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BUSINESS Connections

E-Newsletter | Issue 1 | October 2009

Helping Achieve Your Placement Goals

Hello from VCU-RRTC Business Connections:

I would like to introduce our first quarterly electronic newsletter! In this newsletter, we want to share some information about our growing staff as well as inform you of some new and on-going activities.

Our mission is to provide the highest quality services as well as rapid job development for our consumers. We are very pleased to be working with a number of counselors in each of the DRS offices here in Metro Richmond and the Fredericksburg area. Currently, we are assisting 20 individuals in job development and job site training activities and providing long term follow-along for 13 DRS clients. We plan to highlight success stories, like Tameka on the next page, in each of our newsletters.

We would love to assist more of your clients. You will find a link to our on-line referral form in the quick links section at the top of this page. Also, we are in the process of revising satisfaction surveys for consumers, employers and DRS. In the meantime, please let us know how we can serve you better.

We appreciate your support and collaboration in serving individuals with disabilities seeking employment.

Many thanks!

Howard Green
Director of Employment Services
VCU-RRTC Business Connections



Notable News for VCU-RRTC

- Now an **Employment Network (EN)** participating in **Partnership Plus** with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services.
- VCU-RRTC was awarded an **Autism Grant** funding a new job coach to support the placement of 5 individuals into community-based employment during the project period. The focus will be to develop competitive employment opportunities for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) with the emphasis on Asperger's syndrome.



Meet the RRTC Staff

Providing person-centered and customer-directed supported employment services to individuals with all types of disabilities with a focus on job retention.

Howard Green



Over the past 35 years Howard has been working

with businesses and people with disabilities in efforts to assist with greater employment outcomes. Currently the **Director of Employment Services at VCU-RRTC**, Howard manages 6 employment specialists. He also serves as the business liaison for VCU-RRTC and provides numerous training activities on business development for the employment of people with disabilities

Tracey Robinson



Tracey is a Senior Employment Specialist and Benefit Specialist.

She has worked in this position for over 6 years, assisting individuals with a wide range of significant disabilities, to include veterans. Tracey focus on encouraging her clients to direct their own career paths, obtain, and maintain competitive employment by using an evidence-based approach. Recently, she became a **Certified Work Incentives Counselor with the WIPA project**, which offers benefits planning for SSA disability beneficiaries.

Ebony Kalafatis



Ebony is a Senior Employment Specialist at VCU-RRTC. She has over 5 years of experience assisting individuals with various disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment by providing case management, job placement, and on the job support. Ebony is very strong in the area of job development. Ebony also serves as the **lead Employment Specialist over the newly established Employment Network**.

Alissa Molinelli



Alissa has been an Employment Specialist at VCU-RRTC since July 2008. She has experience working with individuals across disabilities, to include veterans with disabilities. Alissa focuses on supporting choice, competitive employment and job retention. In 2008, Alissa earned her ACRE-certification for community rehabilitation and is currently **attending graduate school at VCU to earn her M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling**.

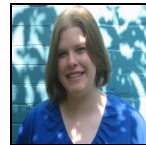
Holly Tate



Holly has been an Employment Specialist with RRTC since April 2008. She primarily works with individuals with significant disabilities from the Virginia DRS and the McGuire Veteran's Affairs Medical Center. In addition, she has given presentations to parent groups related to integrated

employment options. With a background in special education, Holly is **fluent in Spanish** and holds a Bachelor's degree in both Spanish and Biology from VCU. In 2008, she earned ACRE-certification through the supported employment web-based certificate series.

Heather Blubaugh



Heather is a new Employment Specialist with RRTC. She will

focus on community-based, competitive employment opportunities for individuals with **Autism Spectrum Disorders**. Before joining RRTC, Heather was a fulltime residential aide in an autistic group home. She has worked with individuals with a wide range of disabilities for six years and completed a two year Special Education Program at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

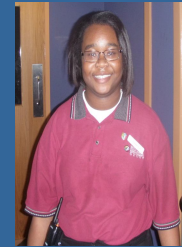
Robin Watkins



Robin, the newest addition to the RRTC team, holds a BA in Sociology

from George Mason University. Previously, she worked for Fairfax County Public Schools HR Department assisting individuals searching for jobs within the school system. This included providing training and assistance with resumes, basic computer skills and Internet based job searching. At RRTC, Robin will provide job coaching services on **Project SEARCH at MCV** as well as other RRTC customers.

SUCCESS Story



In October 2008, VCU-RRTC began working with

Tameka,

a concessionist at Regal Short Pump. The Employment Specialist (ES) built a strong relationship with Tameka and worked with her to improve her work speed, as well as her interpersonal skills, and customer service skills. The ES worked closely with management and Tameka to ensure satisfaction for the employer and the consumer, and to identify other areas where improvement or support was needed. From the first day that VCU-RRTC began working with Tameka she expressed her desire to work in the box office. The ES worked closely with Tameka to make strides in her existing position so that she could prove to management that she was responsible and ready to take on more challenging job tasks. In February 2009, Tameka achieved her goal and was given the opportunity to train in the box office, where she has excelled ever since. The ES witnessed a transformation as Tameka grew more confident and well-rounded. Now, she is a very versatile employee able to work as a concessionist, usher, door attendant, or box office attendant. In May 2009, just 7 months after VCU-RRTC intervened, Tameka was proud to share that she was named Star Performer of the Month.

