

Access Success — the Bigger Picture



**Illinois Department of Human Services
Division of Rehabilitation Services**

Rod. R. Blagojevich, *Governor*
Carol L. Adams, Ph.D., *Secretary*

State Rehabilitation Council Establishment

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is established by the Rehabilitation Act to advise the Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) in matters concerning individuals with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the provision of rehabilitation services.

Function

The function of SRC is to provide true customer input into the current and future VR process. The Council's federal mandates include:

Review, analyze, and advise DRS regarding its performance

Advise and assist in the development of the State Plan for VR services

Review and evaluate customer satisfaction

Coordinate activities with other councils

Identify, jointly develop, and review VR goals and priorities

Jointly select Impartial Hearing Officers with DRS

Membership

SRC members are appointed by

the Governor with the majority having a disability. Membership includes representatives from:

- Disability and Advocacy Organizations
 - Bill Bogdan
 - Edward Bannister
 - David Dailey
 - Kristin Sensor
 - Pamela Heavens
 - Joyce Grangent
 - Marbella Marsh
 - Christopher Ware
- Business, Industry, and Labor
 - Annette Grove
 - Awaiting Appointment
 - Awaiting Appointment
 - Awaiting Appointment
- Community Rehabilitation Service Providers
 - James Wilkerson
- Client Assistance Program
 - Cathy Meadows
- Secondary or Higher Education
 - Mary Rogers
 - John Trach, Ph.D.
 - Thomas Upton, Ph.D.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
 - Henrietta Battle
- Current or Former Customer of VR Services
 - Brian Johnson
- Parent Training Information Centers
 - Myra Christian
- State Board of Education
 - Susan Walter
- State Workforce Investment Board
 - Awaiting Appointment
- Blind Services Planning Council
 - Greg Polman
- Statewide Independent Living Council
 - Tony Arellano
- Director of DRS
 - Robert F. Kilbury, Rh.D.

As chair of the **State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**, it is a privilege to present the **Illinois Department of Human Services', Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS)** Annual Report for FY 2008. In a time of much economic uncertainty, the agency and SRC was faced with many challenges and continued to provide a wide array of programs and services to assist individuals with disabilities to **Access Success!**

I am particularly proud of the work the council has performed to cultivate and strengthen the partnership with DRS and stakeholders to ensure the tenants of World Class Customer Service and Informed Customer Choice remain at the forefront of providing Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs and services to individuals with disabilities in Illinois.

The council's leadership reconstituted standing committees, developed value and mission statements, and established measurable strategic goals and outcomes. This framework provided guidance and enabled members to participate in the rules process, select hearing officers that review customer case appeals, attend public hearings, and present significant input for inclusion in the State Plan for VR services.

To assist DRS in achieving their mission and solicit customer input, the SRC disseminated information regarding their purpose and function, held quarterly public meetings, participated in the Annual Disability Rights Conference and Independent Living Expo, and meets monthly with the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) to share promising practices.

The SRC members and I look forward to the coming year and would like to thank the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), DHS/DRS, Congressional Delegation, the General Assembly, the Governor and consumers for their continued support to ensure that individuals with disabilities have **Access to Success!**



Greg Polman
 Chair
 State Rehabilitation Council

For More Information Contact: 217-782-2280 (Voice) 866-263-1754 (TTY) 217-785-5319 (FAX) Email: dhs.src@illinois.gov

DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Mission Statement forms the basis for access and success. Defining and measuring access and success at any level offer challenge and potential for growth. While we want to be at the top of our game at all times, we must first define what being at the "top" means to us.

DRS has done that--we accept nothing short of excellence. We are passionate about getting services to Illinois citizens with disabilities. We persevere when we face obstacles and hardship as do they. In short, we review the past, recognize the present, and prepare for the future. DRS has a reputation for planning, for attending to individual needs, for recognizing and encouraging talent, and for facilitating the development and implementation of customized services.

We know that every person has the potential to be creative, to be resourceful, and to **Access Success**. Average skills will get us to the middle but focused skills and an unyielding pursuit toward peerless accomplishment will get us to the TOP.

There is no "magic" in this commitment to personal best. It is thinking toward the bigger picture, striving for personal successes, focusing on customer needs, and then accessing success. It is just who DRS is, and it is definitely how we want to be recognized.

This annual report gives testimony to our fortitude. We access success each time we assist a customer in creating a future vision, in developing competencies, and in taking effective action toward desired results. It is accessing success with an eye toward exceptional achievement that we continue to be grounded and pledged to the work that DRS does best--serving Illinois citizens with disabilities. This past year proved to be a year of challenge, a year of growth. This New Year 2009 will bring new and boundless possibilities as we continue to **Access Success**.



Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
 Secretary
 Illinois Department of Human Services



Robert F. Kilbury, Rh.D.
 Director
 Division of Rehabilitation Services





- Illinois continues to be recognized as a national leader in VR with 29,093 DRS customers entering competitive employment in the past five years.
- VR customers who became employed in FY 2008 can expect to earn a total of \$59.8 million more in the next year.
- DRS served 36,858 people through the Home Services Program in FY 2008.
- More than 1,450 customers have moved from nursing homes back into the community through the Community Reintegration Program.
- DRS served 19,993 students with disabilities in FY 2008.
- The number of Hispanic/Latino customers receiving home services increased 102 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2008.

DHS' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities.

DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.

World Class Customer Service

What does it mean to be a World Class Customer Service Agency? In short, it is the ability to view customer service as an agency responsibility where ownership belongs to all employees and is realized within a team-based structure. At Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), we face more and different challenges each year, not the least of which is recognition that the expectations of the customers we serve continues to rise. Some might see these challenges as obstacles, but DRS, who has made a commitment to World Class Customer Service, sees them as opportunities to differentiate between acceptable customer service and exemplary customer service—a mechanism to the bigger picture of **Access Success**.

Success is based on viewing activities and commitment across the entire organization as well as identifying at the functional level how each activity impacts progress. At the very basis of this focus is an understanding of the customer's anticipated needs and expectations in order to ensure that all services support the individualized activities to deliver quality services. We **Access Success** each time we act on customer needs, assume partnership in customer excellence, and accept accountability for customer performance and satisfaction.

The World Class Customer Service "journey" was initiated at DRS in 1999. It continues to the present with a deep commitment and an expectation to settle for nothing less than excellence. DRS takes pride in this initiative; it has served the Agency well. That commitment is at the heart of the bigger picture—**Access Success**—for ourselves, for our agency, and for the customers we serve.

What We Do

Vocational Rehabilitation Services - We help individuals with disabilities prepare for and find quality employment that pays a living wage and offers opportunities for advancement. Our staff offers services in 46 field offices located throughout the state. Services include: evaluation, guidance and counseling, job development, job placement, and follow-up services to ensure that individuals remain on the job.

Home Services Program - We provide services to individuals with significant disabilities so they can remain in their homes and live as independently as possible. Through home services, individuals have the opportunity to live self-directed lives, functioning as active members of their communities and retaining control over the services they receive.

Bureau of Blind Services - We assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in rediscovering their independence and freedom. We work with our customers to help them find and maintain employment as well as achieve their education, training, and independent living goals.

Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing - We help individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened, or Deafblind find employment, attend education and training programs, and learn about other community resources.

Services for Individuals with Disabilities who are Hispanic/Latino - We help Hispanic/Latino individuals with disabilities find employment, apply for Home Services programs, and learn about other community services. We also have a special program that serves migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities and their families.

Independent Living - We help individuals with disabilities make informed choices by funding Centers for Independent Living (CILs). These CILs offer advocacy, training, direct services, referrals, and information to individuals with disabilities and their families.

Educational Services - We operate three residential schools for children with disabilities: the Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville, the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired in Jacksonville, and the Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Roosevelt in Chicago. We train parents in planning, advocacy and identifying resources for their children with disabilities. We offer resource centers and play libraries that loan adaptive toys to families of children with special needs. Our staff also works with high school students with disabilities to help them transition from school to work.

Disability Determination Services - We determine the eligibility of individuals to receive benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Client Assistance Program - Our Client Assistance Program (CAP) helps individuals with disabilities who have questions or a problem with DRS services.



Access Success

Mission

DHS' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.

Vision

Improving the independence of our customers is our only reason for existing. We realize that the skills and abilities of our front-line staff are the keys to our success. Embracing, listening to and collaborating with our community partners will sustain our success.

DRS will be a customer-driven organization, with all major decisions based on the needs of our customers. Our staff will be informed and valued, pursuing lifelong learning and striving to improve their professional skills.

We will create an environment where customers and staff work

in partnership, where customers enjoy working with staff, and staff look forward to coming to work. Finally, we envision an agency where customers feel confident that their goals will be reached.

Values

- We value DRS as a workplace that promotes, supports, recognizes and invests in the importance of having a culturally diverse staff with skills and knowledge, to respectfully provide services of the highest quality to all of our customers.
- We value equal participation in society by persons with disabilities.
- We value situations in which the individual with a disability gets needed service.
- We value an accessible environment.
- We value being responsive to the needs and concerns of customers.
- We value the right of all DRS customers to choose services that will enable them to work and live independently in their communities.
- We value community integration and the customer's right to live in the least restrictive environment.
- We value life-long learning for our staff and are committed to providing necessary training to improve their professional skills.
- We value staff who are creative, well-trained, efficient and knowledgeable about disability, developing careers for customers and the use of assistive technology.

The theme of the DRS 2008 Annual Report (2009 calendar) is **Access Success – The Bigger Picture**. The facts, figures, statistics, and stories that are outlined in these pages exemplify the work that DRS does. There are hundreds of stories that could have been told; we just touch the surface and proudly give the reader a “glance” at the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Daniel Jaquez Auditor

“I come from humble beginnings,” says Daniel J. “When my parents left Mexico, neither of them had a high school education. They came here and worked hard. My Dad earned his GED while working full time. My parents taught all three of their children that education and hard work are the way to success. Now, we are all college graduates with promising jobs.” For Daniel, who is employed at Ernst and Young LLP as an auditor in the Technology and Security Services Department, **Accessing Success** meant honoring his parents by modeling the hard work that defined their lives.

At nine years of age, Daniel was involved in a bicycle accident. As a result, he incurred a traumatic brain injury which impacted his mobility and cognitive skills. In addition, he has a mild hearing loss. Although his life changed, even at that young age Daniel focused on his strengths and was able to overcome a multitude of barriers. He notes that the most

difficult part for him was children making fun of him because he was “different.” In retrospect, this laid a foundation to building self-confidence and to developing the fortitude to persevere and achieve his potential.

Daniel earned an Associates Degree at Waubensee Community College. That same fortitude and work ethic instilled early in life once again came forward. Daniel volunteered as a tutor, went on to Northern Illinois University for his BS in Operations Management Systems with a minor in Spanish, and he continues to seek a second BS in Accounting at Franklin University. He plans to sit for the Certified Information Systems Auditor exam later this year.

Daniel states that “Ernst and Young is a great company to work for. I would love to make this a career, maybe even make partner. That would mean a lot of hard work and a lot of hours, but that’s okay. I’m used to it.”



Photo by DAVID FARBER



“DRS was available to provide support for his college education, but it is Daniel’s drive and determination that keep him moving forward.”

Beatrice Mwinzi

Photo by DAVID FARBER



During 2008, DHS/DRS continued the initiative to create a workforce within state government that mirrors our society. The Disability Hiring Initiative focuses on increasing the number of qualified applicants with disabilities hired in DHS. This extraordinary collaborative effort is supported by a workgroup of representatives from the DHS Divisions of Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Community Health and Prevention; the DHS Office of Human Resources, Bureau of Training and Development and Compliance Access, and Workplace Safety; Central Management Services; the Illinois Department of Human Rights, and the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission.

For more information about this initiative, contact:
Dan Dickerson
Disability Recruitment Program
217-782-9842 (Voice);
1-866-211-4895 (TTY) or
Dan.Dickerson@illinois.gov

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) works in a cooperative effort with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) throughout Illinois. This partnership allows DRS to offer greater choice and flexibility to persons with disabilities in order that they can gain skills, experience, and training in their chosen field. The focus is to access success in the workplace. Not all customers are referred to CRPs. For those customers that need the services of a CRP, the goal is that they will become independent and achieve community-based employment.



"Assisting individuals with disabilities secure employment is one of the most rewarding things we do at Sertoma Centre. When an individual takes a position at Sertoma it excites me and is evidence that we 'walk the talk' of our mission."

Gus van den Brink
Executive Director
Sertoma Centre

Timothy Gomez Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee

The diversity created by putting highly qualified workers with disabilities into state jobs benefits the State of Illinois in many ways: The citizens of Illinois benefit from the experiences and expertise of a more diverse workforce. Workers with disabilities are able to participate fully and equally on the job, as consumers, and as taxpayers. Illinois works best when everyone who wants to work is given the opportunity to contribute.



Photo by DAVID FARBER

Not only does Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS) "talk the talk," DRS also "walks the walk." What better testimony to **Access Success!** Timothy Gomez was recently hired by DRS as a Rehabilitation Counselor Trainee in the Elgin office. He states, "I have gotten so much help and feel so grateful for all I have received and to the people who helped me. Now, I can use all that I have learned and all the benefits I have gotten to help others. I know I can inspire and motivate our customers to reach for the stars and know that they can achieve all they dream about becoming."



Photo by DAVID FARBER

"I continue to be very excited about the Department of Human Services' effort to create a workforce that mirrors the community it serves. Recognizing the value of employees with disabilities, DHS created the Disability Hiring Initiative in August 2006 to address the underutilization of this valuable population. I am proud to be a part of and head that initiative." He goes on to say, "The old practices of matching a job with a disability is being replaced with the practice of matching a person (disability or not) with a position."

Dan Dickerson

Lora Thomas Employment Services Manager

Lora Thomas had a successful career working as a legal secretary for a Chicago law firm. She was making a good salary, loved her job, and looked forward to going to work and the challenges her job offered her each day. However, in 1991 that all changed. Lora developed a spinal condition known as spondylolithesis. She was in much pain, had to go through therapy, and finally had to undergo a spinal fusion. Lora had to leave her job. Ultimately, she applied for and was awarded Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). She described being on disability as "very demoralizing."



An associate suggested that Lora call DRS. Although she notes she was apprehensive, she followed through. That, she notes, is when her life began to change for the better. She was offered options, one of which was to go back to school. Her road to **Access Success** was mapped out. Lora and her counselor discussed a college major. With her background in law, a degree in human resources would "open up some doors," so...Lora completed a Master's Degree in Human Resources Management and Development.

Through VR Counselor Virginia Reynolds, Lora was referred to Sertoma where she learned about an opening as an Employment Services Manager. She applied for and got the job and notes that her organizational skills from her previous job, as well as her degree, have helped her to do the job duties. Regarding DRS, Lora states that, "It is a needed entity of the State. It has a lot of services that people need to know about. I was able to **Access Success** because I would not have gone back to school to get my graduate degree. My job gives me a good feeling."



Access Success

DRS' federally-funded Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) offers benefits planning services to individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and are interested in working.

Since its inception in October 2006, the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program has provided direct services to over 2,220 customers and provided intensive case management services to over 500 working beneficiaries. Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) encourage individuals to explore employment and provide information that enables them to anticipate and plan for changes that may occur in their benefits when they go to work. Staff also identify work incentives and help customers successfully transition to employment. Since its inception in 2006 WIPA has provided:

- Direct outreach to over 2,220 customers.
- Intensive case management to over 500 working beneficiaries.
- A Newsletter that is circulated to over 2,000 customers per month.

For more information on the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program call: 312/814-8660 or 800/807-6962 (Voice) 800/524-9904 (TTY)

DRS' Bureau of Disability Determination Services (BDDS) determines the eligibility of Illinois citizens to receive benefits for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The BDDS has been a national leader in providing quality customer service in an expeditious manner, making the correct decision as early in the process as possible. The BDDS has continued to increase its use of technology in order to request and receive medical evidence electronically.

- BDDS processed 142,094 cases in FY 2008.

Elizabeth A. Emmons Administrative Assistant

Accessing Success sometimes involves a team approach, and that was certainly true for Elizabeth A. Emmons. Fibromyalgia had impacted Elizabeth's ability to work. She applied for and received Supplemental Security Income (SSI). As many individuals are, Liz was uncertain and concerned as to how her SSI benefits would be affected should she go to work. Through the joint efforts of Ron Mulvaney of the DHS/DRS Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Program, who completed a Benefits Analysis, and the Mattoon Rehabilitation Services Office, who offered vocational counseling and guidance, Elizabeth was able to go to work at Blakeslee Law Office in Lawrenceville. Her job is Administrative Assistant. Yes, Liz had obstacles to overcome, both physically and with her benefits. With the help of her physician, the Community Work Incentive Coordinator and the VR counselor, Liz is able to go to work each day. Her future? She hopes to one day pursue a paralegal degree.



"It's great to see Elizabeth enthusiastic about new goals; it is rewarding for me to work with her!"

Ron Mulvaney

Laura Wise Office Support Personnel

From beginning to end, Laura Wise was able to **Access Success** on many levels. One of those levels included informed choice regarding going to work or continuing on SSI. With no work experience and having struggled to receive benefits, Laura's dilemma was how work would affect her benefits. Through the assistance of DRS and Community Work Incentive Coordinators Janice Miller and Kaylee Raymond, Laura was provided with a benefits analysis to help her understand the impact that her earnings would have on her federal and state benefits.



Today, Laura continues to work in a contract position through DRS where she has been employed for over one year. She continues to receive Medicaid coverage under the Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities program. Laura states, "Having the benefits analysis helped me feel secure in making the decision to go to work and be where I'm at today."



"This success was made possible through Laura's determination, her family support and the DRS counselor and WIPA program working together."

Janice Miller and Kaylee Raymond



Access Success

Illinois continues to be recognized as a national leader in VR with 29,093 DRS customers entering competitive employment in the last five years.

- Each VR customer who became employed in FY 2008 is expected to earn approximately **\$12,033** more per year after receiving DRS services.
- Based on this estimate, DRS customers who became employed in FY 2008 can expect to earn **\$59.8 million** more in the next year than their level of earnings prior to coming to DRS.
- The tax revenue generated by this \$59.8 million will be approximately **\$6.8 million** per year.
- The average hourly wage of VR customers increased 17.1 percent since 2003, from an average of \$8.36 per hour in FY 2003 to \$9.79 in FY 2008.
- The percentage of DRS customers who receive employer-provided health insurance is at 27 percent in FY 2008.

As part of DRS' effort to assist customers who receive home services in obtaining quality employment, DRS served 1,310 customers in both the VR and Home Services programs in FY 2008.

Dave Ades Respiratory Therapist

"Hey, there's Dave"! That's a familiar sound through the halls of Children's Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. To his employer, he's Dave Ades; to the kids, he's the guy who was there for them in a time of crisis; to Dave, the kids are the reason he keeps coming back.



At the age of 47, Dave learned he had been diagnosed with Alpha 1 Antitripsin, an enzyme deficiency that impacts the lungs and liver functioning. He underwent a liver transplant which left him only at 65 percent lung capacity. The vocational impact: he was unable to return to his job as a sales distributor of heavy equipment.

Dave began receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), but he knew he wanted more for his family. A friend referred him to DRS. Dave notes, "I knew I couldn't fight the fight myself and needed direction in order to restore my life and support my family." He contacted the Belleville office and was connected with VR Counselor, Kathy Murphy.

It was Dave's wife who suggested he draw upon his own medical experiences to help others who might be going through the same kinds of issues and problems. What an idea to **Access Success** from others benefitting from your personal experiences! Dave met with Kathy. Together they outlined a vocational plan, and Dave began the Respiratory Therapy Program at Kaskaskia College. Dave explains, "From the first visit, Kathy took the time to

explain DRS services and listen to my needs. The services were seamless. I became employed immediately after graduation and am now off of Social Security."

Accessing DRS services, as well as his own personal experience, has equipped Dave to work with children and their families. "When the children and parents realize I've been through some of the same services, it immediately connects us." And, as the children call out his name to say hi or a parent thanks him, Dave always takes a minute to stop and say hi. "After all," he says, "I've been there."



"Working with David was an honor. He epitomizes courage in the face of adversity, perseverance in spite of barriers, and motivation that knows no limits. He, indeed, is an inspiration to me and those he serves as he does his life's work."

Kathy Murphy

January

Braille Literacy Month
National Glaucoma Month

- 3 - 6: Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Congress/Las Vegas
- 4: World Braille Day
- 6: Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) Meeting
- 15: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD) Meeting
- 16: ICRE-R School Advisory Council Meeting
- 21: Statewide STEP Advisory Committee
- 28: Region I Transition Consortiums
- 29: Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council on Transition (IICC) Meeting

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Access Success

Sara Capetillo Employment Advocate

“Yeah, right; I can’t find a job for myself, how will I help others find employment?” was Sara’s response to a friend who suggested she enroll in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Sara had recently graduated with a BA in Early Childhood Education and loved working with kids. She was empathetic to their needs and truly concerned for their wellbeing. The children responded well to her methods; however, the administration operated under a different philosophy and made it clear that teachers were there to teach, not to counsel.

Sara became disenchanted with her dream but remained passionate about working directly with individuals. She continued to take courses in psychology and community counseling and decided to take her friend’s advice and enrolled in the Master’s of Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Not only was she accepted into the program, she also successfully advocated for accessibility on the campus and was offered the position of Assistant Coordinator of the Disability Resource Center. Through determination, dedication, and plain old hard work, Sara completed the degree and is now a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

At present, Sara is an Employment Advocate at Progress CIL in Forest Park and, together with Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago, has helped form and forward the agenda of ReVOC (Renewing Vocational Opportunities for Consumers), an emerging grassroots group of VR customers, consumer advocates and other allies.

Sara and ReVOC have been working with the Staff Development Section and CAP to design and develop outreach training that addresses issues impacting minorities and underserved populations. The training sessions focus on such topics as: Understanding the VR Process; Making the Process Work for You; and Providing Case Scenarios that examine Informed Customer Choice, Application & Eligibility, and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) stages of developing an action plan to **Access Success**.



Photo by DAVID FARBER

“We really enjoy working with Sara/ReVOC and the Staff Development Section! The trainings are a great way to identify and address potential concerns with access to VR programs and services before they occur.”

Sally Eickhorst and Ellis Torres-Acosta, CAP representatives

The mission of CAP is to provide assistance and advocacy on behalf of clients or applicants of the Division of Rehabilitation Services, including the Vocational Rehabilitation and Home Services programs and consumers of the Centers for Independent Living.

The CAP was established by Section 112 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act). Each State and Territory of the United States has a CAP to help individuals with disabilities obtain the services they need from programs funded under the Act (Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living). All DRS clients/applicants are to be informed by their counselor of their right to appeal decisions they do not agree with, and how to contact CAP. All CAP services are free and confidential.

CAP’s primary goal is to resolve client’s issues as quickly and amicably as possible at the lowest possible level. This prevents delays in their services, enhances their opportunity for

a successful outcome, and usually eliminates the process of having to go to the appeal level, which is expensive and very time consuming.

Clients/applicants are eligible for CAP services if they are applying for or receiving services from DRS. The types of services CAP can provide are:

Information and referral services

- Advice and interpretation of the rules and federal regulations
- Negotiation to resolve problems
- Advocacy and representation at informal reviews, formal hearings, and in court

CAP also can help solve problems that affect many individuals through “systemic advocacy”. This often involves working with DRS to change State rules and policies, participating on committees and councils, such as the State Rehabilitation Council, or addressing issues directly with DRS Administration.

To contact CAP call 1-800-641-3929 (voice/tty) or write to:

Client Assistance Program
100 North Street, 1st Flr West
Springfield, IL 62702-5197

- In FY2008, CAP advocates assisted 218 Vocational Rehabilitation clients and 439 Home Service clients.
- CAP responded to 3,228 information and referral requests from individuals with disabilities.
- CAP provided informational outreach to 4,880 individuals.



Photo by DAVID FARBER

February

Low Vision Awareness Month

- 3: ICED Meeting
- 4: Head and Spinal Cord Injury Advisory Council Meeting
- 9: Facility Advisory Committee (FAC) Meeting
- 10: ICC Meeting
- 10-11: Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities (ISAC) Meeting
- 11: ICRE W Graduation
- 13: State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Meeting
- 18: Region 3 Transition Consortiums
- 19: Region 2 Transition Consortiums
- 20: ISVI Advisory Council
- 20: ISD Advisory Council

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28



Access Success

DRS Hispanic/Latino Services Unit facilitates the provision of specialized, culturally appropriate services to Hispanic/Latino individuals with disabilities. Our bilingual staff helps individuals find and maintain employment and access DHS/DRS services as well as community resources.

The Hispanic Outreach Rehabilitation Program (H.O.R.P.), a partnership between DRS and La Voz Latina, assists Hispanic/Latino individuals with disabilities and their families in becoming productive, independent members of the community.

DRS is also partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Management, Inc., Progress Center for Independent Living, and the Illinois Migrant Council to provide expanded VR and independent living services to Hispanic migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities and their families through a three-year federal grant.

DRS' collaborative efforts significantly increased the number of Hispanic/Latino individuals with disabilities receiving services in FY 08.

- The number of Hispanic/Latino VR customers increased 33.2 percent from 2,632 in FY 2000 to 3,532 in FY 2008.
- In FY 2008, 310 Hispanic/Latino customers entered competitive employment.
- Average monthly earnings for employed Hispanic/Latino customers increased from \$1,116 in FY 2000 to 1,225 in FY 2008.
- 23 percent of employed Hispanic/Latino customers received employer-provided health insurance in FY 2008.
- The number of Hispanic/Latino customers receiving home services increased 102.2 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2008.

Raymundo Garza Heating/AC Technician

Raymundo Garza is known for his love of fishing, hunting and hiking, but providing for his family has always come first. On Christmas Eve of 2006, "Mundo" was informed that he was being laid off from his job of 24 years due to "labor force reduction."



Mundo was experiencing chronic back pain from a herniated disc and informed his boss that he may have to have back surgery. "Shortly after that, I was given the news that I would not be returning to work." Mundo recalls feeling helpless about work, even with his extensive skills and long work history. "No one was willing to take a chance on someone who seemed a liability, but I knew I had to keep going, keep trying."

After many sleepless nights wondering what was going to happen, Mundo went to the unemployment office. They took his application and referred him to the DRS Office in Mattoon. He says now that accessing the services of DRS was the "best choice I made throughout the entire process."

Mundo worked with VR Counselor, Amy Packer. He notes, "She genuinely wanted to help me get to work. She helped me through a very difficult time, and I'll never forget that." Amy assisted Mundo with **Accessing Success** through job placement, counseling and guidance, and linkage with a back surgeon to restore his work abilities.

As time went on, Mundo heard of a position working for an apartment complex. There he would be able to do many tasks such as maintenance, construction, and groundskeeping. Not only did he get the job, he received a raise and better benefits. In addition, he completed training in heating and air conditioning and was reimbursed by his employer for doing so.

Mundo has his life back on track thanks to hard work and persistence, as well as the help of DRS. He even has the time and endurance now for some of his favorite hobbies: fishing, hunting, and hiking.



"How awesome it is to work for DRS where we can collaborate with so many different agencies to help people like Mundo access success."

Amy Packer

March

Save your Vision Month

- 3: ICED Meeting
- 4: Region 4 Transition Consortiums
- 4: American Diabetes Alert Day
- 6: Employment Expo SDHH
- 18: Region 5 Transition Consortiums
- 19: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD) Meeting
- 20: ICRE-R School Advisory Council Meeting
- 21: Blind Services Planning Council Advisory Meeting
- 25: IICC Meeting
- 26: IICC Statewide Agency Cross-Training

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



Access Success

DRS provides specialized services to people with a hearing loss, including individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened, or Deafblind, through our Services for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (SDHH) Unit. Our highly trained Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing assist customers by providing VR services, counseling and guidance, assistance with training and technology, resources related to hearing loss, information and referral, interpreter resources and guidelines, in-service training, and advocacy.

SDHH also offers a menu of services tailored to meet the needs of our customers who are Deafblind, many of whom have some functional vision or hearing.

Our Deafblind Specialists work with a team of staff within and outside DRS to ensure that customers achieve their goals. All SDHH staff serve as resources to professionals, state agencies, community organizations, and the public.

They provide information related to employment, training, and accommodations for persons who have a hearing loss.

- 28 Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) provided specialized services throughout the state in FY 2008.
- In FY 2008, 2,758 Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind customers received VR services.
- 454 customers obtained competitive employment with the assistance of RCD's in FY 2008.
- In FY 2008, the average hourly wage of a Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened or Deafblind individual was \$11.43 an hour.
- Customers entering competitive employment through services provided by RCDs worked an average of 32.2 hours per week in FY 2008.
- 47 percent of customers entering competitive employment in FY 2008 received employer-provided health insurance.

Nakisha Wilkins Pastry Chef

Like many of her peers in high school, Nakisha was not sure what she wanted to do when she graduated. She had thought about going to college or maybe becoming a hairdresser. As she tried to make sense of the "turmoil," she decided what she really wanted to be was a chef. After graduation, she got involved with the Job Corps in Joliet who provided her with culinary training. Nakisha describes the training "as difficult," but she made it.

Nakisha was born deaf. That's just a small part of the story. She notes that her family raised her to think that she could accomplish her goals—and that she did. "Life is all about challenges. My family insisted I learn to get along in this world."

After receiving her training, Nakisha moved to the Quad Cities area to be with friends she met while participating in the Program for the Hearing Impaired at Northern Illinois University. Her attempts to find employment were unsuccessful, and she remembered a program she had

heard of in high school that talked about work and could help her find employment – DRS. Nakisha contacted the Rock Island DRS Office and was introduced to Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD), Amanda Lucki. With Amanda's help in career counseling and other employment services, Nakisha was able to **Access Success** and became employed as a pastry chef at Bennigan's Restaurant. "I only needed an interpreter for an interview and the two-day training session. In some ways, I have an advantage because I don't get distracted with all the hustle and bustle of the kitchen," she proclaimed.

Nakisha's advice is, "Never give up. Be confident of the future and do whatever it takes to make it happen."



"I appreciate Nakisha not giving up. She had her own ideas, and I'm proud she stuck with it and achieved her dream."

Amanda Lucki

April

- 7: ICED Meeting
- 10: SRC Meeting
- 13: FAC Meeting
- 15: Region I Transition Consortiums
- 21: Statewide STEP Advisory Committee Meeting
- 22-23: ISAC Meeting
- 27-29: CCDI Conference/Springfield

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



James Bryant Band Instructor

We often hear the saying, "the only thing that is 100 percent sure is change." For Jim Bryant, loving husband, devoted father, talented musician, and successful band director, he lived that saying in a way that many of us will never experience. Jim states, "Though a permanent diagnosis was a mystery, my sight was diminishing in both eyes. Being a music teacher, band director, bus driver, husband and father of two, this seemed devastating to the whole family. To seek rehabilitation seemed the only solution to face and overcome the crisis."



Jim and his wife, Melissa, contacted the local DRS office and were put in touch with Bureau of Blind Services (BBS) Counselor, Dennis Kelahan, who arranged for him to attend the Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education (ICRE-Wood) in Chicago. Jim participated in full-time classes of Braille, mobility, adult living adaptations, technology training, physical education, and home mechanics. He then went to San Raphael, California, to receive a guide dog. He also began to study music Braille with

David Goldstein of the National Resource Center for Blind Musicians and David Sampson, a Braille Music and Technology Instructor in Philadelphia. Jim was able to **Access Success** in his own right through assistive technology and return to his job, but the even bigger picture was to **Access Success** in the family and community setting. That, too, was possible. One of the most important pieces of "technology" that James is using is a tandem bike with a third seat. He and his boys can now go to the lake for fishing and remote control boating. Son, Nicholas, drives; Jim and son, Noah, provide the power.

Yes, things changed for James Bryant. Today, he remains a loving husband, devoted father, talented musician, and successful band director—he just goes about some things a bit differently.



"Jim has been a pleasure to work with. Despite the fact that we have utilized multiple resources and service providers, Jim has never expressed to me that he was overwhelmed. He has trusted his support staff and knew he would have the necessary services, in time."

Dennis Kelahan

DRS' Bureau of Blind Services (BBS) provides specialized VR services to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in obtaining or maintaining employment.

The Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Wood (ICRE-Wood) provides a concentrated, short-term residential program for adults who are newly blind or visually impaired. In the 14-week course, participants receive training in mobility, orientation, and activities of daily living. ICRE-Wood also offers activities tailored to meet participants' needs, including computer skills training, GED preparation, vocational counseling, wellness and recreational activities.

The Illinois Department of Transportation and the Business Enterprise Program for the Blind have enjoyed a successful partnership since the opening of the first Rest Area. These Rest Areas on the Illinois Interstate Highway System not only offer jobs to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, they also offer them

the opportunity to operate as independent persons and contribute to the tax revenue within the State. The continued partnership between IDOT and BEPB has resulted in the Illinois Rest Areas being designated as one of the best in the nation.

The Older Blind Program offers independent living services to older individuals who are blind.

- In FY 2008, a total of 2,978 customers received VR services from BBS staff.
- BBS assisted 302 customers in obtaining competitive employment in FY 2008.
- The average hourly wage of BBS customers increased from \$11.49 in FY 2004 to \$12.43 in FY 2008.
- BBS counselors took 1,141 new applications and developed 797 new service plans in FY 2008.
- ICRE-Wood served 240 customers in FY 2008.
- In FY 2008, 364 individuals were served in the ICRE-Wood Low Vision Clinic.
- 30 visually impaired high school students participated in ICRE-Wood's 2008 "Summer in the City" Transitional Program.
- Illinois has 102 primary BEPB program locations and 330 satellites.
- In FY 2008, total gross revenue for BEPB program locations statewide was \$18.8 million.

May

National Sight Saving Month

- 1: ISVI Advisory Board
- 5: ICED Meeting
- 6: Head and Spinal cord Injury Advisory Council Meeting
- 7: Region 2 Transition Consortiums
- 8: ISD School Advisory Council
- 14: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities
- 15: ICRE-R School Advisory Council Meeting
- 21: ISVI graduation
- 21: ICRE W graduation
- 22: ISD Graduation
- 27: IICC Meeting
- 28: Region 3 Transition Consortiums

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



Access Success

DRS' Home Services Program (HSP) promotes independence by offering an individualized, family-centered approach for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Our HSP customers are able to stay in their homes, be actively involved in their communities, and retain control over the services they receive.

HSP provides an array of services to customers who are otherwise eligible for nursing home placement. These services include personal assistant services, homemaker services, maintenance home health, electronic home response, home delivered meals, adult day care, assistive equipment, environmental modification, and respite care.

DRS' Community Reintegration Program helps people with disabilities, ages 18-59, transition from nursing homes into the community. This program not only offers our customers freedom to enjoy their lives, it also saves the State of Illinois millions of dollars in nursing home costs.

DRS partners with staff from 23 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) who collaborate with customers and HSP staff to locate housing and develop service plans for community reintegration.

Funds pay for start-up essentials, such as first month's rent, furniture, cooking equipment, and household supplies.

The average community reintegration customer is 50 years of age, has resided in a nursing facility for two years prior to reintegration, and requires \$4,000 to transition to independent living.

- 32,652 people were served by HSP in FY 2008 at a cost of \$443.8 million, a 11.6 percent increase over FY 2007.

- The average monthly cost of providing HSP services is \$1,296 per person. HSP results in significant cost savings and dramatically improves the quality of life for people with disabilities.

- More than 1,450 customers have transitioned from nursing homes into the community through the Community Reintegration Program.

- The Community Reintegration Program has resulted in a \$148.6 million savings since its inception.

Jose Cruz Wheelchair Repair Technician

While living in Puerto Rico, Jose Cruz, a successful business owner and truck driver, had a severe motor vehicle accident which severed his spinal cord. He relocated to Chicago and met a DRS employee who gave him information on the DRS Home Services and VR Programs. Through a team effort of VR Counselor, George Aponte, Calor, and the Veteran's Association of America, Jose has moved past his desire for a part-time job and is not only working full-time but seven days a week. He works full-time at Schwab Rehabilitation Center as a mechanic repairing and modifying wheelchairs for patients and new arrivals to the Center. In addition, he is responsible for the supply inventory for parts for wheelchairs, and he serves as a greeter—a "beacon" for persons coming to Schwab.



Jose's story does not end there. On weekends, he works at a Lottery Store at O'Hare Airport... AND he tells us that

he is working on a new invention ("See me next year for more details," he smiles).

Jose credits VR counselor, George Aponte, for his support and "the much needed push" provided when he becomes frustrated. Another source of inspiration comes when he thinks of his child with Downs' Syndrome who is still living in Puerto Rico. Thus, Jose's hope is to purchase a home in the near future in Chicago and then, perhaps, his family can be together.

The phrase **Access Success** is not mere words to Jose; he lives by it every day. "You must have persistence, you must keep going, and you must build your mind and body to make it through difficult times." These are words to live by from a man who has experienced difficulty, has overcome odds, and is still persistent in identifying and pursuing new goals.



"In order to provide good services to our customers, we have to have dedication and love what we do."

George Aponte

June

Vision Research Month

- 2: Statewide STEP Advisory Committee Meeting
- 2: ICED Meeting
- 4-6: ISVI Parent Infant Institute
- 6: ICRE-R graduation
- 7-12: ISD Parent Infant Institute
- 8: FAC Meeting
- 10-11: ISAC Meeting
- 14-19: ISD Summer Camp
- 15-7/31: ICRE-R's Transition Summer Camp
- 16: 14th Annual Visually Impaired Awareness Day/College of Dupage
- 19: Blind Services Planning Council Advisory Meeting
- 21-27: ISVI Summer Camp
- 21-27: Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week
- 26-7/6: Eye Safety Awareness Week

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



Access Success

Brian Newman Truck Driver

Bright, polite, articulate, and 21 years old. Brian could be one of a million young men with a dream. The difference—Brian’s dream came true, and it came true as a result of dedication, direction and guidance from many people as well as a drive and commitment to **Access Success** from Brian, himself.

Brian entered the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) in his junior year at Donovan High School. With the help of his high school STEP and Work Study Coordinator, Kathy Mulling, Brian began detailing trucks and trailers at a local service center. Through good, strong transition planning, Brian came to Division of Rehabilitation Services after graduation from high school and was introduced to VR Counselor Ann Ndorongo at the Bloomington DRS Office. With her guidance and support, Brian enrolled in truck driving classes at Kankakee Community College where he earned his Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) in May, 2006. Immediately after graduation, Brian started to work at the Watseka



Grain Elevator driving his own truck.

At six years old, Brian had a dream of being a truck driver. Today, at 21, his dream is a reality. He works five to six days a week, 60 to 70 hours per week and loves what he does. Most young adults look forward to turning 21 for many different reasons; for Brian, it’s because he will be able to drive his truck out-of-state. VR Counselor, Ann Ndorongo, still checks up on Brian from time-to-time. Brian simply states, “Ann is very good at her job and certainly helped me reach my dream. Once I got my first job driving a truck, I sent Ann a picture of my truck with me standing next to it. I certainly thank Ann for all she did for me.”



“Brian always dreamed of becoming a semi-truck driver. I am proud to say that DRS helped his dream become a reality. We provided the training that Brian needed to secure a job in the field. Brian’s enthusiasm, energy, and commitment to his career goal made it possible. Great job, Brian!”

Ann Ndorongo

DRS helps high school students with disabilities plan for their future with services provided through the Transition Program and the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP). Our counselors work closely with Transition Specialists housed in high schools, staff in individual schools and school districts, and community partners to help students achieve their employment, post-secondary education, and independent living goals. DRS Transition/STEP has been recognized by its federal partner, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), as a model program that they recommend other states across the nation review. RSA was impressed with the collaborative efforts between the State Board of Education, local school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation in Illinois and the way transition services are provided to students across the state. DRS facilitates the enhancement of local transition services by supporting Transition Planning Committees (TPCs). These TPCs identify

existing resources and unmet needs, facilitate an ongoing exchange of information, and develop local customer training programs. DRS joins with many partners to offer a wide variety of transition outreach activities throughout the year. With the collaboration of numerous state-wide agencies, the 2007 Transition Conference offered 625 participants (vocational rehabilitation staff, educators, health-care providers, youth, families, and community representatives) the opportunity to explore transition options that support positive post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Interesting to note is that the Cook County Juvenile Department sent 13 probation officers to learn how to meet the needs of youth with disabilities.

It is these collaborative efforts that enhance opportunities for students and their families and better prepare them to make appropriate and sound vocational choices.

- 18,700 transition students were served in FY 2008, including 15,898 students and 2,802 non-STEP students. DRS caseloads for transition-aged youth total 42 percent of the Agency’s served population.
- In FY 2008, DRS provided 156 STEP contracts serving approximately 600 high schools.
- In FY 2008, 41 active TPCs served 98 Illinois counties. STEP/Transition serve all of Illinois’ 102 counties. There were 24 projects and activities funded for local TPCs that made provisions for web sites, resource materials, public awareness flyers, and resource/transition fairs.

July

- 7: ICED Meeting
- 10: SRC Meeting
- 17: ICRE-R School Advisory Council Meeting
- 20-31: Summer In the City, Youth Transition Program
- 23: IICC Meeting
- 26: 19th Anniversary of the ADA

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



Access Success

Shelly Johnson Movie Theater Attendant

The motto at the theater where Shelly Johnson works is "showing service." But showing service wouldn't have been possible without first "accessing service." Thanks to the help of Rehabilitation Counselor, Tammy Watson, and the DRS Carbondale team, Shelly not only has a job, she has a new found independence.

Shelly had not worked since 2001. In fact, most days her diagnosis of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder prevented her from even leaving her bedroom. She had seen a counselor on and off but she notes, "Not much seemed to work for me." Shelly applied for and was awarded SSI, and with that award came information about Ticket to Work. "My caseworker told me I should call DRS and see about getting help going to work, so I did."

VR Counselor, Tammy Watson, referred Shelly to mental health counseling. In addition, she was referred to the DRS office job club. With the assistance of Elizabeth Finn, Loretta Golden, and Leland Jackson, she practiced interviewing and learned job seeking information. "I knew I was rough around the edges. The staff helped me understand what I needed to work on."

In time, Shelly's job skills improved; she became more confident in social situations and was able to control her obsessive thoughts. Counselor Watson became aware of an internship opportunity at Southern Illinois Center for Independent Living and referred Shelly. The rest is history. Shelly began working as a receptionist and moved from there to the job she currently has, working at the local movie theater where she has been working for the last two years. She is in the process of **Accessing even more Success** as she is trying to become assistant manager. "Thanks to Tammy and the DRS staff, I now look forward to leaving my house."



DRS fully embraces the independent living philosophy of the Disability Rights Movement which is based on the belief that independent living means people with disabilities have control of their lives by making informed choices that enable them to realize their dreams.

Through the Independent Living Program, DRS funds a network of 23 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) statewide that provide accessible programs and services designed to help all people with disabilities live more independently.

Each CIL offers: peer counseling, advocacy, information and referral, independent living skills training, and may also provide other services to meet the needs of people in their communities. These services may include community reintegration programs, personal assistance programs, housing services, accessibility services, job readiness training, and youth programs.

CILs offer community-based

services for people with all disabilities. In contrast to more traditional medical models in which the "client" or "patient" is highly dependent on "experts," a CIL's emphasis is on consumer self-direction and control. CILs promote a positive self-image, which is important to developing significant peer relationships.

Because the most difficult barrier for people with disabilities to overcome is societal attitudes, CILs advocate for changes in legislation, provide disability awareness training, develop technical assistance initiatives regarding the ADA, and promote a strong community presence. Clearly, CILs are not social service agencies, but agents for social change.

- CILs provided an array of direct services and programs to more than 8,434 persons with disabilities in FY 2008.
- In FY 2008, CILs responded to over 97,700 Information & Referral requests.
- Illinois' 23 CILs serve individuals in 93 of the state's 102 counties.



"Shelly is a delightful lady. She has overcome significant obstacles in her life. She has vast employment potential."

Tammy Watson

DRS Carbondale Team: Tammy Watson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; Leland Jackson, Bureau of Blind Services Rehabilitation Counselor; Loretta Golden, Bureau of Blind Services (BBS) Rehabilitation Counselor; Elizabeth Finn, Rehabilitation Case Coordinator.

August

- 4: Statewide STEP Advisory Committee Meeting
- 4: ICED Meeting
- 5: Head and Spinal cord Injury Advisory Council Meeting
- 10: FAC Meeting
- 20-22: Discovery Low Vision Conference/Chicago

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	30				



Access Success

The **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)**, established in 1849, is a residential/day school for students who are blind and visually impaired. Located in Jacksonville, ISVI provides accredited educational and related support services for children from birth to three years of age through preschool, elementary, junior and high school and a fifth year senior program.

All educational and related services programs are designed to prepare students for successful living as independent, self-supporting citizens. ISVI also offers extra curricular activities, including sports, cheerleading, forensics, student council, national honor society, choir, etc.

■ ISVI enrolled 121 students in FY 2008

Established in 1839, the **Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)**, also located in Jacksonville, offers a residential/day program for students who are Deaf and hard of hearing. ISD provides comprehensive, accredited

programs including a birth to three year old program, preschool, elementary, junior and senior high school plus a new fifth year senior program.

ISD offers strong academic programming, many recreational activities and programs designed to prepare high school students to transition into the world of work or post-secondary education after graduation. ISD also offers extra curricula activities including sports, cheerleading, drama club, academic bowl, national honor society, student government, etc.

■ ISD enrolled 272 students in FY 2008

The **Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Roosevelt (ICRE-R)**, located in Chicago, is a state-operated residential school that offers a transition-based program for students ages 14-21. ICRE-R students attend Chicago Public Schools for their academic education while ICRE-R staff provide the in-depth related services as well as a transition focused accredited curriculum after the regular school day. Services include independent living and daily living skills, development training, orientation and mobility training, how to hire and manage a personal care attendant, accessing public transportation, managing personal health-care issues, employability skills training, etc.

■ ICRE-R enrolled 44 students in FY 2008.

As a part of the fifth-year transition program at **Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Roosevelt (ICRE-R)**, to access success the student must be employed as well as take independent living and daily living skills classes. Ashley Hoffman, 20 year old fifth-year senior is employed at the Children's Center at the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC). She plans to make working with young children her career. Ashley recently told staff that she is drawn to working with younger children who need extra time and attention because of the challenge they present and adds, "I think I have learned as much from the children as they learned from me."



High School and fifth-year students at the **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)** access success by participating in the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP). They initially work on campus to hone their employment skills and then move on into competitive employment off campus. Seventeen year old senior, Haley Gaddis, began working at "The Little White Cottage," a catering service in Jacksonville, Illinois, last school year. She worked so well that at the end of the school year, Georgia Stout, owner of the catering services, presented Haley with a \$100 bonus and has employed her again for the current school year. "Haley has to be told



to take breaks," Ms. Stout said and added, "When offered a dessert or snack, she never turns it down." Haley is gaining work experience, building good self-esteem, and enjoying the weekly paycheck.

Whitney Young is an outstanding example of a successful STEP program participant. Whitney, who graduated from the **Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)** in May 2008, had a very successful work career before even graduating. Whitney worked for the Jacksonville Developmental Center in the Dietary Department. She also worked with animals at the Lincoln Land Animal Clinic in Jacksonville and extended her work interest by attending several animal surgeries. Whitney has been described by her employers and co-workers as kind, courteous, and diligent as well as responsible in all her job duties. Whitney is on the road to **Accessing Success** and is taking classes at the community college. Her interest is to pursue a career in the food preparation area.



September

- 1: ICED Meeting
- 2: Region 4 Transition Consortiums
- 9: Region 5 Transition Consortiums
- 12: Blind Services Planning Council Advisory Meeting
- 16: Deaf Awareness Day
- 16-17: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities
- 18: ICRE-R Advisory Council Meeting
- 20-26: National Rehabilitation Week
- 21: ICRE W Graduation
- 25: ISD Advisory Council
- 29-10/1: Statewide RCD Meeting

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



Access Success

Our partnerships with employers throughout the state continue to be critical to our success in helping individuals with disabilities find and maintain quality employment. Through these partnerships, employers are connected with qualified individuals with skills and qualities that match their needs, and individuals with disabilities have a greater number of quality employment opportunities. The list of Illinois Corporate Partners continues to grow. These businesses do more than gain productive employees, they strengthen the workforce and re-invest in their communities by providing an opportunity for Illinois residents to become self-sufficient taxpayers.

Today, DRS has more than 500 local business partners and 30 Statewide Illinois Corporate Partners that include businesses and corporations throughout Illinois. We applaud our partners and all employers who are committed to hiring people with disabilities in jobs that pay a living wage, provide vital health benefits, and offer

opportunities for advancement. Many of these Illinois Corporate Partners, as well as other businesses throughout Illinois, have worked in collaboration with DRS to provide mentoring opportunities whereby students and job seekers with disabilities spend time with a volunteer mentor exploring career paths, identifying job skills, and learning about the world of work. These mentoring experiences not only give DRS customers a chance to demonstrate their abilities, they also gain knowledge that will help them make informed career choices. More than 500 DRS customers joined with over 200 business mentors to participate in Disability Mentoring Week during October 13-17, 2008. Businesses hosted a variety of mentoring activities including hands-on career exploration, job shadowing, company tours, and information sessions on potential careers as well as hiring procedures. As a result of Disability Mentoring Week, many companies expressed an interest in hiring DRS customers. In fact, several persons were offered and accepted employment opportunities.

DRS appreciates the growing enthusiasm and commitment of the business community in partnering with DRS to hire and mentor people with disabilities. We look forward to expanding our mentoring initiative and invite employers and people with disabilities to join us in being a part of this rewarding experience.

Empress Casino

"It all works because our entire team wants it to work," says Christopher Plunkett, Human Resources Manager at the Empress Casino in Joliet, Illinois. "Since opening Chicagoland's first casino, the Empress has embraced and nurtured staff members with disabilities and created a culture that allows those individuals to advance in their careers," reports General Manager, Frank Quigley.

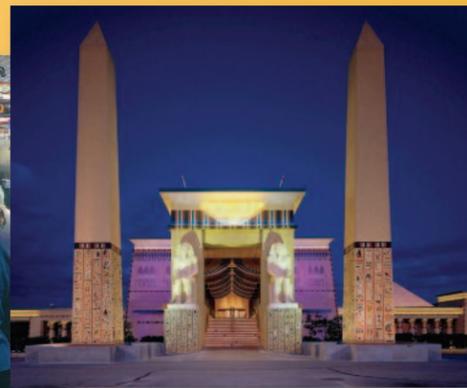
To people like Lisa, who is deafblind, and Nelson, who is deaf, the Empress has provided an opportunity for them to support their goals, pursue their dreams and realize their potential. Lisa was hired in 1992 and continues as a full-time member of the security department. She has been recognized as employee of the month and employee of the year. Nelson works in the Count Department where he started in an entry level position four years ago. He has since been promoted to Lead Count Employee supervising five to six staff members on each shift.

Accommodations for employees with disabilities happen on an almost daily basis as part of the Empress' "make it work" attitude. From very simple to more complicated accommodation needs, it all works because the entire team wants it to work.

Executive Chef, Mark McGill works closely with many DRS customers who often become long-term, valued employees. He takes time to talk to his team members, to their job coaches, and to family members, as appropriate, all of which empowers DRS customers to learn their jobs and perform all responsibilities. Plunkett adds, "We welcome and value the partnership we have formed." DRS looks forward to a continued relationship with the Empress and the opportunity to **Access Success** for the customers we serve.



Empress Casino Staff. Front left to right: Maggie Deering, Kate Sebalj, Diane Christenson, and Chris Plunkett. First Step: Cendy Owano. Second step: Monica Wendell. Third step: Kelly Rose and Lorena Conde.



October

National and Illinois Disability Employment Awareness Month

- 6: ICED Meeting
- 7: Region 3 Transition Consortiums
- 8: Region 2 Transition Consortiums
- 9: SRC Meeting
- 13: FAC Meeting
- 14-15: ISAC Meeting
- 15: White Cane Safety Day
- 28-31: Assistive Technology Industry Association Conference/Schaumburg

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Access Success

DRS works in partnership with the Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP), a not for profit agency that promotes the availability of assistive technology services and programs to provide independence in recreation, education, vocation and daily living activities for people with disabilities.

The Device Loan Program can help determine which technology will or will not work for an individual. The inventory of over 1,000 devices includes categories in communication, activities of daily living, vision and more. Device loans are free, range from four to six weeks, are available to anyone in Illinois. Call to schedule a guided tour of the nine room demonstration center filled with assistive devices. Showcase areas feature a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, office, and more. Tours provide: hands-on exploration of assistive technology, information on the latest technology, low tech solutions and adaptations, and vendor sources.

IATP can help make assistive technology affordable with a low interest loan. Cash loans offer: loans from \$500 to \$40,000, extended terms, flexible approval criteria.

IATPs Assistive Technology Specialists provide evaluation, training, and technical support for customers of DRS Vocational Rehabilitation, Blind Services and Home Services Programs. Evaluations provide: individualized training, follow up services, and recommendations for appropriate assistive technology or home modification.

Other programs: Telework Loan program for home based employment, AT classifieds (a person-to-person exchange of pre-owned assistive technology), workshops, toll free information and assistance lines.

For more information, contact: Illinois Assistive Technology Program
1 West Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 100
Springfield, Illinois 62701
1-800-852-5110 (voice/TTY Illinois only)
1-217-522-7985 (voice)
1-217-522-9966 (TTY)
1-217-522-8067 (FAX)
www.iltech.org

Kyle Steffen Computer-Aided Design and Drafting Operator

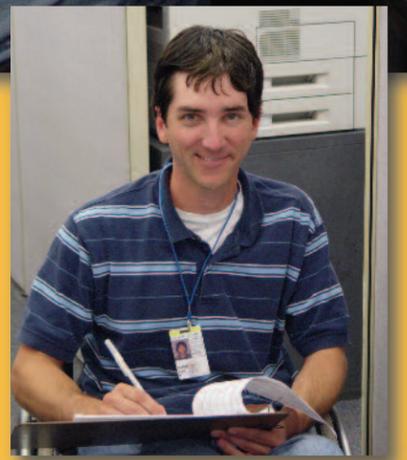
Life is a series of adjustments. In order to **Access Success**, an individual must be able to readjust to life-changing events and circumstances which alter, sometimes drastically, the direction of our lives. Kyle Steffen, a former Army Ranger and Iraqi War Veteran, knows all about that.

After returning from a tour in Iraq with the U. S. Army Rangers, Kyle was discharged in September 2003. He was ready to face civilian life once more. Little did he know that a year later an accident on a four-wheeler would leave him paralyzed from the waist down. For awhile, Kyle struggled both mentally and physically to readjust to his new situation. At first, the grief process seemed an insurmountable barrier, but, finally, slowly, he began to chart the pathway for his life.

Kyle contacted DRS and started working with VR Counselor, Ken Hull, from the Jacksonville DRS Office. He began attending classes at Vatterott College in Computer-Aided Drafting and Design (CADD) in Quincy. He worked hard and graduated in March 2007 with a 3.8 GPA and an Associate's Degree.

Kyle was referred to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and scheduled a time to complete an application. As luck would have it, the day he was at IDOT he was informed that they were actively seeking someone with his qualifications. They asked, "Would Mr. Steffen have time for a quick interview?" Even though his girlfriend was sitting in the parking lot waiting for him to return, Kyle answered, "Yes." After the interview, Kyle was asked when he could begin employment. He jumped on the opportunity and volunteered to begin immediately and started the next day.

Since his employment began, DRS has heard nothing but praise for the quality of his work. When Kyle was asked what advice he would give someone that was facing a challenging time in their life, his response is three simple words: "Improve, Adapt, and Overcome."



"Kyle traumatically injured his back in an accident on 9/5/04 and met with me at DRS on 3/23/05. By the time his VR case was successfully closed on 11/8/07, he had gained the skills in a new occupation, was employed by IDOT, and had turned his life around from what it had been."

Ken Hull

November

Diabetic Eye Disease Month

- 3: ICED Meeting
- 4: Head and Spinal cord Injury Advisory Council Meeting
- 12: Region I Transition Consortiums
- 17: Prematurity Awareness Month
- 17: IICC Meeting
- 19: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities Meeting
- 20: ICRE-R Advisory Council Meeting

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					



Access Success

The Division of Rehabilitation Services works in partnership with INCIL, SILC, and CCDI to collaborate on services for persons with disabilities. The goal is that persons with disabilities will be able to **Access Success** in all aspects of their lives.

The **Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois (CCDI)** is a statewide, cross-disability rights membership-based organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities. CCDI has empowered advocates for nearly 25 years to become more engaged in grassroots advocacy activities. They assist CCDI members in **Accessing Success** through increasing opportunities for employment, education, accessible and affordable transportation, housing, and healthcare, which ultimately enhances the quality of life for all people.



CCDI advocates participate in a Disability Rights March to the Illinois State Capitol.

Members have opportunities to further develop life skills through mentoring, leadership cultivation, training, online advocacy tools, information and referral, and have the opportunity to receive a statewide newsletter and attend an annual disability rights conference.



Gerard Broeker, Executive Director of SILC, holds a press conference at the Illinois State Capitol on behalf of October's National Disability Awareness Month.

The **Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois (SILC)** is a planning organization that focuses on assisting Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in providing the most comprehensive services possible. SILC, along with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, assists the centers in accomplishing these service goals through the implementation of a state plan monitored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). SILC addresses independent living services and hears the needs of persons with disabilities through public forums and meetings. Through research, they are able to assess areas of



Pictured are the members of INCIL. Front row: Pam Heavens, Ann Ford, Cathy Contarino, Jeri Wooters. Second row: Horacio Esparza, Melody Reynolds, Nancy McClellan-Hickey, Leigh Ann Heenan, Daisy Feidt, Becky McGinnis, Erica Edwards. Third row: John Jansa, Roberta Garrison, Mike Egbert, Marci Savage, Kathy Fischer, Pete Roberts, Cathy Holland and, Julie Bosma.

Illinois where persons with disabilities are unserved or under served and assist them to **Access Success** with appropriate linkages to CILs and other support agencies. In addition, SILC works with local officials and state agencies to promote the expansion of CIL offices and services into underserved areas of Illinois.

The **Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL)** is the statewide association that represents the 23 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Illinois. The mission of INCIL is to allow collaboration and networking between the CILs in order to bring

about greater independence, equal opportunities and civil rights for persons with disabilities. Through networking, the CILs are able to work together and discuss local and statewide challenges and successes impacting their staff and customers. Together with DRS, education is provided to local and state officials that focuses on empowerment and independence. This, in turn, helps the CILs to become stronger and provides more avenues for their customers to **Access Success**.

December

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

- 1: ICED Meeting
- 2: Region 4 Transition Consortiums
- 4: ISD Advisory Council
- 8: FAC Meeting
- 9: Region 5 Transition Consortiums
- 11: Blind Services Planning Council Advisory Meeting
- 16-17: ISAC Meeting

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

DHS/DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program

FY 2008 Final Data Summary

Service Data					
Category	Referrals	Applications	New Plans	Total Served	Outcomes
Region 1	7,278	5,173	2,693	14,686	1,246
Region 2	5,313	3,585	2,114	10,065	1,186
Region 3	3,534	2,784	1,539	7,098	906
Region 4	2,519	1,935	972	5,020	512
Region 5	3,475	2,541	1,262	5,907	842
BBS	1,601	1,141	797	2,819	286
Statewide Total	23,720	17,159	9,377	45,596	4,978

Earnings Data			
Avg. Earnings	Weekly	Monthly	Annual
Case Opening	\$61.33	\$265.74	\$3,188.91
Case Closure	\$292.75	\$1,268.49	\$15,221.83
Avg. Increase	\$231.42	\$1,002.74	\$12,032.91
Total Increase	\$1,152,009	\$4,991,654	\$59,889,847

Customers By Service Category						
Category	STEP	Non-STEP	Transition	SEP	Ext Services	College
Region 1	5,238	1,168	6,406	764	30	658
Region 2	4,397	547	4,944	818	38	343
Region 3	2,569	521	3,090	444	31	465
Region 4	2,101	553	2,654	216	19	245
Region 5	1,981	749	2,730	196	24	640
BBS	99	70	169	38	4	129
Statewide Total	16,385	3,608	19,993	2,476	146	2,480

Customers By Disability Category		
Category	Served	Outcomes
Blind-Visual Impairment	2,978	302
Deaf-Hard of Hearing	2,758	454
Physical Disability	5,066	528
Mental Illness	6,237	684
Mental Retardation	6,336	702
Learning Disability	10,982	1,208
Alcohol-Drug Abuse	52	4
Brain Injury	776	85
Other Condition	10,411	1,011
VR Total	45,596	4,978

Customers By Race/Ethnic Group		
Category	Served	Outcomes
White	27,875	3,474
African American	13,213	1,086
Hispanic/Latino	3,532	310
Other Race	976	108
VR Total	45,863	4,978

Customers By Age Group		
Category	Served	Outcomes
<20 years	22,225	1,898
21-30 years	5,911	847
31-40 years	5,315	708
41-50 years	7,032	909
51-60 years	4,159	508
61 or more years	954	108
VR Total	45,596	4,978

Comparison of Data by Race/Ethnic Group, FY 2000 to FY 2008

Competitive Employment Outcomes			
Race/Ethnic Group	FY 2000	FY 2008	Percent Difference
White	3,993	3,474	-13.0
African American	950	1,086	14.3
Hispanic/Latino	313	310	-1.0
All others	101	108	6.9
Total	5,357	4,978	-7.1

Home Services Program			
Race/Ethnic Group	FY 2000	FY 2008	Percent Difference
White	12,976	18,929	45.9
African American	9,785	16,013	63.6
Hispanic/Latino	1,194	2,414	102.2
All others	402	737	83.3
Total	24,357	38,093	295.0

Average Monthly Earnings			
Race/Ethnic Group	FY 2000	FY 2008	Percent Difference
White	\$1,096	\$1,276	16.4
African American	\$1,057	\$1,271	20.2
Hispanic/Latino	\$1,116	\$1,225	9.8
All others	\$1,044	\$1,336	28.0
Total	\$1,089	\$1,273	16.9

Vocational Rehabilitation Program			
Race/Ethnic Group	FY 2000	FY 2008	Percent Difference
White	30,172	27,875	-7.6
African American	11,998	13,213	10.1
Hispanic/Latino	2,652	3,532	33.2
All others	883	976	10.5
Total	45,705	45,596	-0.2

Rehabilitation Rate			
Race/Ethnic Group	FY 2000	FY 2008	Percent Difference
White	61.4	63.1	2.8
African American	39.4	46.4	17.8
Hispanic/Latino	52.0	72.4	39.2
All others	57.3	60.3	5.2
Total	55.3	58.5	5.8

FY2009 GOALS

Independence

Goal: Provide services that will enable DRS customers to achieve the highest level of independence

Key Indicators: The number of persons moved from nursing homes into the community through the reintegration project; the number of Bureau of Blind Services customers completing independent living rehabilitation plans through the VR program; the number of persons receiving core independent living services through Independent Living Centers; the number of new cases concurrently served by the VR and HSP programs

Productivity

Goal: Achieve a high level of productivity by efficiently serving eligible customers and helping them attain successful outcomes

Key Indicators: The number of pre-employment VR measures (applications, certifications, new IPEs); the number of competitive outcomes achieved by VR program customers; the number of transition students becoming employed within six months of leaving school

Job Quality

Goal: Increase the quality of jobs obtained by VR program customers

Key Indicators: The average hourly wage achieved and average hours worked per week by customers who become employed through the VR program; the percentage of jobs obtained by VR customers which provide health insurance coverage; dollars received in Social Security reimbursement for VR customers who become employed and earn above the substantial gainful activity levels

Service Quality

Goal: Continually improve the quality of services provided by DRS in all program areas

Key Indicators: Achieve a quality assurance index of 90 percent as required by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the areas of key Quality Assurance indicators and timeliness

Customer and Staff Experience

Goal: Create a work environment that results in a positive experience for customers and staff

Key Indicators: Survey of customer, employer, provider and staff satisfaction

Statewide Agency and Organizational Resource Phone Numbers

**Illinois Department of Human Services
HELPLINE (Automated Services)**

1-800-843-6154 (Voice) 1-800-447-6404 (TTY)

Division of Rehabilitation Services

1-217-782-2094 (Voice) 1-217-785-9304 (VP) 1-866-268-9549 (TTY)

DHS/DRS Employer Information

1-217-782-2280 (Voice and TTY)

Client Assistance Program

1-800-641-3929 (Voice and TTY)

Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois (SILC)

1-217-744-7777 (Voice and TTY)

Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL)

1-800-587-1227 (Voice and TTY)

Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois (CCDI)

1-800-433-8848 (Voice and TTY)

Illinois Assistive Technology Project (IATP)

1-800-852-5110 (Voice and TTY)

Great Lakes ADA and Accessible Information Technology Center

1-800-949-4232 (Voice and TTY)

Illinois Employment and Training Centers IETC (One-Stops)

1-888-367-4382 (Voice) 1-312-793-9350 (TTY)

American Association of People with Disabilities

1-800-840-8844 (Voice and TTY)

Equip For Equality (Protection & Advocacy System for Illinois)

1-800-537-2632 (Voice) 1-800-610-2779 (TTY)



David Farber

Featured Photographer

After sustaining injuries in a motorcycle accident, doctors gave David Farber less than a ten percent chance to live. He survived but only had the use of his right arm. David didn't let that slow him down. With the help of DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation and Home Services programs, he earned a degree in computer programming. His passion, however, was photography. Thus, he developed his own camera system and shutter release and found a way to **Access Success** - his love of nature and wildlife could be exhibited in pictures. In 2004, David was featured in the DRS Annual Report as a customer; in this 2008 Annual Report, he is featured as a photographer. David photographed a number of people in this year's report and shares a few of his nature and wildlife photographs on this back cover. DRS proudly showcases his work and commends David on his drive and fortitude.

"Find your niche and pour your heart and soul into it; excel at it and encourage others to try; that's what keeps you alive inside!"

David Farber

raptorfoto@sbcglobal.net
www.naturallyfarberphotos.com



Programs, activities and employment opportunities in the Illinois Department of Human Services are open and accessible to any individual or group without regard to age, sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion. The department is an equal opportunity employer and practices affirmative action and reasonable accommodation programs.

Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois 12,000 copies (11/08) P.O.#PRT3464462

