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BUSINESS Connections

VCU

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A Season of Change

As summer ends we can look forward to many changes. The leaves will change colors, the warm summer air will turn cool and autumn will take over. During this season of change, there are several changes taking place at VCU Business Connections also.

First, we have made several changes and additions to our staff of employment specialists. Please see the next page to review our current staff and their roles. The next change is more personal. As of November 1st, I will no longer be with VCU as I am taking a position with the National Organization with Disability. I would like to say thank you to everyone I have worked with over my many years at VCU and especially the past 2 years as I served in the role of Director of Employment Services. Our program would not have seen such great success without the strong partnerships established among the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the business community.

I am happy to introduce to you my replacement [Vicki Brooke](#). Vicki is a great friend and colleague and will assume the duties as the Director of Employment Services. Vicki is Director of Training here at the Center and many of you have worked with her in the past. She was one of the first job coaches for VCU when our direct service program began. Throughout her twenty-five years working in the field, Vicki has always been committed to ensuring individuals with significant disabilities receive quality employment services. She Vicki will be scheduling meetings with all of the DRS offices. I would appreciate your support as Vicki takes over. Once again let me say how much I have enjoyed working with you to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. I wish you much success in the future.

Howard Green
VCU Business Connections

Vicki Brooke

*Director of Business Connections
&
Director of Training and Knowledge Translation*



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Notable News for VCU-RRTC

Our Economic Recovery Grant funded by DRS ended in October of 2010. A total of 20 cases were referred to the project and we assisted 9 individuals with Aspergers in gaining competitive employment. A no-cost extension was granted until January 2011 in order for us to continue working with the 8 individuals still seeking employment. At this time we have 7 individuals from the project in job site training and 1 individual in follow along.

In addition, Dan Coulter did a web cast for us on Aspergers and it was a great success. We had over 300 sites join us for his training. The evaluations were wonderful. Also, we have completed a fact sheet which should be helpful for counselors and job coaches seeking to inform businesses about candidates seeking employment who have Aspergers. Please click the link to review the webcast: [Asperger's Syndrome and Employment](#).

Meet the VCU Business Connections Job Coaches

Ebony Kalafatis



Ebony is a Senior Employment Specialist with over 5 years of

experience assisting individuals with various disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment. Ebony is very talented in the area of job development and is currently working with Virginia Supportive Housing customers. Ebony graduated from VCU with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Merchandising.

Robin Watkins



Robin joined VCU Business Connections in October of 2009.

She holds a B.A. 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. At VCU, Robin will provide job coaching services on Project Search with VCU Health Systems as well as other RRTC customers.

Whitney Ham



Whitney graduated from the University of Virginia in 2008

with a B.A. in Psychology. She is currently enrolled in the Rehabilitation Counseling program at VCU and is working towards her M.S. After completing her practicum at the Faison School for Autism she is now completing her internship with VCU Business Connections. Whitney will focus on working with Autism Spectrum Disorders as an employment specialist with the Project Search research program at St. Mary's Hospital.

Holly Tate



Holly has been an Employment Specialist with VCU since April

2008. She primarily works with individuals with significant disabilities from the Virginia DRS. In addition, she has given training presentations 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.

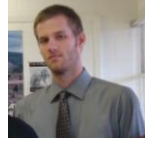
Stephanie Lau



Stephanie joined the Business Connections team as an Employment Specialist in

February of this year. She holds a B.S. in neuroscience and anthropology from The College of William and Mary. Stephanie taught elementary school in the Baltimore City and earned a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) from Johns Hopkins University. Previously, Stephanie has worked as the Training Program Director at Max's Positive Vibe Café, where she taught food service skills to adults with disabilities.

Chandler Moore



Chandler has been hired to continue our work with individuals

with Asperger's as well as other DRS customers. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of William & Mary and earned a teaching certification from VCU. Previously, Chandler taught special education students in Henrico County Public Schools and worked with the County's Inclusion and Therapeutic Recreation programs. He also taught a work placement class, developing several job sites and training opportunities at local businesses.

Alissa Molinelli



Alissa has been an Employment Specialist with VCU since August

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.

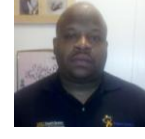
Marie Phillips



Marie is an employment specialist with VCU. She holds

a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of Virginia. Marie has work experience in catering, graphic design, customer service and management. At VCU, Marie is working with our DRS clients as well as on Project Search with VCU Health Systems assisting students with disabilities from Richmond Public Schools.

Terry Parker



Terry is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with

a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Education. He has worked for Henrico County Public School for the past 3 years, primarily in Special Education. Currently, Terry is an employment specialist for VCU Business Connections and a supervisor at UPS.

SUCCESS Story



Shaun

has worked with VCU - RRTC since 2002.

He was employed at Barnes and Noble at VCU for 9 years as a greeter. Due to company restructuring, unfortunately the job no longer met Shaun's needs.

In 2009, with the help of his DRS counselor and Employment Specialist, Shaun obtained a seasonal position at Target as a fitting room attendant. He demonstrated excellent customer service skills and the Employment Specialist worked closely with Shaun to enhance his organizational skills. Because Shaun was so successful in the seasonal position, Target extended an offer for him to stay with the company.

After Shaun mastered the fitting room, his ambitions to learn and do more peaked. Shaun, the Target Human Resource representative, and the Employment Specialists discussed other tasks Shaun could complete. When an internal Department Lead position became available Shaun applied and interviewed along with other employees. Only seven month after working for the company, Shaun was promoted to the Department Lead of Cosmetics.

In his new role Shaun has more responsibility; which he enjoys. Shaun has received several recognitions as well as the "Great Team Hero" award.

Target has been a very supportive employer throughout the process. Shaun plans to stay with the company and further develop his skills and career.