

Fourth Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards kicks off October Disability Employment Awareness Month in the Commonwealth

On October 2, 2009, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) partnered once again with Dominion to host its Fourth Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards Luncheon, honoring nine new recipients for outstanding practices in hiring, accommodating, and supporting workers with disabilities. The event, which took place at the Sheraton Richmond West Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, officially kicked-off a series of statewide events in celebration of October Disability Employment Awareness Month.

“We hope that by annually honoring these ‘champion’ employers, we continue to raise awareness of the positive contributions of employees with disabilities and emphasize the value in recruiting from this skilled and talented labor source,” said DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. “Although we’ve made great strides in creating a disability-friendly business climate in Virginia, recent figures tell us that the unemployment rate for Virginians with disabilities is double that of the general population.”

The Disability Employment Champions Awards recognize individuals and organizations from public, private, and non-profit sectors who have ‘championed’ the employment and advancement of people with disabilities, and have gone above and beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to support workers with disabilities. Since its inception in 2006, Champion awardees have included The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Hyatt Hotel, Kroger, Goodwill Industries, the Virginia Department of Health, and Governor Tim Kaine, who received the first Champions Award for his support of Virginia’s Medicaid Buy-In Program.



Recipients of the October 2nd Disability Employment Champions Awards Ceremony

The 2009 Statewide Disability Employment Champions Award recipients included:

- Defense Commissary Agency (Central Region Business Award) – renewed initiative to actively recruit and hire at least 190 people with targeted disabilities in the next two to three years.
- Safeway (Northern Virginia Regional Business Award) – over 40 DRS clients hired within the last year; committed to integrated employment; supportive supervision to workers with disabilities.
- Top Guard Security (Hampton Roads Business Award) – actively presents and participates in the local Workforce Networks and DRS Job Clubs; all hiring and recruitment practices involve DRS staff.
- ARAMARK (Blue Ridge Regional Business Award) – over 70 DRS clients hired in full-time jobs over the last five years; site used for situational assessments and on-the-job training.
- Walmart (Southwest Regional Business Awards) – over 50 DRS clients hired over the last five years, active partnership with DRS in recruitment and accommodation of workers with disabilities.

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- Department of General Services (State Agency Award) – for three years, worked with disability programs across the state to promote their services; recently awarded a large contract to a program in the Valley, which will create jobs for Virginians with significant disabilities.
- Department of Medical Assistance Services (Community Champion Award) – development of the Medicaid Buy In program, which increases opportunities and choices for Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment and other support services from public and private providers, employers, and other organizations.
- Tony Stinnett (Self-Employment Enterprise Award) – with DRS assistance, started own company, Highland Antique Wood
- Kent Keyser (Client Champion Award) – former DRS client who overcame barriers to employment and sustained his position as Chief of Staff to Congressman Nick Rahall of West Virginia.

Nearly 160 representatives and leaders from business, state, and local government attended this year's event. In addition to the awards ceremony, the program featured a live musical performance by Tommie Branch, former DRS client who, through vocational guidance and financial assistance, is working towards building a career in the music industry as a Blue Grass singer.

2009 Local Disability Employment Champion Awardees

Air Serv - Dulles International Airport
Alexandria City Public Schools
AMC Tysons Corner 16 - Mclean, VA
Applebee's - Lexington, VA
Army and Air Force Exchange Service - Newport News, VA
Christopher Newport University -Newport News, VA
Clinch Independent Living Center - Tazewell, VA
Comfort Inn - Grundy VA
Department of Justice - Washington, DC
Experience Works - Bristol, VA
Fallon Park Elementary School - Roanoke City Schools
Farm Fresh - Hampton Roads Area
Fluor - Kingsport, VA
Food City - Lebanon and Richlands, VA
Food Country USA – Abingdon, VA
Giant Food Stores of Loudoun County
Highlands Center for Behavioral Health - Abingdon, VA
Jack Keikler - RAOC Board of Directors, Buena Vista, VA
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation - Williamsburg, VA
Janet Randall - MayFlower Retirement Home, Lexington, VA
Jennifer Mosely - Team Nurse, Martinsville and statewide
Jerry Wu - Fallon Park Elementary School, Roanoke City (former DRS client)
Joan Manley - Ms. Wheelchair Virginia, Lexington, VA
John Paul Closet - Gate City, VA
Johnson Chevrolet - Buick-Pontiac, Inc., Clintwood, VA
Kathy Tisinge - Higher Education Center, Roanoke City
Kenneth Moss (former DRS client)
Kevin Roberts - Nuclear Engineer, Lynchburg, VA
Laurie Blankenship - Walmart, Stuart, VA
Lorrie Stokes - Lorrie's Little Lambs Daycare Center, Martinsville, VA

Loudoun Workforce Center
Marsha DeLong - J Lodge, Abingdon, VA (former DRS client)
Mary Early - TAP Headstart Program, Lexington, VA
Mayflower Retirement Home - Lexington, VA
McDonalds - Bristol, VA
Megan Gannon (former DRS client)
Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority
National Science Foundation - Washington, DC
Pam Bullins - Walmart, Eden, NC
Patricia Lacy of Teledyne - Hampton, VA
People Incorporated of Southwest Virginia - Abingdon, VA
Press Anything Print - Virginia Beach, VA
Pride Industries - Norfolk, VA
Riverside Regional Medical Center - Newport News, VA
S. John Davis Career Center - Falls Church, VA
Social Security Administration - Norfolk, VA
Sorrentino Mariani - Norfolk, VA
Stephanie Hoer - Goodwill of the Valleys, Roanoke City
Suttle Motors - Newport News, VA
Sykes - Grundy, VA
Target - Bristol, VA
TJ Maxx Home Furnishings - Virginia Beach, VA
The Fractured Prune of Loudoun County
Top Guard Security - Hampton & Norfolk, VA
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Washington, DC
Vickie King - Kroger, Rocky Mount, VA
Virginia Spinner - RAOC, Buena Vista, VA
Washington and Lee Dining – Lexington, VA
Washington County Department of Social Services - Bristol, VA

During the month of October, various local DRS offices hosted their own Champions events...



Peninsula Champions of Disability Employment Luncheon



Northern Virginia Regional Champions Luncheon



Statewide Champions of Disability Employment Luncheon



Southside-Hampton Roads Champions Luncheon



Roanoke Valley Workforce Center Champions Breakfast



Rockbridge Area Workforce Network October Awards Brunch

Employer Spotlight: HandCraft Cleaners

HandCraft Cleaners is a family-owned and operated, full service dry-cleaning business that prides itself with nearly 40 years of quality service, customer care, and fair pricing. Through support received from the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), the company can now add disability-friendly employer to the list.



HandCraft first learned about the Department of Rehabilitative Services two years ago at a job fair, where Wes Seaton, Marketing Representative at DRS' Center for Career and Business Development, explained how DRS could help them meet their staffing needs.

“Wes has become an invaluable recruitment and hiring resource for us,” says Mary Jones, HandCraft’s Human Resource Manager. “Although we were a bit skeptical at first, we have been very pleased with the quality and work ethic of the people that we have hired. They have been exceptional employees.”

Marvin Webb and Shirley Wills are two former DRS clients hired by HandCraft. Mr. Webb, who has worked at the Patterson store for the last two years, serves as a Marker—receiving, tagging, and keying orders as they come in. Shirley Wills was hired just this past September as a Customer Service Representative at their Bon Air location. In a short period of time, Shirley has proven to be a hard worker and positive team player. Her manager reports she is a dependable employee and has learned her job quickly.



Marvin Webb has been with HandCraft for two years

Jay Nichols, owner of the company, says he is committed to hiring a diversified workforce and believes in working with state agencies in order to achieve those goals. HandCraft found that working with DRS also helped the company save money. Instead of spending advertising dollars and time going through a long recruitment process, DRS took care of all the screening and sent only the most qualified candidates for the positions.

“HandCraft looks forward to continuing our working partnership with the Department of Rehabilitative Services and have been pleased with the outcome and quality of service that we have experienced.”



Shirley Wills works at HandCraft’s Bon Air location

About HandCraft:

HandCraft Cleaners is a Richmond-based company that offers a full array of services including professional cleaning, shirts and laundering, and household and linens.

For more information, please visit <http://www.handcraftdrycleaners.com>

Workstation Ergonomic Assessment: A Tool for Prevention and Remediation of Repetitive Strain Injury

In the United States, Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) is the number one occupational health problem, resulting in more than \$20 billion a year in workers' compensation costs (OSHA) and another \$100 billion in lost productivity, employee turnover, and other expenses (Agency for Health Care Policy and Research). RSIs develop as a result of repeated exposure to ergonomic risk factors, one of which is the risk associated with the improper set-up of an employee's workstation. In fact, thousands of people are diagnosed each year with some kind of impairment directly related to poorly designed workstations.

RSIs result from an accumulation of tension and strain in the body. Ergonomics is the practice of adapting a job or the work environment to the person so work can be performed without harmful strain or injury. Effective ergonomics reduces discomfort and injuries, and increases job satisfaction and productivity.

Every component of the workstation, from seating to keyboard to monitor to mouse; from the reach and range and positioning of all a worker's "tools of the trade"; to how an employee sits (or stands) or postures or positions him or herself while tasking, are all critical to managing the amount of strain imposed on the body on a daily basis – and cumulatively, day after day, ad infinitum. Through ergonomic assessment, employers can ensure that employees are working at the proper height, angle, and location in terms of seating, keyboards, monitors, and other office equipment.



Ergonomic workstations increase job satisfaction and productivity

Solving Ergonomic Problems

Ideally, through solving ergonomic problems, an employer can accomplish the primary goal of RSI prevention while simultaneously enhancing the productivity and job satisfaction of individual employees. Effective ergonomic outcomes result from identifying the ergonomic risk factors associated with an employee and his or her specific task-set, then systematically eliminating or reducing the employee's exposure to the identified risk factors. There are three approaches to this process:

- 1) **Engineering controls** - physical changes to a job that eliminate or materially reduce the presence of RSI hazards
- 2) **Administrative controls** - the management-controlled work practices and policies designed to reduce exposures to RSI hazard by changing the way work is assigned or scheduled
- 3) **Ergonomic assessment** - postural assessments, risk factor checklists, task frequency and duration assessments, force/weight measurements, or assessment of environmental factors. An ergonomic assessment should include an interview of the employee to obtain information about the employee's position duties, an evaluation of the existing workstation, and observation of the employee performing work tasks.

To read the full article, please go to: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/ENews/2009/Enews-V7-I2.htm#5>.

DRS staff are available to help employers provide ergonomic assessments and recommendations for the workplace. Call 800-552-5019 (voice), 800-464-9950 (TTY) to contact a DRS office near you.