



ANNUAL REPORT

FFY 2018



Indiana
**VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**
Empowering People. Changing Lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON _____	1
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR _____	3
MISSION, VISION & VALUES _____	6
WHERE ARE THEY NOW? _____	7
IN THE SPOTLIGHT _____	9
RENEE JEWELL _____	10
TIMOTHY BURKLOW _____	12
JAMIE BECK _____	14
DEASIA STONE _____	16
2018 STAFF AWARDS _____	18
2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS _____	19
Pre-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES _____	20
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT _____	22
COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS _____	24
EMPLOYMENT FIRST _____	25
COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT _____	26
COMMISSION FUNCTIONS _____	27
COMMISSION OUTREACH _____	28
COMMISSION MEMBERS _____	29
CONTACT THE COMMISSION _____	30

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

It has been an honor to serve as the Chair of Indiana's State Rehabilitation Commission over the last year. As an individual with a disability and a former Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumer, I am keenly aware of the importance of the services offered by this fine program. I attribute a good deal of my professional success to the support and encouragement

I received from my Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and believe that everyone with a disability seeking support from VR deserves the best that our state has to offer.

First of all, I want to take the time to thank all of the dedicated members of the Rehabilitation Commission for their hard work over the last year. We have a diverse and dedicated group of individuals who have provided and shared their expertise, participated on various subcommittees, and have been eager participants in any number of Commission meetings, VR regional meetings, and outreach events. I also want to thank the leadership of Vocational Rehabilitation for their hard work, transparency, and genuine desire to work towards continuous improvement.

As Commission members, we have worked diligently to fulfill our responsibilities of: reviewing, analyzing, and advising the leadership of Vocational Rehabilitation as to the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services. We have provided feedback on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey, State Plan, VR policy, as well as Pre-employment Transition Services and

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

capacity building efforts. I also want to make special mention of the Employment First Subcommittee and all of their hard work pioneering Indiana's Employment First initiative.

As the Chair of the Commission I want to assure Indiana residents that we as a Commission, in our advisory capacity, are remaining abreast of any and all initiatives being taken by the leadership of Vocational Rehabilitation to build capacity that will move our state closer to exiting out of Order of Selection. Additionally, we have advised the Leadership of Vocational Rehabilitation as well as stakeholders that our state should look closely at opportunities to maximize funding for the Indiana VR program to aid in the employment of people with disabilities.

In closing, I want to encourage citizens in the state of Indiana to stay involved. Feel free to reach out to me or other Commission members to share your suggestions, ideas, and concerns. I believe that the best way to effectuate positive change is to work together. Your input is not only welcome, but greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Michaels". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Michaels, Commission Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we wrap up another year, I want to share my appreciation for every hardworking member of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) staff, the dedicated members of the Commission on Rehabilitation Services, providers, vendors, and other stakeholders for their passion, their excellent work, and the many accomplishments realized in 2018.



Some major focus areas in 2018 included:

- Collaboration with contracted partners to expand pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities and ensuring that services were made available in all 92 counties;
- Continued funding of more than 40 Establishment project contracts with Employment Service Providers to enhance provider staffing capacity and foundational skills with the goal of improving the quality of services and outcomes;
- Collaboration with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) on several initiatives, including development and submission of Indiana's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan. DWD and BRS also jointly submitted an application to the Department of Labor and were selected for participation in a customer service cohort to improve services and access to individuals with disabilities;
- Continued efforts to modernize the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case management system, which will result in increased efficiency, more streamlined federal reporting processes, reduced ongoing costs, and enhanced customer service;

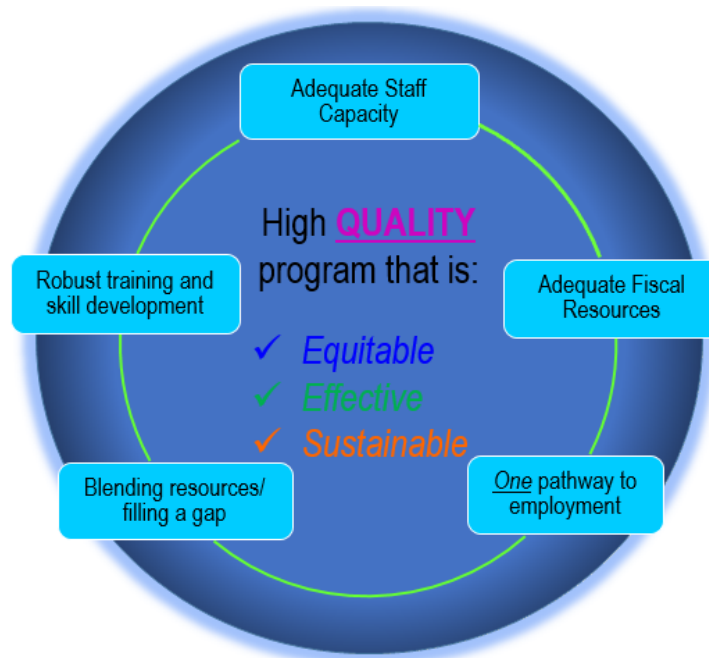
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

- Development of an electronic VR vendor registration process, and continued efforts to develop an electronic claims payment system, which will streamline billing processes, increase efficiency of staff, and result in more timely payment to vendors;
- Improving compliance activities to resolve several federal monitoring and state audit findings, including substantial improvement in timely eligibility and plan development; and
- Completing a comprehensive review of VR promulgated rules to identify necessary revisions for improved clarity and equitable service delivery.

Perhaps my most treasured experiences in 2018 were my visits and conversations with VR field staff. After visiting all VR offices across the state, I gained an even greater appreciation for our staff and the true value VR staff bring to the VR program as a whole. I learned of several VR 'superstars' and subject matter experts, as well as numerous innovative ideas and best practices, many of which were incorporated into written guidance and shared with staff statewide. The opportunity to spend time with VR staff reinforces my belief that staff who are engaged in their work and who treat those they serve with dignity, respect and kindness, are an organization's most valuable asset.

In 2018, I shared a renewed vision for the VR program with VR staff, the Commission on Rehabilitation Services, and numerous stakeholders. The Indiana VR program strives to be a high quality program that is effective, equitable, and sustainable. There are several key components to realizing this vision, including ensuring adequate staff capacity through strategies such as improving staff retention and recruitment strategies with no or low cost efforts, technology system modernization to improve system efficiency, and increased emphasis on staff recognition, among other strategies. Adequate fiscal resources are also important and can be realized by increasing opportunities to blend funding and enhanced partnerships with other workforce programs to improve access to and utilization of multiple pathways to employment for individuals with disabilities. Finally, it is critical that robust training continue to further enhance the skills of both VR and Employment Service Provider staff through strategies such as Establishment Projects, enhancement of the VR Leadership Academy, and ongoing opportunities for training at both the state and local level.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



I would like to take this opportunity to remind staff and stakeholders of the valuable work we get to perform each day. While this work does not come without its challenges, the rewards we gain from finding the potential in each VR participant, seeing first hand each individuals' unique strengths and interests, and playing a small part in helping them to achieve success, far outweigh the challenges. The 2018 annual report features success stories that remind us of the impact that VR assistance has in helping individuals with disabilities to achieve a better life and to realize their employment goals. These stories are just a few examples that showcase the tremendous value of the VR program. I continue to be so very proud and humbled to be a part of it and to work with all of you!

Best wishes in 2019!

Theresa Koleszar, Director
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION STATEMENT

To assist persons with disabilities in achieving employment and independence.

A SHARED VISION WITH VR SERVICES

**Focusing on Long-Term Employment Success for Hoosiers with Disabilities
In Partnership with VR Services.**

VALUES STATEMENT

VALUE 1 - We value persons with disabilities and their equal opportunity to maximize employment, independence, and, to fully participate in their rehabilitation program.

VALUE 2 - We value quality services for persons with disabilities to achieve employment and independence.

VALUE 3 - We value staff as Vocational Rehabilitation Services' greatest resource.

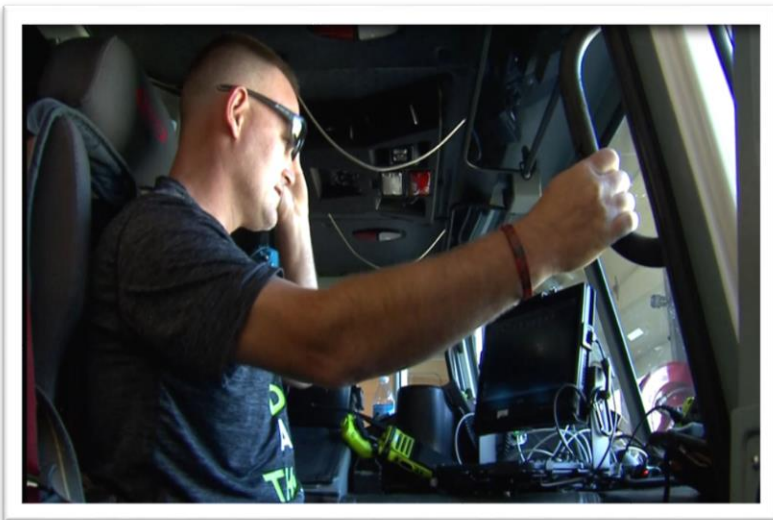
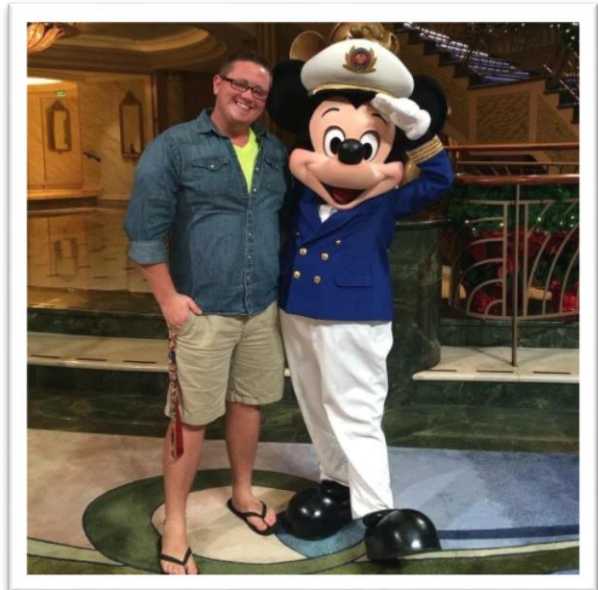
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Last year we featured four individuals who achieved their employment goal with the assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation Services. A year later we are happy to report all four are still employed!

JUSTIN MANN

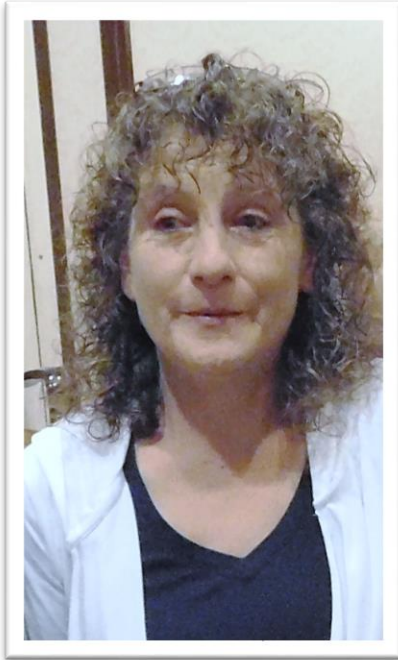
Justin is still working at his dream job with Disney World. He is currently in training for a new role with the company as a Guest Relations cast member. Justin recently married his lifelong partner Jordan in Las Vegas and he just happens to work for Disney Cruise Line.



BRANDON ANDERSON

Brandon is still working full-time as a Lieutenant on E393 with the Fishers Fire Department. He told us “thing are going well. As you can imagine there are always new challenges. I just try to learn from each one and move forward.”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

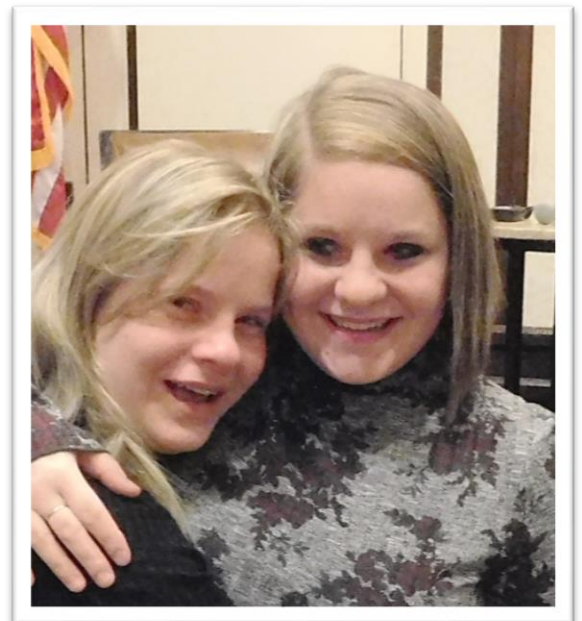


PAMELA SHIREMAN

Pam continues in her employment with Goodwill at Fort Harrison. Her performance remains at a high level and she received a raise! Pam has experienced many health issues over the past year but has overcome those barriers and has been able to maintain her job. Pam lives in her own apartment and recently purchased a car to commute to work each day.

YULIA REYNOLDS

Yulia moved to Florida a few months ago with her mother and twin sister. Mom inherited some land and they are opening a campground. Yulia will be working in the family business. She and her twin have their own living quarters and are enjoying having more independence. Yulia is enrolled in a swimming program to become a lifeguard so she can work at the pool in the campground.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

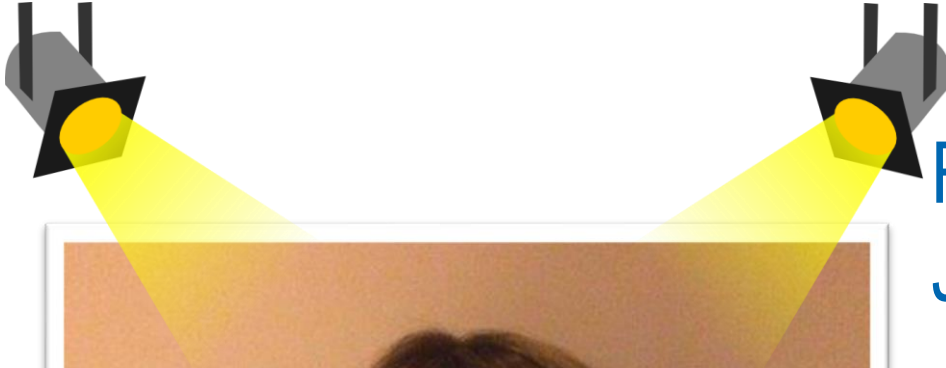


In the
Spotlight

Each year we focus the spotlight on outstanding individuals who were able to achieve their employment goals with the assistance of VR and other local partners. This year we have four unique stories to share with you.

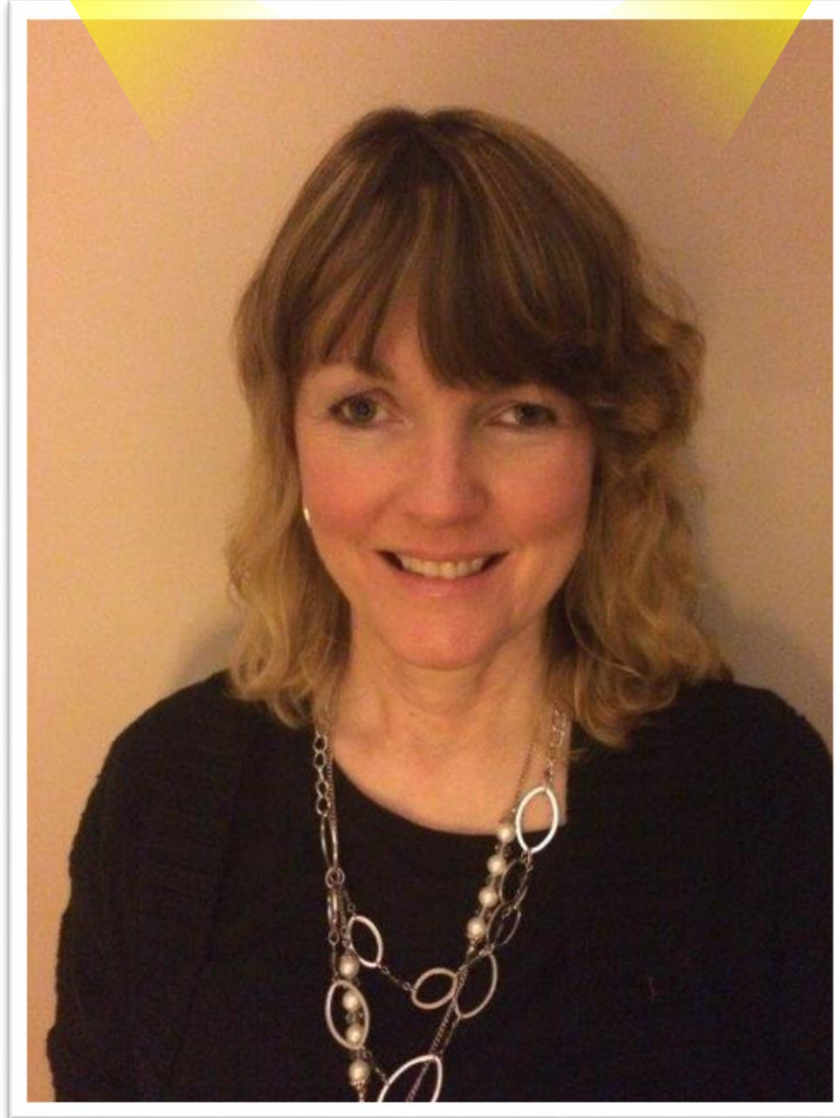
Special thanks to Renee Jewell, Timothy Burklow, Jamie Beck and Deasia Stone for allowing us to share their stories success!

RENEE JEWELL



RENEE JEWELL


Submitted by Renee Wright, VR
Counselor




As a former recipient of VR services, and now in my role as a VR counselor, I have had the marvelous opportunity to witness first-hand the tremendous positive impact VR has made in my own life, and in the lives of the consumers VR staff serves each day. Kathy Ashley, who passed away in 2014, was my first VR counselor. She embodied all the qualities of what I consider to be an excellent VR counselor. She was warm, genuine, caring, creative, and a big believer in people's potential. Her shining example is one I try to live up to each day in my own practice as a VR counselor. When Kathy and I met, I was a hostess at MCL Cafeteria, making minimum wage. Kathy observed I could not see well, and on one of her

lunchtime visits asked me if I would be interested in owning my own business in a program especially designed for individuals who were legally blind. Well, of course I was! I applied for VR services, received training on how to operate a vending business, and was a vendor in the Blind Enterprise Program (BEP) program for 17 years. Owning my own business provided me with financial stability and confidence in myself. However, business ownership had its own share of challenges, and I had a dream to one day help people who lost their vision live up to their own potential.

So back to VR I went in 2009. I explained to my VR counselor at the time that although I had been blessed for many years with a successful business, times had changed, and it was difficult physically to keep up with the demands of the day-to-day operations. In addition, I had reached a point in the program where there was really no further opportunity for upward mobility. My VR counselor at the time patiently listened, and asked me what my future goals were for employment. I shared with her that I wanted to work as a counselor with people who were blind and visually impaired. She believed in me, and we developed a plan for me to get the necessary education to work in social services. Little did I know at the time that I would one day be a VR counselor!



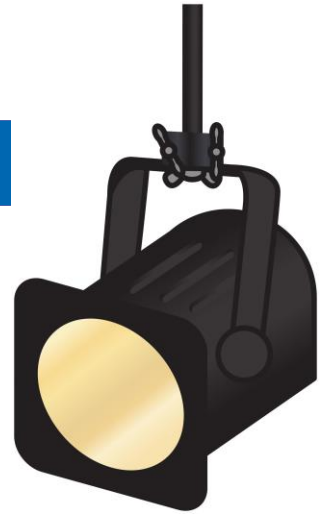
***“I wanted to work as a counselor
with people who were blind and
visually impaired.”***



In the spring of 2014 I was set to graduate from the MSW program at IUPUI, and was working with an Employment Consultant at Bosma to explore my job options. On April 10, I got the news I had Stage 3 breast cancer, treatment would start immediately, be aggressive, and there were no guarantees about the outcome. I had a heart to heart with my VR counselor Renea Semones, and we discussed if it might make sense to put my job search on-hold. I ended up deciding to plow ahead by walking across the stage to get my MSW that May, and then continue looking for a job. I had worked too hard and come too far to just stop. I decided that cancer just would have to come along for the ride in the pursuit of my goals and plans. Melanie Wells, the Manager of Bosma’s employment services at the time asked me if I would be interested in applying for a position as a VR counselor. She said I met the qualifications, and that the job was a good fit for my skills and interests. I did indeed apply, and was invited for an interview. Steve Upchurch, who was an Area Supervisor at the time, interviewed me, and told me that the position was for a specialist who worked with blind and visually impaired consumers. Needless to say I was excited! Steve did not bat an eye when I told him I was going through cancer treatment. He told me about the job, and asked me about my skills and abilities, choosing to focus on what I could bring to the organization, and not my limitations. I then interviewed with a panel of VR employees in Steve’s office, and felt like I was right at home. I jumped for joy when I was offered the position! VR made accommodations so I could get my cancer treatments, and the assistive technologies I required to do my job.

I have now been a VR counselor for 3 years, and thoroughly enjoy the work I do on behalf of people with disabilities. I am also happy to report I am cancer free! Yes, being a VR counselor is demanding and challenging, but is also extremely re-warding! I have the privilege of helping empower consumers to overcome their own challenges so they can live independently and work in fulfilling jobs in their communities. I experience a great sense of gratification and pride each day by getting to be a small part of the tremendous life-changing outcomes that I see with the consumers VR serves.

TIMOTHY BURKLOW



TIMOTHY BURKLOW

Submitted by Steve Upchurch, Training and Professional Development Manager

Tim had most recently been a machine operator, but could no longer perform that job due to complications from degenerative disc disease and resulting nerve damage that resulted in excruciating lower back pain and numbness in the lower right leg.

Tim underwent several back surgeries, but still suffered pain and bouts of incapacitation. “If I did yard work, I would typically have two days in bed after that,” Tim said.

When he came to VR, he wasn’t sure exactly what he wanted VR assistance with. He knew he wanted to either go back to school or work “even one day a week,” as he said “not working has been a big shock to my system.”

Tim’s VR Counselor, Melissa Voegel helped him decide on a goal of Business Operations Specialist. Most of his previous work experience was as a production supervisor, so this seemed like a good fit. With VR assistance, Tim enrolled at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville and earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management in the spring of 2017.



TIMOTHY BURKLOW

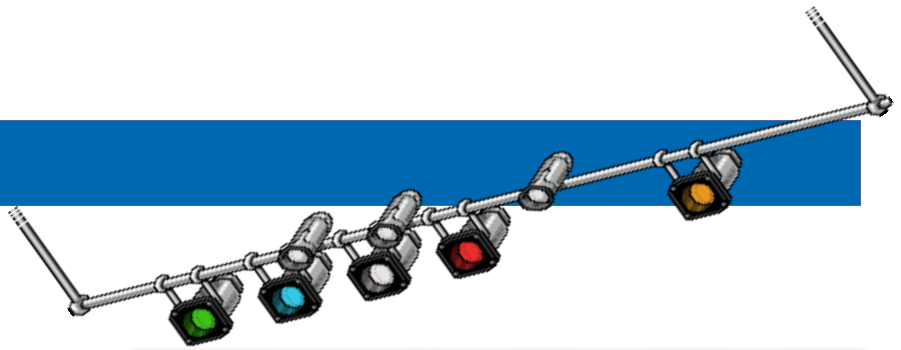
For the next several months, VR provided job placement assistance to Tim through Assist, Inc., and in March of 2018, Tim accepted a position as the Food Safety & Quality Coordinator at Midwestern Pet Foods in Evansville. He is salaried and receives insurance, retirement and paid time off benefits. Midwestern sent Tim to trainings and meetings in several states, including New York, Pennsylvania and Colorado for business.



“VR helped put me in the right direction. When I first met with Melissa, I didn’t even know college was an option.”

Tim said he very pleased with VR’s assistance in helping him get back into the workforce. “VR helped put me in the right direction. When I first met with Melissa, I didn’t even know college was an option.” He is grateful for the assistance that VR has provided, and the career path that has opened up for him. “VR helped me get to where I am now.”

JAMIE BECK



JAMIE BECK

Re-printed with permission from Achieva Resources.

Jamie Beck lived with her mother and stepfather in Economy, IN. In 2009, her mother passed away and then her father passed away in 2012. She was found walking late at night in the neighborhood. When APS arrived, they found out that Jamie did not have any family. Dan Stewart, CEO of Achieva Resources was contacted by Judge Kolger and Jamie was placed in



emergency and then permanent guardianship. Jamie was placed in a nursing home temporarily until proper facilities could be found for her. Jamie did not need a nursing home and was more capable than most of the residents. She helped the other residents at meal time and with fun activities as well as in the cafeteria. Mr. Stewart was busy working to get Jamie her Medicaid Waiver that was eventually granted.

Gaining the Medicaid Waiver allowed Jamie to move out of the nursing home and into a Supported Living Home, in Richmond and to start work at Benchmark's Workshop to earn a little spending money. Jamie was a work-aholic and earned \$350-\$400 every two weeks.

 *Let's get this started!* 

About a year later, Jamie decided she wanted to get a job in the community. Mr. Stewart suggested they get together and start her resume. Jamie said, "Let's get this started." So he helped her craft a resume. Jamie finished school at Hagerstown High School with a Certificate of Completion. She took her resume all over Richmond and did not get an interview. Mr. Stewart called the mayor and said, "This is horrible, we have to get this young lady a job." The Mayor asked Jamie to come and speak before the Council next Wednesday night. Jamie told the Council that people like her were really unable to get a job in the community because they are never really given a chance if they only had a Certificate of Completion. There were two councilmen that said, "Jamie, if you get me your resume tomorrow, I will help you." And then Jamie piped up, "I have it right here." The next day she got a phone call asking her to come to Pizza King for an interview. She interviewed and they hired her on the spot.

JAMIE BECK

As time went on, Jamie wanted a job with benefits that would pay what her three part-time positions were paying. Jamie visited the Erskine Green Training Institute in Muncie. Jamie checked out all of the classes they offer, shadowed a few people, and then chose environmental services. Through Erskine Green, Jamie learned to clean the patient's rooms at Ball Memorial Hospital and how to do the job well. Mr. Stewart got a phone call from Jamie's supervisor at 11 weeks. They wanted to hire her immediately. This journey ended in December and Jamie started her new job at Ball Memorial Hospital on May 21st.

Jamie had a great caseworker that helped her find a potential housemate. They spent time together to make sure they could live in the same apartment. On May 14, Jamie moved from the Supported Living Group Home in Richmond to an apartment close to the hospital, in Muncie, with a housemate.

Jamie has won a couple of awards. Jamie has won the ARC of Indiana's Self-Advocate of the year award. Well that was good but now what? Indiana has a trade association and Mr. Stewart nominated Jamie for the Justin Dar Award. Jamie won that award.

Currently, Jamie has a Supported Decision Making team that she chose. They will help her make decisions and choices, but Jamie makes really good choices. We are very proud to have Jamie as the first person in Indiana that will be using a formal Supported Decision Making agreement.



Achieva Resources would like to thank Justin Schrock and Melissa Keyes with Indiana Disability Rights, Erica Costello with the Indiana Supreme Court, Pat Masters (previous Adult Protective Services Director), Karen Fisher with Indiana Professional Management Group (IPMG) as Case Manager, the Honorable Gregory A. Horn with Superior Court 2 Wayne County Courts and Dan Stewart as guardian and advocate. Jamie could not have accomplished all of this without their support. Achieva Resources is honored to be part of Jamie's story!



DEASIA STONE

Submitted by Steve Upchurch, Training and Professional Development Manager

Deasia Stone graduated this past spring from Lawrence Central High School with a Certificate of Completion, and from Project SEARCH at Community Hospital North. She began working with Vocational Rehabilitation in June of 2017, and Julia Blunk served as her counselor.

Deasia had been diagnosed with mild cognitive deficits and specific learning disabilities. During high school, she was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in multiple job shadows and work experiences, where she learned she enjoyed interacting with others.

During the VR application process, Deasia said she wanted to get involved in Project SEARCH because she likes to work with people, and she wanted to prepare herself to be more independent in the future. Her internship rotations for Project SEARCH were in the Rehabilitation Hospital, Women's Health, and Surgery Center. She was hired full time at the Community North Surgery Center after showing the department her incredible work ethic and positive attitude.



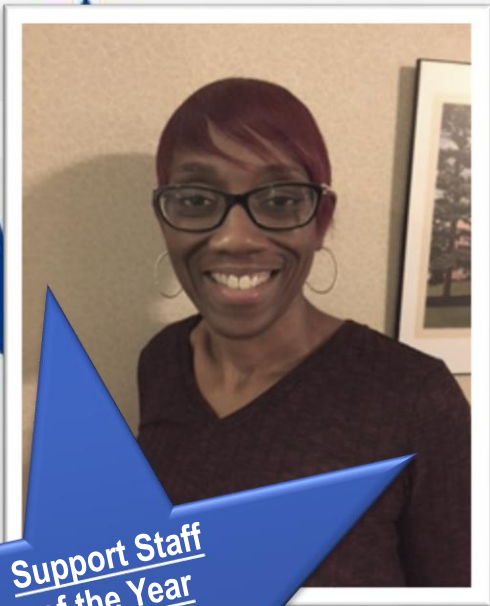
DEASIA STONE

Deasia is very independent and takes the bus to get to work each day. Per Julia, she “loves taking the patients to nuclear medicine and the breast center. She helps calm their nerves, too!” Deasia has excelled in her position in the Surgery Center, and was named Employee of the Month for October 2018! Congratulations, Deasia and Julia!

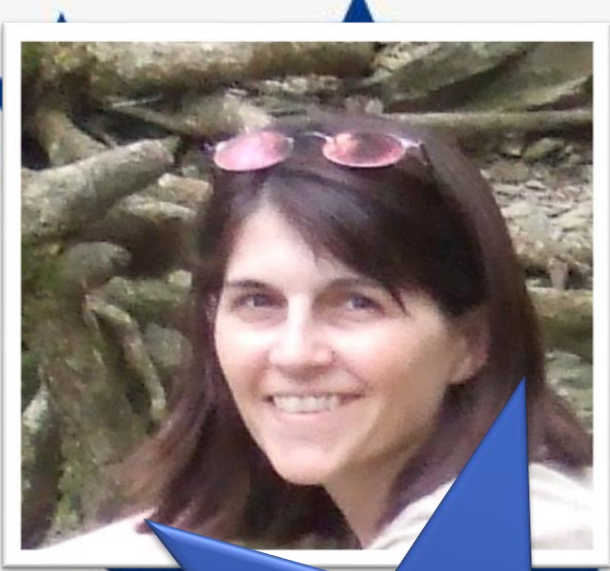


*Employee
of the
Month!*

2018 STAFF AWARDS



**Support Staff
of the Year**
LaVelda Turner
Case Coordinator,
Gary VR



**Counselor of
the Year**
Lora Coffey
VR Counselor,
Clarksville VR



Rising Star
Tracy White
VR Counselor,
Elkhart VR



Leadership
Bryan
Zimmerman
Area Supervisor,
Ft. Wayne VR

2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Business and Community Engagement

Commission Accomplishments

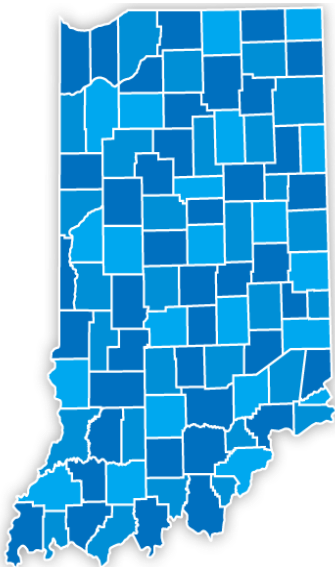
Employment First



PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Pre-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to students with disabilities age 14-22 who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. Pre-ETS activities include job exploration counseling; work based learning experiences; counseling on enrollment in post-secondary training opportunities; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.



Pre-ETS are available in all 92 counties statewide. BRS continues to carry out services through both VR staff and contractors, including two new contractors initiated in 2018. Services are provided during the school day, after school, and during the summer, and may be provided one-on-one or in a group setting. More information about Pre-ETS can be viewed at <https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/5474.htm>

In addition to carrying out Pre-ETS through staff and contracted partners, the VR Youth Services team, with assistance from the VR Business and Community Engagement team, and in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Education and local schools, continued to coordinate VR Pre-ETS Mentoring Days in 2018. These mentoring days were initiated in 2017 and consist of student tours of local

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

businesses, along with discussion of workplace readiness skills. Speakers from Self-Advocates of Indiana, as well as the local WorkOne centers, also attend and speak with students about the importance of self-advocacy, and how to explore job options and other post-secondary opportunities at the local WorkOne. Two mentoring days were held in 2018, at the U.S. Census Bureau in Jeffersonville, Indiana, as well as at Hoosier Pattern in Decatur, Indiana. They were well received by both students and educators and more mentoring days are planned for 2019.



The U.S. Census Bureau currently employs about 4,285 staff members nationwide. The Census Bureau is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The U.S. Census Bureau is overseen by the Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA) within the Department of Commerce. The Economics and Statistics Administration provides high-quality economic analysis and fosters the missions of the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy.



Hoosier Pattern Inc. is a pattern shop and additive manufacturer providing foundry tooling and 3D printed sand molds for custom castings. It specializes in Foundry Tooling, Additive Manufacturing 3D Printing of Sand, 3D Modeling, Laser

Scanning / Reverse Engineering, CNC Vertical and Horizontal Machining Centers, EDM, Patternless Castings, Cimatron CAD and CAM, On Time Deliveries, CNC Lathes. Hoosier Pattern offers an apprentice program consisting of 10,000 working hours (five years) and 12 classes taken at IVY Tech Community College. Apprentices generally start out in the shop helping set up jobs in the machining centers. They rotate into every department in the shop by the end of the apprenticeship. Upon completion of their apprenticeship the new journeyman will settle into a department where their skills, passion and company needs are met.

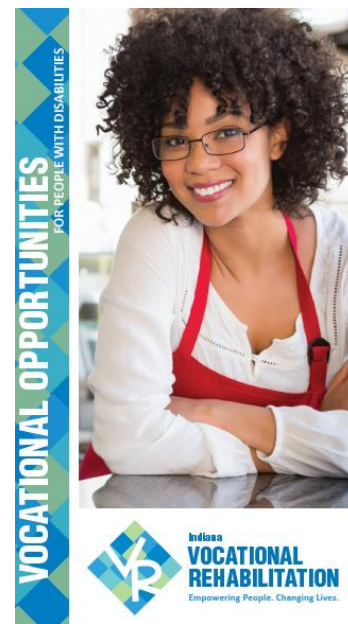
For more information on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) visit our webpage:

<https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/5474.htm>

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2018, the VR Business & Community Engagement team continued their efforts to identify and connect resources around disability hiring to businesses. A few of the year's highlights are included below.

- As many know, March and October are Disability Awareness, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, respectively. This year, the VR Business and Community Engagement team created a custom program for Enterprise Holdings for their Indianapolis based hiring managers. This was a first of its kind collaboration between the Easterseals Crossroads Assistive Technology Team, The Erskine Green Training Institute and Timmy Global Health's Dr. Chuck Dietzen. BRS looks forward to future collaborations.
- BRS continued to build upon a great working relationship with the Department Workforce Development (DWD) and have begun sharing employer data through DWD's new customer relationship management (CRM) system for business relationship tracking called **INGage**. This will help everyone to know which businesses are actively working with the two state agencies.
- New promotional VR materials were designed, created and distributed to all VR offices. The informational brochures and banner were updated with current information and a new and improved look. These materials are provided to VR participants, used at resource fairs, and placed in a variety of locations to raise awareness about the VR program.



BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Vocational counseling and guidance • Services for students with disabilities to make the transition from school to work • Job placement assistance, including supported employment • Training for a job, including vocational school, college/university and on-the-job training • Assistive technology, including devices like speech-to-text software • Physical and mental restoration services • Rehabilitation technology (e.g. vehicle modifications) • Personal assistance services • Small business operation as an employment outcome



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA! VR continues to use social media to promote awareness, change perceptions of employment for individuals with disabilities, and share stories of success.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/INVocationalRehabilitation/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/IndianaVR>

COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following accomplishments were achieved by the Commission during 2018:

- Election of new VR Commission Officers;
 - James Michaels, *Commission Chairperson*
 - Scott Beauchamp, *Vice-Chairperson*
 - Karen Rusk, *Secretary*
- Conducted a business meeting at the Erskine Green Training Institute and Teaching Hotel in Muncie, IN, which is a nationally recognized training opportunity that develops employment skills to enable people with disabilities to obtain employment. The meeting included the opportunity to meet with trainees and tour the facility;
- Reviewed committee descriptions and re-aligned committee responsibilities to be more effective;
- Expanded committee work to include the development of an Employment First Committee to comply with new state legislation;
- Reviewed and made recommendations to BRS for updates to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan;
- Attended regional VR Symposiums held in the Fall of 2018;
- Identified guest presentations for meetings to increase knowledge and awareness of members, and foster opportunities for collaboration and outreach to expand statewide awareness of the Commission; and
- Worked with state government leaders in an effort to ensure that the Commission's membership was in compliance with federal requirements.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

With the implementation of Employment First legislation in 2017, the responsibilities of the Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services were expanded. A new responsibility of the commission is to provide recommendations concerning the implementation and progress toward advancing competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities as described in IC 22-9-11.(5).

In 2018, the Commission on Rehabilitation Services established an Employment First committee and identified several stakeholders, including both appointed commission members and non-members, to serve on this committee. The committee was very active throughout 2018, conducting numerous meetings throughout the year and forming three sub groups to focus on barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities; review of data regarding employment of individuals with disabilities; and employer engagement. Each subgroup submitted initial draft recommendations to the commission for consideration in the development of a statewide plan to support the advancement of competitive integrated employment, including self-employment, as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities. The commission is reviewing recommendations and in 2019, will continue to work toward the development of this plan.

BRS would like to extend our appreciation to the commission and all members of the Employment First committee for all of their efforts throughout 2018 to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. We look forward to continued collaboration in the New Year.

Nancy Davisson – Committee Chair

Sara Chestnut
Christine Dahlberg
Bitta DeWees
Brian Gilbert
Judith Gross
Shelby Jennett
Tim Kirk
Lisa Rector

Lise Pace
Richard Propes
Susan Rinne
Kathleen Parks-Savich
Michelle Schaefer
Thomas Summerville
Ben Trockman



COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Survey for VR Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

Indiana VR's next comprehensive statewide needs assessment, which is required to be conducted every three years, is due in 2019. This is a joint effort of VR and the Commission on Rehabilitation Services. In development of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, VR will be requesting your feedback on the need for services or gaps in services for individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities and those who are unserved or underserved. VR is also seeking input on Pre-Employment Transition Service needs of students with disabilities, and needs of employers in recruiting and hiring job seekers with disabilities. The survey will be completed in early 2019. Visit our web page for more information.

<https://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/2636.htm>

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

COMMISSION FUNCTIONS

The Commission's responsibilities are outlined in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. In performing the following functions, the Commission must consult with the State Workforce Investment Board:

- Review, analyze, and advise the VR Services program regarding their performance related to eligibility, order of selection, the extent, scope and effectiveness of VR Services, and functions performed by VR Services that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome.

In partnership with the VR Services program, the Commission must:

- Develop, agree to, and review the state's goals and priorities;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the VR Services program and submit an annual report to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration;
- Assist with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities living in the state, which is undertaken every three years;
- Advise VR Services regarding its activities;
- Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, amendments to the Plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations, including those necessary for the VR Services program to satisfy the requirements of developing a comprehensive system of personnel development and establishing an order of selection;
- Review and analyze the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, VR Services functions, services provided by VR Services and others, and employment outcomes achieved by VR Services consumers;
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the governor and the commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the VR Program in the state, and make the report available to the public;
- Coordinate the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council with the activities of other councils, such as the State Independent Living Council (SILC), the advisory panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council, the State Mental Health Planning Council, and the State Workforce Investment Board;
- Provide for the coordination and the establishment of working relationships between VR Services and the State Independent Living Council and the Centers for Independent Living; and
- Perform other functions that are determined appropriate and comparable to the State Rehabilitation Council's other functions, provided they are consistent with the purpose of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations.

COMMISSION OUTREACH

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services recognizes the importance of outreach activities throughout the state, which have included networking with governor-appointed boards, councils, and commissions, as well as other agencies and organizations.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services welcomes your opinion about how BRS is meeting your needs and employment goals. The information collected will help the Commission and BRS to improve services and expand employment opportunities for all Hoosiers with disabilities.

- Please contact us (see page 30) if you would like to:
 - Learn more about the Commission
 - Share your ideas
 - Attend a Commission meeting
 - Be considered for appointment to the Commission

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Rehabilitation Act requires the State VR Agency to establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Council members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive full terms. No terms can exceed three years.

Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services was comprised of the following individuals in 2018 representing specific categories, identified below, as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 361.17.

Commission Officers & Members

James Michaels, *Chairperson*
Scott Beauchamp, *Vice-Chairperson*
Karen Rusk, *Secretary*
Dawn Adams
Anthony Cross
Kelsey Cowley
Christine Dahlberg
Nancy Davisson
Eric Heeter
Steven Henderson
Tim Kirk
Theresa Koleszar
Richard Propes
David Spradley
Dan Stewart
Traci Taylor
Ben Trockman
Frederick Vaiana
Stephen Yockey

CONTACT THE COMMISSION

CONTACT THE COMMISSION

You may contact the Commission by:

Visiting the Web site: <http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3355.htm>

E-mail: VRCommission@fssa.IN.gov

Mail to:

Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services

c/o Vocational Rehabilitation Services

402 W. Washington Street, MS-20

PO Box 7083

Indianapolis, Indiana 46207-7083

Toll free 1-800-545-7763

