



VOICES & VISIONS

A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A PROMISING VISION FOR TOMORROW

Rose Williams, Poet, Community Leader & Advocate, To Receive 2007 Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership

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Now in its third consecutive year, the Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership continues to recognize self-advocates whose commitment, initiative, actions, and enthusiasm inspire others and make a difference in their communities. The four stars on the Award logo represent *Independence, Productivity, Inclusion, and Self-Determination* – four fundamentals of leadership and qualities exemplified by Jackie Crews, a graduate of the Board's Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program who passed away in April 2004.

Selected by a panel of PIP graduates to receive the 2007 Jackie Crews Award, Rose Williams is described by those who nominated and recommended her as "quiet, gentle, well tempered, insistent for architectural improvements and barrier removals in the City of Charlottesville." She is commended for her "ability to challenge and change the public mindset about persons with disabilities in a positive way."



Born in Charlottesville in 1950 with athetoid cerebral palsy, Rose has never let her disability stand in her way. She graduated from high school, obtained a drivers license, worked at the University of Virginia Medical Center for

18 years, purchased her own home, and has served on many volunteer boards. In 1994, Rose enrolled in college to study computer science, creative writing, and public speaking, then began a new career as a writer and motivational speaker. In 2000, Rose joined with others in her community to found the Charlottesville and Albemarle County district of VSA arts. Her poems have appeared in all seven VSA collections of writings by individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, and in 2005, she published her first book, *Strike a Pose Rose*.

After two falls and other serious health complications, Rose became completely dependent on a wheelchair for mobility in 2001. In early 2007, after realizing that wheelchair users such as herself could not address the Charlottesville City Council from the microphones provided for public speakers, she successfully spearheaded accessibility changes to the Council Chamber. Rose worked with city planners for several months to have a barrier half-wall removed and an automatic door to the Council Chamber installed. Later that spring, Rose again worked with city planners to have automatic doors installed at Charlottesville's recently opened Downtown Transit



The Jackie Crews Award
for Excellence in Leadership

(continued on page 6)

Letter from the Chair: Taking the Lead to Safeguard Our Rights

Lisbet Ward

The ongoing watch to protect our civil rights allows for no vacations. Challenges seem continuous despite provisions instituted into law by the Virginians with Disabilities Act (VDA) in 1985 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. During its 2007 and 2008 sessions, the General Assembly considered a bill that would have weakened the VDA. At the federal level, disability advocates call for an ADA Restoration Act to reinstate the original intent of the ADA weakened by U.S. Supreme Court decisions. How can civil rights be so hard to gain yet so easily slip away?

In his book, *With Liberty and Justice for All*, Justin Dart, often cited as the "Father of the ADA", offered guidance to the disability community and all those who join together to safeguard the civil rights of all people. To highlight just some of his "Ten Ways You Can Make the Dream Live On", Dart urged us to:

"Give up life as usual... and devote time to passionate advocacy for individualized empowerment.

"Give up politically and socially correct conversation and become a single-minded, repetitious communicator of the message... so that when people see you across the street, your message will register in their minds even though you say nothing.

"Speak to people... giving them sincere, loving praise for the distinctive positives that everybody has. They will be glad to see you coming and be far more likely to internalize your message of empowerment.

"Recruit your family members and friends first. People from age one to a hundred can be good advocates..."

"Become a media person – write letters to the editors, participate in radio and TV talk shows, become friends with media employees and business and political staff..."

"If there is no cross disability action group in your area, form one..."

"When necessary, send your messages of love and truth with... action. You will be surprised how a small demonstration at a political, media, or business office can change attitudes."

What did Dart mean by "individualized empowerment"? We each have a personal responsibility to

empower ourselves, then work together to safeguard and expand our civil rights, develop opportunities for real independent living, and create truly accessible and integrated communities. Dart encouraged us that "the revolution of empowerment will go on."

You and I are that revolution. Find your voice; speak your message. Your family, friends, community, and state need to hear what you have to say. As Dart's wife and fellow advocate, Yoshiko, quoted him in her June 2003 tribute (www.aapd.com/JFA/justindart/jdanniv1.html) on the first anniversary of his death: "Lead on. Lead on." ♡♡



Board Welcomes and Seeks New Members

Nan Pemberton

In January, Governor Kaine commissioned Jason Neal of Abingdon to serve as the newest member of the Board, filling a recently vacated position for a person with a developmental disability. Mr. Neal attended Virginia Highlands Community College and Virginia Tech, participates in diverse civic, cultural, and volunteer activities in Southwest Virginia, and has served as a Community Action Specialist for Clinch Independent Living Services in Grundy. He has also been employed in retail, advertising, and broadcasting, including providing radio color commentary for Abingdon High School sports.

Additional Board positions will be available July 1, 2008.

For more information or to download an application, visit

www.vaboard.org/aboutvbpd.htm#Appointment-Information

New Voices & Visions Schedule

To improve the timeliness of our reporting on Board activities, the *Voices & Visions* schedule is changing. Publication is moving from the months before Board meetings to the months after Board meetings. The change will be gradual, starting with this edition, distributed in March instead of February. The next issue will also be a month later, in June. The new schedule will begin in the fall with future issues to be distributed in October, January, April, and July. ♡♡

Transforming & Rebalancing Virginia's System of Long-Term Supports

This update was provided by Board collaborators Julie Stanley, Director of Community Integration for People with Disabilities; Kristin Burhop, Systems Transformation Grant Coordinator; and Jason A. Rachel, Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Project Director.

The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* requires that persons of all ages with disabilities be able to live in the most integrated setting possible. Recently, Virginia successfully pursued two major federal initiatives that will support continued Olmstead implementation by working with stakeholders, particularly individuals who use long-term supports, across all systems and populations.

The first initiative, a five-year **Systems Transformation Grant** (STG) awarded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in September 2006, serves as a catalyst to drive permanent change across Virginia's entire long-term supports system. STG has two phases. CMS approved the first, strategic planning, in June 2007. It will be followed by implementation of three grant components.

"**No Wrong Door**" will create a long-term supports information system accessible to individuals of all ages with all types of disabilities via the internet and at physical sites. A website is under development featuring links to the 2-1-1 VIRGINIA information and referral system, an on-line Medicaid application, and a single form authorizing information exchanges.

The second key component of STG involves educating staff in all service systems, as well as other constituent populations, in the use of **person-centered practices** (PCP), adding individualized budgeting options to some Medicaid waivers, and expanding self-direction of supports. A statement of PCP principles, a glossary, a planning tool, and a report on individual budgeting will be available soon.

Designing and implementing **information technology** to support PCP and self-directed services, improve and streamline Mental Retardation waiver services, and produce a Critical Incident Management & Reporting System for waiver users comprises the final STB component. The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) has identified inefficiencies in current waiver systems, reviewed legislative mandates, and is examining information currently being shared.

In May 2007, CMS approved the second initiative, a **Money Follows the Person** (MFP) Demonstration project, to rebalance community and institutional services. Beginning soon, 1,041 individuals of all ages with all types of disabilities, who wish to, may transition to the community from nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation (ICFs-MR), and long-stay hospitals. At that time, transition services and coordination, environmental modifications, assistive technology, personal emergency response systems, and consumer-directed supported employment will become available permanently for all individuals currently served under selected Medicaid waivers. Two additional services, supplemental home modifications and temporary "bridge rent" provided by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), will be limited to individuals participating in the MFP Demonstration

To implement these changes, Virginia has developed an Operational Protocol (Guidebook) that must be approved by CMS. The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) has submitted amended waiver applications, drafted regulations, and is updating service and provider manuals. DMAS is also modifying technology systems for Medicaid claims, pre-authorization, and consumer-directed services. It will soon begin awareness and training activities to educate service providers. Please visit www.olmsteadva.com/mfp/ for additional information. ♾

Schools for Students with Disabilities Fund

In 2007, the General Assembly created the Schools for Students with Disabilities Fund to reduce tuition costs at licensed, private special education schools. Individual fund contributions are eligible for a 40% state tax credit, subject to an annual statewide maximum, and may also qualify as charitable donations. Contributions received through June 30, 2008, will be distributed as grants to participating schools for the 2008-2009 school year. For more information,

email susan.cumbia@doe.virginia.gov,
call 804-371-2725 or visit
www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/sess/ssdf/

Partners in Policymaking: Joining the Struggle for Progress

Teri Barker-Morgan



Shifting paradigms from a culture that focuses on differences, liabilities, and segregation to one that embraces diversity and inclusion requires individuals willing and able to act as change agents. With that goal in mind, the January session of

Partners in Policymaking tackled three essentials for social change: grassroots organizing, coalition building, and activism.

In an 1849 letter to a fellow abolitionist, Frederick Douglass summed up the challenge faced by change agents: "Let me give you a word on the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all absorbing, and for the time being putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without

thunder and lightning... This struggle may be a moral one... a physical one; or... both... but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Partners in Policymaking educates people with disabilities and parents of young children with disabilities on systems change strategies, provides skill building opportunities and informs Partners about national best practice initiatives. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2008-2009 PIP class. You can be a change agent! Visit www.vaboard.org/policy-making.htm for more information and to download an application or call 1-800-846-4464 today. ♡



The Board welcomes new Sponsored Programs Assistant, Erin Hickey, to the Partners in Policymaking team. Erin also serves as Executive Director of VSA arts (www.vsava.org) and brings creative energy, experience, and skills from an impressive and varied background in both the art and disability fields to the Board's staff.

YLF Update

Kara White



Youth Leadership Forum: Wanted! Young Leaders

It's that time again! Recruitment of another great group of Delegates for this summer's Youth Leadership Forum has begun. Thousands of announcements and applications have been distributed to high schools and other key educational and disability organizations statewide. YLF and PIP alumni have been encouraged to invite young people in their communities to apply.

The 2008 YLF will take place July 14-18 at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. Invited Delegates will formulate career and life goals, develop leadership abilities, enhance social

skills, and gain a wealth of knowledge and experience from peers and guest speakers.

Selection to participate in YLF is a privilege and honor. Delegates must reside in Virginia, have a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, be a rising junior or senior or enrolled in a non-graded program and returning to high school for at least one more year after the 2007-2008 school year, and have demonstrated leadership in their school and community. They must also be motivated, accept and have an interest in diversity, want to develop their leadership skills and a plan for their future, and desire to share their thoughts and opinions.

To be considered, completed applications and all other required information must be received by no later than 5pm, March 31, 2008. Additional information and applications are available at www.vaboard.org/ylf.htm, by e-mailing info@vbpd.virginia.gov, or by calling 1-800-846-4464. ♡

YLF Alumni Spotlight

John Motley, Class of 2004, achieved his goal of joining the U.S. Army, is currently deployed in Iraq, and hopes to inspire all through his actions and service. He welcomes communications at his MySpace page (John Motley, aka Ranger John), where his headline reads: "the adventurous may not live for long, but the cautious do not live at all."

Transportation Coordination in Virginia

Teri Barker-Morgan



"Finding the Smartest Distance Between Two Points."

On February 26, 2004, President Bush signed Executive Order 13330 on Human Service Transportation Coordination to improve access to critical services for transportation-disadvantaged persons across the country by promoting inter-agency cooperation among 75 federal programs and services. EO 13330 clarified the federal government's vision that "comprehensive and coordinated community transportation systems are essential for persons with disabilities, persons with low incomes, and older adults who rely on such transportation to fully participate in their communities."

In Virginia, the Department of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT) is the lead agency guiding compliance with EO 13330 and serves as the state's administrator of federal New Freedom initiatives, "Section 5310" programs supporting the purchase of vehicles and equipment, and the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program. DRPT's leadership role under EO 13330 derives from its on-going efforts to encourage and support transportation coordination at the state level.

In 2003, DRPT established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council to "allow state agencies to actively work together to identify and recommend state policy changes needed to eliminate duplication and to improve transportation coordination and services to key populations." Council partic-

ipants include agencies under the Secretaries of

Transportation and Health & Human Resources, and in

June 2007, to further support and sustain momentum for transportation coordination, these Secretaries signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Coordinated Human Service Transportation in Public and Nonpublic Transit Systems. The Council also works closely with the Office of Community Integration to raise the profile of transportation as a primary service necessary for the Commonwealth to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's "Olmstead" decision.

DRPT is currently assisting Virginia's 21 planning districts with development of local transportation coordination plans. These plans, to be completed by the end of 2008, will each include an assessment of available services, identify service gaps and strategies to address them, and make recommendations to implement those strategies. Participation in these planning and coordination processes by individuals with disabilities is essential.

To find out what is happening in your area, contact your local Planning District Commission. An interactive map with links to each of Virginia's planning districts can be found at www.vapdc.org/aboutpdcs.htm#PDC%20Map. Updates on DRPT planning and coordination efforts, paraphrased from their website in the subtitle of this article, can be found at www.drpt.virginia.gov. ♡



Super School

Linda L. Redmond

For more than a year, the Board has helped Virginia Commonwealth University "build" a unique Super School where students with disabilities ages ten and older can learn knowledge and skills needed to successfully transition from secondary

school to higher education or employment. Supported by a Board Innovative Grant to the Partnership for People with Disabilities, Dr. Tony Gentry of VCU's Department of Occupational Therapy has created an interactive computer game featuring a virtual campus, faculty leader, seven students with special abilities, and with the help of a team of VCU students, multiple game scenarios. This "proof of concept" version is the first step towards development of a completed game that can be broadly marketed.

Individuals or groups playing Super School face a series of challenges that develop their interpersonal and problem-solving skills. To successfully overcome these challenges, students must develop an action plan using all available resources. Each game level has a performance goal associated with issues students actually face at their real schools, and each player must determine: What are my strengths and weaknesses? What social supports do I have? What actions can I take? What assistive technology is available? At game's end, students "graduate" from Super School to face challenges in the larger world.

Super School drew positive reviews from local students with disabilities who tested it and provided useful suggestions for improvements. Dr. Gentry is currently pursuing grant funding to complete game development, which he anticipates will require two more years of work. ♡

Promoting Partnerships and Employment On-Line

Lynne Talley

The Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research & Training Center (RRTC) has developed a series of webcasts as a key component of its Board-funded project, **Promoting Partnerships and Employment for People with Disabilities in State Government**. In these on-line workshops, experts share resources and collaborative models that will ensure success for all the project's targeted partners: the Virginia Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM), state agency heads and hiring managers, community rehabilitation programs, state-contracted staffing organizations, and most of all, individuals with disabilities, themselves.

The first in the series, "Job Coaching: What Is It and How Does It Affect Businesses and State Agencies," aired on September 20, 2007. Over 220 participants received an overview of the job coaching concept and how this tool encourages and supports workplace success for employees with disabilities, enabling employers to tap new resources to meet their labor needs.

The follow-up on December 11, 2007, "Promoting Partnerships..." featured information on the Board

and how to access the RRTC program. DHRM provided general guidance on recruiting and hiring qualified people with disabilities and specifics on meeting the requirements of the Governor's Executive Directive #8 instructing state agencies to do so. With strong advance encouragement from DHRM, a majority of the 310 participants represented state agencies.

The next in the series will air on April 23, 2008, and cover assistive technology in the workplace.

Advance registration is required to view the webcasts live, but afterwards, they are available to everyone at any time via the RRTC website. For additional information, to register, or to view previous webcasts, visit www.worksupport.com/training/index.cfm. ♡



Expanding Circles of Support

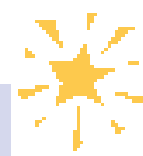
Katherine Lawson

For many individuals with disabilities residing in institutions or at risk of institutionalization, assistance in making decisions is required to enable self-determination and support independent living. The Board provided funding for **Community Opportunities, Inc.**, of Blacksburg, working with Wall Residences, Inc., and the Central Virginia Training Center, to explore the use of circles of support, microboards, and other substitute decision-making alternatives to traditional authorized representative and guardianship arrangements to meet this need.

In its report to the Board last December, Community Opportunities identified the slow process for identifying individuals able and wanting to transition from institutional to community residence, reluctance on the part of service providers and the guardianship system to modify established practices, and inadequate numbers of public guardians as major barriers preventing individuals from moving to less-restrictive community living opportunities. They also found that, while many of these individuals are capable of making decisions about where and how to live and what services and supports they need, they are highly isolated and lack available family members and friends to help and support them in their choices.

Despite these barriers, Community Opportunities was able to achieve successful outcomes in moving individuals to less restrictive environments and related areas of employment, recreation, and health. What they learned was shared in a series of training seminars at conferences across Virginia to increase awareness, understanding, and use of alternatives to guardianship. In its report, Community Opportunities emphasized the need to continue and expand this outreach in order to educate all practitioners of the need for greater community supports and more person-centered thinking and planning.

To learn more about circles of supports, microboards, and other substitute decision-making alternatives, visit www.communityopportunities.org or read the project's final report under Grant Highlights at www.vaboard.org/grants.htm. ♡



Meetings & Events of Interest

9th Annual Accessibility Summit 2008

April 4-5, 2008
McLean Bible Church (Tyson's Corner), 8925 Leesburg Pike,
Vienna, VA 22182, (703) 770-2918

2008 Conference: Guardianship, Elder Rights, and Disability Services

April 7-8, 2008
(Sponsors) Virginia Elder Rights Coalition (VERC), & Virginia Guardianship Association (VGA)
Sheraton Richmond West Hotel, 6624 West Broad Street,
Richmond, VA www.vgavirginia.org/conferences.asp

Board for Blind & Visually Impaired Qrtly Board Meeting

April 8, 2008 1:00pm
VA Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired,
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227

ESOAC Steering Meeting

April 8, 2008 9:30am
(Sponsor) Department Rehabilitative Services, DRS Central Location, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA 23229

Statewide Independent Living Council

April 16, 2008 9:00am
(Sponsor) Department of Rehabilitative Services, Independence Center, Inc., 6300 E. Virginia Beach Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23502

Statewide Independent Living Council Qrtly Business Meeting

April 17, 2008 10:00am
(Sponsor) Department of Rehabilitative Services, Independence Center, Inc., 6300 E. Virginia Beach Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23502

Governing Board

April 25, 2008 9:00am
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy,
National Conference Center in Lansdowne, VA

Virginia Brain Injury Council quarterly Meeting

April 25, 2008 1:00pm
Department of Rehabilitative Services, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Conference Rooms 103-105, Richmond, VA

World of Possibilities Expo Maryland 2008

May 2-3, 2008 10:00am
(Sponsor) Caring Communities, Montgomery County Fairgrounds Gaithersburg, MD

Next Board Meeting
June 19, 2008
Wyndham Richmond Airport Hotel
4700 S. Laburnum Ave., Richmond, VA

For more Meetings & Events of Interest, visit our website at www.vaboard.org/meetings.htm

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