I am...

working

making a difference

Illinois Department of Human Services
Division of Rehabilitation Services

2009 Annual Report ■ 2010 Calendar
The theme of the Department of Human Services’ Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS) Annual Report (Calendar) is “I Am.” Simple words, yes, but if one takes the time to think about the adjectives that will follow these two small words, they speak volumes. So who is DRS? We are a service provider. And to what do we attribute our commitment and success? DRS constantly strives to make its services better, more accessible, and more efficient for our customers. Delving even deeper, the men and women at all levels that make up the DRS Division deliver value-added, effective services that maximize customer potential. The key differentiators are flexibility, timeliness, and professionalism, all which contribute to the ability to provide superior service. We accept nothing less than excellence.

To achieve high performance expectations, DRS has also made a commitment to align service delivery with a trend towards partnerships with local resources, thereby simplifying the infrastructure while maximizing successful outcomes. By ensuring a consistent, collaborative environment based on informed choice, the expectation is for a positive return. That positive return is supported by the facts and figures presented in the pages that follow. Even more significant are the customer stories, which are only a few of the hundreds or even thousands that we could tell, that attest to each individual’s accomplishments. These are stories in which DRS played a role. We proudly and humbly share them as a testimony to each of the customers as well as the Division personnel who contributed to those successes.

As DRS concludes 2009 and begins to focus on 2010, we look with pride at our accomplishments and with anticipation at what is to come. What remains constant is the commitment to customer service, the commitment to excellence, and the commitment to individuals with disabilities. We also remain strong in our pledge for full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities to each of our customers in all of our program areas. So in answer to “I Am,” DRS is: goal oriented, customer focused, committed to excellence, and forward thinking. We will face the new challenges head on with a focus on customer service that is second to none.
Platinum Customer Service

Commitment to customer service in a customer-friendly environment is the way DHS/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) goes about doing business. From the concept of World Class Customer Service (WCCS), the groundwork was laid and a new challenge levied—look at where we were, where we are, and where we’re going—and then...“go the extra mile.”

DRS defined WCCS as exemplary service with a mantra of “faster, simpler, friendlier.” It is in believing in those words that allowed DRS to once again look to the future, reaffirm a commitment to excellence, and affirm a commitment to effective and efficient services which consistently exceed customer expectations. Basically, it is helpful, high quality services provided before, during and after the customer’s needs are met.

DRS proudly acknowledges: I am knowledgeable; I am professional; I am constant; I am consistent; I am customer driven; I am intent on the mission of the Division--I am Platinum Customer Service.

FY 2010 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 became 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 health insurance coverage; dollars received in VR benefits for VR health insurance coverage; dollars received in Social Security reimbursement for VR health insurance coverage; dollars received in VR benefits for VR health insurance coverage.

**Service Quality**

**Goal:** Continuously improve the quality of services provided to 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 timelines.

**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.

Division of Rehabilitation Services—I Am:

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services** helps individuals with disabilities prepare for and find quality employment that pays a living wage and offers opportunities for advancement. There are 46 offices located throughout the state of Illinois. Services include: evaluation, guidance and counseling, job development, job placement and follow-up.

**Home Services Program** provides 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, function as active members of their communities, and retain control over the services they receive.

**Bureau of Blind Services** assists individuals who are blind or visually impaired in discovering or rediscovering their independence and freedom. Services include: finding and maintaining employment as well as achieving education, training, and independent living goals.

**Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing** helps 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** assists Hispanic/Latino individuals with disabilities to find employment, apply for the Home Services Program, and learn about other community services.

**Independent Living** helps 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** operates 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. Parents can also be trained in planning, advocacy, and identifying resources for their children with disabilities. In addition, staff work with high school students with disabilities to help them transition from school to work.

**Disability Determination Services** determines eligibility of individuals to receive benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

**Client Assistance Program (CAP)** helps individuals with disabilities who have questions or problems concerning DRS services.
As I sit at my desk in my office in Bethesda, MD and oversee the efforts of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), I have cause to look ahead with excitement to what lies ahead for the field of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). I also have cause to reflect back on some of the great things that have come about because of the VR program nationally.

Thousands and thousands of persons with disabilities are in the workforce and have become taxpaying citizens; their lives have been enriched as a result of the intervention of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. The employers that have partnered with VR have valued employees who contribute significantly to the “bottom line” of their individual businesses and organizations.

I have many fond memories when I worked for the State of Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services. During that time, the concept of World Class Customer Service not only became a vision, it became a reality. I am proud to have spearheaded this great effort with the underlying principle that our customers always come first. My successors embraced the ‘faster, simpler, friendlier’ mantra and blazed their own trails with those same underlying concepts—customer first. For the past seven years Director Rob Kilbury has held strong and fast to those concepts and has consistently challenged his staff to go the extra mile.

For those of us that fervently believe in the VR program and take pride in the accomplishments of VR throughout the years, I urge you to continue your commitment to making the lives of persons with disabilities better by developing and establishing additional partners and resources. I urge you to ensure that the future which lies ahead will have “champions” who will rise to meet the imminent challenges.

Please take an active role in your job and realize the difference you can make. Most of all, I urge you to reflect on the past, learn from the present, and face the future with a zest that will leave a positive legacy for the future of the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

This Illinois annual report (calendar) is a testament to the positive role Illinois has had on the lives of persons with disabilities. I congratulate you on your accomplishments and look forward to great things from Illinois for many years to come. Remember that I was once a VR Customer from the Land of Lincoln; that the Division of Rehabilitation Services was the springboard to many opportunities for me and my family; and that I am working in Washington, DC, every day to enhance the quality of life of Americans with disabilities.

In keeping with the theme of this report, I am an advocate, a sports enthusiast, and I happen to have had polio when I was a very young child. Go Illini!

Carl Suter
Chief Executive Officer
CSAVR
I am: a nurse, a husband, a father, and a believer.

I found Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Counselor Walter Lipe to be stabilizing. He gave me support and encouragement to hang in there. He gave me that ‘aha’ moment,” says Tom Troe.

Tom notes that his life was good. He had a wonderful family, a successful home business, a nice home, good friends, etc., etc., etc. Much of that changed in an instant when he became an innocent victim with several gunshot wounds to his upper and lower body resulting in permanent nerve damage, a broken femur, and concussive nerve damage. He had over 400 medical appointments, 7 surgeries, and 32 days in the hospital. He lost his home, his business, and his career. He spent a month in a nursing home and a year in a group home and was told he would possibly never walk again or have use of his arm. And at 47 years of age, he was also diagnosed with bipolar and post-traumatic stress disorders.

There’s so much that went on in between, but the important focus is now. As a result of the Successful Disability Option (SDO) and the DRS counselor’s rapid response to a job at Division of Mental Health, Tom is now a Recovery Support Specialist, Regions 3 and 4, Department of Human Services/Division of Mental Health—a position he has held for well over a year. He says his “greatest honor is the ability to go back to work and be a productive member of society.” He further states, “Walter (his DRS counselor) has a job; he is also a humanitarian who went that step beyond.”

I am: a recovery support specialist, an author, a speaker, a father, a husband, and a grandfather, and DRS “helped me get over the top.”

“Tom was told he couldn’t and shouldn’t work by many professionals. It took time, determination and perseverance on both our parts, but I saw hidden potential and empowered Tom the freedom of choice to seek his dream. As a counselor, it is gratifying to see him achieve the personal and professional success he has.” Walter Lipe

When the factory where Randy Hoffsuemmer was employed closed its doors, he found himself unemployed and wondering what he would do with his life. He was young, and he had a family to support. What now? Fortunately, Randy was able to take advantage of a program offered by the West Central Development Council, Inc., which would help him realize his dream…a career in nursing.

Along the way, obstacles presented themselves. Because of a hearing loss, his accuracy for hearing such things as telephone orders from doctors or correct heart/pulse beats all became a challenge. DRS, WIA, and CMS Career Services went into action. This all became a lesson in partnerships—agencies working together for a common interest, customer success.

Randi was committed to his goal and worked hard to achieve it. The good news—Randy graduated and can now put the initials LPN after his name. The even better news—DRS counselor Timothy Preston in partnership with Career Counselor Disabled Workers’ Coordinator Jaci DeBrunt pursued testing for the Successful Disability Option (SDO) list. And the best news—today, Randy is living his dream. He is an LPN at the Veteran’s Home in Quincy and states, “This is the best job of my life.” Teamwork truly does make everyone’s job a bit easier and the life of individual customers more successful.

I am: a nurse, a husband, a father, and a believer.

“Tom was told he couldn’t and shouldn’t work by many professionals. It took time, determination and perseverance on both our parts, but I saw hidden potential and empowered Tom the freedom of choice to seek his dream. As a counselor, it is gratifying to see him achieve the personal and professional success he has.” Walter Lipe
Beth Pikelny has had more than her share of ups and downs. Homeless and unemployed, she had floundered before she came to DRS. Thanks to support from VR Counselor, Patricia Gallagher; Employment Resource Specialist, Carl Larson; the Community Work Incentive Coordinator representing the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program as well as family and friends, Beth was able to join the ranks of the employed. “I believe in DRS because they believed in me,” says Beth.

In her career as a Loss Mitigation Coordinator, Beth works with homeowners in danger of foreclosure to help them find solutions that will keep them in their homes. Her ability to listen empathetically and problem solve made her an ideal candidate for this job. Beth notes, “I enjoy being on the helping end of the equation. It’s hard for people to ask for help; you have to be patient and understanding with them. They often don’t see any solution; that’s where I come in.”

In addition to her current job, Beth is also involved in an internship with Ultimate Staffing. She will graduate in the summer of 2010 with a Human Resources Management Certificate. Although she knows that life will continue to offer its challenges, she also knows she is more prepared to meet them head on.

I am: a Loss Mitigation Coordinator, a problem solver, a daughter, and passionate about helping customers.

“Beth is the kind of person that knows good advice when she hears it. Once her intelligence and motivation get together on a goal, stand back and watch her go.”  
Carl Larson

“Beth Pikelny is always motivated, persistent, and determined in her job search efforts. She has excellent follow-through in everything you give her to do.”  
Patricia Gallagher

Community Work Incentive Coordinators from left to right: Janice Miller, Ron Mulvaney, Mariel Hamer, Kaylee Raymond, and Tyrone Thomas.
Norris Teague worked as a Ramp Service Man for United Airlines loading and unloading luggage, a job he very much enjoyed and planned to continue. Due to a back injury, those plans abruptly changed. Two surgeries later, he was told he could not return to that type of work. His immediate thought was to return to school and be retrained.

Norris received his Associate’s Degree from Wright Community College and then continued his education at Roosevelt University, where he was working towards a Bachelor’s Degree. “I was about to lose my financial aid when the Financial Aid Office referred me to DRS.”

“I bonded with my counselor, Sharon Ridgeway, from the very beginning. She kept me focused. Whenever I got discouraged, she would work with me to bring my spirits back up.” Norris did receive his Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology. He attributes his success in part to his VR counselor, so much so that he personally invited her to attend the graduation ceremonies.

After graduation, Counselor Carolyn Townsend worked with Mr. Teague in job placement. “DRS helped me find employment with the Veterans Administration Jessie Brown Medical Center as a secretary in the Cardiology Department. It’s a clerical job; however, I’ve been informed that I’m in line for a promotion in January 2010. I will qualify for a higher position based on my military service, my education, and my experience,” says Norris.

From a question of “what now” in 2004, to a question of “what if” in 2008, to a statement of “why not” in 2009, Norris is finding satisfaction in his new career as well as opportunity for additional challenge and advancement. This came about because of his fortitude, his commitment, and his training. DRS is proud to have played a part in his success.

“I am: a secretary, a sports fan, a tutor, a veteran, and a swimmer.

“It was a pleasure to work with Mr. Teague. I picked up where the original counselor, Sharon Ridgeway, left off. The North Pulaski office worked as a team to ensure a smooth transition.” Carolyn Townsend

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 2009 is expected to earn approximately $11,939 more per year after receiving DRS services.

Based on this estimate, DRS customers who became employed in FY 2009 can expect to earn $57.3 million more in the next year than their level of earnings prior to coming to DRS.

The tax revenue generated by this $57.3 million will be approximately $5.1 million per year.

The average hourly wage of VR customers increased 19.9 percent since 2003, from an average of $8.36 per hour in FY 2003 to $10.02 in FY 2009.

The percentage of DRS customers who receive employer-provided health insurance is at 27 percent in FY 2009.

As part of DRS’ effort to assist customers who receive home services in obtaining quality employment, DRS served 1,258 customers as dual cases in FY 2009.

5: Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) Meeting
7: Southland Transition Planning Committee
12: STEP Advisory Committee
13: Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) Meeting
13: Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD) Executive Committee Meeting
14: ICDD Meeting

Vocational Rehabilitation
For many years, Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Cheri Taylor worked in a profession she loved—a profession she describes as “meant to be.” Unfortunately, she was forced into retirement from that calling several years ago due to multiple medical concerns including osteoarthritis, bursitis, and fibromyalgia—all of which caused her to live with chronic pain and limited mobility. For many years, SSDI was her only source of income.

With little hope of being able to return to work, Cheri sought assistance from the Division of Rehabilitation Services. There, she was introduced to VR Counselor James Kolzow. Through counseling and guidance, job placement assistance, and much advocacy and communication with a potential employer, Cheri was able to obtain a job in a nursing home working with patients who have Alzheimer’s and Dementia. She says, “I help them feel cared for in the moment-to-moment world they live in.” Counselor Kolzow was instrumental in working with Cheri and the employer to facilitate scheduling needs as well as reasonable accommodations in carrying out the physical tasks at the work site to help ensure she was able to meet the essential functions of the job. She now works full time, has benefits, makes a good wage, and reports she has a new outlook on life and renewed energy and confidence in her abilities.

Cheri goes on to note, “I’ve been through depression. People should know there is always hope and that there are people out there that really care and that can help. That is what I found at DRS—you can’t give up.”

I am: a Christian, a nurse, a friend, and a people person.

“When Cheri came to see me, I could tell that she had a strong desire to work but she needed the confidence that she could succeed despite her limitations. We were able to find her a good job match and accommodations which proved to be the key to her success.” James Kolzow
Every once in a while there’s a customer that stands out, a customer who is “willing to go beyond him or herself.” That is Jordan Bopes. Jordan was born with arthrogryposis, which is a rare congenital disorder characterized by multiple limb anomalies, hypotonia and hyperreflexia involving all four extremities. As a very young child, he underwent multiple medical procedures, including correction of his club feet and casting of his neck to correct torticollis (an abnormal head position turn). He began to receive services through the DRS Home Services Program (HSP) when he was almost three.

Nothing has kept Jordan down. HSP Counselor Susann Whitney states, “From the first time I met Jordan, he was a happy child.” She goes on to note that he had congenital above-elbow amputation of the right arm, very little use of his left arm and hand, and could not straighten his legs or bear weight…but he kept going.

Jordan graduated from high school in May of 2009. With the help and guidance of his vocational rehabilitation counselor, he is attending the local community college majoring in Graphic Design. He plans on then transferring to Northern Illinois University to complete his bachelor’s degree.

What does the future hold for Jordan Bopes? If his life thus far is any indication of the determination and drive of this young man, we can certainly surmise, “the sky’s the limit.”

I am: determined, a student, a choir member, a friend, a son, and a budding graphic designer.

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**March Calendar**

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2: ICED Meeting
3: Post Secondary Education Summit/Springfield
4: Central Region Transition Consortiums
10: ICC Meeting
10: ICDD Executive Committee Meeting
11: ICDD Meeting
17: Southern Region Transition Consortiums
19: FAC Meeting
19: ICRE-R Advisory Council Meeting
24: Northern Region Transition Consortiums

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“Jordan’s family has been very supportive and have allowed him to grow and develop without ever holding him back. This is a wonderful young man who is going to do whatever he sets his mind to.” – Susann Whitney

“I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to serve Jordan in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Jordan was highly successful in high school, and I expect that his success will continue into his college years and beyond. I wish him luck in all of his endeavors and look forward to assisting him on his journey.” – Rachel Johnson

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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 DRS/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 2009.

- The number of Hispanic/Latino VR customers increased 102.2 percent from 2,632 in FY 2000 to 5,252 in FY 2009.
- In FY 2009, 320 Hispanic/Latino customers entered competitive employment.
- Average monthly earnings for employed Hispanic/Latino customers increased from $1,116 in FY 2000 to 1,299 in FY 2009.
- 20 percent of employed Hispanic/Latino customers received employer-provided health insurance in FY 2009.
- The number of Hispanic/Latino customers receiving home services increased 113.7 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2009.
Sarah Scudamore had been receiving services through the Home Services Program (HSP) for some time, but those services became even more significant in February 2007, when she was able to find a job working at Jewel-Osco. Services provided through HSP assisted Sarah in getting up in the morning and readying herself for work. In addition, through support from HSP, Sarah is becoming a better cook and is better able to manage her own earnings.

Sarah's job came as a result of the exuberance that is apparent as she goes through her everyday life. She and her mother were at Jewel-Osco doing grocery shopping. An employee noticed and commented on the skill and care that Sarah used while bagging the family groceries. When Sarah mentioned how she always wanted to be a bagger, she was encouraged to apply for a job. The rest is history. Sarah was hired and has been living her “dream” ever since.

Sarah Scudamore is a cheerful, happy, loving, and self-willed young lady who has worked hard to attain her highest level of independence. Her personality brightens up the room wherever she goes. — Olabisi Iranloye

This active, happy young woman lives a busy life. She has been dancing for years and recently appeared as a solo dancer in an adaptation of the Nutcracker Suite. She loves to travel, and, while on a recent family vacation to Barbados, she learned to surf. Sarah's parents have been supportive of all her efforts to become independent. Sarah, herself, is the motivation behind the person.

I am: a Jewel-Osco utility worker, a dancer, a surfer, a girlfriend, a daughter, and a traveler.

“Sarah Scudamore is a cheerful, happy, loving, and self-willed young lady who has worked hard to attain her highest level of independence. Her personality brightens up the room wherever she goes.” — Olabisi Iranloye
I am: a student, a scuba diver, a volunteer, and an employee.

Like many 18 year olds, Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI) student Mia Strayer is an ambitious young woman with a multitude of interests. She does well in her academic studies and is also involved in the Book Club, the Art Club and the school chorus. Of primary focus for Mia is her love of music and her devotion to playing the Celtic harp. She performs at local coffee houses and is in the process of recording an album. Mia cannot see the music because of a vision impairment but feels sure she will have a future in music. "It is said to become an accomplished harpist, one needs soft hands, a good memory, and natural talent," says Mia. With physical guidance, "learning by ear," and a strong commitment to her goals, Mia has mastered this stringed instrument.

I am: a student, a musician, a singer, and an employee.

Focused, respectful, reliable, a worker with outstanding character, eager to learn accurately describes Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) senior Drake Williams. In addition to his academic schedule and participation on the football, basketball and track teams, he is also involved in the School-To-Work Program which gives students a more in-depth view of the world of work, helps them identify specific occupational skills, and eases the transition from school to work. His employer states, "Drake is efficient and has a great attitude." Both on and off the athletic field, Drake has proven that he can balance extracurricular activities, employment, and schoolwork with honor, respect and admiration from his peers, coaches, teachers, and employers.

I am: a student, an athlete, and an employee.

Reginald Roudez is known as Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education – Roosevelt’s (ICRE-R) “man on the go.” Reggie’s plans for the future include living independently and becoming a minister or teacher’s assistant. As such, he is taking classes at Harold Washington College. In addition, for the last three years, Reggie has worked as a camp counselor with the Chicago Park District and was promoted to a camp supervisor this past summer. As busy as he is, Reggie makes time to do volunteer work at ICRE-R and at a daycare. What does he do in his spare time? Well, this year he has taken up scuba diving. Reggie is a “man on the go” who is motivated to be independent and carve his path to a bright future.

I am: a student, a scuba diver, a volunteer, and an employee.

May

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- ICR-E enrolled 44 students in FY 2009.
- ISD enrolled 287 students in FY 2009.
- ISVI enrolled 106 students in FY 2009.
- 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 as well as preschool, elementary, junior and senior high school programs.
- 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 curricular activities including sports, cheerleading, forensics, student council, national honor society, choir, etc.
- Established in 1849, is Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI), located in Jacksonville, offers 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 senior high school as well as 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.
- Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) is an educational service agency for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. ISD is a state-operated residential school that offers a transition-based program for students ages 14-21. ICR-E students attend Chicago Public Schools for their academic education, while ICR-E 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.
- ICR-E enrolled 44 students in FY 2009.
- ICDD Executive Committee Meeting
- ICC Meeting
- ICDD Executive Committee Meeting
- ICR-E Advisory Council Meeting
- ISD Advisory Council Meeting
- ICR-E Advisory Council Meeting
- Proposed ISVI Graduation
- ISD Graduation
Dean Ingalls’ story is one of crisis, survival and hope in the midst of despair…and with the help of Division of Rehabilitation Services, resolution.

Dean was a successful middle school teacher and coach in Shreveport, Louisiana. In 2000, Dean became ill with a virus, and his life began to change. “The illness which was attacking my immune system was causing me to lose my vision. That’s when I found out I had Viral Retinitis.” By 2002, Dean had all but lost his vision.

Dean contacted Louisiana Center for the Blind who assisted him with completing mobility training and instruction. With no hope of ever teaching again, he decided to learn the vending program. Dean’s perseverance remained constant, he completed the program and was ready to begin work. Then disaster struck. In September 2005, Hurricane Katrina brought devastation to the coast of Louisiana and Mississippi, destroying homes and displacing hundreds of thousands of residents. Some government programs were halted, including the vending program. Once again, Dean had to meet challenges. He notes, “Keep thinking that was my plan, now what?”

As we fast forward to the current time, Dean is tutoring middle school students, assisting on the track field and taking online courses in curriculum development. The accommodations I use are a source of technology training. They’re making me more marketable as a teacher.

Dr. Ingall’s story is one of crisis, survival and hope in the midst of despair…and with the help of Division of Rehabilitation Services, resolution.
"Seen any good movies lately or read any good books? Let me know. I am an avid reader and love to go to movies and plays. Have you seen Mama Mia? It’s my favorite," says Michele Lee. "I enjoy dining out with friends, trying new restaurants and discovering new wines. I am an active member of my church and part of the Young Adult Leadership Team; people look to me for inspiration. I’m also a painter who has had work showcased."

All of the above describe Michele well; however, there is much more to this tenacious young woman. She is a peer mentor at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago where she counsels spinal cord injury patients, and she lives in Chicago near the lakefront and thereby has easy access to Millennium Park and the Art Institute where she admits to love to spend time.

Through her work with VR Counselor Cheryl Eisner, Michele completed a degree in Marketing and Communications and is employed as a treasury analyst with the Aon Corporation. This resourceful, positive young woman is now entertaining the thought of going to graduate school to further her career. And, by the way, Michele just happens to have a disability. She has no sensory or motor function in her legs and very little function in her arms and hands. Her attitude about her life..."nothing is going to stop me."

I am: a college graduate, a Treasury Analyst, a painter, a sister, a daughter, an advocate, and a volunteer.

"Michele’s motivation and tenacity to overcome her obstacles has been unwavering throughout the VR process. It has been my honor to have worked with her. She is an inspiration to all." Cheryl Eisner

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**July**

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<td>26: 20th Anniversary of the ADA</td>
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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 49 years of age, has resided in a nursing facility for 16 months prior to reintegration, and requires $4,500 to transition to independent living.

- 34,309 people were served by HSP in FY 2009 at a cost of $497.3 million, a 12 percent increase over FY 2008.

- The average monthly cost of providing HSP services is $1,105 per person. HSP results in significant cost savings and dramatically improves the quality of life for people with disabilities.

- More than 1,650 customers have transitioned from nursing homes into the community through the Community Reintegration Program.
Dan Bishop has worked with DRS for a long time, and VR Counselor Dennis Gibbons has been a part of that vocational planning almost from the beginning. Dan started out in the Transition Program at Carbondale Community High School. After graduation, he worked with the Evaluation and Development Center and then went on to START, Inc., in Murphysboro. From there, Dennis and START Staff met with Kroger Management, and the employment process started to take shape. Today, Dan works at Kroger as a bagger/clerk, a job he finds challenging and enjoyable.

There is another side to Dan that he would like others to know about. He is an active member in his community where he notes he is a contributing member of his church and sings in the church choir. “I love action movies,” he says, and states that “Terminator 2” is one of his favorites. He is also a country music fan, particularly Alan Jackson, and is a proud owner of Mitzy, a miniature schnauzer.

With the help of his DRS counselor working in partnership with community agencies and resources, Dan has taken some very positive steps and made some important accomplishments. Of himself, he says, “I am lucky to have come from a loving family who provided me with a happy childhood. I am a person with a learning disability and autism. It gets me down sometimes, but I don’t let it keep me down! I’m much too busy for that.”

I am: a high school graduate, a bagger/clerk, a dog owner, a son, a brother, and an uncle.
The sound of an impact wrench ratchets in the background. A hammer pounds out a dent in a Pontiac Grand Am. It’s a wonder how anyone can even hear him or herself think! But for Jose Valenzuela and the staff at Gay’s Body Shop, Inc., in Ottawa, Illinois, communication is crystal clear.

From his first day of work/study experience at Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD), Jose Valenzuela was interested in autobody. “I really liked working with tools and watching cars being painted,” he says. After graduation from ISD, his Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD), Paul Breidenbach, worked with him to secure employment as a car detailer. Jose knew, however, that he had bigger goals in mind: a home of his own and a family to fill it. Therefore, taking a second job to gain more experience, even temporarily, would get him closer to his goal. It was then that he was introduced to the people at Gay’s Body Shop, Inc.

As luck would have it, Gay’s needed full-time help. Owner, Grant Crockett, states, “It didn’t bother us at all to know Jose was deaf. We just knew we would have to work smarter in order for communication to be effective.” The result: many staff volunteered to take sign language courses in order to communicate effectively with Jose. And, as it turned out, those sign language skills came in handy in communicating with each other over the din at the shop. Jose sums it all up by saying, “Being one of the guys is one of the best benefits of all.”

I am: a homeowner, a family man, an autobody technician, and one of the guys.
All across Illinois, employers are putting workers with disabilities into jobs. These jobs not only meet the employer’s specific needs but also afford workers with disabilities the opportunity to reach their potential. In the process, these employers are serving their consumers and making their businesses stronger and more profitable.

The employers featured here, as do so many other employers, understand the business reasons for hiring workers with disabilities: they are dependable, hard working, loyal, and tend to stay on the job longer. And… they are skilled and can do the job and do it well. In short, they increase the “bottom line”—profit. These reasons and many more make investing in workers with disabilities a win/win venture. Moreover, these employers know that hiring workers with disabilities is the right thing to do in more ways than they can count in a ledger or explain to shareholders. Inclusive hiring practices make companies and communities STRONGER.

DRS salutes Jewel-Osco and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the top employers in the state of Illinois. They have hired countless workers with disabilities over the years and tell us they are committed to continuing this trend. They know the value of good workers, and can proudly say:

**I am an employer who values diversity, loyalty and customer service.**

**I am a vital component of the economic well being of my local, state and national community.**

**I am one of Illinois’ finest employers.**

"The U.S. EPA has a long tradition of hiring and promoting people with disabilities. Working with the Division of Rehabilitation Services provides an effective way to turn our mission into truly human realities, touching lives and offering a future full of hope to all qualified individuals."  
Margrett Hardman, Regional SEPM Coordinator

"Jewel-Osco values and understands the importance of a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities. These associates are a valuable part of the Jewel-Osco team, and their hard work and dedication are critical to the company’s success. Their contributions help make Jewel-Osco one of the leading grocery and drug retailers in the state of Illinois."

Keith Nielsen, President Jewel-Osco

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### October National and Illinois Disability Employment Awareness Month

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**Keith Nielsen, President Jewel-Osco**

"Jewel-Osco values and understands the importance of a diverse workforce that includes people with disabilities. These associates are a valuable part of the Jewel-Osco team, and their hard work and dedication are critical to the company’s success. Their contributions help make Jewel-Osco one of the leading grocery and drug retailers in the state of Illinois."

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**Margrett Hardman, Regional SEPM Coordinator**

"The U.S. EPA has a long tradition of hiring and promoting people with disabilities. Working with the Division of Rehabilitation Services provides an effective way to turn our mission into truly human realities, touching lives and offering a future full of hope to all qualified individuals."
“I am a breakthrough,” says Valerie Brock. She also notes that she loves camping, the outdoors and most sports. And, she proudly states that she is a Chicago Bears fan. Beyond those interests, Valerie has much more of a story. She is a retired E4 Airman from the United States Air Force and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Valerie worked with Thresholds Transitions who referred her to DRS. Through a partnership effort by both entities, she was offered vocational counseling and guidance, vocational training and supportive services, all of which focused on her getting a job and being successful at that job. Although Valerie had previous job experience, her skills needed to be updated, and training and counseling would afford her additional opportunities to achieve that success.

Today, Valerie is an Intake Information Representative with EEOC, Chicago District Office, where she educates employers and employees on discrimination issues. What she says she likes most about her job is the “opportunities it provides me to help others.”

Of her goals for the future, Valerie says, “I am passionate about what I believe in. I want to be debt free, to buy a camper, and take a month long vacation in Africa. I want to continue to grow and prosper with my life partner.”

I am: a daughter, mother, grandmother, life companion, and an advocate for battered women and workers with disabilities.

“Valerie Brock has been a pleasure to work with. She presented a professional demeanor to both staff and prospective employers who were very impressed by her from the very beginning. Throughout the job search process, Ms. Brock demonstrated considerable initiative by her willingness to go the extra mile despite personal and professional obstacles. She will be an asset as an employee of the EEOC.” Mary Bennett

Valerie Brock

November

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

2: SILC Quarterly Meeting
2: ICED Meeting
3: Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Advisory Council Meeting
4: Southland Transition Planning Committee
10: ICC Meeting
17: ICDD Executive Committee Meeting
18: ICDD Meeting
19: ICRI-R Advisory Council Meeting

Vocational Rehabilitation
Theresa Johnson loved her job as a nurse. She was working in a job she was devoted to in a career area where she felt like she was contributing. When a stroke made it impossible for her to continue to perform her duties, she notes that she “was devastated and felt lost.” Theresa received a Ticket to Work from the Social Security Administration, but she was confused by what it meant. She contacted several agencies but never felt it was a good fit for her needs…that was until she met VR Counselor Peter Noll from the Sterling DRS Office. “Peter helped me figure out what to do and where I might fit,” says Theresa.

Peter and Theresa began to explore job areas that would not only offer an opportunity to work but would also allow Theresa the same feeling of self-worth and contribution she felt in her previous career. That came about. Theresa now has a job she feels confident she can do. She works from her home for the National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) call center. Her job duties consist of assisting customers from 185 stores in getting the products and customer services they need. She helps customers locate products, resolves billing issues, and answers questions regarding other problems they may be facing.

“I am a person who overcame a stroke,” says Theresa. She adds, “After the stroke, I felt there was nothing I could do. I was not a contributor to my family or the community, but now I am a contributor.”

I am: a problem solver, a mother, a grandmother, a customer service representative, a nurse, a caregiver, and a contributor.

Theresa was my first experience with NTI (National Telecommuting Institute) and her first experience as well. She never did any kind of customer service, but she had many transferable people skills. She was very motivated to work and to try her best. She has been with NTI ever since. She has not only mastered that job, but she still says to this day that she really loves her job and working from home.”

Peter Noll

I am a contributor

Theresa Johnson

a Customer Service Representative

Vocational Rehabilitation/Assistive Technology

December

S M T W T F S

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19 20 21 22 23 24 25

26 27 28 29 30 31

1: Southern Region Transition Consortiums
2: Southland Transition Planning Committee
7: ICED Meeting
8: Central Region Transition Consortiums
13: FAC Meeting
15: Northern Region Transition Consortiums
## DHS/DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program
### FY 2009 Final Data Summary

### Service Data

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### Customers By Service Category

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### Customers By Race/Ethnic Group

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### Customers By Age Group

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### Customers By Disability Category

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<td>Physical Disability</td>
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<td>Mental Retardation</td>
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<td>Learning Disability</td>
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<td>Alcohol-Drug Abuse</td>
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</table>

### Average Monthly Earnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>FY 2000</th>
<th>FY 2009</th>
<th>Percent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$1,096</td>
<td>$1,298</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$1,057</td>
<td>$1,288</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>$1,116</td>
<td>$1,299</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>$1,044</td>
<td>$1,269</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,089</td>
<td>$1,292</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rehabilitation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>FY 2000</th>
<th>FY 2009</th>
<th>Percent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comparison of Data by Race/Ethnic Group, FY 2000 to FY 2009
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.
BRRR… On February 8, 2007, 20 Illinois School for the Deaf students and 6 staff braved zero degree temperatures at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Clustered together in winter gear proudly wearing the school colors of orange and black and sitting in the front row of the bleacher seating, they witnessed Illinois State Senator Barack Obama announce that he would run for the office of President of the United States of America. What an honor it was when Mrs. Obama came forth and signed a greeting to the students and gave autographs.

WHEW… On August 23, 2008, in sweltering 90+ degree weather, this same group of people traveled to Springfield once again, this time to witness Senator Barack Obama announce Senator Joe Biden as his running mate.

WOW… On January 20, 2009, on a blustery winter day, the group was invited to Washington, D.C., to witness the inauguration of Senator Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States and Senator Joe Biden as his Vice President.

Students describe these historic events as a “dream come true,” “a lifetime of memories,” “a chance to be a part of history,” and thank Senator Deanna Demuzio, who was instrumental in getting the tickets for all three of the events, and Illinois Senior Senator Dick Durbin, who hosted the group on a tour of the Library of Congress while they were in Washington.

ISD students can give chapter and verse on life’s challenges. They can also echo and support the message of hope—a message they live and practice daily. They are students, they are friends, they are sisters and brothers, they are daughters and sons—they, like all young Americans, are the hope of the future.