

# *“Bridging the Gap”*

## **2007 ANNUAL REPORT**

**COLORADO STATE  
REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

**DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION**



**COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**





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## LETTER FROM SRC AND DVR

Dear Colleagues:

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) are pleased to provide you with this 2007 Annual Report. Our report covers the year that ended June 30, 2007. 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. In conjunction with the SRC, DVR made plans to conduct its required statewide needs assessment in the next fiscal year.

The result of these activities is concrete recommendations made to DVR about ways in which DVR services can be improved for our customers statewide. These recommendations are, to the best of DVR's abilities, incorporated into its State Plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). If DVR feels it cannot pursue a recommendation, then specific reasons are provided to the SRC and in the State Plan for that decision.

The theme of this year's Annual Report is *Bridging the Gap*. It refers in general to the constant process we are involved in, to improve service offered to our customers. Specifically, it looks at a group of people we have brought into the DVR family in the last year. They are called Business Outreach Specialists (BOS), and DVR thinks they will be instrumental in bridging one of the gaps that has been identified. The BOSs are working to establish and solidify relationships with employers for our clients. DVR and the SRC know that we have at least two sets of customers. While we are providing lots of service to our clients, potential employers have not been receiving as much attention from us. The BOSs represent a solid way of reaching out to potential employers and the greater community. We needed something dynamic. We needed a "sales force" to get employers interested in and excited about our clients. The BOSs are doing just that.

The BOSs, like the SRC, can provide valuable information and education to the public about DVR. Whether the information gets to the ears of a parent of a child with a disability, a state legislator, an adult or a youth with a disability who wants to work, or a potential employer of our clients, 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. The creation of the BOSs is one example of that. We also 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 and live their dreams.

We are excited about the possibilities the future holds for our partnership. We are excited about the work of the BOSs. We are here to provide services and resources to people with disabilities so they become employed taxpaying productive members of their communities. We are also here to make certain that people with disabilities get connected to quality employers and together they increase the success of Colorado.

Sincerely,

Geoff Peterson  
Co-Chair  
State Rehabilitation Council

Marla Decker  
Co-Chair  
State Rehabilitation Council

Nancy Smith  
Director  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



# COLORADO STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

## SRC Contact Information

### *The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council*

Attention: Rebecca Johnson  
1575 Sherman St., 4th Floor  
Denver, Colorado 80203

**Telephone:** (303) 866-4714

**FAX:** (303) 866-4905

**Email:** [voc.rehab@state.co.us](mailto:voc.rehab@state.co.us)

**Web:** [http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dvr/hm\\_councils.htm](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dvr/hm_councils.htm)

## Mission Statement

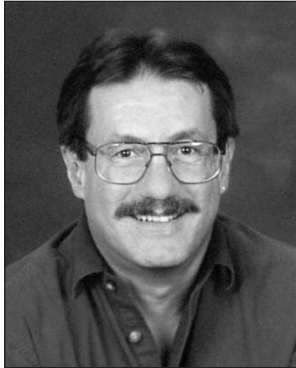
*“There’s no  
doubt in my  
mind that I  
would never  
have this job  
if it wasn’t  
for DVR.”*

The Colorado State Rehabilitation Council provides individuals with disabilities a strong substantive role in shaping the programs and services established to support their employment goals and aspirations and to provide consumers of vocational rehabilitation services a mechanism to influence at the systemic and policy level the direction of vocational rehabilitation programming.

### State Rehabilitation Council Goals for 2008

- ❖ The SRC will formalize recommendations it makes to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).
- ❖ The SRC will partner with DVR's Employee Council on a consumer satisfaction survey.
- ❖ The SRC will recruit members for all vacancies on the council.
- ❖ The SRC will educate all members about the Council.
- ❖ The SRC's Employment Committee will focus on activities that encourage the federal government to hire people with disabilities.

## SRC Council



**Geoff Peterson,**  
**Co-Chair**



**Marla Decker,**  
**Co-Chair**

### ***Appointed Council Members***

**Marla Decker,** SRC Co-Chair\*  
Southern Ute Tribe

**Geoff Peterson,** SRC Co-Chair\*  
Client Assistance Program  
Representative

**Margarita Cordova\***  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Consumer

**Dave DeLay\***  
Mental Health

**Kathy Grant**  
Public at Large

**Booker T. Graves**  
Workforce Investment Board

**Deb Harvey**  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Counselor (Ex-officio)

**Kay Jamison**  
Disability Advocacy Groups

**Gina Luby**  
Parent of Child with Disability

**Brenda Mosby**  
Individuals with a Disability

**Barbara Palmer**  
State Education Agency

**Joyce Schlose**  
Community Rehab  
Representative

**Nancy Smith\***  
Director Vocational  
Rehabilitation (Ex-officio)

**Judi Stein Stutman\***  
Public at Large

**Beth Schaffner\***  
Parent Training and Information  
Center

**Joe Sims**  
Disability Advocacy Groups

**Larry Williams**  
State Independent Living Center

**Kevan Worley\***  
Business, Industry, and Labor

*\*Executive Committee Member*

### ***Membership Committee***

The SRC Membership Committee is a standing committee dedicated to the recruitment of new members and the development and facilitation of a new member orientation. In FFY 2007, the Membership Committee recommended that the STRC and DVR jointly develop an orientation CD to orientate new members to the committee. The CD would include information such as the purpose of the SRC and the federal

regulations and guidelines that govern the SRC, etc. The Committee inducted the new Executive Officers for FFY 2008 at the annual retreat and also honored exiting officers. The membership Committee's biggest challenge in 2007 was the vacant seats designated for employers, which the committee was unable fill this year. The Committee will be focusing its efforts on filling the vacant seats in the coming year.

# SRC Committee Activities and Recommendations

## *Employment Committee*

The Employment Committee of the SRC worked on the issue of engaging the federal government to increase the number of employment opportunities for people with disabilities in their workforce. With the baby boomers retiring we determined that there will be many opportunities in Colorado for federal employment. The following activities reflect the committee's efforts:

- Nancy Smith, Director DVR, presented information about DVR to the Denver Federal Executive Board;
- The Employment Committee made a presentation at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

- A new collaboration with the local EEOC office was established; and
- We expanded the working membership of this committee.

We are determined to open up the pipeline between DVR, the workforce centers, and various federal agencies and will carry this effort in to FFY 2008. One of our activities will be to collaborate with the Denver office of the EEOC as they put together training for this region on hiring and recruiting people with disabilities in to the federal workforce.

Also the committee recommended that DVR conduct training for its own staff regarding the Federal Schedule-A hiring process for people with targeted disabilities.

## *Consumer Satisfaction Committee*

The Consumer Satisfaction Committee for the SRC addresses direct access issues of the DVR consumer of vocational rehabilitation services. The committee presents reports and recommendations to the entire State Rehabilitation Council for

review and confirmation. This year the Committee conducted a Consumer Satisfaction Survey focused on consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. The results of that survey will be published in FFY 2008.

## SRC Responsibilities

The overall purpose of the council is to review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding the performance of the agency. Specifically, the Council will participate in:

1. Preparing, administering and analyzing a survey of consumer satisfaction;
2. Preparing and submitting to the Governor and the public an annual report on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs;
3. Coordinating with other state councils that deal with issues affecting people with disabilities (Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, etc.);
4. Advising DVR in the preparation of applications, the state plan, amendments to the plan, needs assessments, and evaluations;
5. Holding public meetings and forums as necessary to receive input and direction from the public;
6. Providing input to the selection and appointment of independent hearing officers to handle client appeals; and
7. Assisting in performing additional duties determined by the council or sub-committees that will enhance in accomplishing the mission of DVR.



## 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.

*"DVR is an invaluable resource for people who want to get to work."*



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

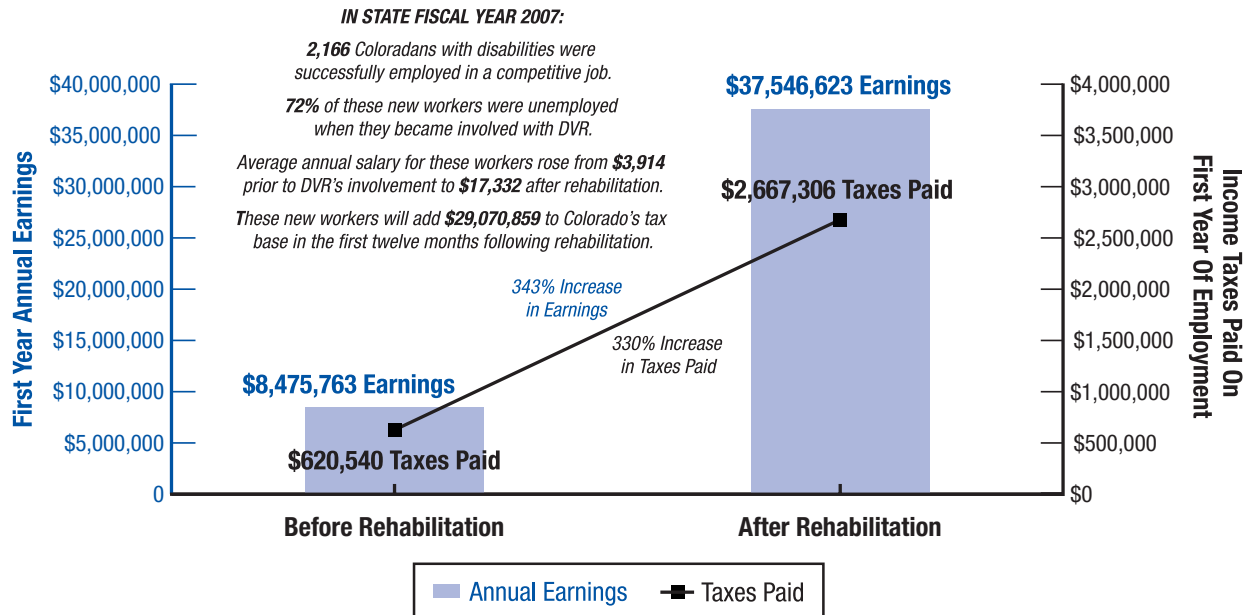


# Successful, Cost-Effective, and Good for Colorado's Economy

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



(Left to right:) DVR Field Office Staff, Mike Wilson, Pam Bakeman, Anne Kabigting, Caitlin Heath, Robin Bauknecht, Edward Hodenpel, and Sheela Chandran

# Offices and Contact Information

## Administration Office

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Colorado Department of Human Services  
 1575 Sherman Street, 4th Floor  
 Denver, Colorado 80203

**Voice/TTY:** 303-866-4150  
**Toll Free:** 1-866-870-4595  
**FAX:** 303-866-4905

**Web:** <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dvr/>  
**Email:** [Voc.Rehab@state.co.us](mailto:Voc.Rehab@state.co.us)

## Staff

**Nancy Smith**

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Kenneth Schmidt, Ed.D.**, Administrator, Field Services  
**Krista Dann**, Manager, Organizational Development  
**Sue Schierkolk**, Supervisor, Transition and Youth Unit

**Sandy Pratt**, Manager, Central Support Services  
**David Hood**, Manager (Acting), Provider Relations  
**Gale Klingman**, Manager, Program Performance and Information Management Services

## Field Offices

<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>TTY</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>TTY</b>
Alamosa . . . . .	719-589-5158 . . . . .	719-589-5150	Golden . . . . .	303-866-4121 . . . . .	303-866-4125
Aurora . . . . .	303-337-4610		Grand Junction . . . . .	970-248-7103 . . . . .	970-248-7103
Boulder . . . . .	303-444-2816 . . . . .	303-444-8136	Greeley . . . . .	970-353-5409	
Cañon City . . . . .	719-275-2318 x3076		Greenwood Village . . . . .	303-221-2089 . . . . .	303-221-3099
Colorado Springs . . . . .	719-635-3585 . . . . .	719-635-0529	Lamar . . . . .	719-336-7712 . . . . .	719-336-7712
Craig . . . . .	970-824-9671		Limon . . . . .	719-775-8819 . . . . .	719-775-8819
Delta . . . . .	970-874-5781 x12		Longmont . . . . .	303-776-6878 . . . . .	303-776-7783
Denver Metro . . . . .	303-866-2500 . . . . .	303-866-3984	Montrose . . . . .	970-249-4468 . . . . .	970-249-4468
. . . . .	303-866-3100 . . . . .	303-866-3980	Northglenn . . . . .	303-866-2110 . . . . .	303-866-2120
Durango . . . . .	970-247-3161 . . . . .	970-247-7940	Pueblo . . . . .	719-544-1406 . . . . .	719-546-0968
Edwards . . . . .	970-926-1515		Rocky Ford . . . . .	719-254-3358	
Fort Collins . . . . .	970-223-9823 . . . . .	970-223-9823	Salida . . . . .	719-539-9670 . . . . .	719-539-9670
Fort Morgan . . . . .	970-542-9376		Steamboat Springs . . . . .	970-620-0418	
Frisco . . . . .	970-668-5360		Sterling . . . . .	970-522-3737 . . . . .	970-522-3737
Glenwood Springs . . . . .	970-945-9174 . . . . .	970-945-9174	Trinidad . . . . .	888-734-2211	

## DVR Offices in Community Centered Board Locations

<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Colorado Blue Sky Enterprises . . . . .	719-546-0574	Mountain Valley Developmental Services . . . . .	970-210-5893
Denver Options . . . . .	303-636-5979		970-945-2306
Development Disabilities Resource Center . . . . .	303-462-6688	The Resource Exchange . . . . .	719-785-6405
Imagine . . . . .	303-665-7789	Starpoint . . . . .	719-276-1616
Foot Hills Gateway . . . . .	970-266-5436		

## Other Facilities Providing DVR Services

<b>Office</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Adams County DHS . . . . .	303-227-2677
Denver Project to End Homelessness . . . . .	720-944-3858
El Paso DHS . . . . .	719-444-8115
Grand Junction Career Center . . . . .	970-778-0790
Pikes Peak Workforce Center . . . . .	719-667-3796

## Other Programs

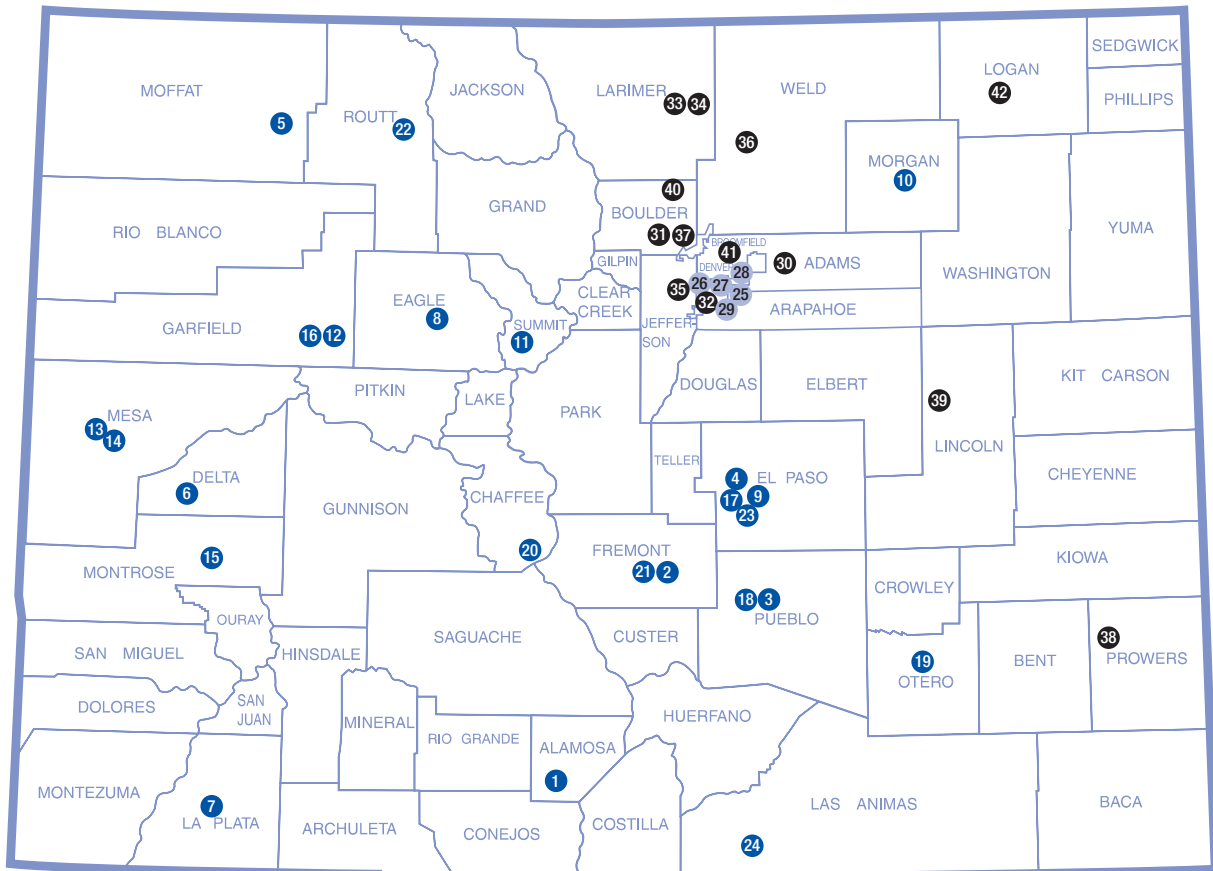
<b>Metro Teaching Programs—</b>	
Statewide Teaching Coordinator . . . . .	303-866-2500
<b>Business Enterprise Program—</b>	
Marilyn Morgan/Manager . . . . .	303-866-3484
<b>Traumatic Brain Injury Program—</b>	
Sandy McCarthy/Director . . . . .	303-866-4085

# Regions

● **REGION I**  
**Ken Reynolds**—Supervisor  
 719-482-7970

● **REGION II**  
**Marilyn Carmichael**—Supervisor  
 303-866-3111

● **REGION III**  
**Candy Leathers**—Supervisor  
 303-866-2708



- **REGION I**
- 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—Montrose

- 16—Mountain Valley Developmental Services (CCB)
- 17—Pikes Peak Workforce Center
- 18—Pueblo
- 19—Rocky Ford
- 20—Salida
- 21—Starpoint (CCB)
- 22—Steamboat Springs
- 23—The Resource Exchange (CCB)
- 24—Trinidad
- **REGION II**
- 25—Aurora
- 26—Denver Project to End Homelessness
- 27—Denver Metro
- 28—Denver Options (CCB)
- 29—Greenwood Village

- **REGION III**
- 30—Adams County DHS
- 31—Boulder
- 32—Development Disabilities Resource Center (CCB)
- 33—Foot Hills Gateway (CCB)
- 34—Fort Collins
- 35—Golden
- 36—Greeley
- 37—Imagine (CCB)
- 38—Lamar
- 39—Limon
- 40—Longmont
- 41—Northglenn
- 42—Sterling



## FIELD SERVICES

Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) conducts its business through 42 field offices located throughout the state (see map on page 9), 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.

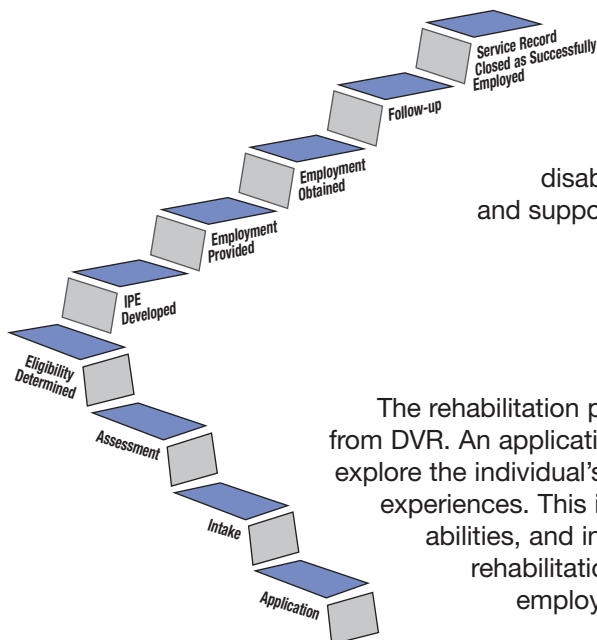


**Dr. Ken Schmidt,**  
**Administrator of**  
**Field Services**

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.

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.



## 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.



*(Clockwise from top:)  
DVR Field Office Staff,  
Stacy Yauman, Meagan  
O'Nan, and Patricia Boone*

## 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. The Division has also initiated a special unit comprised of vocational rehabilitation counselors statewide, who in addition to their regular cases also provide services in the area of Self Employment. These counselors receive additional training and work with clients who have shown an interest and aptitude to become self-employed;
- **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;
- **Placement services** provided to assist an individual with a disability to find adequate and suitable employment in his/her chosen career. The Division has also added to its resources Business Outreach Specialists statewide. These staff work with employers to educate them regarding hiring people with disabilities. They also provide education to referral sources so that appropriate referrals can be made to DVR;
- **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.

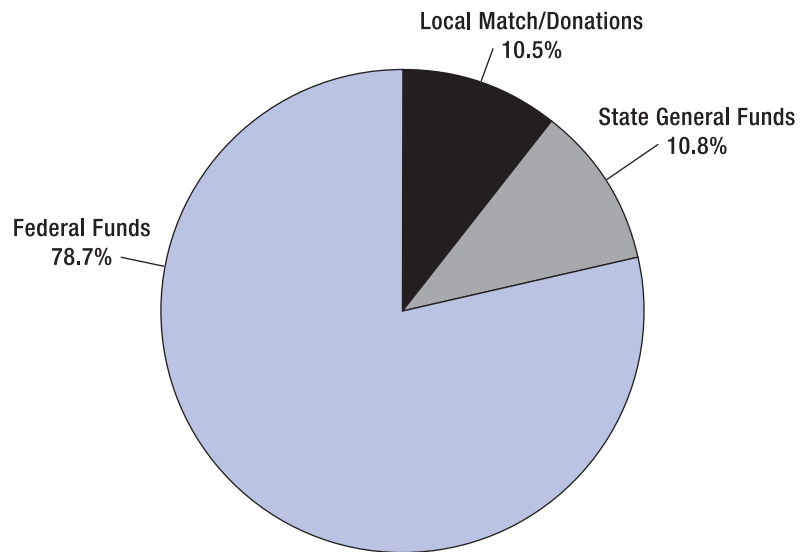
In addition, post-employment services may be provided to previously rehabilitated individuals when needed to maintain or regain suitable employment.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

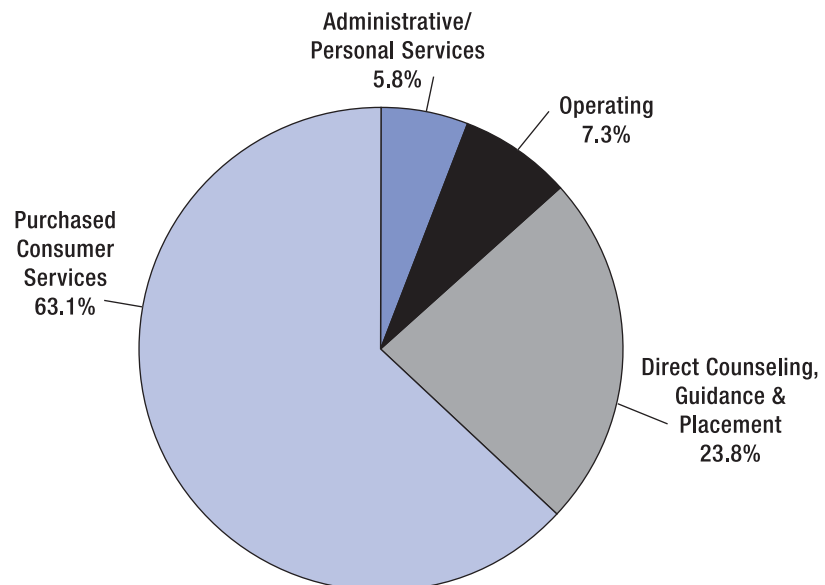
### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Funding and Expenditures

Sources of Funding for SFY 2007



*“When you work with DVR, they are there to make it work and they are very helpful.”*

SFY 2007 Expenditures by Type

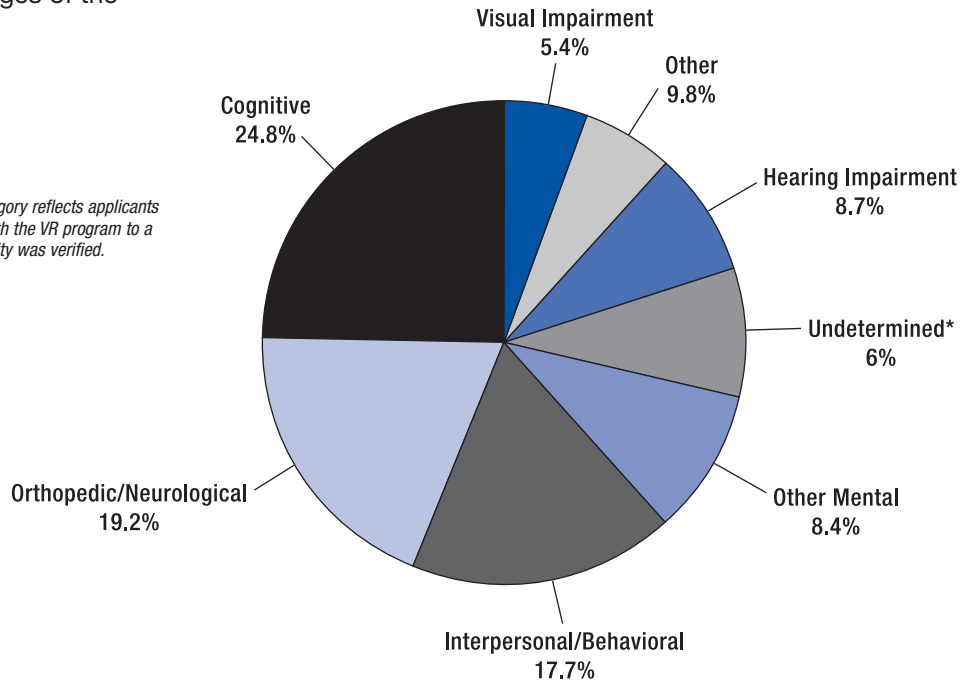


# Who We Serve

During state fiscal year 2007, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation served 19,723 individuals at various stages of the rehabilitation process.

## Primary Disability of 19,723 Consumers Served

*\*The undetermined category reflects applicants who did not continue with the VR program to a point where their disability was verified.*



## Other Characteristics of the Individuals We Served

	19,723 Individuals Served During SFY 2007		2,369 Individuals Rehabilitated During SFY 2007	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	10,739	54.4%	1,333	56.3%
Female	8,984	45.6%	1,036	43.7%
<b>Age at Referral</b>				
21 Years and Under	4,181	21.2%	721	30.5%
22 to 30 Years	3,048	15.5%	337	14.2%
31 to 40 Years	3,497	17.7%	360	15.2%
41 to 50 Years	4,787	24.3%	429	18.1%
51 to 60 Years	3,259	16.5%	334	14.1%
61 to 64 Years	449	2.3%	62	2.6%
Over 64 Years	502	2.5%	126	5.3%
<b>Ethnic Background*</b>				
White	16,742	73.2%	2,074	75.2%
African American	1,679	7.3%	155	5.6%
Asian	240	1%	39	1.4%
Pacific Islander	35	.2%	2	.1%
Native American	476	2.1%	52	1.9%
Hispanic	3,707	16.2%	436	15.8%

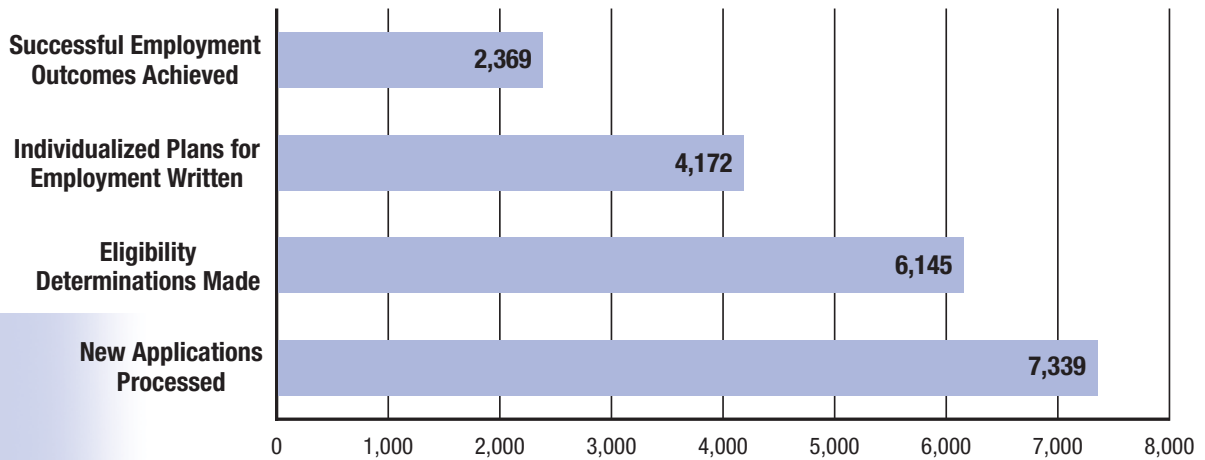
*\*The DVR data system allows for multiple ethnic backgrounds to be reported by one individual. Therefore the amounts shown can calculate greater than 100% and will be greater than the total amount served and rehabilitated.*



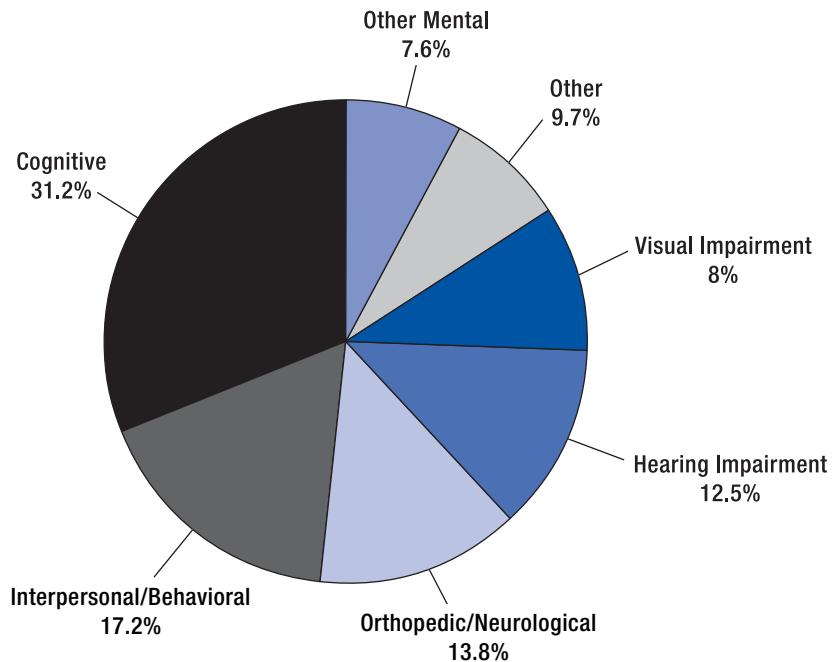
# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## What We Accomplished

2007 Accomplishments



Primary Disability of 2,369 Consumers Successfully Employed

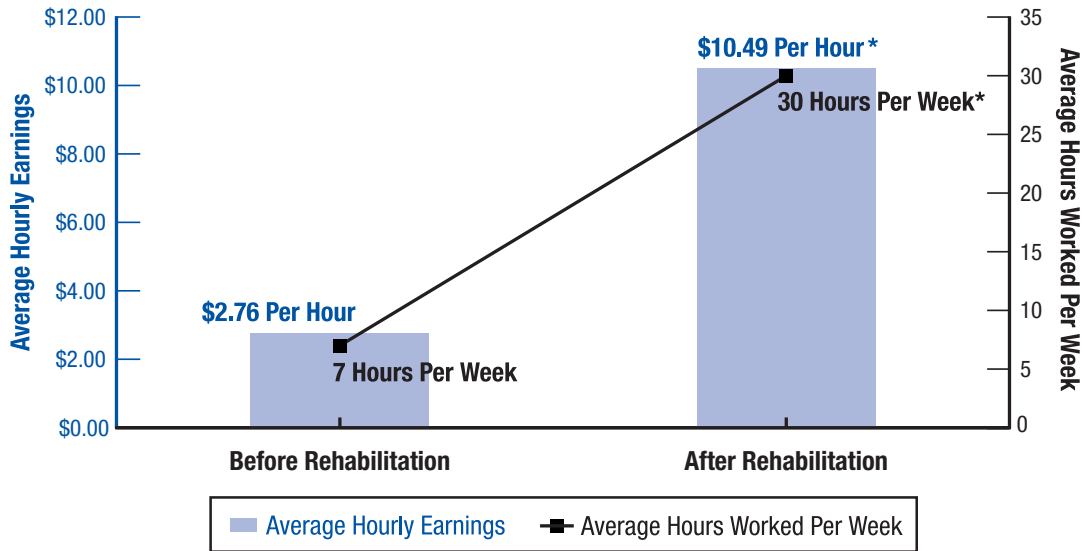


*“DVR is an excellent source of information.”*



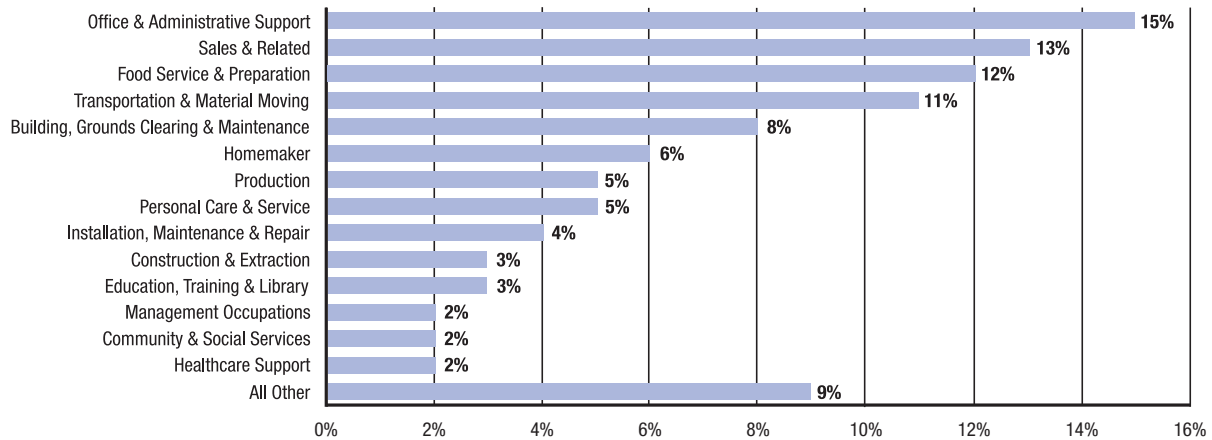
# What Our Participants Accomplished

## Increased Earnings and Hours Worked for the 2,166 Competitive Closures



*\*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 2,369 Consumers Successfully Employed





## NEW INITIATIVES

### Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative

Complex rules surrounding entitlement programs, along with fears of losing cash assistance and health benefits, can often discourage people with disabilities from working. The DPN Initiative better informs beneficiaries and other people with disabilities about the work support programs available at Colorado Workforce Centers, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and throughout the community. The DPN focuses on developing new and ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive, and integrated access to services, creating systemic change, and expanding the workforce development system's capacity to serve customers with disabilities and employers.

The DPN Initiative is being administered by the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. There are 20 DPNs throughout the state. The DPNs are increasing the collaborative efforts between the Workforce Centers and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and their customers by educating the staff of both agencies about the services and programs available through each agency. The DPNs are working to formalize referral processes, service strategies for common customers between agencies, ensuring universal accessibility for all individuals using both agencies, increasing community awareness of the services of both agencies, providing information and resources to employers regarding the hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities, conduct employer outreach and education for the purpose of creating employment opportunities for DVR and Workforce center participants with disabilities, being a resource for the staff of both agencies and assisting customers through the development of interagency resource teams to serve customers. The DPNs conduct outreach, recruitment and screening of participants with disabilities, who are accessing either a Workforce Center or a DVR office and may have barriers to employment.

*“DVR has many high quality people who can manage the difficulties of what they do.”*

### DVR Business Outreach Program

The Business Outreach Program was launched in July 2007. The program's vision is to develop long-term working relationships with both private businesses and public organizations throughout Colorado, which will effectively bridge the employment gap between employers and DVR consumers, resulting in more successful employment outcomes for DVR consumers. In addition, the program personnel will educate referral and potential referral sources about DVR services and how people with disabilities can take advantage of DVR services so more appropriate and timely referrals will be realized.

The program consists of nine Business Outreach Specialists (BOSs) and one Business Outreach Coordinator. The Business Outreach Specialists work out of the following DVR offices: Golden, Northglenn, Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Alamosa, Grand Junction, and Fort Collins. Most BOSs perform

outreach work for more than one DVR office. All business outreach team members possess knowledge and skills in marketing, and know how to apply this knowledge to DVR's unique mission. Although the primary function of the BOSs is business outreach and development, they may also have vocational assignments such as vocational goal development; labor market research; job seeking skills training; and job placement. The business outreach team may be called on to provide or coordinate disability awareness and ADA training, job retention services; or consultation services such job analysis, reasonable accommodation, and assistive technology. Finally, the business outreach team will collaborate with state and local partners to develop economic opportunities for the employment sector that will result in employment for DVR consumers.

There are several key concepts of the program, but all of them build from the "dual customer" concept. This customer service strategy recognizes

that both people with disabilities and businesses are our customers. The majority of VR agencies nationwide have committed to this philosophy. These state agencies, of which Colorado is one, envision a VR-Business Network that starts locally, grows statewide, branches out regionally, and finally spreads across the nation. The goal of this VR-Business Network is for VR to become "one company" nationwide. What this will mean is that businesses can expect to receive the same high quality service from DVR in all states.

People with disabilities will most likely continue to face challenges in employment, including attitude barriers, access, employment competition, and downward economic trends. With the assistance of all DVR staff, the business outreach team desires to educate businesses about the many benefits of employing people with disabilities, and assist VR consumers in being able to successfully compete for employment in the future business world.

## Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury Program

The Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program was created by Colorado statute in 2002 to improve the lives of Colorado residents who have survived traumatic brain injuries. In the fall of 2007, the Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury Program became part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within the Colorado Department of Human Services.

The TBI Trust Fund strives to support all people in Colorado affected by traumatic brain injury through services, research and education. The vision for the program is that all Coloradans affected by traumatic brain injury will have access to available services and supports when needed.

The TBI Trust Fund receives revenue from surcharges assessed for convictions of certain traffic offenses. Moneys in the Trust Fund pay for all program services and program administration.

By statute, approximately 65 percent of the moneys collected for the Trust Fund are used to provide services to persons with traumatic brain injuries; 30 percent are used to support research related to the treatment and understanding of traumatic brain injuries; and 5 percent are used to provide education for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and to assist educators, parents, and non-medical professionals in the identification of

traumatic brain injuries so as to assist such persons in seeking proper medical intervention or treatment.

**Services.** All individuals receiving assistance from the Trust Fund receive care coordination services. Care coordination is designed to provide clients with skills they can use throughout their lifetimes, and to connect clients with resources in their communities that will be there after they leave the Trust Fund Program. In addition, the Trust Fund may provide a variety of other services to clients including therapies, durable goods and assistive technologies to meet individual needs.

The Brain Injury Association of Colorado (BIAC) provides client intake, eligibility and referral services for the TBI program. Once determined eligible, Denver Options, Inc. provides both care coordination and purchased services to the TBI population. In 2007, Denver Options provided services to 434 adults with traumatic brain injuries. For the children's TBI Program, Denver Options, Inc. provides purchased services, and subcontracts with the Department of Public Health and Environment to provide care coordination services to children and their families. In 2007, Denver Options and CDPHE provided services to 105 children and their families.



## RECOGNIZING SUCCESS

### The Employer's Point of View

#### *Mutual Trust and Respect the Key to Relationship*

Employer: **EchoStar Satellite LLC**  
Business Outreach Specialist for DVR: **Cathy Kohl**  
Location: **Littleton**

Partnering with DVR will make all the difference in the world for disabled employees and their employers, says Lynne Neese, Human Resources Representative II at EchoStar Satellite LLC. Over the past several years, EchoStar has hired numerous employees through DVR and continues to build on the strong relationship between agency and employer. "Many employers are afraid to hire and afraid not to hire," she says about those with disabilities. "They don't know where to go so they turn away."

On the contrary, Neese has had so many great experiences with DVR that she often speaks at hiring events and disability awareness events about the many positives of employing those with a disability.

Neese says Cathy Kohl has been instrumental in countless ways. "I can't say enough good things about how she makes the relationship work. She is so honest, so easy to talk to. I trust her and trust her opinion," Neese says. She explains that Kohl regularly comes onsite to the call center to stay abreast of any changes in the environment. "She listens to calls and observes the training to understand what we are looking for and what it takes to make it successful. She makes sure to send us people that are a good fit."

Kohl arranges transportation, scheduling, job coaching, mentoring programs, on-site visits and more. If there are any problems, she steps in immediately to assess whether DVR can help.

In fact, several employees placed at EchoStar through DVR are platinum-ranked employees, which is EchoStar's highest ranking. They receive bonuses in their paychecks for top performance.

Kohl says trust, communication and a caring attitude have fostered success. "The entire HR personnel at the call centers in Thornton and especially in Littleton are always open to possibilities," she says, adding that Lynne Neese is a shining star among employers. "Lynne always thinks outside of the box. She truly cares about individuals with disabilities and how they can fit into EchoStar for the benefit of all concerned."

DVR and EchoStar together take many steps to make each placement is a success, but if an employee doesn't work out, Neese is glad to know that DVR will still provide that person with further assistance. "We don't like to have an employee walking out the door without a job going nowhere," she says. DVR is able to take the information provided by both employer and employee and apply it to the search for a successful job placement elsewhere. ●

*"Thanks to  
the helpful  
and caring  
people at Voc  
Rehab, I now  
have a new  
career."*

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#### *One of the Team*

Employer: **Home Depot**  
Business Outreach Specialist for DVR: **Joy Caine**  
Location: **Denver**

When DVR consumer Joseph Teets first began working at Home Depot in 2006, his co-workers were wary. Teets, a profoundly deaf individual, set out to prove his value to the freight

team. "I thought it was going to create some difficulties," admits Jerod Horta, a Freight Team Supervisor. "As time has passed I have built a really great relationship with Joseph. He goes above and beyond his duties and is outgoing and easy to communicate with."

Horta says he wouldn't trade Teets for any other associate, and Chuck Caves, also a Freight Team Supervisor, says Teets has proven himself to be very positive and productive.

Teets has won two merit awards in the last year recognizing him as an outstanding employee and for going above and beyond what is asked of him. "I am very proud of my merit awards and hope to be at Home Depot forever," Teets says.

Business Outreach Specialist Joy Caine says Teets' work history is similar to that of many individuals with disabilities. In the past, he's worked a series of low-paying, low-skills jobs with little appreciation or opportunity for growth. At Home Depot, his salary has risen dramatically, he has benefits for the first time, he is treated with respect by others, and he has a real career with opportunities for advancement. These days, Teets' non-disabled brother is impressed that Teets makes more money than he does.

Like many DVR consumers, at the time of placement Teets was qualified for employment, meaning he possessed an array of useful skills but needed the right environment to really thrive. "We always work hard for a good match between the needs of the employer and the skills of the consumer," Caine explains.

The DVR Business Outreach Program, which originated in 2007, was created to open doors for those with disabilities and to grow relationships with existing employers. Caine and the other Business Outreach Specialists are constantly in contact with employers like Home Depot. "My job is to go out and find new employers, increase awareness among current employers, and provide more opportunities for individuals with disabilities," says Caine.

According to Caine, Home Depot has been great to work with and very receptive to DVR. Home Depot HR Manager Angie Bruning agrees that her interactions with Caine have been very positive. As a new staffing captain, Bruning says she looks forward to building a working relationship with DVR. She hopes to place more DVR consumers within the Santa Fe store as well as encourage HR managers at other metro Denver locations to consider DVR consumers for job openings within their stores. ●

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## *Organizations Partner to Reach Common Employment Goals*

Employer: **TJ Maxx HomeGoods**  
Business Outreach Specialist for DVR: **Joy Caine**  
Location: **Littleton**

As a Business Outreach Specialist at DVR, Joy Caine's job is to make sure that employers are happy. She views her role as multi-dimensional, utilizing all the resources available to create positive employment situations both for employers and for clients.

At TJ Maxx HomeGoods, DVR has placed over a dozen consumers in retail jobs. Although Store Manager Linda Delegans Parrish has worked with numerous community agencies for years employing individuals with various disabilities, it wasn't until 2007 that her assistant met Joy Caine at a job fair and learned that DVR partners with many community agencies. Now, when Parrish has a question, concern or need, instead of placing multiple calls she only calls Caine. "It is a one-stop recruiting shop," Parrish says. "I think other employers are not aware that there is a government agency that can be as accommodating as DVR can be. We want to help them as much as they help us."

In this case, DVR partners with 2Succeed (a program of the Mental Health Corps of Denver), SWAP and the Developmental Disabilities Pilot Project. If an individual is a good candidate for employment at TJ Maxx, the DVR counselor and possibly a job coach will work closely with that person to ensure the best possible outcome. Caine

communicates with all parties and monitors the process. "I call regularly, go on-site to check in, and make sure employers' needs are being met. If there's an issue I make the counselor and the job coach aware of it and we work on a resolution," Caine says.

"Joy's very good at managing that process," Parrish says. "She's very tenacious, organized and a very good communicator."

With some DVR consumers, Parrish and her staff will experiment by giving them different job duties in search of the best all-around fit. "The greatest thing I have seen in Linda's store is the flexibility and ability to consider individuals needs and skills levels and try to find the right niche for them within TJ Maxx," Caine says. They do a lot of job carving, which often means taking part of the job and giving it to someone else or carving out the job to fit the individual.

DVR consumer Sylvia Vinson, like many disabled employees, has a great attitude, excellent attendance and is delighted to work at TJ Maxx. "Sylvia is the only associate who takes notes at our meetings," Parrish says. "She does such a good job and we're glad she's here."

Parrish employs many individuals with special needs and feels that it's important not only because of a sense of community responsibility, but also because those employees are extremely loyal, hardworking and positive. She enjoys working with DVR because of the background information she receives on each client; the resources and job coaching; and the teaching that takes place if an individual is not a good fit. ●

## Consumer Profiles

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

### *A Journey to a Better Place*

Name: **Rose Garcia**  
Place of Employment: **William Storms Allergy Clinic**  
Occupation: **Medical Assistant**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jan Lattuca and John Ferlin**  
Location: **Denver and Colorado Springs**

You do not know me, but maybe you know someone like me. Maybe you know someone that has suffered a life changing illness or injury. My name is Rose Garcia and several years ago, I suffered one of those injuries. I have never felt so frustrated. Suddenly I could no longer provide adequately for my family. I could no longer perform the job that I had been doing for so many years.

Lucky for me someone directed me to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. That was the beginning of my journey of self-discovery. Thanks to the helpful and caring people at Voc Rehab, I now have a new career. Jan Lattuca was my counselor in Denver until my move to Colorado Springs almost two years ago. I worried that I would have problems continuing on my career path, chosen with the guidance of Jan. I was assigned a new counselor, John Ferlin, and we soon worked out a new plan of action. I'm pretty good with people and I care about their well being, so I decided to become a Medical Assistant. Now the process of finding a school, applying for grants and other resources began in earnest! I settled on a school and began in October of 2004.

DVR, along with some assistance from Colorado Workforce, covered my tuition (including books and uniforms), uniform shoes, blood pressure cuff, stethoscope and other school-related items and expenses that were crucial to my success.



**Rose Garcia**

It wasn't always a smooth road, but I finally graduated with honors in June 2005, and with a position at The William Storms Allergy Clinic already secured. I worked in the Antigen and Injections Department giving allergy shots and mixing antigen for patient allergy extracts. I have since moved to the research department, better known as William Storms Medical Research to fill a position as a Clinical Research Coordinator. I love this position, as it utilizes all of my skills and requires travel to research conferences. In fact, I recently returned from Puerto Rico!

Success is always within reach if you are willing to work hard for it, but it's always nice to know there is help when you need it. I'd like to send a special thanks to John Ferlin for helping me realize a dream. Next stop...a Bachelor's Degree! ●

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### *Work Enriches Life for Those with Disabilities*

Name: **Kelly Chambers**  
Place of Employment: **The Egg and I**  
Occupation: **Wait Staff Assistant**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Jennifer Scilacci**  
Location: **Steamboat Springs**

Like any 23-year-old, Kelly Chambers works, spends time with friends, listens to music and has a fun-filled social calendar. His disability of Down Syndrome, does not diminish his well-rounded life in a community that accepts and cares about him.

As a student at Steamboat Springs High School,

Kelly participated in a transition program, Stepping Stones, designed to help students with special needs learn about independent living. Kelly moved from his parents' home to Horizons Specialized Services, a group home for five adults; there he learned to cook, clean, and shop. After mastering the responsibilities of independent living what Kelly wanted most was a job.



**Kelly Chambers**

DVR had helped other Horizons residents, so staff members referred him for vocational assistance. Rehabilitation Counselor Jennifer Scilacci managed his case and Job Coach Beth Davison worked with him on a recurring basis. Beth and Kelly already had a relationship from the Stepping Stones program.

As luck would have it, Brad and Courtney Moline, the owners of a local restaurant “The Egg and I” had recently contacted Horizons to fill a position assisting wait staff. Kelly was identified as a good candidate and was hired.

The Molines trained Kelly for his duties at work including setting up silverware, filling the OJ machine, filling ketchup bottles, creating “to go” packs, filling the ice machine, sweeping, placing doilies on plates and stacking them, and bussing tables; while Davison provided intensive on-the-job coaching. Kelly and Beth worked outside the job site to develop skills in scheduling, routines, and transportation, such as helping Kelly learn to ride the bus to work. He has a limited reading ability and struggles with the concept of time, so Davison ordered a Timepad to help him schedule his day. This handheld, voice-activated technology tool allowed Davison to record messages saying things like “It is noon, time to head out and catch the bus” and “time to punch in.”

Funding from DVR paid for the Timepad and all of Davison’s services. Her efforts helped Chambers adapt

successfully to his job and he has been a steady and stable employee since May 2003. “The Egg and I” owner Brad Moline says Kelly has done well there and loves to interact with staff members and guests, especially babies and kids.

Davison says the Molines have gone out of their way to mold the job to suit Kelly’s strengths and work within the realm of his disability. “They are part of the reason it’s so successful for him,” she explains. “He does a great job and it’s a great fit because the employers are wonderful with him,” she adds, “acceptance and mutual respect have made this work well for both parties.”

In his free time, Kelly likes to dine out, watch movies, play games on his Playstation (especially WWE wrestling), watch TV, bowl, dance, shop, and listen to music. Kelly’s paychecks are direct deposited and Horizon staff help manage his money. He receives cash tips every Friday. He has traveled to Jamaica, Belize and Alaska with family members and says he’s saving money for another trip.

Kelly’s mom Val Chambers speaks highly of the programs that have helped her son and says he loves his job and it’s been wonderful for him. “DVR has done an amazing job helping to place these kids in the community and helping them to lead more normal lives,” she says. ●

*“I know that DVR can help you.”*

## *Education Leads to Internship and New Career*

Name: **Steve Doyle**

Place of Employment: **City and County of Denver**

Occupation: **Information Technology Technician I**

Rehabilitation Counselor: **Marijean Levin**

Location: **Northglenn**

Steve Doyle devotes his energy towards a rewarding endeavor: learning all about his new career in information technology; despite End Stage Renal Disease (kidney failure), dialysis, and transplant hopes.

When Steve was first diagnosed with kidney failure in 2002 he was very ill. He was in and out of the hospital, weak and exhausted, consumed with thoughts of survival. As the months went by his body adjusted to

dialysis treatments and he began to feel well enough to think about the future. Although he was receiving Social Security Disability income, he felt useless without a job and wanted to return to work. “I could be sitting at home watching TV, but physically, I feel good. If I’m healthy enough to get out there and do something I’m going to do it,” he says. The problem Steve faced was a lack of experience; all his life he had worked as a skilled laborer in fields of sheet metal fabrication and



**Steve Doyle**

glassblowing. Because of his health problems, he needed to develop skills suited to a sedentary job.

In the process of figuring out what to do with his life, Steve contacted DVR for help. He was assigned to work with Rehabilitation Counselor Marijean Levin, who provided career counseling starting with aptitude and interest testing. They discovered that Steve had a strong interest in computers. He then enrolled in a computer training program specializing in training disabled individuals on information technology sponsored by DVR and the Community College of Denver. After 15 months of schooling, Steve was selected for an internship program with the City and County of Denver, working as an unpaid full-time intern from November 2005 to July 2006. "The knowledge was too valuable to let it go," he says. "I went to learn and I learned a lot."

Steve's dedication paid off and he was hired as an Information Technology Technician. "There's no doubt in my mind that I would never have this job if it wasn't for DVR," he says, explaining that he would not have returned to school without financial assistance as he was not willing to take out educational loans. "Now I have a job and I don't owe anyone anything." DVR paid for: guidance and counseling; books and tuition; transportation assistance; occupational training; computer software and hardware; and an initial stipend to his employer.

Even though Steve is thrilled to be entering a new profession, his challenges are ongoing. He has found the transition from skilled laborer to a desk job to be difficult, especially coupled with the weekly 12 hours for dialysis. "My days are 16 hours long on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. It wears me out like a worn tire. Sometimes I wonder how I am doing this," he says.

Steve also struggles with the idea that he's beginning a new career—meaning he must climb a new ladder—at age 46. Nevertheless, he says it's better than spending the rest of his days with a TV remote in his hand. "I like to be faced with a challenge," Steve says of his new job, where he repairs computers, troubleshoots applications, and installs new computers and printers.

Steve credits his own resilience, the support of his wife Susan, and the help he has received from DVR for his return to a normal life. "For a person in my situation, DVR is the way to go," he says. "It's an excellent source of resources. If I were on my own I'd still be studying the newspapers and pounding the pavement."

Steve says he is proud of his vocational rehabilitation and is happy to be self sufficient. He is also optimistic about his health and hopes his new skills will provide him with gainful employment until he retires. "I'm still a young guy and hopefully I have 20 years of employment ahead of me." ●

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## *DVR Helps Computer Programmer Build on Existing Skills*

Name: **Earl Elliott**

Place of Employment: **Denver Employees Retirement Plan**

Occupation: **Software Engineer**

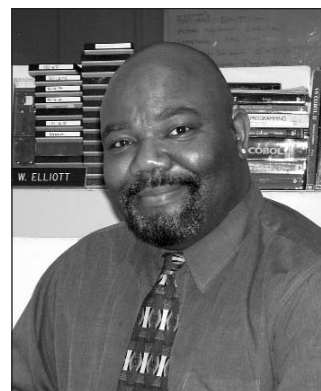
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Edward Hodenpel**

Location: **Denver**

Every day after logging 8 or 9 hours at work, Earl Elliott goes faithfully to the Aurora Public Library to spend his evening studying. Although he's not technically in school anymore, he's what one might call a lifelong learner.

The software engineer spends four or five hours every day, even on weekends, studying Microsoft Visual Studio. Why would anyone be so motivated to spend nearly all their free time reading up on software programs? "That's where all the jobs are," Earl says. "I have to keep my skills up so I don't fall behind and that's the best way to do it."

The job market was flooded with computer programmers following the Y2K conversion in 2000, the events of September 11, 2001, massive layoffs, outsourcing, and the technology crash. Earl, who had worked steadily as a programmer for more than 15 years, suddenly found himself struggling to find even a contract job. "A lot of my friends were driving taxis and working retail. I took whatever I could find," he says, explaining that he relied on temporary jobs and weekend photography gigs to get by. "The new technology, Microsoft Visual Basic, was going strong but I didn't know that skill," he says. After nearly two years without a full-time job, Earl knew he needed to learn Visual Basic to make himself more marketable.



**Earl Elliott**

At the same time, Earl needed new hearing aids. He has suffered with declining hearing ability since birth.



A friend, who also deals with hearing loss, suggested he contact DVR to see if they could help. Beginning in June 2004, he worked with Rehabilitation Counselor Sue Williams and later with Rehabilitation Counselor Edward Hodenpel.

Earl had enough experience and education to know exactly what he needed to compete in the job market, and DVR's services helped him do just that. DVR provided comprehensive audiometric testing, a hearing aid evaluation, and two hearing aids. DVR purchased for him a laptop computer, provided funding for books and tuition at Aurora Community College, where Elliot finished two classes in Visual Basic, and paid for the AppDev Software Training Program, a self-paced online class that allowed Earl to teach himself Microsoft Visual Studio.

All of these high-level programming classes helped Earl get a job at Denver Employees Retirement Plan in December of 2005. His job duties include software development, network support, and computer operation. His professional goals include moving into management. He's also working on a Microsoft Certified Solutions Developer credential, a high-level certification for advanced developers. A library man at heart, Earl totes

a huge suitcase loaded with his own treasure trove of reference books. Even his supervisor and co-workers borrow his books to answer questions and solve problems.

Earl has been fascinated with computers since childhood. "I still have my first computer book from junior high in 1976. I knew when I wrote my first line of code that I wanted to be a software guy," he remembers. A self-described introvert, Earl compares technology to art. "You have to learn the tools to create beautiful works of art," he says, explaining that his fascination with programming stems from the excitement of taking an idea from concept to reality.

He still manages to find time for other interests. He is a cartoonist whose work has been published in several national magazines and he dabbles in photography: shooting sporting events, weddings, and proms. "It's a backup career to this one. I learned after this big crash that it's good to have a backup plan," he says.

What does Earl have to say about DVR? "It was a wonderful experience overall. I would definitely recommend anyone in my situation to go to them," he says. "I know that DVR can help you." ●

*"If it wasn't for my Rehab Counselor, I don't know if I could have gone to school."*

## Giving Back

Name: **Dane Malenkovic**  
Place of Employment: **T. Rowe Price**  
Occupation: **Retirement Participant Services Representative**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **John DePaul**  
Business/Employment Specialist: **Joanne Feenstra**  
Location: **Colorado Springs**

Dane Malenkovic suffered a spinal cord injury in a 1991 motorcycle accident, leaving him a paraplegic. He was just 20 years old. "After the accident I was on a destructive path," he remembers. For three years he coped with anger, resentment, and frustration. "Finally I realized that instead of focusing on what I can't do, I needed to focus on what I can do," he says.

He was living in his hometown of Munroe Falls, Ohio and contacted the local Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. They helped him purchase a standing chair to provide relief from long periods of time spent in his wheelchair. They also paid for schooling enabling Dane to earn an Associates Degree in Polymer

Engineering Technology, or the study of plastics. For several years he worked in laboratories testing plastics. After a 2001 lay off, he decided to move to Colorado Springs to be close to siblings. Initially he worked part-time as the office manager for his brother's company, Colorado Millwork Inc. His goal was to find a full-time job with benefits, so he contacted DVR in October 2003.



**Dane Malenkovic**

Rehabilitation Counselor John DePaul provided career counseling and job-seeking skills training, including resume writing and teaching Dane how to discuss his disability with potential employers. DePaul also provided job site analysis visits to make recommendations to employers about appropriate

accommodations. Employment Specialist Joanne Feenstra first tried to find Dane a job as a laboratory technician because he wanted to utilize his education and experience. But the new geographic area offered few jobs matching his laboratory skills. After several months of looking unsuccessfully they decided to pursue other avenues. Because he had worked as an office manager and possessed accounting and computer skills, they concentrated on careers in which he might apply that knowledge.

Feenstra contacted recruiter Debbie Weaver at T. Rowe Price to see if Dane might be a good fit. The initial interview was promising, but he lacked customer service experience. To compensate for his lack of experience, DePaul worked with Pikes Peak Workforce Center and negotiated a three-month paid “work experience” at T. Rowe Price giving Dane a chance to develop customer service skills. Neither party was obligated to the other, but after the work experience ended T. Rowe Price wanted to keep Dane on staff and he wanted to stay there. He was officially hired June 1, 2005 and has been successfully employed ever since. His current job duties include processing changes to retirement accounts. His future professional goals

include becoming a Subject Matter Expert, meaning he would help educate other employees about daily procedures.

Dane lives a normal life despite his disability. He owns a home, drives himself to work, and cooks his own meals. “If there’s something I want to do, I figure out a way to do it,” he says. He likes to ride snowmobiles and four wheelers and go boating and fishing. “I work out at the gym twice a week,” he says, noting that it’s essential for those in a wheelchair to do daily calisthenics and stretching. T. Rowe Price gives Dane access to a room where he can get out of his chair for 10–15 minutes during his breaks to rest and stretch.

Dane, who was once dependent on Social Security Disability, no longer receives any kind of assistance. “It was important for me to get off the system and give back to the system that helped me,” he says. He is grateful for the financial and vocational help he has received from programs like BVR in Ohio and DVR in Colorado. “It [DVR] is an invaluable resource for people who want to get up and do something,” he says. ●

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## Success Despite the Odds

Name: **Marilyn Robinson**  
Place of Employment: **Beacon Medical Services**  
Occupation: **Trauma Medical Coder**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Sandy Sarniak**  
Location: **Denver**

On May 29, 1980, Marilyn Robinson was run off the road by another driver. Her car went over a bridge and she was thrown from the vehicle resulting in massive injuries. A pelvic fracture combined with a femur injury nearly destroyed her right hip. She endured four total hip replacements and because of the damage is more than two inches shorter on the right side and walks with a crutch and cane.

After four months recovering in the hospital, the single mother of three felt she had no choice but to return immediately to work. Marilyn worked nonstop since the accident, despite living with chronic pain. “I never ever went on welfare my entire life,” she says.

She raised her children alone, supporting her family first as a nurse and later working in banking, accounting, and bookkeeping. Even while working at a desk, Marilyn’s jobs required her to regularly travel up and down stairs. Over time that became nearly impossible because of the deterioration of her hip. In 2003, she sought help from DVR, working with rehabilitation counselor Carol Feuerbacher. They

explored career options based on Marilyn’s talents, interests, and physical limitations. Marilyn’s nursing background and love of numbers indicated that medical coding might be a good fit.

Marilyn enrolled in the medical coding program at Emily Griffith Opportunity School in Denver, and Sandy Sarniak took over Marilyn’s case when Feuerbacher transferred to a different caseload. Marilyn received a Pell Grant from the Federal Student Aid Program and DVR paid the remainder of her tuition, equipment, books, and supplies. “I had a real problem when we were first trying to coordinate the funding, and if it wasn’t for Sandy I don’t know if I could have gone to school,” Marilyn remembers. Sarniak was instrumental in arranging payments and spearheading communication.

Family support also was crucial. Marilyn’s grown children paid for her rent and living expenses the year she was in school. She did well in classes and following an internship, found a job with Beacon Medical Services in Aurora.



**Marilyn Robinson**

Fortunately, Marilyn loves her new career. As an emergency room coder, she uses an international coding system to read, interpret, and record the procedures done during each patient's visit. "It's like a game to see how fast you can be, how accurate you can be," she says. Because of her physical disabilities, working quietly at a desk is perfect for her.

Coding Manager Ann Oberleas, who is Marilyn's supervisor, says she is a pleasant, hardworking employee. "She is very serious about fulfilling her job duties and staying independent, while not focusing on any physical disability or ailment," Oberleas explains. Marilyn, who enjoys baking, often brings in treats or cakes to share with the other coders.

Despite all she's been through, Marilyn isn't bitter

or angry, but instead maintains a cheerful smile and a bright, witty demeanor. How does she remain so resilient? "First, you always figure somebody else has got it worse than you, and second, I think it's your responsibility as a person to keep going," she explains. When depression came along from time to time, she fought it off. Yoga and meditation help her cope with pain. She focuses her energy on cooking, gardening, painting, reading, writing, and activism, even traveling to Palestine as a peace activist in 2002.

She even had the energy and courage to return to school at age 57, with help from DVR. "I don't think you should stop learning until you're dead, and even then there might be a chance you could keep learning," Marilyn jokes. ●

*"It was a wonderful experience overall. I would definitely recommend anyone in my situation to go to DVR."*

## **Disability Helps Young Man Help Others**

Name: **Andy O'Riley**  
Place of Employment: **Community Intersections**  
Occupation: **Employment Services Manager**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **John Ferlin**  
Business/Employment Specialist: **Joanne Feenstra**  
Location: **Colorado Springs**

Andy O'Riley knows all too well that it can be difficult for those with disabilities to find good jobs. Muscular dystrophy, a disease present at birth, caused Andy to have scoliosis, chronic pain, right-side weakness, a speech impediment, and shortness in stature. At first glance, Andy may appear to be disabled, but those who interact with him soon realize that muscular dystrophy is only a small part of who he is: A highly intelligent, charming, funny, and hardworking young man.

Andy received academic achievement scholarships to attend Colorado College, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. He then spent several months looking for jobs in the non-profit arena and at law firms. Finding work proved to be tougher than expected. "I had a really tough time getting my foot in the door because of lack of experience and a disability," he says.

Andy heard about DVR through a family friend. He initially began working with Rehabilitation Counselor Andrew Winders, who placed him in a temporary part-

time position at a law office. Because Andy was still searching for a full-time job his case was never closed. When Winders took leave with an illness, Andy began working with Rehabilitation Counselor John Ferlin. The two identified a new vocational goal—Andy wanted to help individuals with disabilities like him—and embarked on some informational interviews.



**Andy O'Riley**

With a college degree Andy had much to offer employers. What he really needed was help with placement, so Ferlin requested the assistance of DVR Employment Specialist Joanne Feenstra. She contacted Community Intersections, a non-profit agency providing job placements and other services for individuals with disabilities. Andy began working part time in March 2005 as an employment consultant and within a month his employer recognized his talents and potential and hired him full-time with benefits. Within six months Andy was promoted to management and now manages a staff of four people, putting in 55 to 60 hours a week.

As Employment Services Manager, Andy spends about 60% of his time on management, including billing, meetings, plans, and paperwork, with the other

40% devoted to a caseload of 10 individuals. Andy's biggest concern is making sure his staff members have the tools, support, and needed resources to do their jobs well.

"It's challenging but it's fun," Andy says of his job, adding that working in the high-stress, low-pay field of human services requires a caring attitude, a listening ear, and a sense of humor. "There's really no substitute to having a job and doing something productive," he explains, emphasizing that just getting a job can trigger many positive changes for a person with a disability. "I don't have any trouble sleeping at night. I feel I do important work."

Today, former DVR client Andy is in the unique position of working collaboratively with DVR. He visits

the DVR office in Colorado Springs several times a week working with counselors on job placement for clients. His commitment to his job and to disabled individuals has made an impression on his former counselor. "He's doing the best of the five agencies we work with," Ferlin says.

Andy speaks highly of the practicality, commitment, and collaboration he sees among DVR counselors. He also believes Supervisor Diane Everett creates a positive environment for dealing with the challenges of working in human services, explaining that those workers can't help but internalize some of the problems of the people they serve. "They [DVR] have a high quality of people who can manage the difficulties of what they do," he says. ●

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## The SWAP Program Delivers

Name: **David Wolf**  
Place of Employment: **Bap Geon**  
Occupation: **Delivery Driver**  
SWAP Coordinator: **Kim Vossmer**  
Rehabilitation Counselor: **Anne Fishburn**  
Location: **Colorado Springs**

From the time David Wolf began working with the School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) in October 2005, he was a self-starter who actively looked for a job by filling out job applications and going to interviews. David was referred to SWAP after graduating from Wasson High School. As soon as DVR counselor Anne Fishburn approved David's eligibility, SWAP Coordinator Kim Vossmer began working with him.

The goal of SWAP is to help young adults transition from high school to the world of work by building the skills for lifelong successful employment, including how find a job of interest, write a resume, dress for success, interview, and follow-up. A high level of motivation is essential, which is why Vossmer considers David to be one of her most successful clients, "David is very proactive. He went out and tried to find himself a job."

To help David pinpoint a job that matched his interests and abilities, Vossmer spent a lot of time simply getting to know him. She learned that because of cognitive disabilities, it was difficult for him to understand social behaviors and he lacked strong social skills, preventing him from interviewing well. David also struggled to understand the limitations imposed by his disabilities, so Vossmer helped him set realistic employment goals. She discovered he really hoped to find a job allowing him to work with his love for cars and motorcycles.

David was particularly intrigued by an import auto



**David Wolf and Kim Vossmer**

parts store called Bap Geon within walking distance from his home. After an initial interview, General Manager Mike Widoie was very hesitant to hire David. Vossmer met with Widoie to advocate for David and arranged for Bap Geon to receive a stipend for the first 30 days of his employment. David was hired as a delivery driver in December 2005, but things did not go well. He was slow making deliveries and Widoie initially wanted to let him go. Vossmer arranged to ride with him for a day to see if she could figure out the problem. She discovered that David struggled to get from point A to B to C. After some map reading training and preparing each day using Mapquest, he quickly caught up to speed.

"When he first started, we couldn't send him out on more than one delivery at a time, but Kim dialed him in and he's become one of my better and more reliable drivers," Widoie says. "I am amazed at the progress he's made."

David now makes deliveries to car dealerships and auto repair shops all over the Colorado Springs area and even in Denver. He enjoys learning where car

dealerships are located and recommending good repair shops to his friends. He likes to joke with his co-workers and believes the job has helped his social skills tremendously.

Even though David is only 22 years old and does not smoke, he was diagnosed with lung cancer last year and it spread to his brain. He underwent radiation and other treatments, but continues to go to work every day and remains optimistic about the future. He hopes

to earn a raise at Bap Geon and stay working there "as long as I can." As for the future, David is a student at Pikes Peak Community College taking welding classes. "Down the road I want to be a welder and build custom choppers," he says with a smile. Although David's case is currently closed, he knows he can turn to SWAP and DVR for guidance when he finishes school and starts his welding career. "If he should need to use us again, we would certainly encourage him to come back," Vossmer says. ●

## TBI Helps Survivor Help Others

*The Colorado Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Trust Fund Program was created by Colorado statute in 2002 to improve the lives of state residents who have suffered traumatic brain injuries. In the fall of 2007, the TBI Program was relocated to DVR. The Trust Fund hires the Brain Injury Association of Colorado (BIAC) to provide application and eligibility services for individuals who have been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. Referrals are then made to Denver Options, a nonprofit agency that provides care coordination and services.*

Name: **Beth Kahmann, recipient of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Trust Fund**

Care Coordinator: **Alonda Martin, TBI**

Location: **Denver**

A few years ago, Beth Kahmann was a fourth-grade teacher with the Denver Public School system and a part-time massage therapist. She recently had won an award for writing education grants and was training to run her third marathon.

But everything changed on an evening in 2002. Kahmann was the victim of a hit and run car crash in which she sustained several serious injuries, including a traumatic brain injury and severe nerve damage on her right (dominant) side.

As is often the case with brain injuries, Kahmann had trouble understanding exactly what was wrong with her. For four years she suffered from speech problems, memory problems and cognitive difficulties, but because of her traumatic brain injury, she could not advocate for herself. Finally, she sought further medical help.

A cognitive therapist informed Kahmann about the TBI Trust Fund. She applied and was awarded one year of care coordination services from September 2006 to September 2007. At that time she met Alonda Martin, her care coordinator for the TBI Trust Fund Program. "She gave me a lot of hope," Kahmann says. "Alonda was one of the most supportive and empathetic people. She went out of her way."

Martin's case management services included helping Kahmann apply for Section 8 housing, making

calls that resulted in a scholarship for Kahmann to attend the Brain Injury Association of Colorado (BIAC) annual conference, and generally advocating for her. "The resources were extremely helpful," Kahmann says about the TBI Trust Fund Program.



**Beth Kahmann**

Hydrotherapy, psychotherapy and a lightweight tablet allowing her to type with her left hand were funded from \$2,000 available to Kahmann as items identified in her care plan to assist her recovery. In addition to applying her grant writing experience to brain injuries, Kahmann's dream is to create a documentary to help other traumatic brain injury survivors identify resources. She has discussed her ideas in-depth with a filmmaker and a writer with the intention of turning her dream into reality. Someday she hopes her documentary could be distributed not only in the state of Colorado, but also nationwide.

Although Kahmann has made tremendous progress working with therapists, she still lives with chronic pain, headaches, anxiety and extreme fatigue. DVR is now assisting Kahmann in pursuing a different career path involving grant work, consulting and filmmaking. "DVR can help me start a new career, a new life. I can take the time now to heal and learn new skills and talents," she says. Someday, she hopes to work with the general public and the TBI community to generate awareness and funding. ●



## DVR'S SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

### DVR's Teaching Program

“Personal Adjustment Training” (PAT) center-based program has added a new AT Specialist on staff, which will allow AT Specialist, Michael Bastien, to travel state-wide. Michael's increased availability makes evaluation and training more readily accessible and timely for DVR consumers across the state.

Staying with personnel updates, the center-based PAT program should have the “Client Services Coordinator” (CSC) position filled by the end of February. While the position has been in existence for some time, the face of the position will have a different look. In addition to typical center-based duties, the new staff will travel state-wide in an effort to provide DVR consumers and Colorado citizens first-hand information about blind services through DVR, as well as support potential PAT referrals, who historically may have been intimidated and uncertain about relocating to Denver for training.

Outside of the personnel perspective, the PAT center-based program will be developing an interactive environment with multiple uses. The environment will serve as a community presentation/exhibit space, an indoor mobility training ground, and provide work station simulation for blind and visually-impaired individuals.

One of the “Counselors for the Blind” (RCB) assumes a SWAP program—Jackie Geib joined forces with Sheridan High School SWAP staff. Jackie will continue to serve the DVR/SWAP eligible students, but will add her interest and contacts in the transition program to seek-out blind and visually-impaired students, who may be able to benefit from the collaborative efforts.

*“DVR has done an amazing job helping to place these kids in the community and helping them to lead more normal lives.”*

### Transition Services for Youth and Young Adults

For several decades, DVR has assisted youth with disabilities in making a successful transition from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, employment and independent living. To this end, DVR continues to operate a Youth Unit, responsible to assure that quality transition services are provided to Colorado's youth and young adults with disabilities. DVR operates on the premise that quality partnerships result in the best possible transition 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. A second DVR premise is that all counselors understand and successfully implement DVR's transition responsibilities. All DVR counselors receive regular transition training and technical assistance from the Youth Unit. Tools developed in the past year include a training kit, “Talking Transition,” which provides staff with the information, materials, tools and script needed to

successfully and consistently reach out and present to educators, families, youth and community providers.

DVR continues to work closely with numerous federal, state and local transition 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 at Denver and Health Sciences Center's WIN Partners, 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 numerous community-based agencies including Goodwill Industries, Easter Seals, and CP of Colorado.

In 2007, Colorado DVR was selected by RSA, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), and the U.S. Department of Education as one of three states in the nation to participate in an in-depth assessment of promising transition policies, practices, strategies and management that promote collaboration and improve transition services for youth with disabilities. The findings and recommendations from this in-depth, multi-year study will be used to inform and improve successful transition practices nationwide.

During the past year, DVR's School to Work Alliance Program (SWAP) continued to operate through 45 community-based sites, including newly implemented programs in Custer County and El Paso County. SWAP is the result of partnerships with CDE and more than 150 local school districts. Annually, these sites provide 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.

Last year, CDE and DVR joined forces to provide 1:1 site visits, technical assistance, training and mentoring for all SWAP sites, and to the majority of Colorado's Local Education Agencies (LEA). A mentoring program set up by



**(Left to right:) Mary Waterhouse, Sue Schierkolk, and Cheryl Carver from the Youth and Business Outreach Program**

these partners paired new SWAP transition providers with seasoned, successful providers. This allowed new providers an opportunity to network with, learn from and practice Colorado's promising and best transition practices. Training included Colorado's jointly funded DVR/CDE statewide meeting of more than 500 transition providers, including educators, DVR counselors, and SWAP staff; and statewide jointly-funded web-based training on marketing and job development for persons with disabilities.

DVR partnered with CDE, the Office of Workforce Development, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Colorado State Youth Council to hold the third annual Think Big Youth Development 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 youth and businesses in the state. During the Forum, the State Youth Council recognized and provided the opportunity for communities to showcase promising evidence-based workforce development practices for youth, including youth with disabilities.

Also 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 Youth Transition Grant. This endeavor was funded for four years by ODEP and is now sustained and supported financially by multiple

state partners. The purpose of this initiative is to improve transition outcomes for youth with disabilities through the use of state and local intermediaries, including local transition teams and youth councils. In-part through this grant, a comprehensive searchable database “Youthnet,” is now available statewide for youth, parents and practitioners to seek out services and supports for transitioning youth.

DVR continued involvement with WIN Partners, CDE, OWD and the SSA 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 National Governors Association’s (NGA) Policy Academy to Improve Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities. Colorado’s strategic plan for this Academy addressed the areas of: partner education and collaboration; data collection and sharing; and policy development. DVR partners included the Governor’s Office of Policy and Initiative, CDE, OWD, CDLE, CCC, WIN Partners, DPHE, CP of Colorado, Colorado Easter Seals and the Colorado Prevention Leadership Council (PLC). Through these partnerships, these entities were able to blend and braid resources and strategically plan activities, resulting in coordinated, multi-agency plans to improve outcomes for Colorado’s youth.

DVR continued to partner with community-based organizations. Examples included: braiding funds with Goodwill Industries of Denver, the Denver Zoological Foundation and three local school districts to offer youth with disabilities the opportunity to receive employment skills, work adjustment and the development of good work habits in a zoological setting; the transition of the High School High Tech program to CP of Colorado; and the development of a youth mentoring program with Goodwill Industries and Jefferson County School District.

Finally, ongoing collaboration continued between DVR and Colorado’s youth-related consortiums and advisory groups. DVR continued its involvement with the Colorado/Wyoming Consortium of Support Programs for Students with Disabilities. This Consortium maintains active participation from all Colorado public and private post-secondary institutions as well as DVR and CDE. The focus of the Consortium is collaborative provision of services to post-secondary students with disabilities. DVR continued as a member of the State Youth Council, which is responsible for providing policy and practice recommendations related to skill development and the economic success of youth, to the Workforce Development Council and the Governor of Colorado. DVR maintained membership on the Colorado System of Care Council, whose mission is to craft policies and strategies that support the social and emotional well-being of youth and families. Also, DVR became a member of the Colorado Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth, which has the goal of ending youth homelessness by improving the quality, availability, and accessibility of services for homeless and at-risk youth.

## **Business Enterprise Program**

Business Enterprise Program (BEP), mandated by the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, trains legally blind individuals and helps them establish, maintain, and manage food service locations in State and Federal government buildings and other facilities. The operations include large and small cafeterias, military dining halls, snack bars, convenience stores, and vending machine concessions in these buildings as well as 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. As of April 2007, 46 business enterprises were operating on Federal and State properties in Colorado; of these, 43 were managed by 28 blind operators and 3 were managed by Colorado’s Business Enterprise



Program. These sites serve 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. The Program receives no general fund moneys and is funded from an allotment of Federal funds authorized by Title I of the United States Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 110), cash funds, and cash funds exempt. One of the primary sources of the Program's cash fund is derived from the blind operators and their assessments. The blind business operators replenish inventory and supplies; hire, train, and pay their own personnel; and pay all related taxes and insurance. Blind operators are individual business entrepreneurs, using profits earned as their livelihood income.



**Colorado State Centennial Building, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver. One of BEP's newly remodeled sites managed by a blind business operator.**

## Independent Living Program

This fiscal year, Colorado's ten centers for independent living (CILs) took on the challenge of expanding services into unserved and underserved territory. New satellite offices in Montrose and Alamosa became hubs for rural communities, while a new Aurora office served a diverse urban crowd. Innovative outreach and service delivery models helped centers reach a few remote populations, but full state coverage will depend on growing partnerships with DVR and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

The Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL) took an active role in developing the new State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) that sets goals and objectives for the next three years. The SPIL calls for a Needs Assessment in the second year which will reveal locations throughout the state that may lack access to IL services. The assessment will also

address barriers to full community integration, and identify the services necessary for equal access.

Centers for independent living provide four core services mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended: advocacy, peer support, independent living skills training, and information and referral. Centers focus on other services to meet the needs of their local area and create integrated communities. CILs are consumer controlled and are required to have a staff and board of directors comprised by more than 50% of people with disabilities. Each center is a private non-profit organization. DVR is the designated state unit (DSU) for monitoring CIL compliance with state and federal rules. DVR and the CILs have many common goals and many consumers in common. We continue together to build a strong network that offers people with disabilities the tools they need to live independently.

*“DVR was the beginning of my journey of self-discovery.”*

## Older Individuals Who Are Blind

Our aging population wants, and expects, to remain active and live in their own homes regardless of encroaching disability. The Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program, funded by Title VII, Chapter 2, provides independent living services to individuals 55 years and older who are blind or visually impaired. Although low vision or blindness may make competitive employment difficult, there is no need for consumers to give up activities that keep them connected to our society. The OIB Program teaches skills and coping techniques that allow them to maintain independence and continue enjoying life.

The OIB Program's seven Colorado vendors served 756 individuals this year, and provided information and outreach to hundreds more. There were more home visits than in past years, as program providers have developed surprisingly

low-tech methods for making homes more accessible. The largest group of consumers in this program is women between the ages of 80 and 89 who have macular degeneration. There are many consumers between 55 and 80 years of age, and there are four individuals who are 100 years old or more. A number of consumers have more than one disability, the most frequent being hearing loss. Peer support groups dominate as the most frequently used service. There are about 50 OIB groups throughout the state.

The OIB Program is a part of the independent living network that receives oversight and monitoring from DVR. This year was the last in a three year grant cycle. Current vendors and interested parties were invited early in the fiscal year to participate in the development of program goals for the new cycle.

## Pilot Projects

This past year two new ways of delivering service to specific customer groups have matured. 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 window of opportunity for Colorado to look at service delivery options that might have broader applicability statewide.

The homelessness pilot project has involved 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, has worked with outreach workers in downtown Denver as well as doing his own outreach visits to homeless shelters and congregate meal sites. The challenge of this project in the past year has been the readiness of the referred clients. Our

agreement with the Denver project is that DVR receives customers with disabilities who are deemed ready to seek work. They must be stable enough to have an address, have addressed immediate needs, and be fully able to work with him to achieve their employment goals. In the coming year we will work with the Denver project on achieving success through appropriate referrals.



**Fort Collins DVR Office Staff**

Another opportunity to serve customers in an innovative way was developed through collaboration with the Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and DVR. DVR has placed six 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.

The goal was to see if VR counselors working closely with CCB staff and customers provide more successful employment outcomes for customers in less time than a counselor with a

general caseload. 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. The pilot project is showing that these assumptions are correct. The average time from application of a client to job placement and success is much lower. Job development is becoming a skill used more often by these counselors and with more success.

DVR is excited about these two new projects and the possibilities they bring regarding new ways to deliver service. Final evaluation of their success and future planning will occur in March 2008.

## Self-Employment Program

- According to the Small Business Administration, an estimated 22 million sole proprietorships exist in the United States—approximately 550,000 are located in Colorado.
- Citizens with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to be self-employed as non-disabled citizens in the United States.

At the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), we have a program dedicated to helping entrepreneurial individuals realize their goals and dreams. Our Self-Employment Program utilizes the skills of eighteen highly trained Rehabilitation Counselors for Entrepreneurship (RCEs), strategically located around the State of Colorado. These “RCEs” have specialized skills in the area of self-employment and participate in extensive and ongoing continuing education training designed to help them assist our diverse clientele. In addition to our highly trained staff, we have a vendor network of experienced professionals with finely honed business skills. These professionals are called upon to assist our entrepreneurial clientele with a wealth of expertise and training opportunities not found elsewhere.

On average, six new or existing businesses are approved for start up or retention assistance every month. While new business start-ups are predominant, the Division’s intervention assistance



**(Left to right:) Dan Legg, Self-Employment Coordinator; Sandy Pratt, Central Support Services Manager; and Joy Caine, Business Outreach Specialist**

for existing businesses is an approach that serves to expeditiously deliver services to business owners jeopardized by barriers related to disability.

This approach is best illustrated by our collaborative work with the Colorado AgrAbility Project, a partnership between Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and Easter Seals Colorado. AgrAbility locates farmers and ranchers at risk of losing their careers in agriculture due to injury or disability. Through DVR financial assistance and support, farmers and ranchers obtain equipment adaptations or other adaptive devices that help them sustain their work.

The Division’s Self-Employment Program partners with the Colorado Small Business



Development Center (SBDC) Network, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade and a myriad of other similarly charged organizations, each of whom are dedicated to the goal of preparing entrepreneurs to succeed in today's tricky and sometimes brutal business environment.

**Joe Hintz, Rehabilitation Counselor and Self Employment Specialist**

## Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program

The Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides specialized services to individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to assist them in achieving vocational success. Support services provided through DVR address the unique communication and cultural aspects of Deafness that are required to ensure the full and active participation of customers in the rehabilitation process. DVR counselors that are Deaf or fluent in American Sign Language are staffed in appropriate offices throughout Colorado. Their knowledge of deafness and ability to facilitate effective, culturally-sensitive communication is vital to the collaborative and highly interactive vocational rehabilitation process.

DVR continuously strives to project forward through development and positive change. Direct input from DVR customers is essential to an improved rehabilitation process. As such, DVR is partnering with its State Rehabilitation Council to conduct focus groups that will solicit the views of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and receiving VR support services. Recommendations will be made for process changes that may lead to increased levels of effective service provision and customer satisfaction. Factors that are continually reviewed for quality assurance include the following: the quality of employment outcomes as they compare to non-deaf individuals, the length of time required to achieve employment outcomes, the sufficiency of interpreting services available, the quality of services for individuals with dual diagnosis, and the prevalence of counselors fluent

in American Sign Language versus the need in various areas of the state.

DVR continues to keep current with technological advancements and Assistive Technology that promote communicative independence and self-reliance. DVR has recently begun the installation and utilization of Video Phone technology in several offices throughout the state, which have significantly enhanced communication and heightened the level of cultural immersion with the Deaf community. To further enhance communication, quality certified interpreters are made available to all individuals who require interpreting service. In fact, DVR field offices set aside a portion of the operating funds in order to ensure that DVR has adequate resources available for interpreting services, when needed.

Improved service delivery, advanced communication technology, and effective counseling practice have been key components to increasing the accessibility and support of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing throughout the State of Colorado. The commitment of DVR to the vocational success of persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is clearly reflected in the fulfilling experiences shared by DVR customers and the number of employment outcomes achieved this year. DVR looks forward with hopeful anticipation to the new fiscal year, sure to be filled with exciting improvements and deeper insight into effectively addressing the needs of the Deaf community.

## Statewide Independent Living Council

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) asserted its role in the independent living network this year by forming a functional collaboration of stakeholders to create a new State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The SILC, along with DVR, held four public hearings, conducted a full day session with the Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living (ACCIL), and brought together a dynamic SPIL committee. The result is a road map to drive the independent living network toward more choices for people with disabilities. The three-year plan has four major goals: strengthening the SILC infrastructure; educating public policy makers about disability issues; promoting community organizing and community participation; and supporting the centers for independent living. As part of the new plan, the SILC will soon have a

website that will give the disability community access to statewide IL information.

The outgoing SPIL goal for training CIL staff was completed this year. The SILC also provided financial support for CIL staff and SILC members to attend the Region 8 Independent Living conference in Casper, Wyoming. This was the first opportunity for many CIL staff to meet each other and recognize that they are part of a statewide network.

The SILC is mandated in Section 705 of the Rehab Act and members are appointed by the governor for three-year terms. Membership is cross-disability, ethnically, and geographically diverse. The Independent Living Program Coordinator serves as an ex-officio member and liaison between DVR and the SILC.



*(Left to right:) Sue Williams, Rehabilitation Counselor; Kerrie Hull, DVR Vendor; Robin Bauknecht, Rehabilitation Counselor; and Terry McGarry, Community Work Incentive Coordinator, CP of Colorado*



*Carol Feuerbacher, Policy and Quality Assurance Specialist*

*“Thank you  
DVR for  
helping me  
realize a  
dream.”*



*(Left to right:) Field Office Staff, John Halphen, Mary Bevirt, Madeline Vogt, Nancy von Schulz, and Meagan O’Nan*



# COMMENTS ABOUT THIS ANNUAL REPORT

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

Yes       No

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

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*"We welcome all comments on both the form and substance of this report."*

Name and address *(optional)*

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Colorado Department of Human Services  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
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Denver, Colorado 80203

**Phone:** 303-866-4150  
**Fax:** 303-866-4905



***This Report is based on  
the 2007 State Fiscal Year  
July 1, 2006– June 30, 2007***

***A special thank you to:***

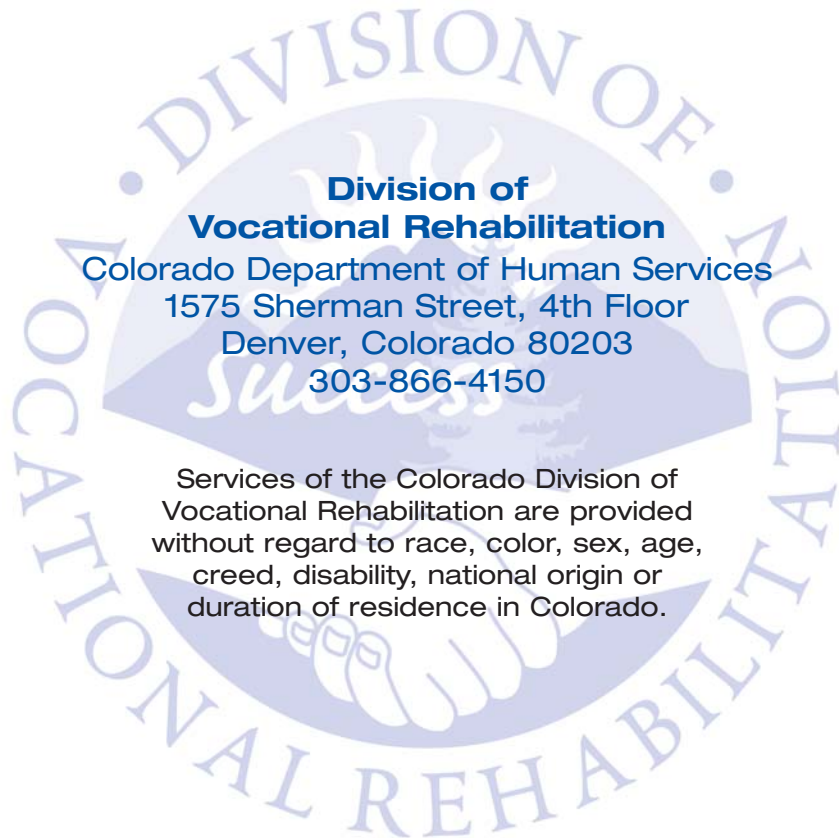
Olivier De Smedt, Rebecca Johnson,  
Gale Klingman, and Deb Ortlip

Jennifer Scilacci, Joanne Feenstra,  
John Ferlin, Ed Hodenpel,  
Sandy Sarniak, Marijean Levin,  
John DePaul, Alonda Martin,  
Jennifer Anderson, Joy Caine,  
and Anne Fishburn

Ken Schmidt, Sandy Pratt, Nancy Smith,  
Judy Neal, Sue Schierkolk, Dan Legg,  
Lee Carter, Larry Gehring,  
Karen Ferrington, Marilyn Morgan,  
Barb Bryant, Lindsey Pacheco,  
Sandy McCarthy, Karen Prince,  
and Tiffany Panza

The Colorado State Rehabilitation  
Council, The Home Depot,  
EchoStar Satellite LLC, and TJ Maxx

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