



The OVR Review

"To assist Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve suitable employment and independence"

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Article submitted by Dave Matheis and Nanci Shelden

'The OVR Review' Presents First Staff Spotlight

Carol Leonhart, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor



Carol Leonhart is a vocational rehabilitation counselor in the Covington office in northern Kentucky. In addition to carrying a general caseload, Carol is also a communication specialist working with individuals who are hard of hearing and one of seven Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf in the state.

Carol was born in Steubenville, Ohio, in 1960. She had a spinal cord injury at the age of four and uses a wheelchair as a result. She has been a rehabilitation counselor for the agency for nearly 20 years.

Carol credits vocational rehabilitation with having a significant impact at a pivotal juncture in her life even though she was not a client at the time. At a young age, she faced the prospect of years in a body cast because of her disability. It was a vocational rehabilitation counselor who suggested to her school to try a speakerphone to enable her to participate in her classes. In the early seventies, this was a highly innovative idea. From the eighth through the eleventh grades, Carol remained at home while a speakerphone was moved from class to class, an early example of 'distance learning.' The only other accommodation made for her was a monthly visit by a teacher. Carol returned to school as a senior and students were finally able to put a face to a voice they had heard for the past four years. She graduated at the top of her class.

In her twenties, Carol moved to northern Indiana where she worked for a newspaper in Lafayette. In desperate need of wheelchair repairs, she went to a local vocational rehabilitation office seeking assistance. Not satisfied with just getting Carol's wheelchair repaired, her counselor, Sue Lyons, questioned her about her goals in life and urged her to pursue further education in her area of natural interest, counseling. With Sue's help and encouragement, Carol earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Purdue University in 1988. Sue, who has an amputation, has remained a role model for Carol throughout her professional life.

After graduation, Carol moved to northern Kentucky. She worked for five months with Employment Services before obtaining the job she really wanted, vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state agency, in November of 1989.

In addition to her undergraduate degree in Psychology, Carol earned a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Kentucky in 2005. She also completed the intensive "Orientation to Deafness" training at the University of Tennessee in 1990 and is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

Several years ago, Carol chaired a committee that planned a statewide mental health conference. It was attended by 500 individuals from six state agencies and she considers this one of the biggest accomplishments of her career. She currently serves on a team locating resources in northern Kentucky for individuals who are deaf and have mental health issues. Carol credits Sam Serraglio for emphasizing participatory management while he was head of the agency and for building an environment conducive to team-building.

Carol feels 'it is really fantastic to work for an agency where the staff is so committed to its philosophy and mission.' She appreciates having 'the opportunity to assist so many individuals in becoming more independent.'

Outside of her work life, Carol pursues an interest in drawing, painting pastels and water colors and taking photographs.

Carol wants everyone to know that her supervisor, Don Hiatt, 'is such a nice boss.'

"It is really fantastic to work for an agency where the staff is so committed to its philosophy and mission."

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Message from Acting Executive Director, Sherri Greer

Extends Thanks to OVR Staff



I have attended all four **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Guidance and Counseling trainings** (see page 6) to date and can not say enough about the content of this training. Tom Combs and Malinda Davis have done an outstanding job and have provided the staff with exactly what they need at this time... "Going back to the basics of Vocational Rehabilitation while looking toward the future". Given the economic condition of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the timing of this training has been perfect! Why? Whether or not we have sufficient financial resources, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have resources far more valuable. Our skills! Our assessment skills, our guidance and counseling techniques, our ability to place individuals with disabilities into appropriate jobs and our knowledge of rehabilitation technology **just to name a few**. These unique skills set us apart from others and make us marketable in a unstable market! We have another trait that seems outdated these days but in my book is always in style for winning people over: **consumer satisfaction!** We at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation care about the consumer and always put the consumer at the center of our practice. In Central Office, I receive many phone calls, letters, e-mails, etc. from consumers telling me of their experiences with the fine staff of Vocational Rehabilitation (see example on page 3). They recall for me a positive experience at the Perkins Center

or an encounter with their counselor that makes them realize they **CAN** be successful in life. When I hear these comments I swell up with pride and immediately I am both relieved and assured that while I am in Frankfort with my thoughts consumed with budgetary matters, OVR staff from Perkins to Paducah are taking care of our consumers. That is why I know it is indeed right Central Office take care of the staff and the staff **WILL** take care of the consumers. Thank you **all** OVR staff for everything you do and remember that in these times of budget difficulties and other frustrations, your skills and your attitude are **priceless!!!!**

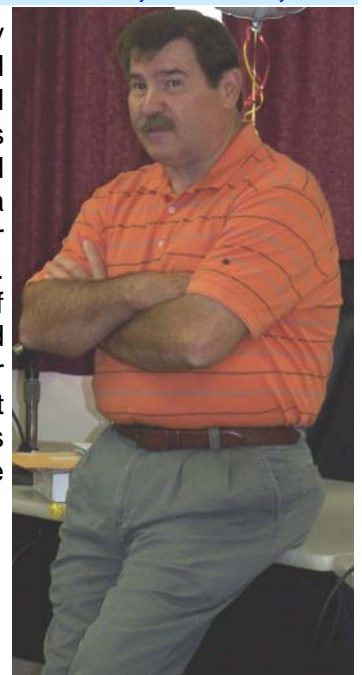
Remembering Larry Hoskins

Former West Liberty District Manager Passed Away on January 7, 2008

Article submitted by the West Liberty District



It is with great pride that we write this about a truly great friend and a most respected co-worker. Larry had many great qualities. He was certainly a wonderful husband, a very caring father and a great provider for his family. He devoted much of his time to Little League and high school baseball where he was head coach for a number of years. In the 30-plus years Larry worked for Vocational Rehabilitation his contributions were many. His attitude, hard work and dedication made him one of the most productive and respected counselors and managers in this state. Not only will Larry be missed for his numerous ideas, positive attitude, hard work and great management skills, we in Rehabilitation will miss Larry as a family member and someone we truly do love. There isn't a day in the office he isn't missed.



Consumer Spotlight

Agapé Carpets

On July 30, 2007, David Morris and his business partner and wife, Hannah, opened Agapé Carpets. David obtained help from, among others, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Social Security Administration and the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

The Morris' have over 70 years of combined experience in the carpeting business. They started in 1967 by cleaning carpets in New York and Pennsylvania. In 1971, they expanded their company by adding carpet installation. Two years later, they added carpet selling. In 1979, the Morris' moved to Kentucky, continuing their business, and opened their first carpet store three years later. The rapidly growing store had to move to a larger location in 1983. The next year, David was injured in an accident and the couple was forced to give up the retail business, but not their dreams.

In 1985, David started pursuing a degree in Business Management at the then Prestonsburg Community College. The next year, he attended carpet inspection school. His first job raised enough funds for the Morris's to receive additional design and crafting education in Minnesota. He kept abreast of the changes in carpeting through supervising his son's business of carpet installation. While working with his son, David realized there was a definite need for specialty rugs with higher detail and higher definition. He continued his education of design and production of such rugs, planning for the future. It has been a hard and difficult road, but David is a better designer and craftsman for his efforts. Now, it is time for him and his wife to put their experiences and education to use.

Agapé Carpets focuses on selling bound decorator carpeting, custom-designed rugs and fabricated rugs for use in the home. They also carry linoleum, tile, laminates and hardwood flooring in various sizes and colors, becoming a 'one-stop shop' for all floor covering needs. The business is located on KY 40 in Beauty, Kentucky.

For his share of the partnership, David received financial assistance and guidance provided by the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation through his counselor, Alan Gullett and West Liberty manager, Charlie Crigger. Steve Doty from the Social Security Administration helped develop a PASS Plan. Phil Greene at Morehead State University's SBDC in Paintsville supplied advice on the establishment and operation of the business. David is very appreciative of the services he received from the agencies involved and applauds their work and efforts to get his business started. According to David: "The assistance we have received gives us a good foundation to build our sales. We really appreciate the extra miles that Phil Greene of the SBDC and Alan Gullett of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation have gone for us to get our business off the ground. Their willingness and enthusiasm for our project has been unparalleled. We know there are many others behind the scenes working for our success, for which we are very grateful. Now we are ready to be found by our customers and make them happy to know Agapé Carpets is ready to build a custom rug for them."



David Morris of Agapé's Carpet

Consumer's Parent Pleased With VR Services

This e-mail message was recently submitted to the general OVR mailbox.

"I would like to send this message in regards to the services provided by Voc. Rehab. I am so grateful that we have services such as this. My daughter will be entering the program as soon as she graduates. I cannot praise this program enough for the opportunities it provides one of our most vulnerable populations. Growing up I recall observing individuals with a disability putting their time in at school then being taken home and kept there. I cannot describe in words how it feels knowing my daughter can have a future and live a full life."

-Wanda Jones, Somerset

Great
Job!

Employer Spotlight

The Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott

The Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott opened in June of 2007. The facility is an extended-stay hotel with studio, one bedroom and two bedroom/two bathroom suites designed to meet the needs of guests needing a stay from one night to a year or more. While it was still under construction, Eric Wilson from the hotel contacted Cindy Ragland, job placement specialist in OVR's Paducah district, to discuss his impending employment needs. Cindy set up interviews for eight OVR consumers and 5 of those individuals initially started at PACE sites at the hotel. Two of those consumers are still employed there and are very happy with their positions.

Kim Smith works the front desk. Since being employed, she has started attending school, taking a few courses. She says her life has turned around since she was employed by Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott. Working has made her feel better physically and has increased her confidence.

Demetrice Jones started in housekeeping and has seen an increase in pay several times since he started. As a single parent, his job allows him to adjust his schedule as needed and he is proud of his accomplishments.

Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott's manager, Jennifer Dearness, is thrilled with the PACE program and her board is very happy with utilizing the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Whenever there is an

opening in any department at the hotel, Jennifer or Eric contact Cindy to give the agency the first shot at filling it. It has been a great partnership, has changed the lives of at least two individuals with disabilities and hopefully will positively affect many more in the future. Demetrice and Kim have been permanently employed since the opening of Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott. Both feel a great deal of pride and ownership in helping to open the doors of a very successful business. Not only has Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott been pleased with OVR's PACE program and the tax credit, but it has found quality employees.

For more information about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), visit the following website: www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/.



Demetrice Jones



Staff of the Residence Inn Paducah by Marriott

Gina Hughes Job Placement Month

Governor Proclaims the Month of May

Article submitted by Robin Ritter

Governor Steve Beshear is proclaiming the month of May 2008 as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Gina Hughes Job Placement Month. This is in honor of OVR's dear friend and former colleague, Gina Hughes, who throughout her many years of service to the consumers of OVR showed a special devotion to job placement.

Gina was a counselor in Richmond and Lexington as well as a Job Placement Specialist and Field Administrator in Frankfort. She valued the rights, worth and dignity of all persons with disabilities and demonstrated this daily. Gina showed great passion and spirit in her dedication to consumers and staff. Gina passed away in October 2007 after a courageous battle with leukemia.

The activities planned for the month of May will acknowledge and celebrate OVR's partnerships with employers, placement activities and accomplishments. Perhaps more importantly for us this year, they will pay a special tribute to Gina Hughes from her rehab family.

NEWS BITS

Creative Diversity Studio Holds Artists' Reception

On Friday evening, February 29th, Creative Diversity Studio held an artists' reception for two artists with disabilities at the Shekinah Gallery in Louisville. Todd Esser and Melissa Wilson exhibited many of their works and were able to make a number of sales. The reception was well attended and very successful. Creative Diversity Studio is partially funded by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. It currently works with five OVR consumers to develop their artistic abilities and market their work. In Todd's case, his association with the studio has reaped huge rewards. As his mother, Sandy, said at the reception: 'It has turned into much more than we had ever dreamed of.' For more information about this project or to view some of Todd's work, visit www.creativediversity.org.



Artist, Todd Esser



A beautifully painted foot stool by artist Melissa Wilson

874K Event Draws Large Crowd

1,100 in Attendance

The 874K Coalition's annual advocacy event has become as much a part of Kentucky winters as panic over snowfall predictions. On January 23rd, more than 1,100 Kentuckians with disabilities, family members, advocates and service providers braved yet another snow scare to attend this year's luncheon. The keynote speaker was newly-inaugurated Governor Steve Beshear who spoke eloquently regarding the need to insure "the most vulnerable in our society are a priority." He committed the state to pursuing "initiatives (that) focus on individuals' freedom, independence, productivity, self-sufficiency, resilience and recovery." After the Governor's speech, several individuals with disabilities and family members spoke to the crowd about their personal triumphs and challenges. Sixty state legislators were at this year's event, giving their constituents an opportunity to discuss issues with them personally.



Governor Steve Beshear



Jaime Blanton, Ms. Wheelchair Kentucky, attended



The large crowd listens to Governor Beshear's remarks.

HRD Update

Beth Smith Returns as Executive Director



Beth Smith

In March, Beth Smith was named the Executive Director of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation by Governor Steve Beshear, effective April 1. Beth is no stranger to the agency. She was named Executive Director in June of 2004 by then-Governor Ernie Fletcher and served in the post until her promotion to the position of Commissioner for the Department of Workforce Investment in September of 2006. Among her accomplishments during her first stint with the agency was a restructuring of job classifications for vocational rehabilitation counselors to reward individuals for achieving status under the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD), as mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Beth, a resident of Harrodsburg, was a nursing home administrator prior to her employment with state government.

Vocational Goals Training

Developing an appropriate vocational goal is essential to the success of a consumer. The counselor mentor team has done an excellent job putting together a training agenda that tackles this important issue. Tom Combs, the Ashland District Branch Manager and Malinda Davis, an Owensboro District Counselor are the primary presenters. Representatives from the Office of Employment Services provide information to staff on EKOS and the e3.ky.gov project. Sue Simon, from the Education Cabinet, also presents on the challenges of saying "no" to a consumer. The training has been offered in



Malinda Davis and Pam Jarboe

Louisville and Lexington with another Lexington training scheduled for the end of April, a Pennyriile training scheduled for Western Kentucky in May, and a training for the Rehabilitation Counselor's for the

Deaf (RCD's) in July. Reviews for this highly interactive training have been very positive.

A-LEAP Update

Sally Siewert from the Southeast Regional Continuing Education program at Georgia State University presented a week-long training to the OVR Academy of Leadership Exploration and Preparedness (A-LEAP) Phase II participants in January. The training focused on leadership in today's environment, performance and project management and coaching. Thanks to all the participants for their hard work on the assignments during this training!



A-LEAP Participants

Personnel Changes

Information submitted by Carmen Freeman

New Employees

Dorothy Jenkins - Counselor January 16

Bardstown - Elizabethtown

Kristen Brown - Program Specialist I January 16

West Liberty

Judy Cantrell - VR Care Aide January 16

CDPVTC

Scottie Bentley - Program Specialist I February 1

CDPVTC

Jeanne Burke - Dis. Asst. Spec. Driver March 1

CDPVTC

Promotions

Garnetta Wireman - VR Admin. I February 1

CDPVTC

Retirements

Diana Skaggs February 28

CDPVTC

Resignations

Jennifer Ellis January 1

Lexington - Bluegrass

Jodi Kamunen February 29

Covington - Florence

Transfers

Tony DeName March 17

Central Office to Office of Employment Services, Division of Employment Insurance

CDPVTC Report

Academic and Lifeskills Program of Higher Achievement Takes Flight

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center is proud to announce the start of a new program called Academic and Lifeskills Program of Higher Achievement or ALPHA. The objective of the ALPHA program is to provide appropriate instruction and support to assist students to successfully complete vocational training or other post-secondary education. The program will include instruction in reading, math, computer basics, keyboarding, social skills, community living, study and research skills, GED preparation and participation in the External Diploma Program. Student schedules will be individualized to meet their needs and vocational goals.

Work related behaviors addressed in this program are: responsibility, quality of work, quantity of work, initiative and attention to task.

Students will qualify for this program if they:

- Need to increase academic levels to enter training at the Center, another vocational school or college;
- Need assistance, support and tutoring while attending KCTCS (all students are required to have weekly contact with the instructor and these services will be scheduled on an individual basis);
- Do not need "hands-on classes";
- Do not have deficits in the work-related behaviors that are already addressed in the Work Adjustment Program;
- Have 5th grade or higher math and reading skills;
- May need Social Skills class, Community Living class or Study Skills class;
- Will typically be at the Center longer than the average Work Adjustment student;
- Are a GED student; and require Developmental Education Classes at a vocational school or college.

Interested consumers should discuss this program with their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

Program Services Update

Summer Transition Enhancement Program (STEP)

Picture submitted by Janis Friend. Article submitted by Nanci Shelden

The Summer Transition Enhancement Program (STEP) is a distinctive effort designed to provide students in the 10th and 11th grade who are deaf or hard of hearing to experience a taste of college life. Training components of this week long program at Eastern Kentucky University include: budget and time management, study and advocacy skills and campus life. Participants will also have individual sessions with Campus Disability Services, opportunities to meet with college professors and much more! For information on how to apply please visit www.kypa.net/drupal/?q=node/935.

Save the Date!
June 7-14, 2008

STEP is a unique program designed to provide students who are deaf or hard of hearing, an opportunity to experience some of the challenges encountered when entering a university, community or technical college. Participants will engage in a variety of activities while staying in campus dormitories throughout the week.

Summer Transition Enhancement Program!

For more information contact:
Cindy Downey at
cindy.downey@eku.edu
859.539.2703 (C)
859.622.2568 (O)

Sponsors: EKU, KSD, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Wilderness Trail Special Education Cooperative

Get to Know Your Council Members

Vicki Staggs and Juanita Westerfield

Vicki Staggs Vicki works as the Program Coordinator and Advocate for the Kentucky Client Assistance Program (KyCAP) in Frankfort. KyCAP advocates for persons with disabilities who are applicants or clients of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office for the Blind, the Independent Living Centers or other programs mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. These individuals may need assistance with eligibility issues, services and/or have questions about their cases.

When Vicki first came to KyCAP, she had no idea what vocational rehabilitation was. As she started becoming involved with her clients, she saw the need for individuals with disabilities to become independent citizens of their communities by becoming employed. She has seen the importance of working closely with OVR counselors to help KyCAP clients achieve their vocational goals.

"I have met and known people on this Council that are so dedicated to the well being of all persons with disabilities and I count my blessing that this Council exists to help make changes in the lives of those we serve."

When Vicki was asked to give a short speech at the Professional Rehabilitation Assistants Program graduation, there was one thought she wanted the graduates to take away with them that day. She told them, "You must have the *passion* to do the work that you do for our clients and persons with disabilities . . . but you also must have the *compassion*. Without that, it's just a job." It's not

just a job for Vicki. Having disabilities of her own and having a grandson with disabilities has really brought home to her the importance of the work she and others do every day. She says, "we bring a light to the end of a long tunnel that most individuals with disabilities must go through to become independent and employed."

Working on the Statewide Council of Vocational Rehabilitation has been very rewarding for her because she has met people that are so dedicated to the well being of all persons with disabilities.

Juanita Westerfield Appointed to the Council in the summer of 2006, Juanita Westerfield is employed full-time by Eastern Kentucky University as the field coordinator of extended campuses in the Social Work program. She obtained a Bachelor's of Science in Education from Cumberland College in 1987 and Master degrees in Social Work and Public Administration from Ohio State University in 1989. Juanita has 18 years of inpatient behavioral health experience and eight years of academic experience. She has been a Licensed Clinical Social Worker since 2000 and established a Professional Limited Liability Corporation (PLLC) in 2006, maintaining a small private practice in Corbin.

Of her involvement with the Council, Juanita says: 'I think VR is a wonderful resource for clients throughout the state. I have enjoyed getting to know about resources and people who are dedicated in providing them.'

Outside of her professional life, Juanita loves Civil War re-enacting and has been the president of the Laurel Home Guard for 12 years. The Laurel Home Guard coordinates the Camp Wildcat Civil War Battle Re-enactment every third weekend in October.

Save the Date

Upcoming Council and Committee Meetings

Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC)

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

10:00-12:00

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
209 St. Clair Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
Training Room C, 1st Floor

Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR) Meeting

Monday, June 9, 2008

9:00-3:00

Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa
1800 Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY 40511

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(Dave Matheis and Nanci Shelden, editors)

