



Investing in America

2013–2014

*The Public Vocational
Rehabilitation Program:
Employing the Talents of
Individuals with disabilities
in America's Workplace*



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Success Stories

Freedom and Confidence



Dianna Noonan's career as a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) came from blending two things with which she had extensive experience— sports (track and field) and healthcare. Dianna was born with a hearing loss that was diagnosed at four years of age, and she was prescribed hearing aids.

In high school, Dianna found her confidence through participation in track and field events. "Track showed me that my disability doesn't define me. I felt this freedom and confidence that I could express myself and show my abilities." Dianna was offered a track scholarship in pole-vaulting from Grand Valley State University and was connected with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Counselor, Mary Ann Rice, as she was graduating high school.

"Mary Ann was great! She communicated with my professors, disability services, and myself during my collegiate and graduate school years to assist in the creation and approval of academic, clinical, and work accommodations I needed to succeed as a student and a practicing physical therapist. In addition, DRS provided technological resources including closed captioning services for meetings, websites for a landline closed captioning telephone and employment rights for persons with disabilities."



My Mind and My Voice

Joshua Basile is an attorney with the law firm of Jack H. Olender & Associates, PC. The path to his success began with an appointment with his vocational rehabilitation counselor, Bridget Goines. Bridget asked Joshua, "What are your strengths?" he answered, "My mind and my voice." Ms. Goines responded, "We can work with that."

Joshua majored in communications at the University of Maryland College Park, and the Maryland Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provided support for his education and assistive technology. With DORS continued assistance, Joshua enrolled in the David A. Clarke School of Law full-time, and graduated magna cum laude. On December 17, 2013, Joshua was sworn in at the Court of Appeals and officially became an attorney.

In addition to his work assisting with medical malpractice cases, Joshua manages a foundation and a website to provide mentoring support to people with spinal cord injuries. He is an active advocate for others who have spinal cord injuries.

"DORS gave me the tools and opportunities to pursue my goal... without this support and encouragement, I would not be where I am today. Thank you, DORS and Bridget Goines for believing in me!"





The Journey to Success

Service members often enter the Veteran Services Office at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) feeling lost, overwhelmed, and sometimes on the verge of giving up their dreams of college. Then they meet Gary Mokuau, Vocational Rehabilitation consumer, recent UNR graduate and Veteran Services Coordinator. If Gary did it, so can they.

Gary grew up on the beautiful Hawaiian island of Molokai and spent 16 years serving his country in the United States Marine Corp. After a spinal cord injury in 2001, resulting in quadriplegia, Gary was forced to pursue a new career.

Gary became a consumer of the Nevada Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation in February 2010 and received a Business Degree in Finance from UNR in June of 2012. UNR then hired Gary as the Veteran Services Coordinator. The ideal student had now become the ideal employee, helping others on their journey to success.

Gary assists other veterans or students receiving veteran education benefits to navigate the paperwork and the campus. Gary's experience as a student, a veteran, and a person with a disability gives him the credibility, knowledge, and experience to encourage and provide services to over 450 non-traditional students of Veteran Services.

(l to r) Sherry Slaughter, former SCVRD consumer, and Warren Helm of the Boeing Company, and Cathy Clower and Shannon Reed of SCVRD.



A Bright Career Path

Sherry Slaughter says that Shannon Reed, Area Client Services Manager at South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD), "became my champion. She and her team put me through several levels of interview training, honing my skills and increasing my confidence."

Cathy Clower, VR Business Development Specialist, was really impressed by Sherry's professionalism. "I had been working with the Boeing Company and felt Sherry would be an ideal candidate." Through the work of the VR business development team, Sherry was offered the position of Administrative Assistant to the Boeing South Carolina Site Training Leader, Warren Helm.

Sherry admits that transitioning off disability benefits has been challenging and rewarding. "Boeing and Mr. Helm have given me all the support I need to be successful, with development opportunities and a bright career path."

Warren Helm expressed his appreciation for the work of the South Carolina VR team. "They provided me with an outstanding candidate that met all my requirements. Hiring the best people is never an easy job so I really appreciate how the staff at Vocational Rehabilitation provided me with an outstanding employee in Sherry—I could not be happier."

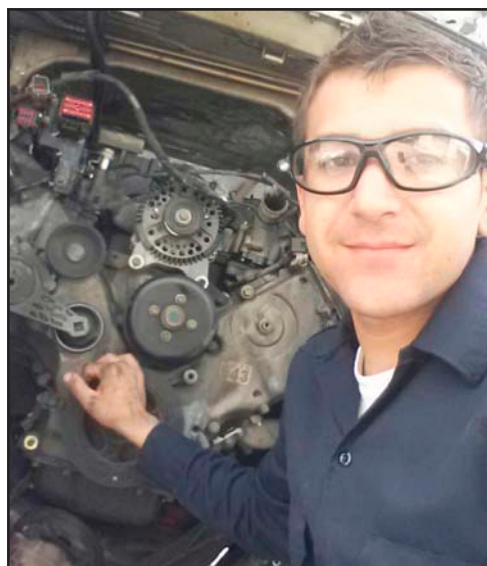
Sherry says, "I look forward to being a valuable member of the Boeing team for the next twenty years and paying them back many times over for investing their trust in me. SCVRD and Boeing have given me purpose and independence, two of life's greatest gifts!"

Sherry experiences a neurological disorder and VR services included diagnosis and treatment, counseling and guidance, referral for benefits counseling, transportation, job preparedness instruction, job search and job placement.



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Reaching Goals

From the time Ramon was in the Texas Blind Children's Program, he talked about his dream of becoming an Auto Mechanic and owning his own Auto Shop.

Ramon entered the VR Transition Program while still in high school. Due to a dual sensory loss (hearing loss and blindness) Ramon experienced problems with reading regular print, had communication barriers, and is unable to drive.

Ramon pursued an Associate Degree in Automotive Technology at El Paso Community College. The VR Transition Program provided counseling and guidance and assisted with tuition waivers, books and assistive technology. Ramon transferred to the adult VR Program where he continued to receive services to help him reach his vocational goal, including low vision aids, hearing aids, and a comfort duet to use in the Auto Shop to be able to understand coworkers.

Ramon graduated from El Paso Community College in December of 2012 and is currently employed full-time as an Auto Mechanic.



Contributing to the Richness of His Community

Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Vernal, Utah recently had the opportunity to work with USU AgrAbility of Utah, to develop a plan and provide services to a local rancher, Mr. John Snow.

John has emphysema and asthma that makes continuing farming difficult. Mr. Dan Wheeler, VR Counselor, and Luke Peterson of USU stepped in to ensure that this highly productive and hard-working man was able to maintain his employment.

AgrAbility reviewed his ranching/farming situation and made recommendations on the services VR could provide in order to facilitate John's continued ability to ranch and farm. These services included financial assistance with the cost of solar powered wheel line movers, auto and bump gates for his different pastures, Ag cameras and a UTV Kawasaki Mule. John stated all this equipment shortened the process of changing water from a couple of hours down to 30 minutes per setting.

Because of VR's assistance, John continues to ranch and contribute to the richness of his community.





Staying Focused

Justin Spurlock was a senior at King William High School in Virginia, weeks from graduation, when he was involved in a car accident that severed his spinal cord.

"My disability opened my eyes up to life a lot more and focusing on what I need to focus on," he said.

A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor from the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services contacted Justin about the services the agency could offer him. Justin initially resisted services, but then discovered the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and contacted his VR Counselor, saying, "I want to go there."

Justin received medical rehabilitation services at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center for six months, and shortly after returned to WWRC as a student where he took vocational training courses in drafting and AutoCAD. Justin was offered a six-week internship as an AutoCAD operator by a businesswoman who knew him through her sons. She also provided the technology he needed for the internship and made her home accessible with a wheelchair ramp.

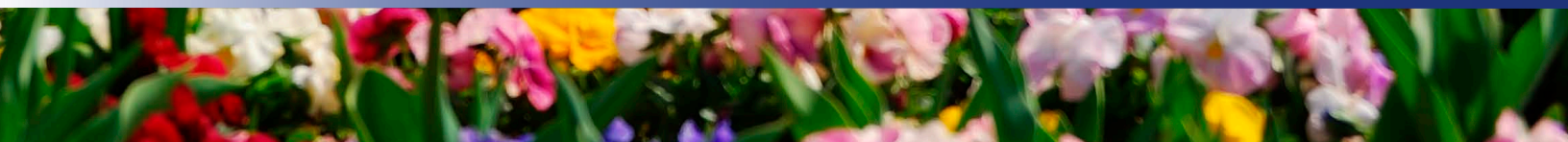
After graduation, as a result of his internship, Justin was offered a temporary job with a national company, Roof Consulting that was expected to last six weeks. Six years later, Justin continues to have great success working there.

Supporting Employment in Omak, Washington



Lee Richards greets each person he meets with a big heartfelt smile. He admits that his Autism has created barriers but he loves working the retail environment. Lee had worked as a part-time janitor at Safeway for over 10 years with perfect attendance. With the support of his Washington VR Counselor he moved to a position with Big R where he was hired as a janitor working 25-35 hours per week. This was done through a partnership between VR, a community agency and long-term supports provided by the Developmental Disabilities program in Washington. VR provided the job and intensive employment services. The DD agency will pick up the long-term supports.

Through this multi-faceted support Lee remains employed at Big 5. His family reports that work has given him structure and a sense of purpose. Lee enjoys his job and interactions with customers. He enjoys joking around with customers, many of whom have known him for years through his previous employment and are excited to see him working again. VR is Working in Washington!





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Business Partnerships



Iowa VR Partners with Manpower: Temp to Perm Results in a Career

Byron Waite was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes which resulted in hospitalizations and the amputation of some fingers. Byron's family of seven was surviving on state assistance (food stamps and Medicaid). He connected with Iowa VR who supported his education, provided career counseling and assistive technology. Byron had completed his BA in Business Administration and worked with VR to take additional classes to upgrade his IT skills and certification.

Byron was not getting interviews when he applied for jobs because of his lack of current work experience. Byron worked with VR and Manpower to obtain temporary employment as a way to develop his work experience. This temporary opportunity led to a career when Byron was hired full time as a Controller with the Domestic Violence Intervention Program at the rate of \$17.00 per hour with benefits.

During the spring of 2013 Byron had to take a leave of absence due to medical issues that required a below-the-knee leg amputation. However, he returned to work within two weeks noting that his desire to return was a positive motivator in his recovery. He told his counselor, "It's good to know I'm needed."

This opportunity was made possible through Access2Ability™, a partnership between VR and Manpower that provides workforce solutions and talents of qualified candidates with disabilities to local business and industry.



The VR-National Employment Team (NET) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with **Manpower**. The MOU addresses on the NET's work at the national and state level with the Access2Ability™ program. This partnership focuses on the use of temp to perm employment to assist VR candidates in building work experience and increasing their opportunity to obtain career focused employment.

California VR Partners with Project Search



Lady Idos, pictured left, and Christen Dinh

The Lawrence Berkeley National Lab recently hired four new employees in entry-level clerical positions. They happen to have intellectual disabilities. These nine-month appointments include pay above minimum wage, benefits, and union representation.

The Lab identified these individuals through VR's collaboration with community partner, East Bay Innovations (EBI) and Project Search. Project Search is a national program that provides job training for adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. They partner with employers to further their job training as interns. The participants include Christen Dinh in Human Resources.

California VR Partners with Project Search—cont'd

“Our goal is to bring Project Search employees on as permanent staff if possible, and provide work experience they can put on a resume to increase their chances of getting jobs with other employers,” according to Lady Idos, who is coordinating the Lab’s participation in the Project Search program.

“Not only do they contribute to the daily business operation by performing their duties with skill, but they are also part of our talent pipeline for recruiting and employment,” she says. “Providing qualified individuals with disabilities an opportunity to enter our workforce adds important cultural and cognitive diversity to the Lab community.”

CSAVR and the NET Launch the Talent Acquisition Portal® (TAP)

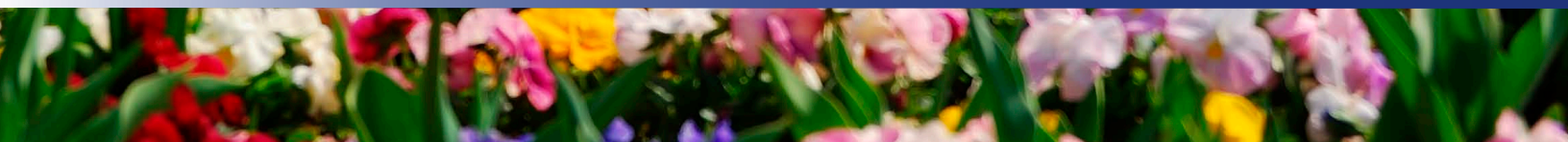


The National Employment Team (NET) of CSAVR has been working in partnership with disABLEDperson, Inc. to develop a national talent pool of VR candidates. TAP was developed in response to requests from both individual and business customers. VR candidates wanted an easy way to connect with businesses that have employment opportunities across the country and in the territories. Business customers wanted an efficient and effective way to connect with qualified applicants across the country and access the nation’s largest talent pool of candidates with disabilities. TAP was built in partnership with the U.S. Business Leadership Network and the National Industry Liaison Group and included input from various private and public sector entities, including Federal partners.

programs, to post their resume to the online talent pool. These profiles or resumes include the vocational objective of the individual as well as work experience, degrees/certifications/licenses and any special training, second languages, security clearances, geographic availability and a variety of other information requested by employers. A VR candidate can search and apply for positions that are posted as well as connect with employers directly. Business has the opportunity to recruit candidates, search profiles, conduct online interviews, career fairs or hiring events. The employer can also generate a report showing how many candidates from TAP applied for positions, were interviewed and hired.

TAP allows VR candidates, including those from the public, Veterans and American Indian Rehabilitation

TAP is supported by NET Business Consultants who support employers at the national, state and local level. Log on to the CSAVR website to get connected and learn more about the NET as well as TAP at www.rehabnetwork.org or www.tapABILITY.org.





www.rehabnetwork.org