

2006 ANNUAL REPORT



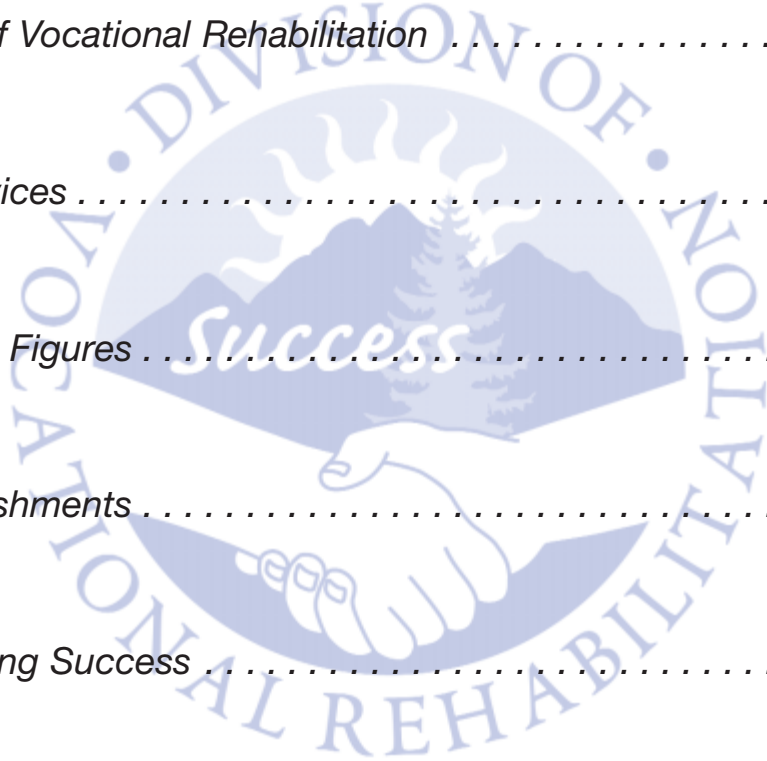
COLORADO DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



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COLORADO OFFICE LOCATIONS

Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Administration Office

303-866-4150 Voice/TTY

Toll Free: (866) 870-4595

FAX: (303) 866-4905

Web: <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dvr/index.htm>

Email: Carlos.Fernandez@state.co.us

Nancy Smith—Director

Sandy Pratt—Manager, Central Support Services

Kenneth Schmidt, Ed.D.—Administrator, Field Services

David Hood—Acting Manager, Provider Relations

Krista Dann—Manager, Organizational Development

Gale Klingman—Manager, Program Performance and
Information Management Services

Sue Schierkolk—Youth Unit Supervisor

Field Offices and Other Facilities

Region 1 Supervisor—Ken Reynolds, 719-482-7970

Office	Phone	TTY
Alamosa	719-589-5158	719-589-5150
Cañon City	719-275-2318 x3076	
Colorado Blue Sky Enterprises (CCB)	719-546-0574	
Colorado Springs	719-635-3585	719-635-0529
Craig	970-824-9671	
Delta	970-874-5781 x12	
Durango	970-247-3161	970-247-7940
Edwards	970-926-1515	
El Paso DHS	719-444-8115	
Fort Morgan	970-542-9376	
Frisco	970-668-5360	
Glenwood Springs	970-945-9174	970-945-9174
Grand Junction Career Center	970-778-0790	
Grand Junction	970-248-7103	970-248-7103
Lamar	719-336-7712	719-336-7712
Limon	719-775-8819	719-775-8819
Montrose	970-249-4468	970-249-4468
Mountain Valley Developmental Services (CCB)	970-210-5893	
.	970-945-2306	
Pikes Peak	719-667-3796	
Pueblo	719-544-1406	719-546-0968
Rocky Ford	719-254-3358	
Salida	719-539-9670	719-539-9670
Starpoint (CCB)	719-276-1616	
Steamboat Springs	970-620-0418	
Sterling	970-522-3737	970-522-3737
The Resource Exchange (CCB)	719-785-6405	
Trinidad	888-734-2211	

Region 2 Supervisor—Marilyn Carmichael, 303-866-3111

Office	Phone	TTY
Aurora	303-337-4610	
Denver Project to End Homelessness	303-885-6274	
.	720-944-1825	
Denver Metro	303-866-2500	303-866-3984
.	303-866-3100	303-866-3980
Denver Options (CCB)	303-636-5979	
Developmental Disabilities Resource Center (CCB)	303-462-6688	

Region 3 Supervisor—Candy Leathers, 303-866-2708

Office	Phone	TTY
Adams County DHS	303-227-2677	
Boulder	303-444-2816	303-444-8136
Foot Hills Gateway (CCB)	970-266-5436	
Fort Collins	970-223-9823	970-223-9823
Golden	303-866-4121	303-866-4125
Greeley	970-353-5409	
Northglenn	303-866-2110	303-866-2120

**Metro Teaching Programs—Statewide Teaching
Coordinator,** 303-866-2500

**Business Enterprise Program—Marilyn Morgan,
Program Supervisor,** 303-866-3484



FROM BETH SCHAFFNER AND NANCY SMITH

Dear Colleagues:

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) are pleased to provide you with this 2006 Annual Report. Our report covers the year that ended June 30, 2006. The SRC and the staff of DVR are proud of the accomplishments reflected herein.

The State Rehabilitation Council works in partnership with DVR to accomplish goals important to both bodies. Annually the SRC conducts Public Hearings that garner information from Coloradans about program services and needs. The SRC also convenes forums on specific topics such as self-employment. The result of these activities is recommendations are made to DVR about ways in which the services can be improved for our customers statewide.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation relies on the SRC to be its eyes and ears in the community. Often one of the SRC members will reflect back some comments heard during the usual course of their life and business. Those comments may help us to solve a problem or change policy. The SRC also can provide valuable information and education to the public about DVR. Whether it is a parent of a child with a disability, a state legislator, or a service provider, making connections and offering information extends DVR's reach into the communities it serves.

The SRC and DVR believe in the power of partnerships. This is first reflected in the composition of the SRC that includes customers of DVR, providers, advocates, workforce and education department representatives, and business people. Through partnerships we are able to extend the reach and the resources of the agency to serve more people in Colorado. Secondly, it is reflected in the way we do business. DVR prides itself on its ability to recognize an opportunity to expand its reach and provide services in an innovative way. We have partnerships with the Workforce Centers, higher education, the Denver Project to End Homelessness, our sister Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health, and public transportation entities. We recognize that it takes many types of entities to bring people the service they need to get to work.

We are excited about the possibilities the future holds for our partnership. We hope you will learn from reading about our work. We are here to provide the resources to people with disabilities so they become employed taxpaying productive members of their communities.

Sincerely,

Beth Schaffner
Acting Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Nancy Smith
Director
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vision

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation believes that individuals with disabilities are essential to the success of Colorado's workforce.

Mission

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assists individuals whose disabilities result in barriers to employment to succeed at work and live independently.

DVR's Guiding Principles:

- The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation believes that treating our employees with dignity and respect results in the highest quality outcomes for our consumers.
- Our employees strive to assist our consumers in developing the knowledge, skills and tools necessary for them to become independent in their employment endeavors.
- Any action taken or service provided by our employees to our consumers will have a direct impact on their employment success.

"I really think they care about the people they assist. They are really professional, all-around good people."



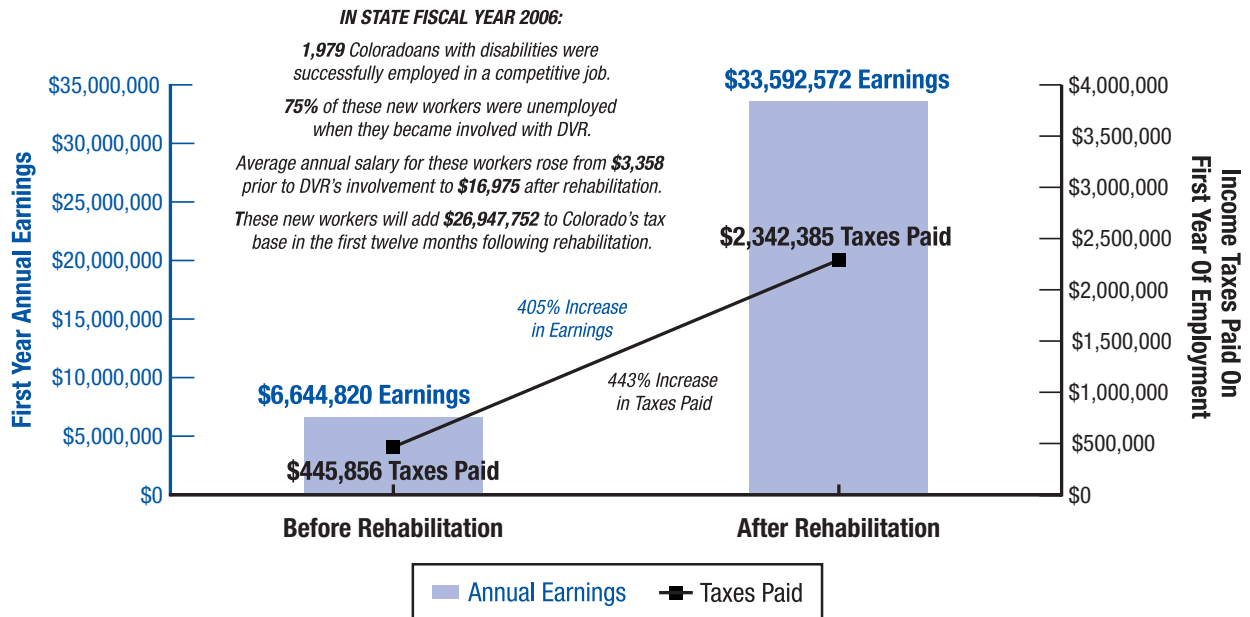
**Nancy Smith,
Director,
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Successful, Cost-Effective, and Good for Colorado's Economy

Successful employment and independence for persons with disabilities is good for Colorado. The cost of vocational rehabilitation is paid back to the public in increased tax revenues, reduced reliance on public assistance, and a more stable

and diverse workforce. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is extremely proud of the competence of its staff and is highly committed to the success of its customers.

Vocational Rehabilitation's Economic Benefit to the State of Colorado



Beth Schaffner at the DVR Conference in Colorado Springs, CO



FIELD SERVICES

Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducts its business through 38 field offices located throughout the state, each serving individuals with all types of physical and mental disabilities. DVR's staff is highly committed to assisting consumers to obtain vocational success and independence through evaluation, planning, provision of services necessary to be successful in employment, and comprehensive support during the process. Colorado employs approximately 130 extensively trained vocational rehabilitation counselors who work individually with consumers to help them identify goals and implement plans that meet their specific vocational needs. Rehabilitation counselors are required to meet stringent standards put forth by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. This requires a Master's level degree, typically in the highly specialized field of rehabilitation counseling.

The Division strives to assure that the same level of high quality services is delivered all over the state regardless of geography, and to all individuals regardless of the nature of the disability. In order to meet the needs of a variety of consumers, DVR has ensured that there are "specialist counselors" throughout the state. These counselors have a high level of expertise and act as resources to other staff in the areas of blindness, deafness, developmental disabilities, mental health issues, and the corrections system. There are also counselors who are fluent in Spanish and American Sign Language in each region, as well as an individual who speaks Dutch.

*"Vocational
Rehabilitation
Changed
my life."*

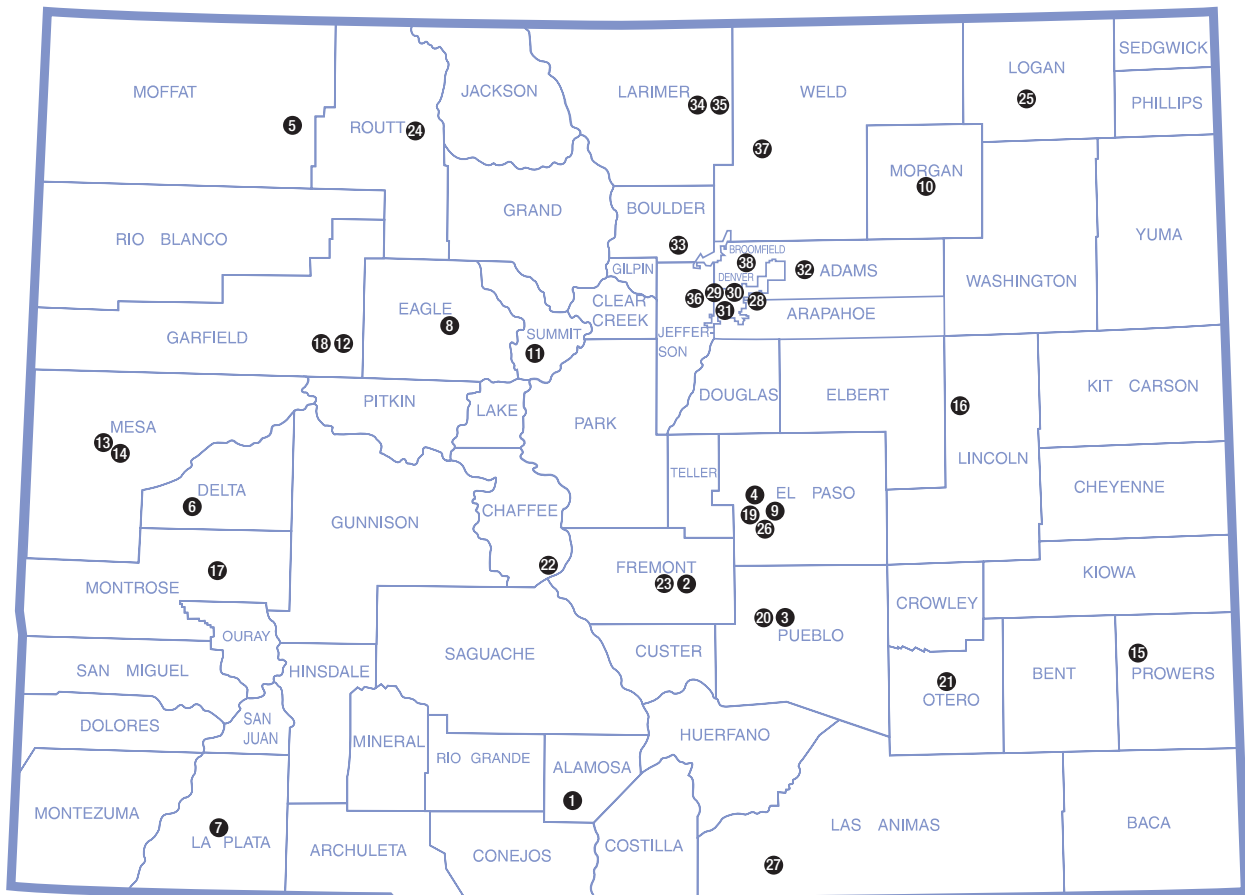


Dr. Ken Schmidt, Administrator of Field Services

Each of the field offices has a supervisor who, in addition to providing leadership and guidance to the staff, takes the lead in developing partnerships with area employers, workforce centers, schools, and other public and private service agencies within the community. These supervisors meet monthly to network and share ideas, resources, and information that will help

improve the employment outcomes of consumers.

DVR also works in partnership with the business community to provide services to employers such as disability awareness training, on-site job assessments, referral and support of qualified employees, and professional consultation.



- 1—Alamosa
- 2—Cañon City
- 3—Colorado Blue Sky Enterprises (CCB)
- 4—Colorado Springs
- 5—Craig
- 6—Delta
- 7—Durango
- 8—Edwards
- 9—El Paso DHS
- 10—Fort Morgan
- 11—Frisco
- 12—Glenwood Springs
- 13—Grand Junction Career Center

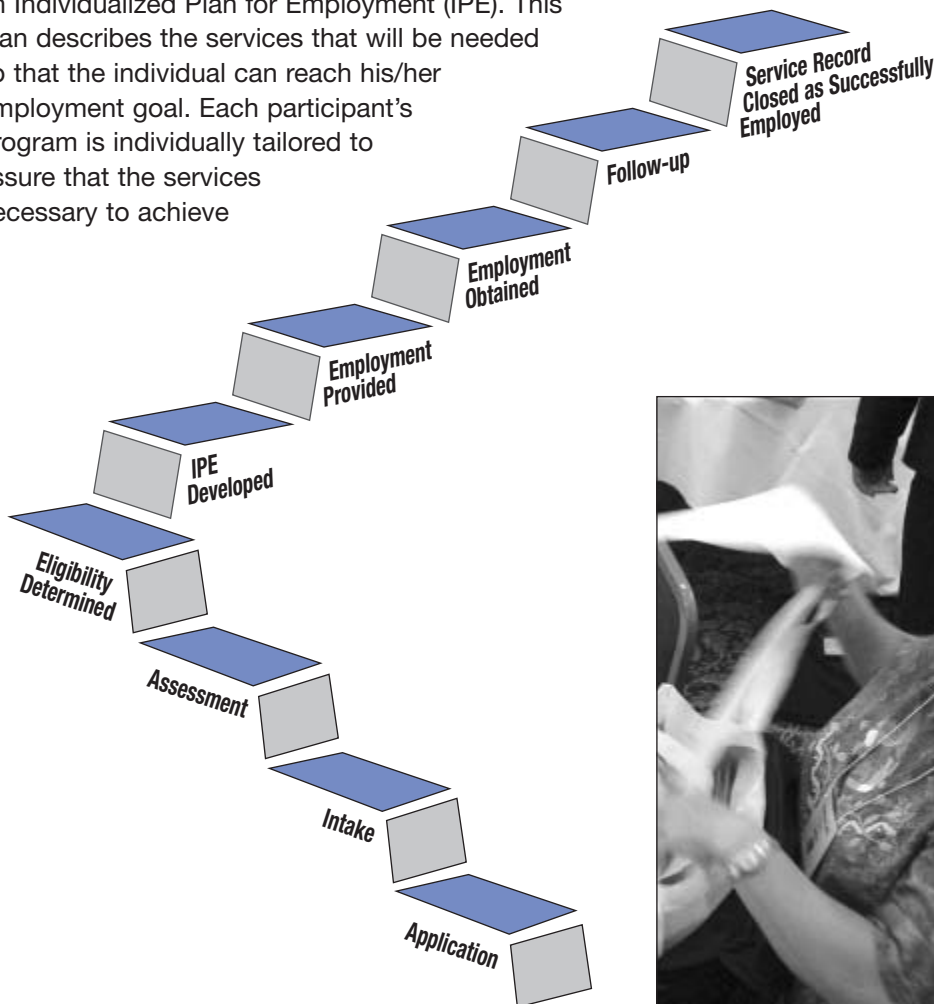
- 14—Grand Junction
- 15—Lamar
- 16—Limon
- 17—Montrose
- 18—Mountain Valley Developmental Services (CCB)
- 19—Pikes Peak
- 20—Pueblo
- 21—Rocky Ford
- 22—Salida
- 23—Starpoint (CCB)
- 24—Steamboat Springs
- 25—Sterling
- 26—The Resource Exchange (CCB)
- 27—Trinidad

- 28—Aurora
- 29—Denver Project to End Homelessness
- 30—Denver Metro —Denver Options (CCB)
- 31—Developmental Disabilities Resource Center (CCB)
- 32—Adams County DHS
- 33—Boulder
- 34—Foot Hills Gateway (CCB)
- 35—Fort Collins
- 36—Golden
- 37—Greeley
- 38—Northglenn

What We Do

The rehabilitation process begins when an individual applies for services from DVR. An application form is completed and an intake interview is held to explore the individual's medical, social, financial, educational, and vocational experiences. This is an opportunity to explore the applicant's skills, abilities, and interests, and to understand his/her specific vocational rehabilitation needs. Further assessment of the individual's employment barriers is conducted when necessary to establish eligibility for services. Once eligibility is established, the participant and his/her vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This plan describes the services that will be needed so that the individual can reach his/her employment goal. Each participant's program is individually tailored to assure that the services necessary to achieve

his/her goals are provided. The anticipated outcome of the individual's vocational program is competitive employment in a career of the individual's choice. Depending on the services needed, the program can last anywhere from a few months to several years. Follow-up services are provided by the rehabilitation counselor to assure that the individual's employment is stable and satisfactory. Advocacy and support services are available through the Colorado Client Assistance Program throughout the term of the individuals involvement with DVR.



LaVerne Dell, Rehabilitation Counselor in Golden, CO

Services Available

DVR is able to provide a variety of services to eligible individuals to help them obtain their employment goals. The eligible individual and the vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to determine which services are necessary and appropriate for the consumer's identified employment goal. The services provided to any eligible individual are determined by his/her unique employment barriers, his/her chosen employment goal, and his/her individual circumstances. Examples of services available from DVR include:

- **Evaluation and diagnostic services** provided to determine eligibility and the services needed for the individual to become employed;
- **Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance** provided directly by a vocational rehabilitation counselor during the individual's plan of services to accomplish a variety of objectives leading to successful employment;
- **Physical and mental restoration services**, which may be provided to correct or substantially modify an individual's physical or mental condition;
- **Training services**, when necessary to become employed, including vocational training, academic training, personal and vocational adjustment training, job coaching, on-the-job training, job-seeking skills training, and books, tools, and other training materials;
- **Specialized services for individuals who are blind, deaf, and deaf-blind**, including interpreter services, note-taking services, and reader services;
- **Rehabilitation technology services**, including assistive technology devices, assistive technology services, and rehabilitation engineering services to address barriers encountered by an individual in attaining or retaining employment;



Joe Hintz, Rehabilitation Counselor in Greeley, CO

- **Placement services** provided to assist an individual with a disability to find adequate and suitable employment in his/her chosen career.
- **Supportive services**, such as maintenance, transportation, personal assistance services and services to family members may also be provided if necessary for the individual to utilize the services identified above.

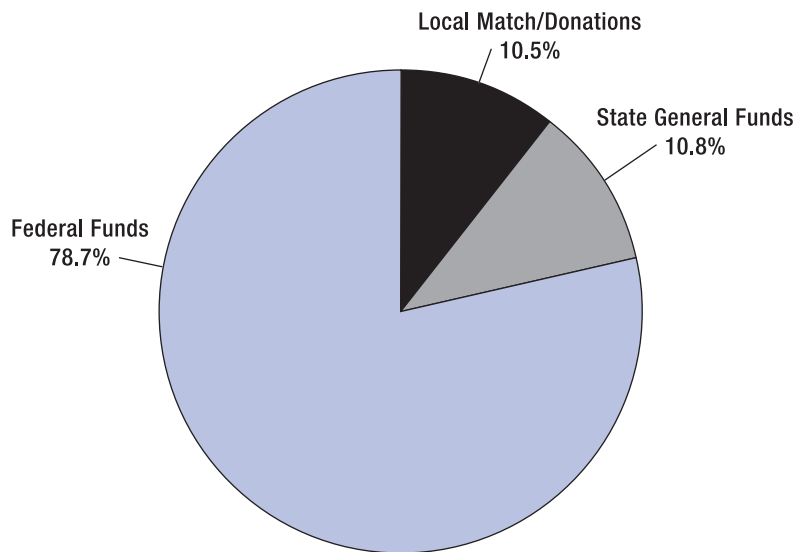
In addition, post-employment services may be provided to previously rehabilitated individuals when needed to maintain or regain suitable employment.



FACTS AND FIGURES

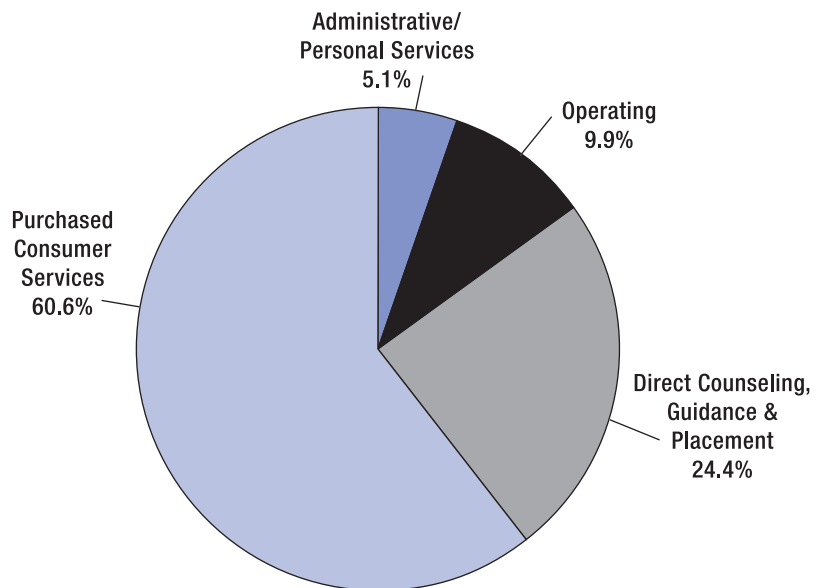
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Funding and Expenditures

Sources of Funding for SYF 2006



*"Thank You...
Division of
Vocational
Rehabilitation
for helping me
attain things
I never even
dreamed of!"*

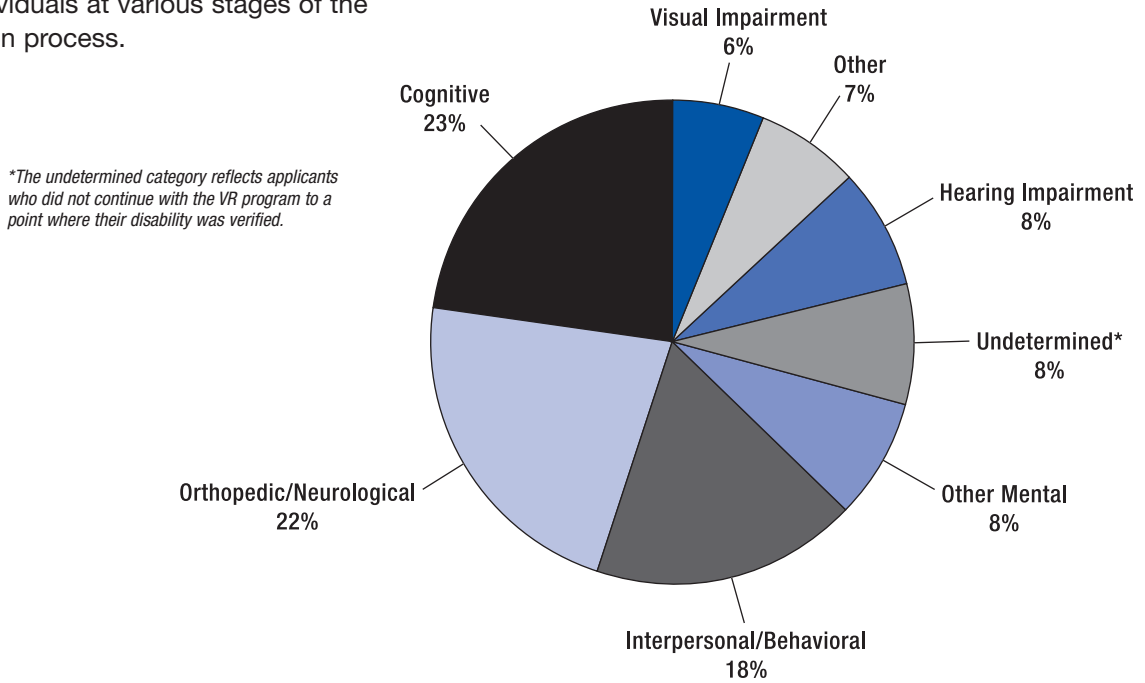
SYF 2006 Expenditures by Type



Who We Serve

During state fiscal year 2006, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation served 19,262 individuals at various stages of the rehabilitation process.

Primary Disability of 19,262 Consumers Served



Other Characteristics of the Individuals We Served

	19,262 Individuals Served During SFY 2006		2,151 Individuals Rehabilitated During SFY 2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender				
Male	10,421	54%	1,185	55%
Female	8,841	46%	966	45%
Age at Referral				
21 Years and Under	4,022	20.9%	687	31.9%
22 to 30 Years	2,888	15%	300	13.9%
31 to 40 Years	3,595	18.7%	331	15.4%
41 to 50 Years	4,867	25.3%	438	20.4%
51 to 60 Years	3,037	15.8%	246	11.4%
61 to 64 Years	411	2.1%	54	2.5%
Over 64 Years	442	2.3%	95	4.4%
Ethnic Background*				
White	15,944	72.5%	1,809	74.8%
African American	1,577	7.2%	142	5.9%
Asian	220	1%	32	1.3%
Pacific Islander	35	.2%	6	.2%
Native American	449	2%	42	1.7%
Hispanic	3,757	17.1%	386	16%

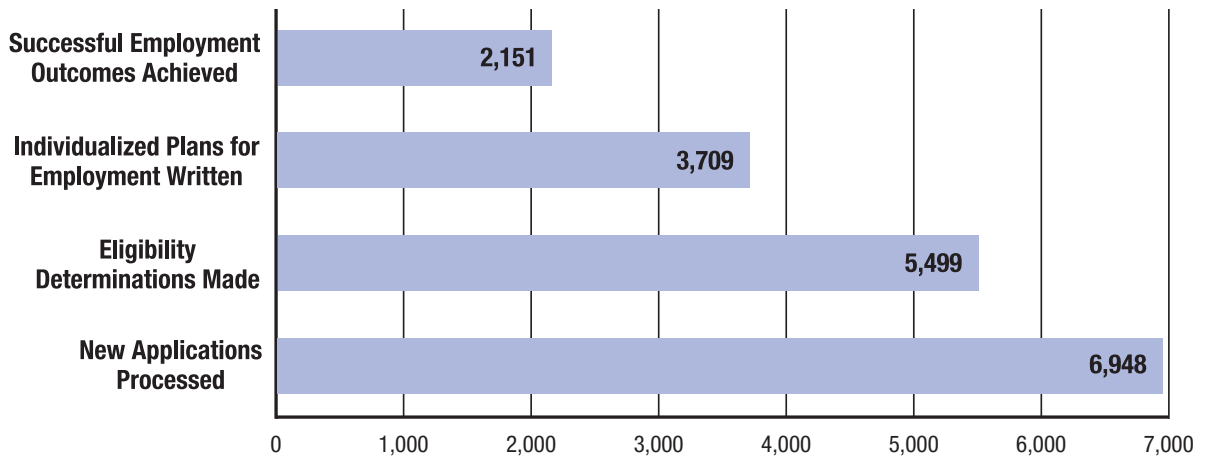
*The DVR data system allows for multiple ethnic backgrounds to be reported by one individual. Therefore the amounts shown can calculate greater than 100% and will be greater than the total amount served and rehabilitated.



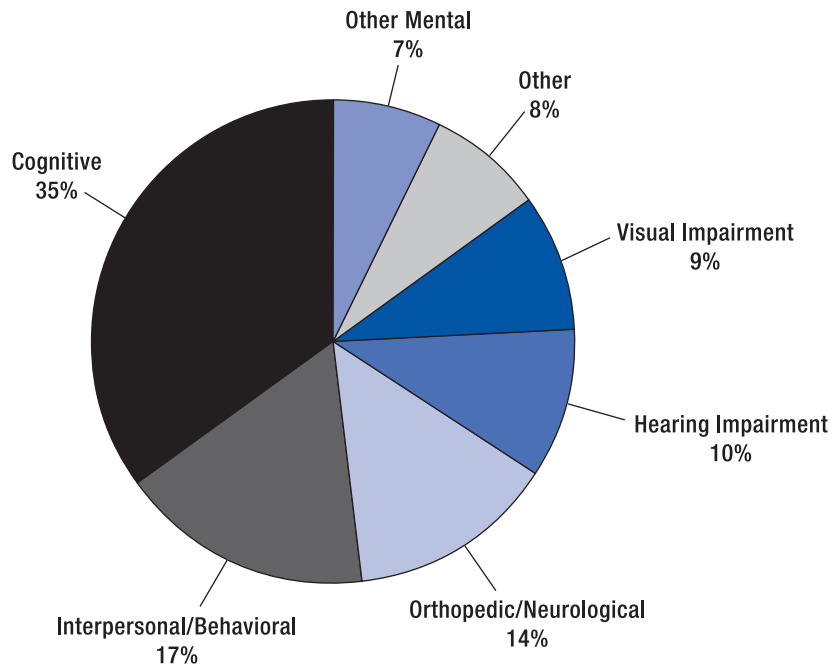
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What We Accomplished

2006 Accomplishments



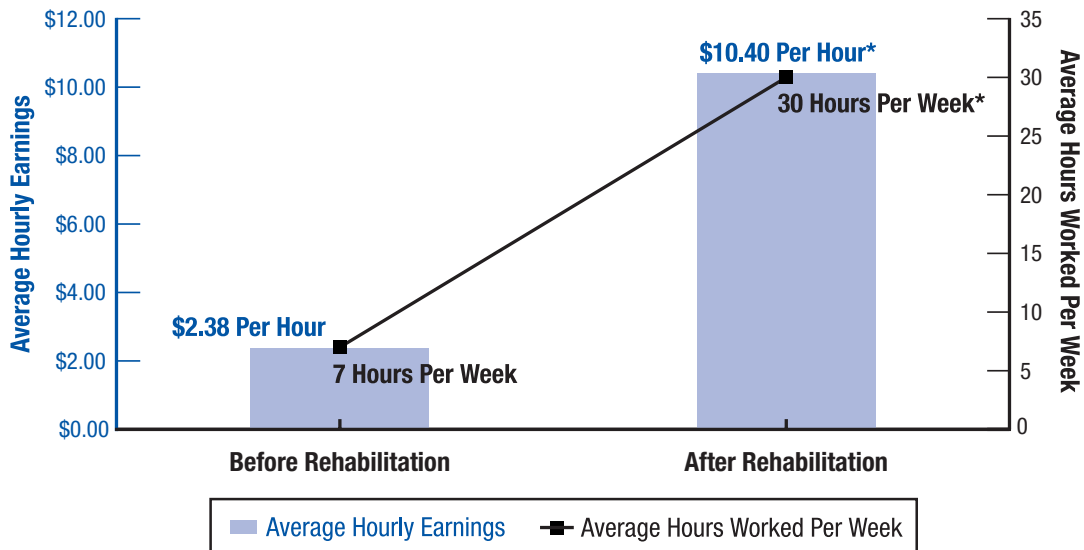
Primary Disability of 2,151 Consumers Successfully Employed



“I’ve been blessed to be in the program, and I believe it helps a lot of people.”

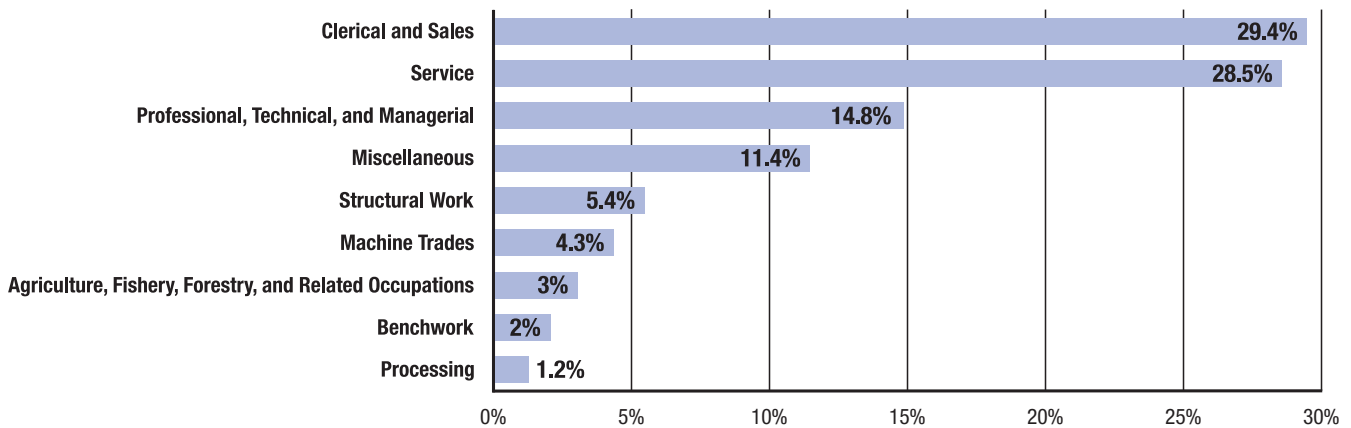
What Our Participants Accomplished

Increased Earnings and Hours Worked



**This hourly rate and hours worked are reflective of persons obtaining entry-level employment with opportunities to advance in their chosen career. They do not include homemakers or unpaid family workers. In order for DVR to consider a person successfully rehabilitated, the individual must be performing gainful employment. Persons closed as homemaker or unpaid family worker are considered by DVR to be gainfully employed, although they do not receive monetary earnings.*

Occupations of 2,151 Persons Successfully Employed





RECOGNIZING SUCCESS

The following customer profiles are being shared with the individuals' permission.

Last Comic Standing

Name: **Josh Blue**

Place of Employment: **Comedy Clubs Nationwide**

Occupation: **Stand-Up Comic**

Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jan Lattuca (Retired 2005)**

Location: **Denver**

At just 27, Josh Blue has achieved more with a disability than many peers his age without one. In addition to becoming a local celebrity because of his laugh-out-loud performances at Comedy Works in Denver, he skyrocketed to fame in 2006 as the winner of NBC's hit show, "Last Comic Standing". He has appeared on Comedy Central's "Mind of Mencia." And that's not all. He participated in the 2004 Paralympic Games for disabled athletes as a member of the USA soccer team.

As a young man with cerebral palsy, Blue is the first person to laugh at himself. His stand-up routine is filled with lots of hilarious material about life with a disability. He sets goals and approaches them with gusto and courage. Even though cerebral palsy makes it difficult for him to read and write, Blue was undeterred from his plan to graduate college. He hired an assistant to help him take notes and earned a B.A. degree in creative writing from Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. It was during "Open Mic" nights in college that Blue began performing comedy in front of small crowds.

Shortly after moving to Colorado, Blue came to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in March 2003 with a specific goal in mind: to become a successful stand-up comic. He met with counselor Jan Lattuca, who arranged for Blue to work with consultant Bill Swartz on a business plan describing his job goals, relevant experience, and projected income. Even though Blue's plan was unconventional, DVR Self-Employment Coordinator John Beckman and Lattuca both believed he could pull it off and advocated for him during the preparation and approval phases. After his business plan was approved, Lattuca created a rehabilitation plan detailing the services DVR would provide to help Blue,



Josh Blue

which included a laptop computer; cell phone; adaptive technology software so he could write his own material; accounting and legal services; business supplies; and marketing materials, including t-shirts, photos, and demo tapes.

While working on business and rehabilitation plans, Blue was gradually getting more and more laughs from his short stand-up routine. He started out performing on "Open Mic" nights at Comedy Works in Denver. Mike Raftery, who is in charge of talent management and concert promotions for Comedy Works, saw promise in Blue and gave him opportunities to perform for longer periods of time in different settings. He began traveling to clubs, corporate events, and college campuses across the country.

In 2005 and 2006, Blue became one of the hottest acts on the college circuit. He auditioned a second time for "Last Comic Standing" in March 2006 and by then had generated enough buzz to garner serious consideration from the show's producers. Following a successful audition, NBC requested additional content and received his original demo tape (funded by DVR.) After he was chosen to be on the show, the rest, as they say, is history.

"Josh has a good self-image and expects to be successful, yet there's no arrogance about him," Lattuca says. "When I began working with him, he already had some visibility and an agent, but we [DVR] provided a lot of the nuts and bolts that helped him to make a pretty quick rise to fame."

"It was really just a huge boost for me," Blue says of the services provided by DVR. He also was personally inspired by working with Jan Lattuca, who is blind. "She has a disability too and she was so on top of her game. It was encouraging for me to see that," he recalls.

Even though Blue is now a celebrity, Lattuca says he remains a down to earth guy. He is still connected to the people who believed in him from the start, especially Bill Swartz, who helped Blue write his business plan and is now his business manager. What's changed most for Blue these days is his schedule. He travels all over the country performing at least five days a week at various clubs and college campuses. He appeared as a guest

on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and is in discussions with NBC about possible television roles. Blue recently received an offer for a role in an independent film. It seems that he is only beginning what is likely to be a long and influential career. Blue is especially proud that he's proving to millions of people that those with a

disability can shine just as bright, or even brighter, than anyone else.

Jan Lattuca retired one month after successfully closing Blue's case and John Beckman retired in spring 2006. ●

Lifelong Dream Fulfilled

Name: **Ann Collings**
Place of Employment: **Doak Walker Care Center**
Occupation: **Treatment Nurse**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jennifer Scilacci**
Location: **Steamboat Springs**

For nearly 25 years, Ann Collings dreamed of returning to nursing school. Back in 1980, Collings enrolled in college to study nursing, but was never able to finish her degree. She got married, became a mother, and worked at a backpack manufacturing plant for many years.

In 1997, the California native moved to Steamboat Springs and made her living doing tile work in high-end homes. Four years ago, she broke her left forearm during a snowboarding accident. After the injury healed, she continued to work with tile, even though her arm caused her significant pain. Lifting heavy boxes of tile and materials and doing grout work became more and more difficult, and Collings realized she needed to find a new way to make a living.

Shortly after the arm injury, she heard about a new nursing program at Colorado Northwestern Community College in nearby Craig. Collings wanted to enroll in the nursing program, but as a divorced mother with a teenage daughter, she needed financial help. "I called the college and talked to the program director, trying to figure out how in the world I was going to be able to go to school," Collings says. Upon hearing her story, the program director suggested she contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

After an interview with rehabilitation counselor Jennifer Scilacci, Collings was thrilled to learn she qualified. DVR paid for everything directly correlated to the program, including tuition, books, gas, a computer, and travel expenses when Collings had to visit Denver or Grand Junction for clinical study.



Ann Collings

In this case, DVR partnered with Colorado Workforce Center in Steamboat Springs, a division of the Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, to further assist Collings. The Workforce Center paid for her car insurance. "Workforce was able to provide assistance that we couldn't provide," Scilacci explains. "It's nice when our two agencies can work together and come out with a success."

After a two-year program, Collings graduated in May of 2006 and passed her Registered Nurse (RN) licensure in July of 2006. She earned straight A's the entire time she was in school, even becoming a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a club for those with a high grade point average.

She now works in geriatric care at Doak Walker Care Center, an extended care facility affiliated with Yampa Valley Medical Center. Initially, Collings was unsure which population she'd most like to work with. After completing a clinical at Doak, she found working with the geriatric patients to be "fun and uplifting." In fact, her favorite aspect of nursing is connecting to the patients by making them more comfortable, answering their questions, or hearing their concerns.

"Vocational Rehabilitation changed my life. They made it possible for me to go to nursing school," Collings says. Besides being grateful for the help she has received from DVR, Collings is proud not only of fulfilling her personal goal, but also of the contributions she will be making to society. "The field I chose is really going to make a difference because we need nurses."

Collings is delighted to be making \$22 to \$25 an hour, depending on which shift she works. After sixteen years of self-employment, she especially appreciates the good benefits.

As a new nurse, Collings is excited for the future. She plans to begin online classes in 2007 with the goal of completing her bachelor's degree in nursing. And her ultimate long-term goal is to earn a Ph.D. and become a research nurse. ●

Family Business Embraces Young Man

Name: **Damien Gabaldon**
Place of Employment: **Sextant Technologies, Inc.**
Occupation: **Warehouse Technician**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jacqueline Koel**
Location: **Denver**

At Sextant Technologies, warehouse technician Damien Gabaldon has impressed his employers so much, they go out of their way to assist him with transportation to appointments, often pick up his medicine, and even helped him open up a bank account. Last Christmas, they bought him a coat. And when Sextant CEO Chris George learned that Gabaldon wanted a new guitar, he purchased it through the company and Gabaldon made payments to his employer.

It seems hard to believe that just a couple of years ago, Gabaldon was unhappy with his previous job and still living at home with his parents. As a young man with two developmental disabilities, Asperger's Syndrome and Expressive Language Disorder, Gabaldon found it difficult to establish working relationships and advocate for himself on the job. Although he was an employed and dedicated worker for several years, Gabaldon struggled for respect in the workplace.

Jacqueline Koel, Gabaldon's rehabilitation counselor at DVR, gave him some specific job-seeking skills, including teaching him how to interview and suggesting time-management techniques to help him look for work. In Gabaldon's case, DVR was able to provide direct job placement at Sextant Technologies, a source of new and refurbished telecommunications equipment and related services. DVR also continued to provide assistance to him as he transitioned to his new position.

Once he was hired, DVR helped connect Gabaldon to the Disability Center for Independent Living (DCIL) to assist him in finding safe housing and to ensure that he had the skills to live alone. Gabaldon now lives in his own apartment and possesses the independence and privacy he truly needed. He rides the bus to work at Sextant every day and overall feels much happier with



Damien Gabaldon

his life. "As far as my occupational and living situations go, DVR has helped me make many improvements in these areas," he says.

What Gabaldon likes best about his job is the variety of different tasks and responsibilities. "I learn new things each day, like shipping and receiving, delivery and refurbishing," he explains. His professional goals at Sextant also are important. "I'd eventually like to learn installation of telephone communication technology equipment," he says. He also really likes the people he works with. And it's clear from the way Gabaldon jokes with his co-workers and bosses that he's well-liked and respected at Sextant. "He does a great job and he's very valuable," says Chris George. "Damien's role in the company will continue to grow and get bigger, as long as he wants to stay here."

Both Chris George and his father, Sextant President Larry George, say it's important to have an open mind about hiring an individual with a disability. "When you give a person like Damien a chance, they will be dedicated and come to work, and they are thankful to have a job," says Larry George.

There's no doubt Gabaldon is thriving in the small setting of the family-run business. During a going-away party for a fellow employee, Gabaldon, a musician who plays viola and guitar, brought his viola in to work to entertain the staff. "He's got a great sense of humor, he's very compassionate, and he's part of the family here," says Chris George. ●

*"When people with disabilities take control of their lives,
barriers diminish and opportunities multiply."*

After Years of Problems, It's a Well-Rounded Life Now

Name: **Nancy Grandfield**
Place of Employment: **Bethany Healthplex**
Occupation: **Adult Recreation Assistant**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Cheryl Carver**
Location: **Denver**

At Bethany Healthplex, a nursing home in Lakewood, residents light up with smiles, waves and hugs when Nancy Grandfield walks in the room. They are always excited to see what Grandfield has planned for them; activities like bingo, gardening club, rock of the week, nail care, ice cream socials and cooking club.

"I love my job," Grandfield says. "It's so gratifying. It fuels me to see the residents happy. I like to do things with them, and it's really therapeutic for everyone involved."

On June 3, 2006, Grandfield celebrated her one-year anniversary as a part-time Adult Recreation Assistant at Bethany Healthplex. This milestone is a huge accomplishment, because previous to this position she had not worked for 11 years.

Grandfield's problems began nearly 14 years ago. During her twenties, she worked full-time in the advertising field while taking college courses part-time. Life was fairly normal. But at age 29, Grandfield began experiencing hallucinations, paranoia and depression. She was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Grandfield withdrew from school and work and became extremely depressed and suicidal. Sessions with a psychiatrist helped, but the medications she needed to cope were very expensive and difficult to balance.

Not knowing where to turn, she sought help from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation seven years ago. While DVR helped Grandfield tremendously by funding her medications, it wasn't until rehabilitation counselor Cheryl Carver took over Grandfield's case that true progress was made. Grandfield went back to school and worked with Carver to complete her degree. Carver made sure Grandfield stayed in therapy

and helped find ways to reduce the cost of her medications. DVR helped pay for tuition, books and supplies, parking, relapse prevention and clothes for work. Carver set up situational assessments and job shadows, as well as helped her prepare to reenter the world of work through interpersonal skills training and job readiness skills training.

But schizophrenia and depression still plagued Grandfield. In the five years she worked with Carver, she suffered several setbacks. But Carver kept reminding her of her progress, and Grandfield never gave up. "There's a lot to be said for showing up every day-whether or not I'm equipped like I thought I should be," Grandfield says. "Even in my darkest days, I tried to be available and say 'yes, I will give it a shot.' I did that and it paid off."

In December 2004, Grandfield graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado at Denver. Within six months she found a job at Bethany



Nancy Grandfield and Lurelee Simmons, resident

Healthplex, where residents benefit from her passion for photography, sculpting, painting and music. Kathy Jo Mitchell is the Adult Recreation Director and Grandfield's supervisor. "The residents just love her," Mitchell says of Grandfield. "This position is perfect for all of her talents." Grandfield is even President of the Morale Focus Committee, acting as a liaison among the residents, staff and upper management.

Grandfield feels extremely fortunate for all the financial support, training and encouragement she has received from DVR. Grandfield and Carver agree that although the journey was long and difficult, the mutual respect they shared helped ensure a positive outcome. "Cheryl was always supportive and always thought I could do it. With enough encouragement and support and consistency over a long period of time, it made all the difference in the world. Cheryl made a big, big difference in my life. I couldn't have done it without her," Grandfield says of her rehabilitation counselor.

Today Grandfield works part-time and receives disability payments, but someday she hopes to get off disability completely. "I am so happy now. I haven't been in this place ever before," she says. "It's a well-rounded life now." ●

Regaining Independence

Name: **Johnny Herrera**
Occupation: **Homemaker**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Carol Feuerbacher**
Mobility Specialist: **Ken Neve**
Location: **Denver**

In October of 2003, Johnny Herrera was working for Gates as a chauffeur. He was very happy in his job and enjoyed the different people he would encounter each day as he drove. He had worked for the company for 10 years when his health took a very negative turn and he lost his vision. Johnny is diabetic and although he was aware of the complications of his diabetes, he did not grasp the impact that losing his vision would have on his life.



Johnny Herrera

At that moment, everything in his world changed. Johnny encountered heart problems, hand and feet neuropathy, and most importantly, since his vision was severely impaired, he could no longer do the work he loved—driving. He found himself sitting at home where his wife took on the role of caretaker, and Johnny's health and attitude declined. He was unable to do many things for himself, or at least he thought he could no longer do these things, and he isolated himself from friends, co-workers and family. He shared that "the 'Tough Guy' was scared to move."

A relative shared with Johnny the phone number for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. He was put in contact with Carol Feuerbacher, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, who worked with Johnny to identify a suitable employment outcome of homemaker. This outcome does not represent traditional employment, but rather the ability to perform the

majority of homemaking activities necessary to maintain a suitable living environment for he and his family. Carol and Johnny worked together to identify Johnny's needs and to develop a plan that would assist him in learning the skills necessary for him to resume the responsibilities of taking care of himself and his home.

Johnny chose the Personal Adjustment Training program located at the Colorado Rehabilitation Center, housed at the Metro Rehabilitation Offices. He entered into a seven-month intensive training program that addressed issues around daily living, mobility, and the use of low-vision aids. Today, Johnny maintains his own home and manages all of his own needs, and his wife has been able to return to work outside her home with the confidence that her husband is safe and independent.

Johnny shares that learning to travel and his work with Mobility Specialist, Ken Neve, changed his life. In fact, from Johnny's perspective, it actually saved his life. He credits his training program, and the teachers and students he met there, in making all the difference to him. Johnny has received some national recognition as well. He will be featured in a video funded by the American Printing House for the Blind of Louisville, Kentucky. This video will share the experiences of adults with visual impairments who have had to deal with the reality of no longer being able to drive. Its goal is to help many adults with visual impairments, their families and the professionals who work with them, to understand that through attendance in a program such as DVR's Personal Adjustment Program, individuals with visual impairments can learn a variety of new skills to make them independent. A secondary concept that we all hope to convey is that one can find support through participation in classes with others. ●

Moving Forward

Name: **Kenny Maestas**
Place of Employment: **Wal Mart**
Occupation: **Manager of Operations**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Shelly Ulrich**
Location: **Lamar**

Kenny Maestas worked with Mary Spolarich, the Supervisor of the Limon and Lamar offices on the Eastern Plains, as well as DVR Counselors Caryn

Spreeman, Dara Randell and Shelly Ulrich. Kenny tells his story in his own words...

"I'm a 41 year old C-5/C-6 quadriplegic. I have limited use of my arms and no use of my fingers. I was injured on December 12, 1987...17 years ago. I was the passenger in a one-vehicle rollover accident. For a long time I didn't want to do anything but party. I became an alcoholic and battled addiction to drugs. I met a very wonderful counselor from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the summer of 1998 named Mary Spolarich. She told me that if I was willing to

work at it, DVR would help me get an Associates degree and I wouldn't have to just sit at home being unproductive. I never wanted to work so hard in all my life...and I did.

Vocational Rehabilitation has done so much. They helped me pay for much of my schooling when I was starting out getting my Associates degree in Lamar, CO (at LCC). During that time they also bought a standing table for me. This helped me to start exercising again. Vocational Rehabilitation also helped me to equip a new van with a ramping, lifting and driving system, which completely transformed me into a very self sufficient individual. No longer did I have to spend much of my spare time waiting for a ride from the city transit or a family member. Now I could drive myself!

In the spring of 2000, when I was getting ready to graduate from LCC as the top non-traditional student, with an Associate of Science degree, Mary was very influential in helping me decide to go for more. To go on to the University of Southern Colorado to get a Bachelors degree, DVR helped me pay my rent, which was such a blessing. It was during this time that I met a wonderful woman. While I was at USC I earned an



Kenny Maestas

internship with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and during the summer of 2001, I was able to drive to Washington DC, and work for the Federal Aviation Administration as a web designer and multimedia specialist. Mary was very supportive during this whole time.

I graduated from USC number one in my class in May of 2002. I also drove to Las Vegas, Nevada soon after and got married to the most wonderful woman in the world!

The confidence I had gained from my start in Lamar, had encouraged me to go on for a Masters degree, which I attained in May, 2004.

I am currently a Manager of Operations with Wal-Mart #3582 and the biggest and brightest news in my life is that I am a new daddy! Kristopher Kenneth Maestas was born on November 24, 2004, and he is the most wonderful baby ever. Who'd of ever thought life could be so good!

Thank you Mary Spolarich and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for helping me attain things I never even dreamed of!" ●

The Sweet Sound of Success

Name: **Kendra Manning**
Place of Employment: **NORTHCOM (U.S. Northern Command)** on the Peterson Air Force Base
Occupation: **Computer Assistant**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jane Berry**
Business/Employment Specialist: **Joanne Feenstra**
Location: **Colorado Springs**

Kendra Manning has a three-year plan, a five-year plan and a ten-year plan. What does she hope to accomplish? Earn a promotion, finish her master's degree in management information systems, reach a financial position that allows her to comfortably support her two young daughters, buy a house, mentor a single mother like herself, and travel to France and Italy. A lofty list? Perhaps, but so far there's been no stopping Manning, who was born completely deaf in her left ear and partially deaf in her right.

She wears a hearing aid and reads lips to communicate, and her speech is remarkably good. Growing up, she attended regular schools. "I did have a lot of problems with it [hearing loss], but I was forced to adapt to keep up with the other kids," she explains. "My grades were just as good as everyone else. I was always on the honor roll, but I had to work extra hard to achieve."



Kendra Manning

In college, she often tape recorded classes and would listen to lectures multiple times. She earned her degree in computer and information science and was recruited to work at a contracting company in Colorado Springs. After two years, she was laid off in 2000. Around that time, competition for IT jobs was fierce. Manning struggled to support herself and her young

daughter with temporary jobs. Four years went by without a permanent position, and financially, she was in worse shape than ever. Pregnant with her second child, Manning was desperate to find a good job.

Manning came to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation simply hoping they could repair her broken hearing aid. That's when Jane Berry and Joanne Feenstra stepped in to help. Besides replacing her hearing aid and paying for speech therapy, Berry provided assistive devices for Manning's home to help her prepare for interviews and for work, including a portable phone amplifier and alarm clock signaler.

Feenstra worked with Manning on a successful job placement. At the time, the market for IT jobs was brutal, but Feenstra advocated for Manning-focusing on her skills and positive attitude. On March 8, 2004, Manning began working as a computer assistant at NORTHCOM on the Peterson Air Force Base.

"If it wasn't for DVR I'd probably still be looking for a job. They helped me a lot," Manning says. She especially enjoyed working with Berry and Feenstra.

"I really think they care about the people they assist. They were really professional, all-around good people."

Today, Manning continues to thrive at NORTHCOM. What are her favorite aspects of the job? "The people and the fact that you get really good training through the government," she says. Manning's list of responsibilities grows ever longer as she takes classes in project management, security management training, and project server training.

In 2005, she was nominated by her boss for the "Civilian Employee of the Year" award. She won the award first within her division and then within the entire company and was rewarded with a parking space up front, gift cards, and a plaque.

Even with a full-time job, children and evening training classes, Manning finds time to volunteer for an advocacy group through the military that provides support to victims of sexual crimes. "I feel like I was always the one who needed help, so it's my turn to help someone else," she says.

With so many dreams, Manning occasionally feels frustrated that it takes her so long to achieve her goals, but says she draws strength from her faith and feels blessed to be alive and have a job. "I have to keep reminding myself, when I get in my complaining moments, to keep trying, it will come. I'm in a much better situation than many other people," she says. ●

No Obstacle Too Great for a Resolution

Name: **Aul Pedajas**

Place of Employment: **Self-Employed**

Occupation: **Web Developer**

Rehabilitation Counselor: **Peg Schmitz**

Location: **Denver**

Aul Pedajas, who has a spinal condition that renders his arms and legs virtually paralyzed, has been a DVR consumer since 1991. He is confined to bed 24 hours a day, and weighs about 65 pounds. Through the use of adaptive computer software called "Dragon Naturally Speaking", Aul has developed remarkable computer skills, including the ability to develop websites. DVR's Self-Employment Coordinator, John Beckman, worked with Aul to develop a business plan to become a self-employed web developer. Assessing the viability of the business proved to be challenging, as Aul's disability prevented him from doing the usual customer surveys and other assessments that others could do with ease. John and Aul needed to find one

company or organization willing to take a chance on Aul. Since Aul uses a trach, it is difficult for him to communicate with customers via telephone. John and Aul decided that they would need to develop a user-friendly email system that would allow Aul to communicate with his customers and gather all of the materials, documents and information necessary to build an effective website. Then, they would have to find a way to convince potential customers that it would not only work, but would actually be a more effective way to



Aul Pedajas

communicate. When GRAPEVINEcolorado needed a new web developer, they asked John's advice. Since Aul already had his business license, John presented his information, along with the information of others, to the committee. After viewing Aul's personal website, they decided that they wanted to meet with him. Together,

Aul and John developed an excellent, user-friendly system for communication which resulted in a spectacular website. Aul's work on the website for GRAPEVINEcolorado now reaches an audience of several hundred people and the feedback has been nothing short of fantastic! ●

Seeing the Benefits of Hard Work

Name: **Jack Riley**

Place of Employment: **Schriever Air Force Base**

Occupation: **BEP Manager**

Business Consultant, Vocational Specialist:

Tim Poole

Location: **Colorado Springs**

Every morning at 4:50 a.m., Jack Riley and his wife Sandy arrive at Schriever Air Force Base ready for another day at work. When his wife Sandy is set up for business at the convenience store, Riley begins his daily treks back and forth to the dining hall, checking in with his staff and making sure that the food service operations he oversees are pristinely clean. His shirt and tie reflect how seriously he takes his profession, yet he never hesitates to crack a joke with any employee, from the dishwasher to the assistant manager.

Riley developed macular degeneration at the age of 5 or 6 years old, and has been legally blind ever since. Even so, he never thinks of his vision impairment as a disability. "I think we all have disabilities," he explains. "Some are just more obvious than others."

Although though he was unable to read the material in his college classes, Riley became "an excellent listener" and earned an Associate's Degree in Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Management. For eight years, he managed a motel and restaurant. In 1987, Riley entered the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). Upon completion, he began managing various food service operations at Schriever Air Force Base where he has been employed for the past 18 years. Last year, he was awarded the dining hall in addition to the convenience store, a testament to his outstanding performance as a BEP manager.

Riley has worked steadily all his adult life despite visual impairment. Over the years, he has learned that there are many fields to which visually impaired people simply cannot adapt. "I was on SSI twice when I could



Jack Riley

not get a job. It wasn't because I didn't try," he recalls. "I was embarrassed to have to collect an SSI check. It's not very fulfilling to sit at home and get a paycheck in the mailbox and not have earned it. That was the lowest esteem I had in my life, when I knew I was capable but was not given an opportunity."

Remembering those brief periods of unemployment makes Riley's achievements even more satisfying. "I attribute my success to the BEP program. I've been blessed to be in the program, and it I believe helps a lot of people," he says.

Riley and his wife Sandy typically log more than 55 to 60 hours a week. With his hardworking attitude and impeccably high standards, Riley and his staff are preparing to compete for The Hennessey Award, which is the Air Force's award for excellence in food service.

He prides himself on the cleanliness of the dining hall and his relationships with staff members. The listening skills Riley picked up in college have been invaluable as a manager. He takes care to involve the employees in discussions, to listen to their opinions, and to do everything in his power to keep smiles on their faces. Riley has come up with several creative ways to boost employee morale, including pizza parties, birthday cards with cash enclosed, and a \$40 gift certificate for the employee of the month. He took

several of his managers to Las Vegas for the weekend and a large group of employees to Cripple Creek for an overnight getaway. He organized a company picnic to meet the staff's family members and get to know them better. All of these extras are paid for out of Riley's own pocket. "The employees are representing me in the dining facility. If they are happy and glad to be there,

they are going to perform better. It's a win-win for everybody," he says.

Clearly it's working. Assistant Project Manager James Haynes, who has been an employee of the dining hall for 18 years, sums up what many employees feel about Jack Riley. "He's the best boss we've ever had," Haynes says. ●

Driving to Success

Name: **Jenny Siegle**
Place of Employment: **Altitude Sports**
Occupation: **Journalist**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Dana Vande Burgt**
Location: **Northglenn**

Jenny Siegle first became affiliated with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in 1999 at the beginning of her senior year in high school. Since then, DVR has been a tremendous support system for her.

While attending the University of Northern Colorado, DVR paid for the portion of her tuition that scholarships did not cover and purchased all her books and supplies. With their help, she was able to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and mass communications in 2004.

DVR's assistance did not stop when Jenny graduated. They purchased a computer for her so that she could work in the journalism field from home, if needed. DVR is helping Jenny adapt her home office using ergonomics and assistive technology. They also have been assisting Jenny in creating a resume, searching for jobs, and accompanying her on interviews to explain to companies some of the benefits that are available to them if they hire an individual with a disability.

DVR played a significant role in empowering Jenny to drive. After an extensive evaluation at Craig Hospital, she went to a driving school in Pennsylvania, one of only four states in the U.S. where people are trained to use high-tech driving equipment. An extensive

evaluation pinpointed the equipment Jenny needed to be a safe driver. Jenny then completed 50 hours of behind-the-wheel training. During this out-of-state experience, DVR financed the evaluation, training, airfare for Jenny and her care-giver, hotel, meals, and a rental van.

While in Pennsylvania, Jenny obtained her driver's license and is currently in the process of purchasing a van. DVR has agreed to pay for the necessary modifications to the van which include the adaptive driving equipment. Without DVR's help Jenny would not be able to afford her van. To help offset the total price of the van, Jenny has been working, fundraising, and started her own non-profit organization, Mobility for All. This organization will help people in the same situation as herself purchase transportation (van, wheelchair, etc.) to increase their independence.

Jenny is very grateful for the help DVR has given her. With their support she can continue working for the Colorado Rockies Baseball Club, Mile High Sports Magazine, producing Football Colorado, as well as pursuing her dream of being a sports broadcaster. ●



Jenny Siegle

"DVR opened so many doors for me... they really helped me to regain my independence and move forward in my life."

On the Road Again

Name: **Bruce Spare**
Place of Employment: **Equipment Services**
Occupation: **Self-Employed**
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Patrick Ferrington**
Location: **Northglenn**

Bruce Spare was determined eligible for, and began receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services from the Northglenn Vocational Rehabilitation Office in 2004 after having moved to Colorado from Pennsylvania. At that time, Mr. Spare was experiencing major disruption in his life, including his ability to obtain and maintain meaningful employment due to mental health concerns (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, major depression, and Bipolar Disorder). Mr. Spare learned from working with his father at a young age, the basics of heavy equipment mechanics and repair, welding, etc. He expressed his desire to work in that capacity in his own business. Working through DVR's self-employment program, his business concept of owning and operating a mobile equipment repair service was approved and he agreed to enter a partnership between himself and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

In addition to services funded by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist Mr. Spare with remediation of barriers to employment due to his disability, Mr. Spare took advantage of an array of services to help assure the success of his business. Some of those services included small business development classes through Front Range Community College and the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce,

private business and accounting consultations with William Swartz, and regular consultations with his DVR counselor. Bruce also received services through collaboration with other agencies including the Broomfield Workforce Center, who funded the initial outlay for his tools.

After signing his Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in October of 2004, Bruce's company, "Equipment Services" was born. Bruce drove to Oklahoma to pick up his 6,000-pound hydraulic crane and heavy-duty hydraulic air compressor, equipment deemed essential to the success of his business and purchased for him by DVR. Mr. Spare also made a significant investment in the success of his business in terms of commitment of his time, his own capital, and his endless energy and effort. He secured his own funding for the 2004 Ford heavy duty F550 that he uses to haul his equipment and service his customers. Some of Mr. Spare's customers include Atlas Metal and Iron, Denny's Construction, ABF Freight Systems, Hope Lumber and Supply and Tarco Inc.

After getting his first work in late 2004, Bruce is now at times so busy he has to turn work away. He is able to charge between \$55 and \$80 per hour for his services and gets most of his business from 'word of mouth' advertising. Bruce is now a fully self-sufficient, taxpaying Coloradoan who has this to say about his experience working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: "I couldn't have found a better organization to help 'take away' my disability and turn me into a successful person of ability. My counselor looked at my abilities and I am now using those abilities to improve the lives of my family and friends." ●



Bruce Spare



DVR'S SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

DVR's Teaching Program

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation offers training programs to help people who are blind or visually impaired become independent at home, in the community and in employment. Depending on the individual's needs, training may be provided through the center—based Personal Adjustment Training Program or the field-based Rehabilitation Teaching/Orientation and Mobility Program, where instructional services are provided at the individual's home, on the job site, and/or in other community settings. Referrals for evaluation and/or instructional services are made by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Soon after a person is referred by their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, they are provided a comprehensive evaluation of their skills. This helps to identify what training needs they may have. Evaluation and training covers the skill areas of adaptive communication, basic computer skills, travel skills, college preparation, financial management, home management, low vision, medical management and personal management. Training programs are designed to meet an individual's needs, help them improve their skills, build confidence, and enhance self-esteem.

“Young adults now have a firm hold onto their skills and abilities, and know how to use these tools to move in the direction of their choosing.”

DVR Youth Unit

The DVR Youth Unit assures that quality transition services are provided to Colorado's youth and young adults with disabilities. The Youth Unit operates on the premise that quality partnerships result in the best possible transition services, including vocational rehabilitation services. In support of this, each Colorado high school has at least one DVR counselor assigned for the purposes of consultation with education teams and for the coordination of referrals to DVR for eligibility determination and service provision. A second Youth Unit premise is that all DVR counselors understand and successfully implement DVR's transition responsibilities. As such, DVR counselors receive regular training and technical assistance from the Youth Unit.

The Youth Unit works closely with numerous federal, state and local partners. Federal partners include the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the National Governor's Association (NGA). State partners include the Department of Education (CDE), the Office of Workforce Development (OWD), the Community College System (CCS), the Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), the University of Colorado's Health Sciences Center's

WIN Partners (UCHSC/WIN), and the Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Local partners include the state's 178 local school districts, the state's eighteen recognized workforce regions and the counselors and supervisors in each local DVR office.

During the past year, DVR's School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) continued to grow. Colorado citizens benefited from 45 community-based SWAP sites. This joint partnership with CDE and over 140 local school districts provided year-round transition services, including career exploration and development, job placement and follow-up support to more than 3,000 youth with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 25. In support of SWAP, the state team of CDE and DVR partners participated in over one hundred 1:1 SWAP site visits with local DVR, education and SWAP teams, and made available four regional trainings, five new-site trainings and eleven regionally-grouped SWAP team technical assistance opportunities.

Partnership between CDE and DVR resulted in the Employment Development Institute (EDI). EDI was designed for and presented to DVR Counselors, SWAP providers and school district/transition personnel as an experiential and interactive community-based job placement training. Participants interacted with employers and practiced strategies for employer relationship building, company research, informational interviews, cold calling and maximizing workforce

center options for youth with disabilities. CDE and DVR also partnered to present Personality IQ Training to educators and DVR counselors. This training promoted effective professional and interpersonal communications through the use of temperament theory.

The DVR Youth Unit partnered with the Office of Workforce Development and the Department of Labor and Employment to create the Think Big Youth Forum, an opportunity for the state's youth service providers to come together to network and learn skills and strategies to enhance the delivery of services to the youth and business in the state. During the Think Big Youth Forum, the State Youth Council, on which DVR is a member, provided the opportunity for communities to showcase promising workforce development practices for youth, including youth with disabilities.

Within the workforce development realm, the Youth Unit continued efforts to ensure DVR participation on each of Colorado's 18 local workforce development region youth councils. On these councils, DVR representation assured the needs of youth with disabilities were considered as workforce development activities were developed and implemented throughout the state.

During the past year, DVR continued to lead Colorado's 5-year ODEP—funded Intermediary Youth Transition Grant. The purpose of this initiative is to improve transition outcomes for



DVR Counselors and SWAP Coordinators doing Job Development.

youth with disabilities through the use of state and local intermediaries including local transition teams and youth councils. DVR worked with federal, state and local partners to establish prototype sites in six Colorado communities. Local DVR representatives were at the table in these communities as transition resources were mapped and as results are used to develop and implement strategic plans to improve transition services for youth with disabilities.

DVR continued involvement with WIN Partners, CDE, OWD and the Social Security Administration to implement Colorado's SSA Demonstration Project, entitled Colorado Youth WINS. The overarching goal of this project is to assist youth between the ages of 14 and 25, who are currently receiving or are likely to receive Social Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Child Disability Benefit (CDB) to maximize their economic self-sufficiency and career advancement.

During the past year, DVR's Youth Unit was an active player in the multi-partner application for and involvement in the National Governors Association's (NGA) Policy Academy to Improve

Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities. Colorado's strategic plan for this Academy addresses the areas of: partner education and collaboration; data collection and sharing; and policy development. DVR partners include the Governor's Office of Policy and Initiative, CDE, OWD, CDLE, CCC, UCHSC/WIN Partners, DPHE, Cerebral Palsy of Colorado and Colorado Easter Seals.

DVR continued braiding funds with Goodwill Industries of Denver, the Denver Zoological Foundation and three local school districts to offer a safe and secure environment for youth with disabilities to receive employment skills, work adjustment and the development of good work habits in a zoological setting.

Finally, ongoing partnership continued between DVR and the Colorado/Wyoming Consortium of Support Programs for Students with Disabilities. The Consortium maintains active participation from all Colorado public and private post-secondary institutions as well as DVR and CDE. The focus of the Consortium continues to be collaborative provision of services to post-secondary students with disabilities.

Business Enterprise Program

Business Enterprise Program (BEP), mandated by the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, trains legally blind individuals and helps them set up, maintain, and manage food service locations in government buildings and other facilities. The operations include large and small cafeterias, military dining halls, snack bars, convenience stores, and vending machine concessions in State parks, rest areas, ports of entry, welcome centers, and youth corrections. The mission of BEP is to provide individuals who are legally blind with remunerative employment, ever-enlarging business opportunities, and ongoing empowerment with a greater effort toward self-sufficiency, and a commitment to mutual cooperation, excellence, and positive public image.

Presently, there are 55 sites in Colorado, serving the U.S. Air Force, Army, Postal Service, Department of Commerce, as well as Federal and State government employees and the public throughout the State. BEP purchases the initial location merchandise and inventory, and then purchases and maintains the equipment as prescribed by Federal law. The blind business managers replenish inventory and supplies, hire, train, and pay their own personnel; pay all related taxes and insurance; and submit a "franchise-like" fee back to the program, based on their net profit. The blind managers are individual business entrepreneurs, using profits earned as their livelihood income.

Independent Living Program

“Our independent living programs help people help themselves.”

The Independent Living Centers and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have a history of collaborating to help our mutual consumers live independently in their local communities. The Independent Living Program is authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and Title 26, Article 8.1, in the Colorado Revised Statutes. The purpose of the program is to promote a philosophy of independent living (IL), including a philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy, to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals

with significant disabilities. The IL Program also promotes the maximum integration and full inclusion of individuals with significant disabilities into the mainstream of American society.

There are ten Independent Living Centers statewide. DVR contracts with each Center through the Colorado Independent Living Core Services (CILCS) program to provide services such as independent living skills training, peer counseling (including cross-disability peer counseling), individual and systems advocacy, transportation, and housing. Each Center also provides information and referral services to all individuals with disabilities who request this type of assistance or services. The information and referral services are available in alternative formats and accessible to the individual requesting these services.

Older Individuals Who Are Blind

DVR also maintains contracts through the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program to provide independent living services to individuals who are 55 years or older whose significant visual impairment makes competitive employment extremely difficult to attain but for whom

independent living goals are feasible. DVR contracts with six of the ten Independent Living Centers and the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) to provide services to help these individuals live independently in their communities, thus avoiding placement in a nursing home.



Judy Neal, Independent Living/OIB/SILC Program Coordinator

Pilot Projects

This past year we had two opportunities to experiment with new ways of delivering service to specific customer groups. Our federal funding and monitoring agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration at the U.S. Department of Education, allows vocational rehabilitation agencies to utilize an option for limited time projects designed to help them determine if proposed methods for delivering service will be effective. Pilot projects provide a two-year window of opportunity for Colorado to look at service delivery options that might have broader applicability statewide.

The first type of pilot project is the placement of a rehabilitation counselor full-time in a workforce center in the heart of Denver. This project aligns with Denver's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. This Plan is part of a nationwide effort to eliminate homelessness in cities. Our counselor, Lawrence Gonzales, works with outreach workers in downtown Denver and visits homeless shelters and congregate meal sites. Customers with disabilities who are deemed ready to seek work are referred to him. They must be at a stable enough point to have an address, have addressed immediate needs, and been able to work with him to achieve their employment goals. Homelessness is a problem that plagues

many parts of the state. Many homeless people have disabilities and can become good candidates for rehabilitation if they achieve some stability in their lives.

Another opportunity to serve customers in an innovative way was developed through collaboration with the Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and DVR. DDD and DVR have arranged to place vocational rehabilitation counselors in a number of the Community-Centered Boards (CCBs) throughout the state. The CCBs are local vehicles for service delivery to many persons with developmental disabilities in Colorado.

DVR has placed its counselors in nine CCBs to see if working closely with CCB staff and customers provides more successful employment outcomes for these customers. In addition, these counselors will have lighter caseloads and be expected to spend a portion of their time developing jobs in which to place customers.

DVR is excited about these two new projects and the possibilities they bring regarding new ways to deliver service. We will be evaluating their success throughout the remaining 18 months of the pilot projects.

Self-Employment Program

Realizing entrepreneurial success is a priority for a number of individuals seeking assistance from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation program each year. Self-employment is, and has long been, a vocational option possible for eligible customers. But service delivery challenges in the area of self-employment were strongly expressed by customers as well as DVR counselors a couple of years ago. An initiative to broadly re-define and re-structure the self-employment program was accomplished in August of 2005 when a completely new set of policies and procedures unfolded.

The new program was designed following substantial stakeholder feedback, national and local research, and field office input. The results included an introduction of self-employment specialists in geographic areas around the state. Specialists, or Rehabilitation Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCEs), facilitate the innovative process which features abbreviated business plans for small scope endeavors, a two-tiered approach with approvals tied to start-up capital needs, and planned business plan development supports and services. RCEs have heightened expertise in business ownership and can assist

unique self-employment needs in areas of small business retention, supported employment/self-employment, and self-employment endeavors enhanced by SSA work incentives.

The new DVR self-employment program has resulted in strengthened customer service and meaningful technical assistance to persons with disabilities who have viable business concepts.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program

In order to improve the effectiveness of DVR's service delivery process for individuals who are deaf, the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf focused on several action plans this year.

Community outreach was increased. Each of the RCD's in Colorado are members of special committees and community organizations. Memberships and networking opportunities include (but are not limited to) Deaf Ace, deaf providers groups (such as ACD in Colorado Springs), Dove, Work Force Centers employment councils, American Association of the Deaf/Blind, CSDB transitions board, NAD, NASW, Intertribal Deaf Consortium, CRC and CVE groups, Pepnet networking, FRCC English Language Pilot, LFD NIDRR grant with Marion Downs, and the SCD group.

All current DVR RCD positions have been filled by 3 deaf, 3 hearing and 1 hearing impaired counselors. Current hiring demonstrates an increase in communication accessibility for consumers. Rehabilitation Counselors for the Hard of Hearing have been identified and are included in the RCD group meeting. In addition, 3 interns from Western Oregon University have started and/or completed their internships with Colorado DVR.

Vendors who are deaf have been encouraged to contract with DVR and are currently serving DVR consumers who are deaf. Several signing vendors who are hearing have recently contracted with the state and have also served this population.



Krista Dann and Karen Ferrington from DVR's Organizational and Staff Development Unit.

At the quarterly RCD meetings, the following topics have been presented: nation-wide issues regarding rehabilitation counseling for the deaf, vendor presentations, and IT and VP difficulties. Using a model developed by California DVR, the Colorado RCD's completed a survey. Results of this survey lead to RCD related training.

In order to provide increased access for consumers who are deaf, some catchment areas have been reassigned. Individuals who are deaf and live in Northern or Southern Colorado now have more opportunities to meet with signing counselors in local offices.

*“Thank you DVR from
the bottom of my heart
for all the assistance
you provided.”*



ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has established two consumer controlled advisory councils. They are the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was initially established in accordance with Section 105 of the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. As amended in the 1998 Amendments, the purpose of the SRC is to review analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation regarding the performance of its responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act. Members of the SRC are appointed by the Governor and represent diverse ethnic and geographical locations. The majority of SRC members must be individuals with disabilities, including family members, advocates, and others who represent a broad spectrum of interests, including business and industry. The SRC works in partnership with DVR regarding the following: annual goals and priorities; operations and performance relative to established processes and outcomes; evaluations of the effectiveness of the VR program; the federal state plan; consumer satisfaction; and coordination with other statewide councils. The present SRC has 18 appointed members and 11 non-appointed associate members who participate within the SRC structure.

The SRC's Standing Committees for 2006 were:

- **Consumer Satisfaction**—This committee addresses direct access issues of the DVR consumer of vocational rehabilitation services, and presents reports and recommendations to the entire State Rehabilitation Council for review and confirmation. The committee is also responsible for conducting the Consumer Satisfaction Survey and working with DVR to maintain a pool of qualified Hearing Officers assigned to clients in appeals.
- **Employment Linkage**—This goal of this committee is to forge a partnership between businesses and DVR vocational services to facilitate client transition into employment. During 2005, this committee held a forum on DVR's self-employment program, which helped to shape new policies and procedures that helped to make the program more user-friendly.
- **Membership/Recruitment**—The goal of this committee is to assure that the SRC is made up of a diverse group of individuals, including people with a range of disabilities as well as employers, advocates, and others, who through their active participation will assure the SRC makes a positive difference for people with disabilities in Colorado. It also insures

“We are an active group of stakeholders who are engaged in advising and collaborating with DVR to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.”

that membership of the SRC is in compliance with the mandates of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act and that members participate and contribute to the SRC and its mission. The committee recommends potential SRC members to the Governor for appointment and is responsible for the initial orientation and ongoing training of SRC members. During 2006, this committee worked to build the strength of the SRC through recruitment of new members and ongoing support of its existing membership.

The SRC's vision for 2006 is as follows: In order to make a positive difference in the lives of people with disabilities, the SRC will clarify its goals and objectives, create steps to reach those goals, and make the necessary changes to implement them. It's 2006 focus includes: recruitment and training of new SRC members, monitoring governmental activities and trends with an eye toward outcomes, partnership with DVR, emerging trends in employment, transition, and consumer empowerment.

Statewide Independent Living Council

“Working to Create Opportunities, Fulfillment, and Equality for People with Disabilities in Colorado to Enhance their Quality of Life”

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) promotes a strong independent living program that meets the needs of the individuals with disabilities while supporting the mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). SILC members are recruited from a cross-section of Colorado citizens. Disability, regional representation, and experience in both the public and private sector are valuable qualities, but ultimately every SILC member represents all people with disabilities in Colorado. SILC members are volunteers appointed by the Governor.

After gathering information and soliciting public input, the SILC works closely with DVR to develop the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) that sets the direction for the ten Colorado Centers for Independent Living (CILs) for a three year period. The goals of the current SPIL focus on SILC autonomy, strengthening CILs, transition from institution to community, consumer involvement in creating public policy, services for the deaf and hard of hearing, and cultural competency. Actions to achieve these goals are

implemented by the SILC's standing committees: Advocacy, Youth, Training and Education, Resource Development, and Research and Development. A funded staff position of Training Coordinator provides leadership development for SILC members, and, under the direction of the SILC, presents workshops and trainings that support SPIL initiatives.

In FY 2005, the SILC, in collaboration with the Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL), obtained an increase in CIL funding from the state general fund. In addition to training on SPIL objectives offered by the SILC Training Coordinator, the SILC also sponsored a number of workshops and activities to promote the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). The theme of the annual SILC Conference held in May was “Transitioning Toward Independence.” A variety of workshops addressed the transition process, community living, and strategies for maintaining independence.

The SILC looks forward to the challenges of FY 2006. A new SPIL must be developed, forging new relationships and enhancing existing partnerships. Public hearings, forums, and focus groups will supply grassroots input for determining the goals and objectives in independent living for the next three years. The thoughtful deliberation and foresight of our SILC has helped to establish Colorado's leadership in the disability movement and our reputation for a powerful Independent Living Program.



COMMENTS ABOUT THIS ANNUAL REPORT

Did you find the report useful? *(Please explain)*

Yes No

What suggestions do you have for next year's annual report?

“We welcome all comments on both the form and substance of this report.”

Name and address *(optional)*

Please photo copy and send of fax to:

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