community Services Boards, the Department of Rehabilitative services and employment service providers to match, employ, and support students with developmental disabilities in the jobs of their choice. Final project evaluations received from students, families, and employers revealed a high level of satisfaction with the skills, knowledge and employment opportunities afforded by the grants.

Project ACE capitalized on the power of education and advocacy to strengthen and provide long-term awareness about employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Virginia. Activities at two project sites - in Northern Virginia and in Tidewater/Hampton Roads -- proved that the benefits of self-advocacy and self-empowerment are effective tools for promoting community-based competitive employment for people with disabilities. As a result of the grant, over 800 individuals, including consumers, family members, legislators and employers were educated about the significance of meaningful employment in the lives of people with disabilities. Nearly 200 individuals enrolled in the Project ACE long-term network of advocates that was developed as a result of the project and over 30 individuals have become Project ACE leaders in their communities.



In the area of education, transition awareness and services were improved through several Board initiatives completed in 2004, including the

Collaborative Transition Training Grant (Radford University Training the Technical Assistance Center) and College Quest (George Mason University). The goal of the Collaboration Transition Training Grant was to increase the capacity of students, family members and educators to be actively involved in the transition process by working collaboratively with transition professionals. Over 700 attendees were educated about transition services during the 18-month project time-frame. Participant feedback indicated that most attendees gained useful information and greater understanding of their role and the need for collaboration in implementing effective transition services. The project

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2004 Virginia New Freedom Employment Initiative Award

Katherine Lawson

During October, which is celebrated annually as National Disability Employment Awareness Month, six Virginia businesses received the New Freedom Employment Initiative Award for their exemplary leadership and commitment to providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. The six businesses -- the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, RAMARK Corporation, the Educational Credit and Management Corporation, the Home Shopping Network, Hampton Inn of Waynesboro (Stuarts Draft), and IKEA (Northern Virginia) - received this prestigious award at a breakfast ceremony held at the Richmond Marriott during the Virginia Society of Human Resource Management's annual conference October 6-8, 2004.

During the celebratory breakfast -- sponsored in part by the Board, SunTrust Bank, and former Board grantee the Virginia Business Leadership Network -- award recipients acknowledged the importance and benefits of hiring a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities. Employers receiving the award shared stories of empowerment, teamwork, productivity and incredible accomplishments achieved through their proactive hiring policies that included recruiting from the pool of people with disabilities who are eager and willing to work as an important source of exceptional workers. The manager of Hampton Inn of Waynesboro, for example, shared his experience of hiring an individual with multiple disabilities who, with minimal accommodations and supports, could perform specialized tasks better than other employees.

Over five hundred business leaders were in attendance at the conference to share and learn about the achievements of the six Virginia companies that received this year's New Freedom Employment Initiative Award as well as all the employees with disabilities who contributed to the success of their companies. The Board congratulates all the award recipients and all the collaborators who made the conference and the awards ceremony an inspiring event, especially the Virginia Business Leadership Network, SunTrust Bank, and the Virginia Society of Human Resource Management. These organizations are networking, training, and modeling successful employment practices that demonstrably improve the hiring and retention of people with disabilities in Virginia's workforce. Successes achieved through improved corporate attitudes and expanded hiring and accommodation policies should be celebrated everyday. ♡



Staff, Sponsors and Award Recipients

Board Grantees Achieve Success Meeting State Plan Goals

(continued from page 6)

was so successful that the Education Committee decided to fund a replication of the project in the FY 2005 grant cycle.

The College Quest project (www.vacollegequest.org) developed an interactive, comprehensive web site that empowered high school students with disabilities and their families to explore post-secondary education options. Streamlined college application information, assisted with the admittance process, informed students about accessing specialized services available in higher education, and developed supportive networks linking students who have "made it" in college with those who are seeking to apply. At its completion the project had developed a fully-functional web site with over 200 subscribers to the web sites's e-newsletter and numerous web site "hits" every day 24 hrs/day. ♡



Meetings of Interest



Virginia DRS State Plan Public Hearings

Department of Rehabilitative Services, all meetings 3:00 PM
 12/2/04 Portsmouth DRS
 12/8/04 Fairfax DRS
 12/14/04 Mt. Rogers Community MH & MR
 1/10/05 Richmond DRS
 Contact Liz Smith: smithee@drs.state.va.us or (800) 552-5019

Planning & Development Committee

Commonwealth Council on Aging
 12/2/04 Virginia Department for Aging
 9:00 AM 1610 Forest Ave., Suite 100, Richmond, VA

State and Local Advisory Team

DMHMRSAS
 12/2/04 Henrico County Training Center
 10:00 AM 7701 Parham Rd., Richmond, VA

Public Input Session for HOME, ESG and HOPWA

Department of Housing & Community Development
 12/2/02 Mason District Government Center
 10:00 AM 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale, VA
 Note HOME time: 1:00 PM
 Contact Johnette.Mallory-Pullen@dhcd.virginia.gov

Public Guardian & Conservator Advisory Board

12/09/04 1610 Forest Ave., Richmond, VA
 10:00 AM

Public Input Session for HOME, ESG and HOPWA

Department of Housing & Community Development
 12/9/04 Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
 10:00 AM 723 Woodlake Dr., Chesapeake, VA
 Note HOME time: 1:00 PM
 Contact Johnette.Mallory-Pullen@dhcd.virginia.gov

Public Input Session for HOME, ESG and HOPWA

Department of Housing & Community Development
 12/14/04 Piedmont Community College,
 10:00 AM 501 College Dr., Charlottesville, VA
 Note HOME time: 1:00 PM
 Contact Johnette.Mallory-Pullen@dhcd.virginia.gov

Olmstead Community Integration Implementation Team, DMHMRSAS

12/21/04 Virginia Housing Development Authority
 1:00 PM 601 Belvidere St., Richmond, VA

Medicaid Transportation Advisory Committee, DMAS

1/5/05 DMAS Board Room
 1:00 PM 600 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA

The Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Trust Fund Advisory Board, DRS

1/20/05 DRS, 1st Floor Conference Room
 10:00 AM 8004 Franklin Farms Dr., Richmond, VA

VBPD 2005 Calendar Slated for Statewide Distribution

The Board will begin distributing its annual 2005 Calendar in November 2004. The calendar, with the upcoming year's theme "Together We Can Make a Difference," highlights the work of the Board, and includes important dates relevant to the Board's programs and activities. In addition to information about the Board, the calendar is intended to inspire and inform broad audiences about the contributions and activities of individuals with disabilities as they live, work and contribute to their communities through independence, self-determination and inclusion. The calendar is slated for statewide distribution in mid-November to consumers, organizations and agencies throughout the Commonwealth. The full-color 2005 calendars are available free of charge to individuals and organizations interested in obtaining additional copies. For more information or to order copies of the calendar contact Katherine Lawson (Katherine.Lawson@vbpd.virginia.gov) or call the Board's toll-free number 1-800-846-4464. ♻



Virginia Board for
 People with Disabilities

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VBPD publications are available in alternate formats, upon request

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