



Welcome to HireGround!

The Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency (OOD) produces this bimonthly newsletter expressly for our VR professional audience. We hope that the stories, best practices and practical tips we share will be of use and value to you as we continue our relationship and work with participants to achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through our mutual integrated services, partnerships and innovation. For questions, suggestions or comments on this newsletter, please contact elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov. Thank you for reading this information and sharing as appropriate.

Disability Community Opportunities/Announcements

Verizon Special-Needs Customer Support

In October 2014, Verizon Wireless opened the National Accessibility Service Center to address the special needs of customers with disabilities. Inquiry representatives address finding specific applications for customers depending on their needs, recommending devices, and providing instructions on how to use certain features, as well as reviewing the products and services available today for these customers and discussing the best pricing plans for customer needs.

The dedicated phone number for the center is 888-262-1999, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After these hours, the call will be handled by other customer service and technical support representatives available

6:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. (local). Customers can also utilize chat services found on www.VerizonWireless.com.

New Tool for Business E-Access

Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) is a federally-funded organization whose work centers on employment accessibility which is a primary initiative focusing on improving the accessibility of online application systems. PEAT has created its own tool for assessing an organization's accessibility in recruitment, employment, and policy for individuals with disabilities. See more at <http://www.PEATworks.org>. Features include an action guide for employers, informational articles, and "TechCheck," an interactive tool to help employers assess their technology accessibility practices, and to further find resources to help develop them.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Are We There Yet?.....	p. 3
Walgreens Finds its Groove.....	p. 4
A Day in the Life.....	p. 5
Was the Alarm the Charm?.....	p. 6
One Local Veteran's Take on Art & Recovery...	p. 7
Some Veterans Resources and Expressions...	p. 8
What's New on OhioMeansJobs.com?.....	p. 9
Iron Will in an Iron Town.....	p. 9
Steve Tribbie.....	p. 11
James Gears.....	p. 11
At Your Fingertips.....	p. 12
Calendar of Disability Community Events.....	p. 13

Good News for Commercial Drivers Who Are Deaf



The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) clarified a rule that states motor vehicle departments cannot require truckers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to speak English to qualify as drivers.

October was an important month for deaf and hard-of-hearing. On October 1, after repeated requests by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) clarified a rule that states motor vehicle departments cannot require truckers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to speak English to qualify as drivers. DOT conducted a roundtable meeting with DOT officials, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, the Commercial Vehicle Training Association, the National Association of Publicly Funded Truck Driving Schools, the NAD, and several truckers who are deaf including those from advocacy organizations such as Deaf Truckers United and Rights of Deaf Truckers. The meeting focused on identifying barriers and removing those barriers for truckers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, bringing everyone together to find solutions. Read more at: <http://www.nad.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=19690&qid=2864369>.

Scholarship and Learning Corner

The deadline for the Research Scholar Award is the first day of each month for first-time OSU undergraduates. This \$1,000 award is designed to generate early interest in undergraduate research and reduce barriers to faculty-mentored research opportunities for students

in all disciplines at all OSU campuses. Please visit: <https://connect1.osu.edu/page.redir?target=http%3a%2f%2fundergraduateresearch.osu.edu%2furop%2frsa%2findex.htm&srcid=52083&srctid=1&erid=56157447&trid=209b266e-9e43-449d-b80c-b334e3f6ae64>

The deadline for the Association of Blind Citizens Assistive Technology Fund is December 31. This Fund provides up to \$3,000 or 50% of the retail price of adaptive devices or software. Applicants must be legally blind and residents of the U.S.A., have a family income of less than \$50,000, and cash assets of less than \$20,000. Please visit: http://www.blindcitizens.org/assistive_tech.htm

The deadline for the Guild Scholar College Scholarship is January 15. This merit-based scholarship will provide up to \$15,000 to a U.S. blind/legally blind high school student to his/her choice college or university. Applications are accepted from students in their junior year, with scholarships awarded the following year. For more information: <http://www.guildhealth.org/Programs-And-Services-Overview/Awards-And-Scholarships/GuildScholar-College-Scholarships>

The deadline for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Scholarship is January 15. This scholarship will be awarded to a U.S. citizen/resident with MS while attending any year of undergraduate study or whose parents have MS. For more information, please visit: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Resources-Support/Insurance-and-Financial-Information/Financial-Resources/Scholarship-Program/Scholarship-Program-Information>

The deadline for the RISE Scholarship Foundation is February 15. This scholarship will be awarded to U.S. high school seniors with learning disabilities or ADHD. The GPA must be a 2.5 or higher to apply at <http://risescholarshipfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Application-Rise-final-2014-2015.pdf>

Continuing Education

Think College is hosting a series of webinars between now and May 2015 on topics related to postsecondary education for students with

intellectual disabilities. For more information and registration, please visit: <http://www.eventbrite.com/o/think-college-6524126425>

307,743 Titles and Counting!

Bookshare is a leading U.S. and international source for accessible digital books for anyone with physical or visual difficulties. Bookshare takes pride in releasing all bestsellers within a month of publication. Bookshare is free for qualified U.S. students, non-students pay a low fee. The website has been updated to include new features and information. Special access is available for readers who are deaf/blind, including a variety of Braille-ready files, print-to-audio, and fonts which can be magnified. Visit www.bookshare.org for more information.

Exciting Contests for Super-Tech Consumers!

The deadline for the Louis Braille Touch of Genius Prize is January 7, 2015. The winner can receive up to \$20,000. This contest is open to individuals, groups, or companies who have developed an innovative and accessible product in one of the following areas: professional software & applications; educational software & applications; gaming software; or applications that promote tactile & Braille learning and Braille or tactile-related hardware. For more information and to download the application, please visit http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/technology/tog/tog_prize or contact Ximena Ojopi at 617-266-6160, ext. 412.

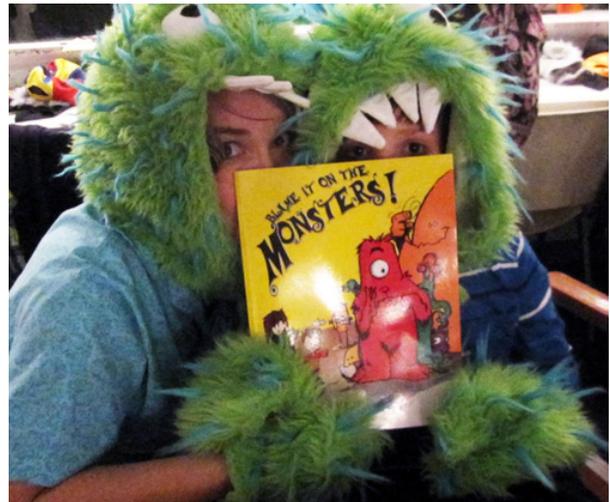
Submit your best work on improving accessibility to the web, mobiles, and wearables for people with and without disabilities to the International Web for All Conference at www.w4a.info. The conference will take place in Florence, Italy (May 18-20).

- Submission deadlines: January 23
- Notifications: March 4
- Intuit will award \$2,000 and \$1,000 to the best technical and communication papers
- The Paciello Group will award the winners of the Accessibility Challenge
- ABILITY Magazine will highlight the winners of awards in a special editorial

- IBM will provide travel grants to students with disabilities
- Google will sponsor six PwD students to participate in the Doctoral Student Consortium

Accessible Currency Update

In addition to the iBill Talking Money Identifier, (see HireGround last issue), the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) has developed the iNote application to allow scanning and hearing denominations of U.S. currency. The app is free and runs on all iPhones, 3g and newer iPads, and iPods. BEP also has an app, the Ideal Currency Identifier, for Android-based mobile devices, which can be downloaded from Google Play. For more information, go to www.bep.gov.



See "One Local Veteran's Take on Art and Recovery" for more information.

Are We There Yet? What Ohio Businesses Have To Say on Workplace Integration

By Elizabeth L. Sammons

Editor's note: In our last issue, you may recall reading a few comments from blindness and deafness focus groups about life in the workplace. As part of the research for the Workforce Integration Task Force (WIT) instated by Governor John Kasich last June, OOD and ODJFS also conducted surveys in the business community with about 150 respondents in all. Here is a mosaic of some notable comments from around Ohio:

“Vision and or hearing impaired employees would be a safety hazard to their co-workers and themselves.”

“Our agency has both in the past and currently employed individuals with a hearing or vision impairment. The degree of the disability as well as the specific job could make the difference in our ability to make accommodations.”

“We currently have two employees that are hearing impaired, and it is a struggle to ensure that when (we have) training, communication, etc., that they are receiving the information. Our facility also requires hearing protection in areas, so that is another factor. We would like more information on strategies to hire and accommodate people who are hearing and/or vision impaired.”

“I think employers should be more open minded to vision and hearing impaired people. There are systems available to help accommodate.”

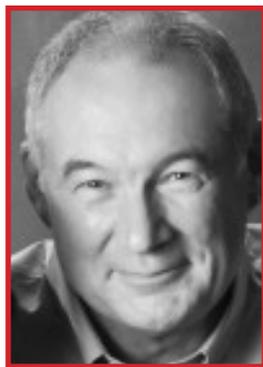
“We currently hire sight impaired agents and they are using both JAWS and ZoomText.”

“We have a man working for us who is 86 years old. He is completely deaf, and has worked here for more than 60 years. He runs printing presses and puts together job work, as well as performing various other tasks. He has no problems, and has been a total asset to our company.”

Walgreens Finds its Groove

By Elizabeth L. Sammons

What do you do when a worker goes wild loving purple? That’s one of many scenarios Randy Lewis, now-retired Walgreens Senior Vice-President of Supply Chain and Logistics, faced when a productive assembly line employee would break out into a joyful dance and a song every time he saw his favorite color coming down the belt. According to Mr. Lewis, “We haven’t found a disability yet that



Randy Lewis, former Senior Vice-President of Supply Chain and Logistics at Walgreens

prevents someone from doing the job.”

Qualifying for a job on paper versus performing are two distinct issues, Mr. Lewis stressed in his late-October talk with an audience of parents, VR professionals and a handful of businesses at Ohio University Lancaster. “Someone unable to multiply 60 x 10 may still perform at 150% production rate when it comes to spacial relations and packing.” With this awareness, Walgreens began an alternate hiring pipeline in establishing one of its major distribution centers. Applicants with disabilities could come in through a temp-to-hire program supported by a variety of community partners eager to place them. Within less than two years, a second center began the same model of hiring one of three employees with disabilities. Applicants came in through a coalition of disability and vocational organizations, with a shared training room on the premises to prepare job applicants for reality in the workplace. Normally, employees are given 60 days to meet production standards. These VR employees may take as long as they need to meet the goal as long as they are making progress. At that point, they may be hired on as permanent employees with benefits, Mr. Lewis explained.

Faced with issues of transportation and loss of benefits common to applicants with disabilities, Mr. Lewis and team still made the decision to hold to a full-time workload at the rural South Carolina location of their first disability hiring center. “We’re a business, not a charity, and we have shareholders to answer to,” Mr. Lewis said. On the other hand, he speculated that given half the absenteeism of other centers where disability hiring has not been stressed, plus meeting or exceeding all production goals, “We may be able to consider part-time positions for the future.” For most people working there, it is their first job. In the words of one of his top HR staff who has a significant disability, “Pay a living wage, and they’ll find a way to be there.” Many employees also appreciate the chance to get off SSI or SSDI benefits for better money, although such considerations still play a significant role for people with disabilities and their families.

Mr. Lewis understands the family dynamic all too well. "I never expected Austin to drive a car at age 17, let alone get a job," he reflected about his son, who has autism and did not speak until he was ten years old. "Now he's working full time and keeping secrets from his parents about his personal life, just like any other kid living at home his age." Since retirement, Mr. Lewis has published his book "No Greatness Without Goodness," www.nogwog.org, in which he explains "the story of how I got involved with disability hiring, why we did it as a company and how we were able to go from essentially zero to 10% of the workforce in five years." Resulting from Walgreen's lead, a number of other companies are adopting or considering this model. Already at 12% of its workforce in its distribution centers, Walgreens wants to incorporate more people with disabilities into its front-line stores as well by targeting to 10% of its entry-level positions with people with disabilities.

The defining principle is "managing in the gray," that is, thinking in terms of principles over rules, and making strategies to enable all employees to do their work well. This involves both managers and those they supervise. There is now no "us" and "them," Mr. Lewis explained. Thus, the answer to the dancer seeing purple came from the principle of focusing on the results and not style, says Lewis. "Everyone is different. We don't prohibit complaining at work and if it were a choice between having our employees complain or dance, we'd prefer dancing!"

Executives from many companies have visited the new-model Walgreens distribution centers. "We ask them after they've been on the line with someone, 'Did that person have a disability?' 'What disability?' Most of them say, 'No.' Then they learn that each employee they were paired with had something – perhaps explosive anger disorder, or multiple seizures, or a learning disability. They are stunned."

Sidebar:

See also: Walgreens proves the business case for hiring "disabled": <http://bloomparentingkidswithdisabilities.blogspot.com/2014/03/walgreen-proves-business-case-for.html>

More than three-quarters of employers that hire people with intellectual and developmental disabilities say those workers submit good or very good work according to a study from the Institute for Corporate Productivity. Many employers in the study acknowledged having initial misgivings about hiring workers with disabilities. Please visit: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/27/hiring-people-with-disabilities-isn-t-just-the-right-thing-to-do-it-s-good-for-business.html>

Vermont closed its last sheltered workshop in 2002. Today, the employment rate of people with developmental disabilities in the New England state is twice the national average. (Legislation was not involved, but lots of parental and inter-group collaboration was.) Please see: <http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2014/09/30/what-sheltered-workshops-close/19717/>

Business Sourcing Analysts (BSAs') - A Day in the Life...

By Elizabeth L. Sammons with BSA input

It is tempting to imagine work life for our Business Sourcing Analysts (BSA) as



BSAs' (from left to right) and their areas: Kelly Jordan, Southeast; Cynthia Crews, Southwest; Stephanie Branco, Northwest; and Susan Krejci, Northeast

glamorous or easy as they present on disability awareness, travel to meet willing partners in employment, or match ready-to-work "Status J" participants with open jobs. After being bounced from a job fair, Southwest Ohio BSA Cynthia Crews had to persuade her former colleagues in OhioMeansJobs that though she was not a job seeker herself, she needed to get in there to network with employers. She was finally granted permission to do so for the last half hour of the event. Similarly,

Northwest Ohio BSA Stephanie Branco landed at an address for a meeting and found herself in front of an abandoned building with broken windows. She called her contact, only to learn that she had been given the wrong street number, but with 26 counties in her district, she has to cut herself some slack.

Tracking down employers involves a mix of cold calls and personal contacts, such as local chambers of commerce. This is combined with lots of labor market and other research. Since their work began in January, Stephanie, Cynthia and Southeast Ohio BSA Kelly Jordan have learned that most employers fall into three categories. Most are willing to consider disability employment, but they don't feel the need to take the lead. A few employers, particularly with ties to the Business Leadership Network, strive for higher placement of OOD participants, especially federal contractors looking for higher numbers of employees with disabilities. Others just give lip service and never really go beyond political correctness.

The heart of the job is getting out in the community and talking about what OOD does and how this agency can be of service to the business community. Learning in depth what individual employers are looking for and what trends to expect plays a vital role as well. Given the choice, BSAs try to target "high-touch employers," that is, those with name recognition and a wide array of jobs available. No one, however, is off the potential contact list.

Not surprisingly, employers often note the stick-to-it attitude of many OOD participants. Having one successful hire often paves the way for more. Employers tend to think about same-disability hires for that second position. BSAs find the opportunity to talk about the variety of disabilities and skills through awareness trainings like Windmills that cut across corporate lines. Often this includes those not directly involved in the hiring process as well as HR screeners.

Most employers realize that not every disability hire will be successful. However, they can learn more about OOD candidates through contact with the BSAs and job developers than

are commonly known about off-the-street or on-the-net applicants. Matching interests and qualifications is the best way to pave the way for successful employment.

Feeding the BSA-VR partnership, a little advice on working with your area BSA:

- Counselors and job developers should send job leads to BSAs for follow-up. This results in saving the VR professional time, as well as allowing potential new openings for the business sourcing analysts.
- Similarly, job coaches or developers are welcome to invite BSAs to join them on job site visits, permitting greater networking and mutual support.
- The sooner participants are officially in "Status J," the wider a pool of candidates becomes for business matches, which is good for everyone.
- Finally, thorough field office reviews and follow-through on the hot leads from BSAs help things work in our Governor's words "at the speed of business."

Was the Alarm the Charm?

By BSA Kelly Jordan

Since I had tried for quite some time to get in front of folks with a certain company, I was excited to finally introduce them to the agency and engage in dialogue about working with people with disabilities. After completing the needed paperwork and getting my picture taken to pass through security, I was escorted up to the



BSA Kelly Jordan talks about her experience with reaching out to businesses and building relationships and future partnerships.

15th floor. I had just introduced myself to the Human Resources (HR) director and sat down in the conference room. As I was taking out my pad of paper and a pen, the alarm went

off. I gathered my purse, bag, and the state computer (there was no way I was going to let that out of my sight!) and we headed for the stairwell.

The Director indicated that every two years, this building does a mandatory drill and everyone must evacuate to their designated area: no elevators. Keep in mind that this is mid-afternoon, late August. This is a building with 30 floors. We all packed into the hot stairwell, stacked body to body, trying to get down the stairs. We were all loud and sweaty. We finally made our way to the lobby; down another set of stairs to the underground parking, up to a walkway, through an overhead walkway to an adjacent parking garage, up to the third level of the parking garage, and finally to the exact opposite corner, which was our designated spot. There I was, standing in a row of HR professionals lined up by a row of parked cars, sweat dripping from my forehead.

Well, I just pulled out my paper and pen and continued the meeting standing in the parking garage. We concluded our meeting before security ever released us to return to the building. The following week, the HR Director sent me a job opportunity lead looking for our qualified candidates - Success!

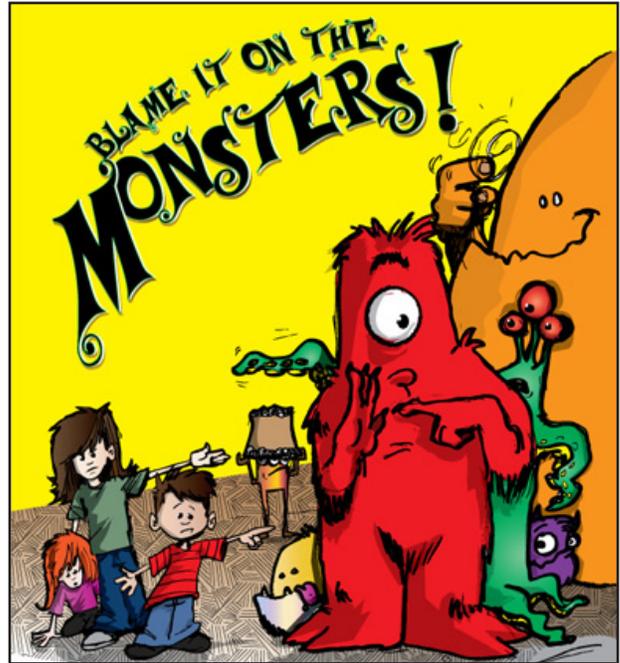
One Local Veteran's Take on Art and Recovery

Columbus' ADA and veterans coordinator Rick Isbell started with a love for art, cartoons and comics at a very early age.



Rick Isbell shares his love of art through the Veterans Writing Project.

"Ever since Junior High School, I have been able to talk people into letting me paint on their walls! I have had a mural in almost every school (including the military tech school) and a few Air Force bases around the world," he recalls.



"Blame It on the Monsters" is Rick Isbell's first published children's book.

"I joined the Air Force out of High School and traveled to many places and learned a whole lot. Europe was wonderful and opened my eyes to many great experiences. After the first Gulf War, I became very ill and had to have several operations. Since I was not able to perform the job I was trained for in the Air Force, I rehabilitated through art. I trained at the Columbus College of Art and Design after I healed and eventually graduated with a degree in Fine Arts-Illustration. Being an artist has helped me to be centered and find a way to use my talents that God gave me. Today, I work with Veterans by day and get to do artwork and graphics as a freelance artist by night.

"That is how I came into contact with the Veterans Writing Project that came to Columbus a few years back. The Writers Guild wanted to give veterans a way to share their experiences and find their voice through writing. Thus, began my journey to publishing my first children's book, "Blame it on the Monsters!"



Some Veterans Resources and Expressions

In honor of Veterans Day, we've put together some artistic outlets, plus opportunities you can share with family, friends and veterans.

Veterans in the Arts

Terra Firma weaves together the stories of three female veterans who served in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq in the early days of the War on Terror. After struggling for years with combat related PTSD, they have all found ways to heal the hidden wounds of war through farming. www.terrafirma.com/

The Welcome

The Welcome offers a rare and fiercely intimate view of a diverse group of veterans and family members, from Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq - all suffering from the effects of PTSD - who come together to participate in an unusual healing retreat. <http://www.thewelcomethemovie.com/>

Coming Back with Wes Moore

Coming Back with Wes Moore, a PBS series produced by former Army combat veteran of that name, tells the story of Wes Moore's search for answers to some of the most difficult questions related to returning from war. Moore's journey takes him into the personal lives of different soldiers as they attempt to reintegrate back into society, establish new identities, and for many, find a new mission. Each of the three episodes focuses on a different stage of coming home: <http://www.pbs.org/coming-back-with-wes-moore/about/>

From War to Home:

Through the Veteran's Lens explores the realities of military service through words and images from veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. <http://www.va.gov/FromWarToHome/>

When Johnny and Jane Come Marching

One author proposes that we welcome veterans back into our communities and listen to their stories, one-on-one. She provides guidelines for conducting these conversations in the book. <http://whenjohnnyandjanecomemarching.weebly.com/>

Veterans Resources

Ohio's online eligibility system for income-based programs has been updated to identify veterans. With the individual's consent, basic information is electronically forwarded to the Ohio Department of Veterans Services and the local County Veterans Service Office. The county office then contacts the individual to discuss all potential benefits, including health care coverage and employment opportunities. To visit the Ohio Benefits site, see: <https://www.benefits.ohio.gov/>.

This Disability & Veterans Community Resources Directory lists organizations available to provide assistance with training, recruiting, and hiring veterans and individuals with disabilities. <http://www.dol-esa.gov/errd/resources.html#pagecontent>

Learn more about resources for veterans pursuing post-secondary education including military grants. <http://www.accreditedonlinecolleges.org/resources/veteran-continuing-ed/>

Also see this Military Education Benefits & Programs Guide. <http://www.usnewsuniversitydirectory.com/military-education-resources/>

Unified Behavioral Health Center offers a centralized location for service members, veterans and their families to receive mental health care at no cost. <http://www.northshorelij.com/hospitals/location/unified-military-vet-location>

Note: All the below are available in HTML and printer-friendly PDF formats.

Ten Points for Veterans to Consider When Returning to Work with a Disability: <https://www.disability.gov/resource/ten-points-for-veterans-to-consider-when-returning-to-work-with-a-disability/>.

TenTips for Employers: Tapping into the Talents of Veterans with Disabilities: <https://adata.org/factsheet/ten-tips-employers-tapping-talents-veterans-disabilities>.

For families and other supporters: Ten Tips for Supporting a Veteran with a Disability Returning to Work: <https://adata.org/factsheet/ten-tips-families-supporting-veteran-disability-returning-work>.

ADA Resources for Veterans: <http://adasoutheast.org/solutions.php?idarea=Veterans>

What's new on OhioMeansJobs.com?

General updates: The homepage for OhioMeansJobs.com has been streamlined. Now you can easily access general services from the Wonderwall and on the new home pages for both Individuals and Employers.

Additional pages are now available and/or updated on the mobile site, including: Budget Calculator, Career Cluster Inventory, Occupational Search, and In-Demand Careers.

Now you can easily access Ohio's In-Demand

Careers by selecting the "Thumbs Up Icon." You'll see a list of career titles. Once you select a title, you are taken to the job search results page for that specific career.

Employer Updates: Note the new landing page with "Employer" focused on Wonderwall items. Some options are still under development such as the "Workforce Professionals" portal page.

Individual Updates: New landing page with individual focused Wonderwall items and easy access to additional portals, such as Veterans, K-12. Please Note: Some options are still under development such as the "Workforce Professionals" portal page.



Iron Will in an Iron Town: Some Thoughts from VRC Janet Brown

Nestled along the Ohio River near the elbow of West Virginia and Kentucky, Lawrence County harbors memories of iron markets on a world scale. Ironton is a town known for the Underground Railroad advocacy and by repute, the greatest checkers player of all time, Marion Tinsley. Its 5.7% unemployment rate, while not staggering by recession standards, still ranks well above Ohio's 5.1% average. Population of Ironton, the county seat, has gone down by one-third since the 1950's, given the shrinking of heavy industry like Alpha Portland Cement and Allied Signal, many residents still remain with a vengeance. "People from this area tend to feel they are part of the land, and their families are from here, and they have no intention of going anywhere else," explains Kentucky native and VR counselor, Janet Brown.

With her iron will exhibited while going through college as mother to three young children, plus 38 years of experience in vocational rehabilitation helping participants forge new



VR Counselor Janet Brown shares her advice on how to stay focused on providing VR services to consumers rather than non-employment related needs.

career paths, Janet's can-do attitude does much to shape successful outcomes: 29 in FFY 2013, 30 in FFY 2014. In addressing the shrinkage of industry that used to be the county's mainstay, she explains that disability is a strong influence on what the person can do. "What I try to do is assess the person's transferable skills, then look at those in line with their disability, and try to match that to particular jobs in the community or employers in the community who use that skill. Once a consumer has a job prospect and requires a service from OOD, like work uniforms, occupational license, etc. that consumer's need becomes a number one priority. I want to make sure I do everything to help the consumer get that prospective job."

One tendency Janet sees that can block case development involves over-emphasizing the social work side of being a counselor. **"Getting away from vocational rehabilitation and becoming distracted by non-employment-related needs;**

it's important to stay focused on the VR services making referrals out to other community resources to help the consumer link to other programs designed to meet medical and economic needs."

Janet faces the learned helplessness of some participants with a compassionate realism. "Because poverty is a significant issue in southeastern Ohio, some develop low expectations of themselves with high expectations for services from external resources such as community action groups, religious affiliates or government programs. Therefore, when they come to the desk and talk to you, they're looking at what you can do for them, not necessarily what they can do for themselves. It's important to engage the consumer early after explaining services, evaluating progress and follow-through, like (getting their own) medical records or transcripts and keeping appointments. Sometimes there's case closure at this point, because they're not willing to do the work." But Janet adds, "I send them to nice people. You don't want to set them up for a bad experience."

Along with close collaboration with the OhioMeansJobs, where Janet is embedded, and the give and take with some additional partners, she stands confident in her work. "As counselors we need each other to know who among us are good at what they do; for example, a counselor may stay on top of the correct forms that are always coming out, while another counselor is great with following the correct policies. Each office knows who those counselors are – we can't all keep up with the changes...find a job developer that can deliver, someone you know you can have staffing with and help direct them. I think that score card we're going to have for the job developers is going to be important."

On the other hand, Janet does not rest without checking at least weekly her own job leads online through broadcast media and anywhere else she hears about them to pass on to job developers. She also utilizes

post-employment services to help with some closures. "I successfully close cases out with the consumer's agreement, obtaining the closures the agency is in need of, but also, it helps the employed consumer, should something come up that needs to be dealt with on a one time basis. The counselor has captured the closure, plus, you're still able to work with the consumer on wrapping up the parts that there may be a need for, such as, a couple of mental health appointments, YAG laser following cataract surgery, driver's training, certifications needed, etc. Of course, all this must be in line with what was planned in the IPE earlier. "

Summing up, Janet emphasizes, **"The greatest asset needed is, you have to have a heart for this kind of work. Remember when you got your very first job out of college and how excited you were? Your self-esteem went up. This is how the consumers feel."**



Conflict of Interest: Insights from Ohio Fiscal Professional Steve Tribbie

From time to time, OOD identifies during an audit that an official or employee of a contractor participates personally in activities under the contract in which that individual holds a personal financial interest. For example, an employee of a county board who is working on an OOD contract could also have

partial ownership of the service provider hired as a subcontractor. Such an arrangement represents a conflict of interest for that official or employee. In these cases, OOD would ask the partner to remove that person from working under the contract



Steve Tribbie

and provide assurance that he/she would not have any undue influence on or oversight of the activities and expenditures taking place under that contract. This helps to ensure the objectivity of decision makers within the partner's organization, always keeping in mind what is in the best interest of our consumers.

OOD addresses this concern directly in the Standard Terms and Conditions of agency contracts and agreements, typically appearing as item 13 in the Standard Terms and Conditions under the heading "Conflicts of Interest and Ethics Compliance." Additional information about the ethical requirements underpinning agreements with OOD can be found at the Ohio Ethics Commission website: <http://www.ethics.ohio.gov/index.shtml>.

Wisdom from the Desk of James Gears: Proposal and Information Update Opportunities for Partners

OOD is renewing Miscellaneous Training and Addendum Services for calendar year 2015. These are services outside the scope of the defined VR, Medical, Dental, or Psychological Fee Schedules. Providers must submit a new form, even if not



James Gears

making any changes from 2014. New rates will be effective January 1, 2015 through end of calendar year. Providers may still include programs later in 2015 through the Provider Management Program (PMP). For current renewals, providers must submit information by December 19 on the Word document that was emailed November 19.

Miscellaneous Training proposals should be between 20 and 60 hours and include a summary of staff qualifications and a training calendar. OOD will accept proposals in the following areas: **Computer Skills; Customer Service; Data Entry; Food Service (includes Food Preparation/Dishwashing); Home Health & STNA; Janitorial Skills; Maintenance; Medical Office; Retail (includes Cash Register); and Warehouse/Forklift.**

Provider Management Program (PMP)

OOD and the Department of Developmental Disabilities continue progress on completing the Provider Management Program (PMP) with expected deployment in January, 2015. Providers will be notified and offered training on how to use the new system, where providers can change their contact information, counties of services, and add or remove VR services. The Provider Search will improve opportunities for VR staff and consumers to access information on partner organizations by county, service, and name.

Soon providers will receive an individual email with current provider information that VR has in the database, with changes welcome until December 19. If information changes after the initial validation, providers can make changes after the PMP system goes live. For any questions, please feel free to contact crpvendor@ood.ohio.gov.

At Your Fingertips: (A Few Additional Resources and Features)

While historically Ohio government has lagged far behind the 15% minority business contract goal, it's taking steps to make the process of filing as a small business owner easier:

http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2013/02/ohio_seeking_to_increase_the_n.html

See this newly reorganized Youth to Work Coalition website, to link resources for work-based learning experiences for youth with disabilities. The resources are organized across eight categories: (1) career exploration, (2) job shadowing, (3) job sampling, (4) service learning, (5) internships, (6) apprenticeships, (7) paid employment, and (8) mentoring. Within each category, resources are organized for (1) schools, (2) businesses; (3) youth service professionals, (4) families, and (5) youth with disabilities. <http://www.nsttac.org/ytw/home>

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the US Business Leadership Network® are pleased to announce a pilot launch of the Disability Equality Index SM (DEISM). The DEISM is a national transparent benchmarking tool that will offer major businesses the opportunity to receive an objective score on disability inclusion policies and practices and identify avenues for continued improvement. The tool can help build a company's reputation as an employer of choice, which could advance talent acquisition. DEISM will also provide useful information to people with disabilities. Learn more at: http://power.aapd.com/site/R?i=or1ZfIPKVMZ28IF2wtdv_g and http://usbln.org/pdf-docs/2013_USBLN_DEI_FAQs.pdf

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce just hosted its second corporate disability summit with the US Business Leadership Network®; offering a new report on specific strategies for businesses to recruit and retain individuals with disabilities: <https://www.uschamber.com/leading-practices-disability-inclusion-0>

LINCS now offers 18 online, no-cost, self-paced courses for adult education practitioners. Topics include Building Strategic Partnerships, Developing Effective Bridge Programs, Designing Contextualized Instruction, Integrating Career Counseling/ Planning, and Engaging Employers in Adult Career Pathways: <http://lincs.ed.gov/courses>

Calendar of Disability Community Events

April 13-14: **OSU's Multiple Perspectives Conference**. A call for proposals has been issued; deadline January 5: <http://ada.osu.edu/conferences/2015Conf/callforproposals2015.html>

Graduate and undergraduate students are also invited to submit: <http://ada.osu.edu/conferences/2015Conf/callforstudentproposals2015.html>

February 17: **Global Access (faith-based) conference** from Joni and Friends, Westlake Village, CA: <http://globalaccessconference.org/>

Thanks, so long, and what's up next?

I want to thank each person who wrote or was interviewed for these articles, all of whom voluntarily gave their time and wisdom. If you have suggestions, a success story or best practice from your work, please email Elizabeth L. Sammons, HireGround Coordinator at: Elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov.

Elizabeth L. Sammons
HireGround Coordinator

Interviewees, designers and authors:

Mary Armstead
Morgan Bleich-Lee
Stephanie Branco
Janet Brown
Cynthia Crews
Donna Foster
Jim Gears
Richard A. Isbell
Kelly Jordan
Diane Koren
Brigid Krane with logo design
Randy Lewis
Steve Tribbie