



VOICE

■ vocational rehabilitation ■ disability determination ■ independent living ■

MRA HONORS VR EMPLOYEES

VR employees once again took top honors at the Missouri Rehabilitation Association's (MRA) annual conference May 31-June 2 in Osage Beach. Not only were individual employees honored, but all district offices received a Certificate of Appreciation for their valuable contributions to the disabled community.

The **Outstanding Support Staff Award** honors outstanding contributions by those who go above and beyond to serve people with disabilities. Recipients were Therese Johnston (*bottom left*), secretary II, St. Charles; Becki Rikard, secretary I, Springfield North; and Charolette Thieme, secretary III, Kansas City Downtown.

The **Counselor of the Year Award** recognizes outstanding contributions by counselors in the rehabilitation community. Recipients were Kelly Cook (*top right*), counselor IV, Columbia; Jackie Crawford-Apperson (*middle right*), counselor III, Springfield North; Catherine Knowlton, counselor III, Kansas City East; and Peggy Ottersbach (*middle left*), counselor II, St. Charles.

The **Administrator of the Year Award** honors those who give outstanding service to meet the needs of their staff and the rehabilitation community. The recipient was Teresa Nianga (*top left*), district supervisor, Kansas City Downtown. She received the award from Clarinda Unger, coordinator of client services.

The **President's Award** is given by the MRA president to individuals who go above and beyond in being supportive of their position. The recipient was Tom Sampson (*bottom right*), counselor III, Sedalia.

The **MRA Lifetime Service Award** recognizes members (either working or retired) for their long-term commitment to the organization and for their dedication to serving the needs of individuals with disabilities. The recipient was Sherri Redding, counselor II, Kansas City East.





Photo: Department of Justice

Former VR Employee Nominated to U.S. Parole Commission

On May 21, President Obama nominated Cranston Mitchell, a former VR counselor and supervisor, for reappointment to the U.S. Parole Commission in the Department of Justice. Mitchell was originally nominated to the commission by President George W. Bush and was confirmed by the Senate in 2003.

Prior to joining the commission, Mitchell was a correctional program specialist for the Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections in Washington, D.C. In addition to his time with VR, Mitchell spent 18 years as chairman and director of the Board of Probation and Parole with the Missouri Department of Corrections. He was also a police officer for seven years in St. Louis.

Mitchell has received numerous awards in his career including the Vincent O’Leary Award for his contributions to the field of parole, as well as the Jonathan Jasper Wright Community Leadership Award given to him by the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice.

A native of St. Louis, Mitchell graduated from the University of Missouri-St. Louis with a bachelor’s degree in political science.

Ready, Willing and Able

By Karri Wilson, district supervisor, Sedalia VR office

In February, I was notified by Tim Gaines of Central Office that an Indiana company was interested in hiring individuals with disabilities from the Sedalia area. I was advised to follow up with the company to see if we might be able to work together. I contacted Jeff Harris of Anthony Wayne Services; he said that his company had just secured a government contract to provide staffing for the post office on Whiteman Air Force Base. The company wanted to staff some of the positions with individuals who qualified as disabled workers, and he asked if our office had any candidates who might be interested. I assured him that we did, and he agreed to call me back at a later date with more details.

To my surprise, Harris called a few days later and said that the contract had been put on a fast track. He asked if he and a colleague could come to Sedalia in two days to interview prospective candidates. Of course I responded with a resounding “yes,” but in the back of my mind I was a bit worried about getting our potential candidates identified, notified and ready for interviews on such short notice. Still, I had faith that we could do it.

We quickly got to work. Each vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) in our office identified clients who possibly fit the job criteria. Candidates had to be classified as most-severely disabled in order to meet the contract’s definition of a qualified disabled worker. Candidates also needed to have a valid driver’s license, be able to obtain base clearance and be able to learn a fairly complex job.

We also contacted our community rehab partners and asked for their assistance in identifying candidates and in preparing individuals for interviews. In all, we selected seven candidates and scheduled interviews that were less than 48 hours away.

As planned, Harris and his colleague arrived on Feb. 19. Incidentally, they had scheduled several outside candidates as well, but none of those individuals showed up. I’m pleased to say that each of our seven candidates arrived very excited, dressed appropriately and well-prepared for their interviews. Later that day, Harris told me that he was very

“It took the entire staff of the Sedalia office to make this great opportunity for employment a reality for our clients.”

impressed with the quality of our candidates. He said his company simply cannot find that level of qualified

workers in Indiana. He added that he will contact us in the future if he has more workforce needs.

When the interviews were done, three of our clients were offered full-time positions at the base working alongside other military personnel in the mailroom. Their salary was to be just over \$16 an hour. We developed individualized job-coaching plans for the workers, and they began their new positions in May.

Reports from the clients and their job coaches indicate that, so far, everything is going well. The job coaches have commented that the work is fairly complex, and they are working diligently to come up with creative ways to modify the work for our clients to ensure long-term success. However, the clients are all excelling to their own abilities and,

(Continued on p.7)

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.

An e-mail sent to Elizabeth Smith from a Richland R-I School District employee

I just thought you should know that because of your help and dedication, a life was saved. A student came in and told me that he had done his clinicals at Stoddard County Ambulance last Thursday and Friday. He asked if he could come back. He said that they told him they had never had anyone from the EMT class ask to come over, never had anyone ask to see how the ambulance worked, etc. They were going to have him sign a form, and then he could come back and ride along. I was really excited for him. However, that is not where the story ends. He proceeded to tell me that he woke up yesterday and found his dad unresponsive. He did CPR for 30 minutes until an ambulance finally came. His dad is in ICU in Sikeston right now. Anyway, I was praising him and telling him that if nothing else came out of this, he had saved his dad's life and that would be with him forever. I asked what his dad said, and he said that all his dad kept saying was "thank you" over and over.

At that moment, I was so thankful that DESE made us look at transition. You think how transition activities will help them financially in their careers and allow them to be more independent, but

you don't ever think that it could impact someone's life. I know that is the reason for him going to the EMT class, but you think about him saving people's lives after he is certified, not during. What if we had not looked at this as a transition activity? My biggest "what if" was what if VR had not approved for him to take this course while he was still in high school?

Because of you and the extra mile that you went for him, he still has his dad. He had the knowledge and the self-confidence to do what needed to be done. I hope that you will forward this on to your supervisor because he needs to know how much you helped our student and his family.

Elizabeth Smith is a counselor II in the Cape Girardeau VR office.

Feedback that Lois Bobbett, professional relations officer in the Springfield office, received from a DD consultative examiner

Dear Lois,

I wanted to let you know of my appreciation for how Rochelle Davis handled a situation during a claimant consultative examination today that was distressing to all concerned. I contacted Rochelle three or four times after this event to discuss various aspects of the situation. I was very impressed with her support of me, her helpful input and good suggestions. I felt she was very professional in her management of the situation, and I really appreciated that.

Please extend my appreciation to Rochelle and to any other appropriate person. Having that kind of assistance makes my job much easier.

Rochelle Davis is a counselor III in the Springfield DD office.

Excerpt from a letter Jim Ankrom, district supervisor of the Kansas City North VR office, received from a consumer

I am writing this letter to let you know about a wonderful employee you have. After I was disabled a few years ago, I felt hopeless and lost. On the "permit to work" program, I met Delores Sehorn. She was professional, cordial and made me feel right at home. In my middle 50s at the time, I was scared at losing my independence. Delores gave me encouragement. She was my counselor while attending college, and I am proud to say I graduated in May 2008 with a bachelor's degree. I couldn't have done it without her and Vocational Rehab.

Delores went strictly by the program rules, which at times I thought unfair. However, I also understood, even when expenditures were cut for the students. If I called Delores with a problem, she would help me if she could. Sometimes I was not happy with her answers, but she did the best she could for me.

I understand social work doesn't pay well. It is stressful with never-ending paperwork, limitations and deadlines. I worked in the medical field so I understand extremely well. She never got frustrated, hateful or rude with me no matter what problems I had. What I am trying to express to you is: without the dedication, the caring concern and sufficiency of Delores, I would have never gotten as far as I have.

Thank you for hiring such a caring counselor. It means so much these days, where people seem not to care about each other, to find a person who really cares and strives to accomplish goals within the limits of her profession and program.

Delores Sehorn is a counselor II in the Kansas City North VR office.

DDS EARNS TOP HONORS

During the past few months, Missouri DDS employees have taken top honors both regionally and nationally. Fourteen staff members were honored with regional awards and 17 were recognized with national awards.

Regional Commissioner's Awards Ceremony

The Kansas City Region of the Social Security Administration (SSA) held its annual Regional Commissioner's Awards Ceremony on June 18 at the American Heartland Theater in Kansas City, Mo.

Several individuals received the **Regional Commissioner's Citation**, which is the highest honor award. This award "recognizes employees and others who have made superior

contributions to SSA." Recipients were Suzanne Falk (*photo 2, right*), assistant district supervisor, and Donna Schudy (*photo 2, left*), secretary III, Springfield; Melissa Guilliams (*photo 3, left*), counselor III, and Kathy Sisco (*photo 3, right*), billing specialist II, Cape Girardeau; and Gerene Vincent (*photo 4*), quality assurance specialist, St. Louis.

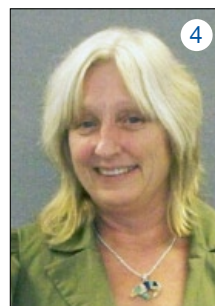
Donna Bradshaw (*photo 5*), assistant district supervisor, St. Louis, received the **Regional Commissioner's Managerial Excellence Award** for her superior ability in managing staff while helping to accomplish the overall mission of the office.

The **Regional Commissioner's Team Award** was presented to the Cape Girardeau DDS Management

Team in recognition of its approach to supporting SSA's mission. Team members include (*photo 1, left to right*) Carol Tenholder, assistant district supervisor; JoEtta Snell McCoy, assistant district supervisor; Sheila Beggs, hearing officer; Paula Niswonger, professional relations officer; Deena Exler, quality assurance specialist; and Mary White, hearing officer. (Members not pictured are Karen Bergmann, former quality assurance specialist; and Aaron Spratt, former assistant district supervisor.)

Awards for Outstanding Achievement

SSA also honored Missouri DDS during the Awards for Outstanding
(Continued on p.5)



DDS Earns Top Honors
(Continued from p.4)

Achievement at the Disability Forum on May 19 in Detroit.

The **Commissioner Citation** was awarded to Melissa Hunter (*photo 7, holding award*), counselor II, Kansas City, in recognition of her service to DDS, SSA and the citizens of Missouri. (Pictured from left to right are Linda McMahon, SSA deputy commissioner; Melissa Hunter; Ruby Burrell, SSA associate commissioner; and Michael Grochowski, SSA regional commissioner.

The **Deputy Commissioner Citation, Quality Service Award** was presented to Sharon Falter (*photo 6*), assistant district supervisor, Jefferson City, in recognition of outstanding performance and for providing exceptional and compassionate service.

The **Associate Commissioner Citation** honored the Missouri DDS California Assistance Team for outstanding performance and service to the Social Security disability program and the disabled citizens of California. Team members include (from the Springfield office) Jennifer Bates (*photo 8, holding award*), hearing officer; Kathy Davis, hearing officer; Becky McClure, counselor II; Bernadette Shively, counselor I; Susan Solum, assistant district supervisor; (from the Kansas City office) Kathy Biesmeyer, counselor III; Karen Dryden, counselor III; Diana Moresi, counselor III; Tandy Weger, former assistant district supervisor; (from the Cape Girardeau office) Tony Moyers, counselor; Kyla Ressel, counselor I; Aaron Spratt, former assistant district supervisor; (from the St. Louis office) Don Pflieger,

counselor III; Gerene Vincent, quality assurance specialist; and Maria Willson, counselor II. Bates accepted the award on the team's behalf.

NADE: Great Plains Region

Two DDS employees were recognized by the Great Plains Region of the National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) in May.

Rebecca LaMar (*photo 10*), assistant director of MIDAS training, Cape Girardeau, was honored with the **Frank Barclay Award** in recognition of her ability to challenge others toward personal and professional growth.

Beverly Lee (*photo 9*), billing specialist II, St. Louis, was recognized with the **Director's Award** in honor of her efficient performance at work and her outstanding leadership and support.



Service Awards

Please congratulate the following. These milestones were reached from April-June 2009.

Five Years

Don Jackson, counselor II, Chillicothe VR

Glenn B. Smith Sr., counselor II, Kansas City Transition VR

Christal Thomas, counselor II, St. Charles VR

10 Years

Kimberly Hulett, secretary III, Kansas City DD

Christie Viehmann, counselor III, St. Louis North VR

Chris Wilson, counselor I, Kansas City North VR

15 Years

Patricia Dodson, secretary II, Kansas City DD

Terri Haake, HR analyst III, Central Office DD

Jacqueline Thomas, intake counselor, Springfield South VR

Elizabeth Tomes, secretary II, St. Louis West/Transition VR

20 Years

Jackie Crawford-Apperson, counselor III, Springfield North VR

Charles Hermann, counselor III, St. Louis DD

25 Years

Kendall Giles-Campbell, secretary III, St. Louis Downtown VR

Pamela Goodin, administrative assistant II, Cape Girardeau DD

Lynn Scroggs, secretary III, Joplin VR

30 Years

Raymond Tretter, counselor II, St. Louis South VR

Michele VanWechel, secretary III, Jefferson City DD

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.

April 2009

Lisa Hammond	Counselor II	Cape Girardeau DD
Jennifer Kenkel	Counselor II	Springfield DD
Rick Smith	Counselor III	Kansas City DD

May 2009

Marita Gilb	Counselor III	St. Louis South VR
Kathy Kelly	Assistant Director	Central Office
Mieka Powell	Counselor I	St. Louis DD
Marianne Schmitt	Secretary III	St. Louis DD

June 2009

Chris Clause	Counselor II	Sedalia VR
Tonya Fambro	Assistant Director	Cape Girardeau VR
Bev Gardner	Counselor III	Jefferson City VR
Deb Henry	Secretary III	Springfield North VR
Veronica Hoxworth	Secretary III	St. Charles VR
Kathy Julius	Admin. Assistant II	St. Louis South VR
Randy Libbert	Director	Central Office
Lacey Maples	Secretary I	Springfield South VR
Jenny Yinger	Counselor II	Kansas City Transition VR

Yvonne Wright (right), district supervisor of the St. Joseph VR office and assistant director of workforce development, received the Twyla Morgan Advocate of the Year Award in July from Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) in St. Joseph. She also received a service award for sitting on MERIL's board for the past eight years. Kent Ahrens (left), MERIL board chairman, presented Wright with the awards.



DDS Receives Positive Feedback for Providing High Quality Service

By Myra Rackers, director of quality assurance, Central Office

Missouri DDS will make Social Security disability determinations for more than 70,000 Missourians this fiscal year. Approximately 15 percent of these determinations will be reviewed by the Social Security Administration's Disability Quality Branch (DQB). This ensures we accurately apply disability laws, rules and regulations.

Since the beginning of this fiscal year, DQB has recognized the excellent casework and customer service provided in 52 of the cases reviewed. The following individuals received this recognition (many of whom have been recognized more than once).

Cape Girardeau DDS

Melinda Huggins, counselor II
Megan Marchi, counselor II
Deborah McWilliams, counselor III
Kyla Ressel, counselor I

Aaron Sprat, asst. district supervisor
Amy Swain, counselor II
Michelle Weber, counselor

Jefferson City DDS

Jennifer Dunlap, counselor I
Terri Helming, counselor III
Julie Kujath, counselor I
Lindsey Struempf, counselor I
Dr. Janie Vale, medical consultant

Kansas City DDS

Beverly Moore, counselor II
Rick Smith, counselor III
Dr. Denise Trowbridge, medical consultant
Eric Underwood, counselor

Springfield DDS

Holley Abbey, counselor
Alison Alaimo, counselor I
Kathy Davis, hearing officer
Rochelle Davis, counselor II
Suzanne Falk, asst. district supervisor

Linda Foster, counselor III
Regina Grieshaber, asst. district supervisor
Lisa Hendrix, counselor
Susie Henry, counselor II
Debra Johnston, counselor II
Sarah Lemons, counselor II
Becky McClure, counselor II
Terry Miller, counselor I
Scott Shifflet, counselor II
Bernadette Shively, counselor I
Greg Turner, counselor III
Carleen Ziehmer, counselor III

St. Louis DDS

Joanne Moses, counselor II
Bryant Nalagan, counselor
Mieka Powell, counselor I
Nola Townley, counselor III

These individuals demonstrate our commitment toward providing exceptional service to all of Missouri's citizens. We congratulate our co-workers on a job well done!

Ready, Willing and Able (Continued from p.2)

with the help of their full-time job coaches, are learning their positions. Three VRCs and I plan to make a trip to the base sometime this summer to visit our folks and take a tour of their work site.

It took the entire staff of the Sedalia office to make this great opportunity for employment a reality for our clients. While I fielded phone calls, relayed information and served as the central contact for the employer, the

other staff pitched in as well. The VRCs took a great deal of time and care in choosing the best possible candidates. The support staff made schedules for the interviews and prepared for the large number of visitors that we were expecting.

Our community rehab partners were also essential in making this a success. As soon as they were informed of the situation, they immediately set out to assist us. Staff from the Rehabilitation Institute (Warrensburg satellite) and the Children's Therapy Center continue to be involved

in providing job coaching for the workers. They have been very responsive and flexible throughout the process, and they have truly contributed to the success of this entire endeavor.

As a result, I believe that Anthony Wayne Services has a very good impression of the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. They have continually expressed how pleased they are with our responsiveness and with the individuals they were able to hire. I anticipate a long and prosperous relationship with this employer.

In Remembrance

Two retired VR employees recently passed away. **Dave Danforth**, former VR computer information technology specialist I, Central Office, died July 1, 2009. **Duane Rogers**, former district supervisor, Rolla VR, died April 27, 2009.

Our condolences go to their families.



"If it weren't for MoVERS, I would have never had the opportunity to find a career that best suits my positive attributes and goals."

-MoVERS applicant

Visit <http://movers.dese.mo.gov>

Staff Achievements

Please take the time to recognize the following employees for their accomplishments:

Melinda Fox, counselor II, Farmington VR, became a licensed clinical social worker in June.

Sandy Hughey, counselor I, St. Louis North VR, became a licensed professional counselor in April.

David Showalter, counselor II, Kansas City Downtown VR, received the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award in June from Truman Employment Services in Kansas City.

Karri Wilson, district supervisor, Sedalia VR, received her doctorate in social work in May from the University of Missouri.

The VR Voice... ...is your voice!

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

Dr. Chris L. Nicastro, Commissioner of Education

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

For additional copies or to submit materials, contact:

Lisa Sone
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
3024 Dupont Circle
Jefferson City, MO 65109-6188
Phone: (573) 526-7010
TTY: (573) 751-0881
Fax: (573) 751-1441
E-mail: lisa.sone@vr.dese.mo.gov



Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Making a positive difference through education and service

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Title IX Coordinator, 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-751-4212.