

VOICE

■ vocational rehabilitation ■ disability determination ■ independent living ■

“Anything Is Possible”

By Lisa Sone, Quality Manager
VR Central Office

It was fall 2006 when Maurice Puckett’s life in St. Louis took an unexpected turn. At the age of 23, Puckett was shot in the back; the injury to his lower spine left him paralyzed from the waist down.

“I was in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Puckett said.

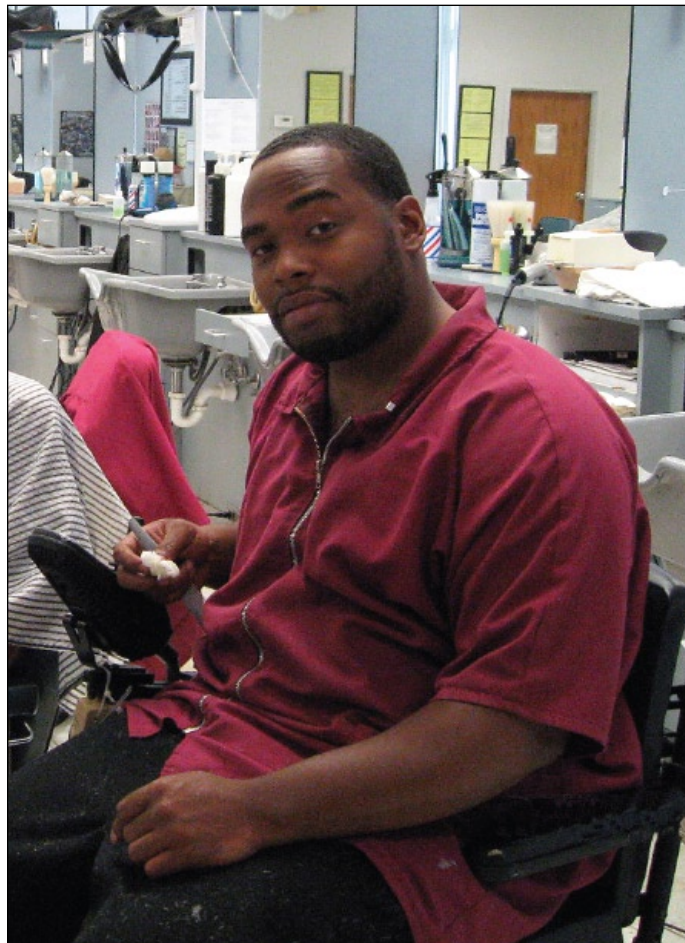
After his hospitalization, Puckett went to The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis for therapy. During his month-long stay, he was given information on Vocational Rehabilitation. Sadye Gartland, counselor III in the St. Louis West VR office and state consultant for assistive technology, began working with Puckett to help him re-enter the workforce, and Puckett said that “the ball has been rolling ever since.”

While he knew he would need financial help, Puckett’s career goal was never in doubt.

“I knew right away that barbering was what I wanted to do,” he said. “I had a passion for it since I was eight.”

This childhood passion would soon become his livelihood. VR paid for Puckett’s barber school tuition, including his barbering

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After a gunshot wound paralyzed him from the waist down, Maurice Puckett attended barber school with assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation. VR also provided Puckett with a power chair perfectly suited for his new career as a barber. He plans to eventually own his own barbershop.

“I KNEW RIGHT AWAY THAT BARBERING WAS WHAT I WANTED TO DO. I HAD A PASSION FOR IT SINCE I WAS EIGHT.”

Anything Is Possible (Continued from p.1)

tools, and for the installation of hand controls for his car. VR also provided Puckett with a power chair especially suited for his work as a barber.

"It was a blessing (Gartland) came along," Puckett said. "I wanted to go to school to learn barbering so that I could work for myself. Barbering is a very lucrative business."

Puckett attended the Missouri School of Barbering and Hairstyling in St. Louis. Director Margie Siems said, "This was the first time we had worked with VR. The experience was great, and the communication was good."

Siems said that she and others at the school had a learning experience as well. They had to make adjustments to some of the equipment and work areas for Puckett's power chair. Now the school is wheelchair accessible.

"He's a good barber," Siems said of Puckett. "He is personable, and people like him."

Puckett graduated in the summer of 2008 and had already secured a job at Initram, a barbershop in St. Louis, before leaving school. His long-term vision includes running his own shop, but before that he wants to gain experience and learn how to run a business.

Puckett used his own ingenuity to find the resources and assistance necessary to make his childhood dream a reality, but he said that "without VR, I don't know where I'd be."

"The most exciting part of working is that I did it with few complications," Puckett said. "It can be done by anyone. Anything is possible if you put your mind to it."

VR Business Network Focuses on Dual-Customer Approach

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is collaborating with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), businesses and customers in establishing a national business network. The VR Business Network is designed to improve employer access to qualified VR candidates and support services while at the same time increasing VR's business connections.

VR is emphasizing a dual-customer approach. VR will continue working to meet its clients' needs, but VR also recognizes that meeting the needs of businesses is an integral part of what it does as an organization.

For this to be successful, VR must determine how it can best meet the needs of employers. Do employers need help with staffing, accessibility or support services? VR could be a valuable resource in addressing these issues. Building relationships with businesses can also enhance successful employment outcomes.

To show VR's commitment to the dual-customer approach, an ad hoc team was created to develop and expand the VR Business Network. The team used Iowa's network as a template. Team members have drawn up a framework for district offices to operate within. Expectations are the same statewide, but each district office can implement the business network as best suited to its geographic area.

According to team member

Duane Shumate, district supervisor of the Columbia office, there are two main reasons why the network will be beneficial.

"Once we develop a business relationship (by) filling the employers' needs, we hope they'll come to us as a staffing resource agency," Shumate said. "Secondly, if we can meet the businesses' needs, they become advocates for us at the state and national levels."

The VR Business Network process began Oct. 1, but not before ad hoc team members spent a tremendous amount of time and energy on the project. The team worked with IT to create a business

"If we can meet the businesses' needs, they become advocates for us at the state and national levels."

database and determined office points of contact that will be responsible for populating the

new system. Members created and implemented statewide training to introduce the dual-customer approach.

The team built a toolkit that reflects Missouri's business language and values to encourage VR staff to use terms that match the business world. For example, *supported employment* would be referred to as *on-the-job training*. The team also developed the Missouri Vocational Employment Resource Solutions (MoVERS) Web site, which emphasizes what VR can do for businesses.

Missouri joins Iowa, Nebraska, Alabama and Virginia as states that have launched business networks. By keeping focus on the dual-customer approach, both employers and clients will benefit from the VR Business Network.

WHAT IF YOU BECAME DISABLED



The following story was written by Mary Roetto Verburgt, a counselor II in the Springfield DD office. She details her experience with a disabling condition and her fight to overcome the resulting impairments. Her story reminds us how vital empathy is in the performance of our jobs. The "MADE in Missouri" newsletter first ran this article in its May/June 2008 issue.

Getting sick with a major illness or disease can be a life-changing event. I had always been blessed with good health until Nov. 2, 2007. Out of the blue, I came down with capnocytophaga, a serious bacterial infection from the saliva of a cat or dog. By Nov. 3, I became unconscious; shortly thereafter, I was put on life support, including a ventilator, dialysis and blood transfusions.

By the grace of God, the bacterial culture finally grew. I was given the right antibiotics and came out of it a couple of weeks later, but not without some problems. I had lost circulation to my toes and developed dry gangrene and severe peripheral neuropathy in both feet, my left leg and the fingertips of both hands. By Feb. 25, I had to have all of my toes partially amputated on both feet. This was definitely a life-changing event in many ways.

Before I left the hospital after a four-week stay, the doctors kept reminding me that I should not expect to regain my strength for quite some time, at least six months to a year. They weren't kidding! I was confined to a wheelchair from November 2007 to April 2008. Even though

I did some exercise daily, my body suffered a great deal of atrophy and loss of strength. With the help of physical therapy, I am now up on my feet and able to walk. However, I still have neuropathy in both legs, my feet and my fingers, along with balance issues from the amputations and the loss of foot pads due to atrophy. I also have pain and fatigue from deconditioning.

Many of our claimants experience similar life-changing

“What if you had limited or no support to help you get through a major illness, disease or injury?”

events due to a multitude of illnesses, diseases and injuries. Now that it has happened to me, I can better understand how getting sick or injured can reduce or limit one's ability to function in the workplace. When we do an RFC, it is important to consider how such changes can affect a claimant's daily activities.

Not only does an illness or disease affect you physically, but it can also affect you financially and emotionally. I

was fortunate to have enough sick and vacation time to cover all of my time off. Otherwise, I could have been facing financial difficulties as well. Even with a steady paycheck coming in, the extra health care costs add up for co-pays to various doctors, outpatient surgeries, medications, 20 percent co-insurance for medical supplies and equipment, home health care, and physical therapy. What if you didn't have paid leave and good health care coverage? What if you didn't have any health insurance at all? The fear and despair of losing your home, your vehicle and your lifestyle could be overwhelming, adding more stress to an already weakened body and mind. As disability adjudicators, we hear about these types of situations every day. You can see how desperate and devastated some of our claimants might be feeling when they apply for disability.

Just traversing the medical community of doctors and health care providers (and investigating the medical information about one's situation) can be very demanding. Finding the right doctor or doctors for the best medical care, going through trial

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What If You Became Disabled?

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and error on what medications work or don't work, and learning who to trust or not trust is time-consuming and difficult to understand. As disability adjudicators, we likely have more access and training in medical knowledge as compared to the general public. But for me, it was still difficult to find solutions and answers. What if, as a claimant, you had limited medical knowledge and limited access to medical information? Imagine how frustrating and overwhelming that would be.

What if you had limited or no support to help you get through a major illness, disease or injury? I was very fortunate to have my family, friends and co-workers at

DDS to assist me. There were times that I had to completely depend on others to prepare my meals, wash my hair, get my baths ready, push me around in a wheelchair and drive me to the doctor.

Not only do you need physical care when you are disabled, but you need emotional support as well. This is possibly more important than anything else. Personal visits, cards, calls, treats with balloons and other fun things are so important to lift one's spirit, maintain a positive attitude and motivate one to continue to meet the challenges of the situation.

Many of our claimants don't have an array of support to help them. The next time you speak with one, just listen for a moment to his or her story. Respond with compassion and words of encouragement. You might never know how much your words and

actions can help someone cope with the day's demands and give hope that tomorrow will be a better day.

For myself, I am beyond grateful for all of the support, care and concern I received during my illness. I am blessed to be a part of the Springfield DDS office. My co-workers, family and friends are the most wonderful people you could ever know.

I want to especially thank Debbie Turner, best friend and co-worker, and Dr. Peter H'Doubler, Springfield medical consultant. Debbie visited me almost daily, kept me laughing and always left me with positive thoughts and feelings. Dr. H'Doubler was a comfort and pillar of strength for my entire family through the toughest of times. Thank you for going the extra mile for me and my family.

Voice of our consumers



In this section, consumers, partners/suppliers and division employees can voice their opinions, views or appreciation to our division and staff. Some letters will be printed in their entirety while longer letters might only have excerpts printed. Consumers' names are omitted to protect their confidentiality. All letters are subject to editing.

Consumer feedback

Ms. Shani,

Wishing my note finds you in the best of health. (Thank) you for assisting on my disability case. You were very patient with me and I truly appreciate (everything) – it was so nice of you!

Shani Greenberg is an assistant district supervisor in the St. Louis DD office.

Feedback from a letter Central Office received from a consumer

I wanted to take a brief moment to let you know that Debbi Browne is one of the finest people I've ever worked with. I was injured on the job in February 2001 and contacted the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation late in 2002, which led me to Debbi. Debbi counseled me about options to remain gainfully employed that ultimately kept me in the workforce and self-sufficient. Her compassionate demeanor and professional conduct was unmatched by any person of any agency that I've sought (assistance from). I am blessed to have crossed paths with Debbi and would walk 10 miles out of my way to assist her for any reason. She is a true gem to society and

hopefully is recognized as such by the VR department.

Thank you!

Debbi Browne is a counselor III in the Cape Girardeau VR office.

Feedback from a letter Joyce Carter, district supervisor in the St. Louis DD office, received from a consumer

Ms. Carter,

I wanted to send a short note to let you know that one of your case managers has been such a great person to handle my disability claim. (Angela) has always been courteous, helpful and a pleasure when I had to call. She is a caring person and very thoughtful. I just feel that she should be thanked.

Angela Bennett is a counselor I in the St. Louis DD office.

Service Awards

Please congratulate the following staff for their years of dedicated service. These milestones were reached between July-September 2008.

Five Years

Julie Ard, counselor I, Kansas City DD

Kimberly Conrad, district supervisor, Springfield South VR

Nichelle Pool, secretary II, Columbia VR

Elizabeth Smith, counselor II, Cape Girardeau VR

10 Years

Sharon Adam, secretary III, Springfield DD

Anita Baker, counselor III, Kansas City East VR

Casi Castrop, accounting specialist II, Central Office VR

Nelda Engelhardt, secretary III, Kansas City North VR

Angela Freeman, counselor III, Springfield DD

Marita Gilb, counselor III, St. Louis South VR

Brooke Hampton, district manager, Kansas City DD

John Kues, counselor III, Kirksville VR

Lynn Norton, secretary III, Kansas City DD

Catherine Sifford, secretary II, Springfield DD

Jane Woods, secretary II, Springfield DD

15 Years

Catherine Alexander, counselor II, Kansas City Downtown VR

Lorie Bergman, billing specialist II, Sedalia VR

Joyce Christopher, counselor III, West Plains VR

Kelly Cook, counselor III, Columbia VR

Nancy Dunlap, counselor III, St. Louis DD

Barbara Gahagan, secretary II, Jefferson City VR

Kimberly Gee, counselor III, St. Charles VR

Neil Harms, district supervisor, Jefferson City VR

Denise Kinkead, quality assurance specialist, Kansas City East VR

Sandra Montgomery, secretary II, Rolla VR

Trini Moreno, secretary II, St. Joseph VR

Donald Pflieger Jr., counselor III, St. Louis DD

Stephanie Pressman, secretary II, Springfield South VR

Christine Robinson, counselor III, St. Louis West VR

Duane Shumate, district supervisor, Columbia VR

Carol Tenholder, assistant district supervisor, Cape Girardeau DD

Sandra Weitkamp, counselor III, St. Charles VR

Mary White, hearing officer, Cape Girardeau DD

Yvonne Wright, district supervisor, St. Joseph VR

Rob Zirfas, district supervisor, Chillicothe VR

20 Years

Melissa Eakens, secretary II, Cape Girardeau DD

Mary Mayberry, billing specialist II, Cape Girardeau DD

Abby Mobley, counselor III, St. Louis DD

Tom Sampson, counselor III, Sedalia VR

25 Years

Jeather Smith, district supervisor, St. Louis Downtown VR

Sharon Steward, counselor III, St. Louis South VR

30 Years

Brenda Hill-Grant, secretary III, St. Louis South VR

Dale Kaiser, director, medical services, Central Office DD

35 Years

Susan Specht, secretary II, St. Joseph VR

Staff Achievements

Tom Sampson, counselor III in the Sedalia VR office, received the Bill Buell Memorial Award in September from the Brain Injury Association of Missouri. The award recognizes his outstanding service to Missouri individuals with brain injuries.



Donna Knodell (right), district supervisor of the Poplar Bluff VR office, retired July 31 with more than 28 years of service; and John Ryan (left), VR supervisor of Workforce Development and Ticket to Work in the Kansas City area, retired June 30 with more than 24 years of service.

DDS Wins Awards for Serving Missouri Citizens

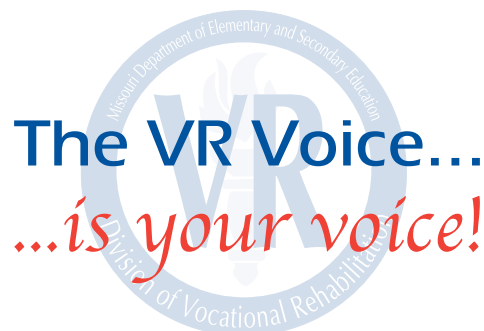
The Kansas City Region of the Social Security Administration (SSA) held its annual Regional Commissioner's Awards Ceremony on July 24 at the Westin Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City, Mo. This was another of the many years that Missouri DDS took home top honors.



The Regional Commissioner's Team Award was presented to the Transition Team in recognition of the "team approach to carrying out or supporting SSA's mission of providing world-class service." Pictured left to right: Michael Grochowski, SSA regional commissioner; Kimberly Kaemmerer, assistant district supervisor in the St. Louis office; Loretta Price, professional relations officer in the St. Louis office; Linda McMahon, SSA deputy commissioner; Brian Deuster, district manager in the Cape Girardeau office; Dale Kaiser, director, medical services at Central Office; and Ken Powell, deputy regional commissioner. Kaemmerer, Price and Deuster accepted the award on behalf of the team. Team members not pictured were Chandra Carter, computer information tech II; Nancy Dunlap, counselor III; Diane Freppon, counselor II; Harriet Jones, secretary III; Jan Lewis, secretary III; and Paul Lossman, counselor I (all from the St. Louis office).

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE: Stephanie Riley, hearing officer in the St. Louis office, received the Regional Commissioner's Managerial Excellence Award for her "superior ability in managing" her staff "while contributing significantly to the accomplishment of the overall mission of the office."

Several individuals received the Regional Commissioner's Citation, which "recognizes employees and others who have made superior contributions to SSA." Honored were Pam Goodin (top photo), Cape Girardeau; Pamela Robertson (second photo), Kansas City; Nathan Kempker (third photo), Jefferson City; and Melinda Huggins (bottom photo), Cape Girardeau. Pictured with the winners from left to right: Michael Grochowski, SSA regional commissioner; Linda McMahon, SSA deputy commissioner; and Dale Kaiser, director, medical services at Central Office.



MADE Honors Presented at Annual Conference

The Missouri Association of Disability Examiners (MADE) held its annual conference July 24-25 in Cape Girardeau. Awards were presented to six individual MADE members and one MADE chapter. While these seven awards are state awards, the nominees were also considered for Great Plains Regional Awards. (Two individuals and one chapter received both state and regional honors.)

NADE Award – State and Great Plains Region

- Awarded to: **Sheila Beggs**, hearing officer, Cape Girardeau

This award recognizes a disability professional who has made outstanding contributions, not only in the service of claimants but also in contributing time and talent to promote harmonious and more effective working relationships within the professional community.

Frank Barclay Award – State and Great Plains Region

- Awarded to: **Karen Bergmann**, quality assurance specialist, Cape Girardeau

This award is presented annually in recognition of an individual who has demonstrated exceptional ability to motivate and challenge personnel in a disability program.

President’s Award – State and Great Plains Region

- Awarded to: **Kansas City Region Chapter**

In recognition of outstanding service, this award is given to an organized National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) chapter that has enhanced interaction among its professional



Pictured left to right: Karen Bergmann, Ken Bowman (accepting for the Kansas City Chapter), Paula Niswonger, Sheila Beggs, Carla Young and Trish Chaplin.

and community partnerships through panel presentations, speeches, educational programs, community service, volunteerism and other philanthropic activities.

Charles O. Blalock Award

- Awarded to: **Carla Young**, computer information tech II, Cape Girardeau

This service award is presented annually in recognition of the founder of NADE. It is given in recognition of an individual who has made extended efforts and major contributions toward the organizational advancement of NADE.

Director’s Award

- Awarded to: **Pam Goodin**, administrative assistant II, Cape Girardeau

Given in recognition of an outstanding support staff member who demonstrates work-performance efficiency and characteristics that contribute to the efficient operation of the unit and the morale of co-workers.

John Gordon Award

- Awarded to: **Paula Niswonger**, professional relations officer, Cape Girardeau

This award recognizes a supervisor in the disability program and is designed to honor superior performance in a supervisory capacity.

Rookie of the Year Award

- Awarded to: **Julie Ard**, counselor I, Kansas City

This award recognizes a disability professional who has made a significant contribution on a local, regional and/or national level to NADE. The recipient must have been a member of NADE for less than two years at the time of nomination.

Presidential Appreciation

- Awarded to: **Trish Chaplin**, counselor II and MADE president, St. Louis

While not a NADE award, this plaque is given in recognition and thanks for service as state president of MADE.

VR's FY2009 Goals Approved

Each year, VR submits its state plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The plan is the Division's governing strategy for administering its vocational rehabilitation program. VR recently received confirmation that the FY2009 plan submitted this summer was approved.

Developing the plan is a continuous process. VR seeks input from all sources (clients, the public, underserved populations, division teams, consumer advocacy groups and more). Management reviews the information and uses it to formulate goals that drive the state plan and VR's overall strategic plan. The state plan is shared with the State Board of Education, the State Rehabilitation Council and the Client Assistance Program.

Feedback on the following goals or on any part of the state plan is encouraged. Send comments to lisa.sone@vr.dese.mo.gov.

- **Goal 1:** Effectively serve individuals with significant disabilities to increase competitive employment outcomes
- **Goal 2:** Increase utilization of assistive technology services with consumers
Objective 1: Meet or exceed the number of individuals receiving technology services
- **Goal 3:** Reduce the average amount of time from application to services
Objective 1: Maintain or reduce the number of days to determine eligibility
Objective 2: Reduce the number of days from eligibility to IPE by 5 percent
- **Goal 4:** Increase the number of high school students with disabilities exiting the VR program into employment outcomes
Objective 1: Increase the percentage of transition students reaching employment outcomes by 2 percent
- **Goal 5:** Increase employment outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder
Objective 1: Increase the percentage of employment outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder by 10 percent

Mission Champion Award

The Mission Champion Award recognizes exemplary employees who go above and beyond the agency's mission by performing outstanding service. The award is based upon the employee assisting other staff, consumers and/or partners in exceeding the agency's mission in the areas of customer service, employment outcomes, case management or other services as deemed appropriate by the employee's immediate supervisor.

June 2008

Crystal Thele	Counselor II	Cape Girardeau DD
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July 2008

Duane Shumate	District Supervisor	Columbia VR
Amy Swain	Counselor II	Cape Girardeau DD

August 2008

Debra Henry	Secretary I	Springfield North VR
Patti Hill	Admin. Asst. III	Central Office VR
Michael Metz	Asst. Dist. Supervisor	Springfield North VR
Aaron Spratt	Asst. Dist. Supervisor	Cape Girardeau DD
Laura Wallen	Quality Assurance Spec.	Sedalia VR

September 2008

Jesse Sitzes	District Supervisor	Farmington VR
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Editor's Note: VR Motion to be Monthly

The VR Motion section will soon be published on a monthly basis separate from the VR Voice. VR Motion will still announce new hires, promotions, transfers and retirements. Be on the lookout for the first edition of VR Motion to arrive in November.



voice

Please tell us how your newsletter can best serve you. Call Lisa Sone at (573) 526-7010, e-mail her at lisa.sone@vr.dese.mo.gov, or send comments to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 3024 Dupont Circle, Jefferson City, MO 65109-6188.



Loss of a Friend: Tony Logan



By Lisa Sone, Quality Manager
VR Central Office

It seems that over the last few years, I have reported on the loss of too many of our Division family members. It is with sadness that I report one more. Tony Logan, former district supervisor and regional manager of the Joplin VR office, passed away Sept. 2, 2008.

Anyone who knew Tony knew a true friend. I always saw him with a smile on his face. But, I have to admit, I always wondered whether he was up to something. Because anyone who knew Tony also knew that he was an all-out prankster.

Tony started with the Joplin office as a VR counselor in September 1978. He was promoted to district supervisor in April 1987 and assumed the dual role of supervisor and regional manager in February 2002. After 27 years of service, Tony retired in August 2005. I remember he said something about playing a little golf.



Tony Logan displays the cake celebrating his retirement in August 2005 after 27 years of service. He died Sept. 2, 2008.

Tony lived a life full of accomplishments. He played basketball for Republic High School and was part of the team that led the school to the state championship. He also played basketball in college and later coached the game as well. In 2003, he received the Administrator of the Year Award from the Missouri

Rehabilitation Association. He was also honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Independent Living Center in Joplin in 2005.

Tony's friends and co-workers will long keep his memory. Karla Bunch, district supervisor of the Joplin VR office and Tony's successor, remembers Tony as a "beautiful and gracious man" whom she "valued as a mentor, trusted like a best friend and loved like a brother." Bunch said Tony was "a valued and respected community leader" in Joplin.

Clarinda Unger, coordinator of client services, said, "Tony was a part of our rehabilitation family. He was a friend, co-worker and a leader within our agency. We were fortunate to have him as a part of our VR family. We will miss him."

Tony is survived by his wife, Andrea; his son and daughter, John and Ashley; and two grandchildren, Jordan and Kaylee.

The **VR Voice** is published by the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, a division of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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C. Jeanne Loyd, Assistant Commissioner,
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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