



# Business matters

Encouraging Diversity in The Workplace • Promoting a Positive Environment for Business Growth

Fall 2010

## From the Commissioner's Desk



What do SunTrust, Kmart, Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Navy have in common? During October, these and more than 200 employers, community partners and individuals across the state joined the ranks of those we honor annually as “Disability Employment Champions” for giving people with disabilities the chance to become productive, valued workers. This mix of corporate titans and small businesses indicates that, across our Commonwealth, employment organizations are benefiting from the

transformational services DRS offers not only to our clients, but also to the business community.

Every year, October’s Disability Employment Awareness Month presents an opportunity for us to publicly acknowledge and thank stellar employers and partners for supporting the employment of people with disabilities. I was fortunate to attend many of the Champions Award ceremonies around the state and hear exciting testimonials of how our program, our staff, our technology, our clients and our employers are making a difference in Virginia's workplace.

But our services, albeit critical elements to success, were only half of the story. Making the big difference were the talents of our clients that have found a "home" within the vast array of businesses we serve. I was particularly impressed by the personal stories shared by our clients of how they addressed barriers, overcame them, and found success in the workplace. A number of our employers gave testimonials as well, sharing the positive effects that hiring people with disabilities has brought to their business culture. For that, I offer my congratulations and hope that these stories continue to be shared with others and inspire replication of best practices.

We’ve included in this issue highlights and photos from October Disability Employment Awareness Month. It features the kick-off event in Richmond, as well as highlights from select Champion events from our different regions.

If you are new to DRS, I encourage you to contact us and learn what you can do to become a Disability Employment Champion next year. It’s easy, it’s effective, and it can make a difference not only to thousands of Virginians with disabilities, but to your organization as a whole. Take advantage of our services and help us become a true “Commonwealth of Opportunity” for all.

~ Jim Rothrock

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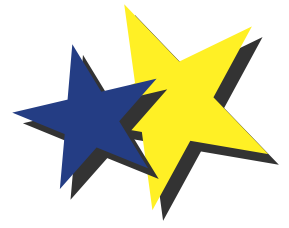
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### Stay Connected:



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# October's Disability Employment Awareness Month: THE HIGHLIGHTS



## Central Region - Statewide Champions Awards (Kick-Off Event)

On Oct. 7, DRS and Dominion hosted the Fifth Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards, honoring 10 new individuals and organizations for outstanding business practices that support the employment and advancement of people with disabilities. The event took place at the Hilton Short Pump in Richmond and served as the official kick-off to October Disability Employment Awareness Month in the Commonwealth.

Approximately 155 guests attended this year's awards ceremony. Among these were businesses such as Comcast Cable, Long and Foster Real Estate, ARAMARK and Comfort Suites Hotel; organizations such as AARP, Community College Workforce Alliance, and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and Secretary of Health and Human Resources Dr. Bill Hazel.

The 2010 Disability Employment Champions Award recipients included the following recipients below. Included this year were four business partners involved in the Project SEARCH program, a one-year training program for high school seniors with significant disabilities to gain hands-on work experience in a professional workplace setting and receive useful feedback on their performance.



*2010 Disability Employment Champions Award Winners*

### Regional Business Awards:

- [HandCraft Cleaners](#) (Central)
- [Professional Contract Services, Inc.](#) (Hampton Roads)
- [The Melting Pot](#) (Blue Ridge)
- [Wells Fargo –Wachovia](#) (Southwest)
- [Federal Transit Administration](#) (Northern VA)

### Project SEARCH – Partnership Awards:

- [Bon Secours Richmond Health System](#)
- [VCU Health System](#)
- [Chesterfield County](#)
- [Sentara CarePlex Hospital](#)

### Self-Employment Enterprise Award:

- Nick Ibarra, Owner, [Cortes de Nico Salon/Barbershop](#), Waynesboro

A portion of the event also showcased the singing talents of local singer/songwriter Leslie Tucker, a former DRS client who has slowly started to build a name for herself in the music industry. Photos from this event can be accessed at <http://www.vdrs.org/champs.htm>.



## Hampton Roads Region:

Champions award events were held on the Peninsula, Southside and Eastern Shore of the Hampton Roads region. The Peninsula event took place Oct. 26 in Hampton, honoring businesses such as Walmart Super Center (Newport News), Comfort Inn, CarePlex Hospital, and Army & Air Force Exchange Services. The Southside ceremony was held Oct. 29 in Suffolk. Companies including Target (Norfolk), American Red Cross, U.S. Navy (Norfolk), and Professional Contract Services, Inc. received Champion awards. Both events featured personal testimonies from clients and employers.

The Eastern Shore field office held its Open House/Recognition event at the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce in Melfa. The office also hosted a booth in the main lobby of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce Building throughout the month of October. Other activities included four disability and sensitivity training workshops at the US Navy, and the opportunity to air 30 free Public Service Announcements about Disability Employment Awareness Month on three radio stations for two weeks.



Commissioner Rothrock and U.S. Navy representative at the Southside Champions Awards Ceremony

## Southwest Region:

The Southwest region celebrated Disability Employment Awareness Month in a variety of fashions. Several offices delivered baskets and certificates of appreciation to local employers for their efforts to champion the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Recipients included businesses such as Food City from Vansant, Bristol, and Lebanon; Applebee's and Manpower from Wytheville; Fed Ex from Dublin, Goodwill of the Valleys from Fairlawn; Johnson Chevrolet in Clintwood; and The Old Mill Restaurant in Lebanon.

The Roanoke office focused on the relationship with the One Stop partners who refer individuals for DRS services. Individuals from the Roanoke Valley Workforce Center and Goodwill were honored at a small reception for their partnership and collaboration with DRS.



Joshua Martin at Applebee's receives an Employer Basket

## Blue Ridge Region:

A number of award ceremonies and activities were planned around the Blue Ridge region for October. In Waynesboro, the Shenandoah Valley Regional Disability Employment Awareness Committee held an awareness event at Home Depot to commemorate Disability Employment Awareness Month. Various Workforce Networks, including the Lynchburg, Farmville, Rockbridge, Martinsville and Danville area networks, each hosted award ceremonies to honor employers, partners, and consumers in their locality.

Pictured here are awardees from the Southside Workforce Network Champions Award ceremony, hosted by the DRS Farmville Office.

The event was held at the historic Farmville Train Station. Two DRS consumers provided powerful testimonials of their DRS experience and their road to successful careers. Among the awardees pictured above are representatives from Longwood University, Longwood University Campus Police, and Crossroad Services. Other recipients not pictured include CVS Pharmacy and English Construction Company.



Blue Ridge Region celebrates Disability Employment Month

## Northern Virginia Region:

Throughout October, Northern Virginia hosted a variety of Champions Award events in the following localities: Winchester, Fairfax, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Leesburg. Nearly 90 awards were presented across the region, with recipients recognized in the categories of Leadership, Partnership, Making a Difference and Professional Development. Attendees of the events included employers such as Walgreens, Lowes, Sodexo, Quad Direct, Didlake Inc., Bottom Dollar, Walmart Super Center, Toys “R” Us, Federal Highway Administration, ECHO and Dulles Golf & Sports.

Many of the events highlighted business relationships developed with DRS and featured testimonials from clients such as Taylor Werner, who shared his story at the Loudoun Champions event about his journey into disability and how it led him to the educational arena. Other keynote speakers included Martha O’Keefe, Dean of Workforce and Professional Development from Germanna Community College. Dean O’Keefe appeared at the Fredericksburg Champions event to discuss workforce trends in Virginia and how education plays a key in opening career doors. At the Manassas event, Workforce Center Manager Kristi Hartley presented on current workforce trends and services available at the Prince William One Stop.

DRS also participated in AT-focused events such as the regional Assistive Technology Fair, sponsored by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in D.C., as well as a “Think Beyond the Label” Disability Resource Fair in Woodbridge, to increase awareness about universal design and assistive technology.

All of the events highlighted the national “Think Beyond the Label” campaign and featured two commercials showing persons with disabilities in the workplace.



## Apple iPad, iPod touch... More Than Just Fun, Convenient Gadgets

Popular consumer electronics such as the Apple iPad and the iPod Touch have revolutionized the way we surf the Web, read a book, check e-mails and connect with the world. But with its simple touch screen features and ease of portability, Apple's newest technology is connecting people with disabilities to far more possibilities.

Reporter Emily Hager at the New York Times recently wrote [iPad Opens World to a Disabled Boy](#), an article featuring seven-year-old Owen Cain who was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy—a disease that has left him with very limited mobility. When a nurse brought an iPad to Owen one day and propped it within his reach, Owen's mother, Ellen Goldstein, was amazed to see him touch the screen and open an application on his own. She says the iPad was the first device that Owen has been able to interact and operate independently. She is encouraged that the iPad's applications will serve as a useful communications and learning tool for her son.



While Apple's iPad is giving hope to parents like Ellen Goldstein with special needs children, the smaller iPod Touch is also proving effective in the workplace, especially for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The Department of Rehabilitative Services, in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, has been involved in a grant-funded study to improve employment services and outcomes for consumers with ASD.

A portion of the research takes a look at the use of hand-held devices—in this case, the iPod Touch (2G)—as cognitive aids for individuals with ASD. Of interest with this particular device is the “calendar” feature, which provides reminder alarms linked to calendar events, as well as the “memo” feature, which allows people to enter and follow task descriptions. There is also a voice memo feature, which enables someone such as a job coach to record audio prompts for people who respond better to audio information versus pictorial information. People who prefer pictorial information can also look at that information through video downloads, which may also be recorded by a job coach or trainer.

The study, called the *ASD Career Links Project*, is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. For more information about the ASD Career Links Project, visit: <http://www.vcu-autism.org/>.

## NEW RESOURCE

### Hiring Veterans: A Step-by-Step Toolkit for Employers

Interested in developing or enhancing a veteran's hiring initiative for your company but don't know where to begin? America's Heroes at Work, a project under the U.S. Department of Labor, has designed a toolkit to assist and educate employers who have made the proactive decision to include transitioning Service Members, veterans and wounded warriors in their recruitment and hiring initiatives.

Recognizing that each employer is unique, this guide allows you to select from promising practices and other resources that employers are using to successfully welcome talented and skilled veterans into their companies.

Go to: [www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit).



# Winter is Coming – Get Ready Now

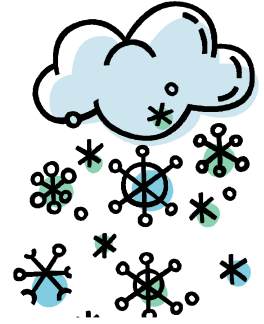
Winter Preparedness Week, Dec. 5-11, 2010

Who can forget the winter of 2009-2010! Multiple record-breaking snowstorms and cold temperatures affected every part of Virginia.

Millions of us suffered through power outages. Snowplow drivers worked around the clock to get roads open. School systems shut down for days. Sadly, 14 Virginians lost their lives due to last winter's storms.

Many communities set records for the number of days with at least one inch of snow on the ground. And it could happen again this year.

Winter Preparedness Week – set for Dec. 5-11 – is the time to get ready for possible bad weather. All it takes is one heavy snow that sticks around for several days or an ice storm that knocks out power to remind us that being prepared ahead of time just makes sense.



- **Make a plan.** Decide on a meeting place outside of your neighborhood if your family is separated and cannot return home because of closed roads. Choose an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications. With your family, write down your emergency plan – get a free worksheet at [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov).
- **Get a kit.** Here are basic supplies for winter weather: three days' food; three days' water (a gallon per person per day); a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio with extra batteries; and your written family emergency plan. After you have these essential supplies, add a first aid kit, medications if needed, blankets and warm clothing, supplies for special member of your household, and pet items.
- **Stay informed.** Before, during and after a winter storm, you should listen to local media for information and instructions from emergency officials. Be aware of winter storm watches and warnings and road conditions. You can get road condition information 24/7 by calling 511 or checking [www.511Virginia.org](http://www.511Virginia.org).



Go to [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) and print out an emergency supply checklist and a family emergency plan. It's time to get ready for winter weather now!

Prepared by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, November 2010  
(804) 897-6510; [pio@vdem.virginia.gov](mailto:pio@vdem.virginia.gov); [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov).

People with disabilities can be more vulnerable during winter weather and its accompanying hazards. Learn how to [prepare yourself and your family](#) for emergencies and [winter-related events](#) by going to [www.vadrs.org/downloads/PreparingFamiliesEmergency.pdf](http://www.vadrs.org/downloads/PreparingFamiliesEmergency.pdf) and [www.vadrs.org/downloads/WinterWeatherPrep.pdf](http://www.vadrs.org/downloads/WinterWeatherPrep.pdf).