

# 2016

## VIRGINIA'S BEST



VIRGINIA STATE  
REHABILITATION  
COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES



# 2016

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## VIRGINIA'S BEST:

Each year, more than 4,000 Virginians with significant disabilities become gainfully employed after receiving services from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' vocational rehabilitation program. The individuals featured on the cover of this report have been recognized at Project SEARCH graduations, Champions of Disability Employment events and in the State Rehabilitation Council annual reports. We continue to congratulate them and their employers.

1. Teena Carter, certified nursing assistant, Morningside House of Leesburg.
2. Justin Spurlock, AutoCAD operator, Roof Consulting Services Inc., Glen Allen.
3. Tevin O'Brien, custodian, McLean (Regency) Sport & Health, McLean.
4. Kalyn Hutson, salon clerk, Mango Salon, Richmond.
5. Mark Schomaker, electrical engineer, Delta Star, Lynchburg.
6. Daniel Altomonte, production worker, The Hershey Co., Stuarts Draft.
7. Elvis Cheatham, electrical designer, Harrell Design Group, N.C.
8. Kathleen Colon, health care practitioner, Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center, Midlothian.
9. Valerie Jones, owner, All Ways There Home Care, Newport News.
10. DuRaun Druitt, floor technician, Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center.
11. Matt Shelor, independent living coordinator, Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, Christiansburg.
12. Brian Evans, assistant vice-president, Bank of America Merchant Services, Henrico County.
13. Damon Anderson, web developer, A Security Training Academy Inc., Annandale



## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to share with you the State Rehabilitation Council's 2016 Annual Report on the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. This report features as "Virginia's Best" some of the 4,060 VR consumers who became successfully employed during the past year and Virginia's employers who hire our consumers into competitive jobs. It also reviews DARS' innovative services and programs that assist individuals who have significant disabilities to receive the education and training they need to enter or stay in the workforce.

The SRC is proud of the DARS VR program, including the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), working in collaboration with other state agencies and community partners to assist in developing highly qualified workers for Virginia's employers. WWRC helps to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of individuals with significant disabilities to live independent lives.

I encourage you to review this report and share it with others.

Bruce Phipps  
SRC Chairman



## COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

Our Commonwealth is routinely cited as being the "best." We are noted as the "best state for business" and as a "best state to retire to." Not only do these distinctions allow us to be proud, but such declarations are inducements for future investments and resources to come to us.

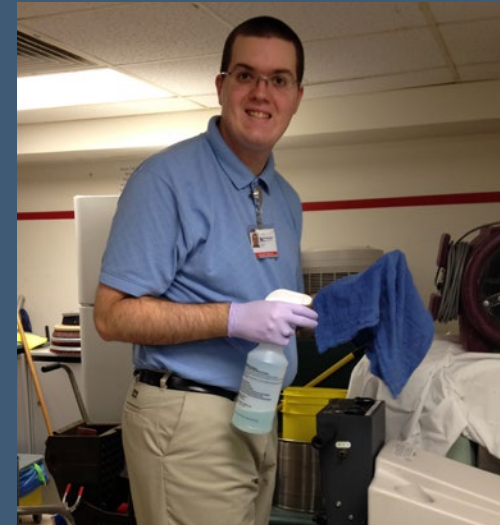
DARS is included in many conversations about best practices for vocational rehabilitation. This summer, our staff and colleagues were cited for our Project SEARCH initiative. When national discussions focus on rehabilitation research, our study on return on investment is acclaimed as a national leader. I am confident that future conversations around the "best" will include our emerging VR effort, supported by new training at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, to prepare our clients to enter manufacturing jobs in our new Virginia economy.

Here the Council focuses on some of the "best" clients who found careers in our Commonwealth Workforce. Thanks to all for learning more about the best that DARS can do.

Jim Rothrock, Commissioner  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

## SUCCESS STORIES

### ZACH SUIT



**Zach Suit**, who has autism, has been nonverbal his entire life, making school, interviews and the job searching process very difficult.

After graduating from high school, Zach participated in Project SEARCH at Novant Health UVA Health System Prince William Medical Center, located in Manassas, where teachers and counselors worked with him in the classroom and in his internship duties. Partway through the program, Zach attended the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center for two weeks of training on a device, called NOVA chat, which helps individuals communicate with others.

After the training, he returned with the device to Project SEARCH and gave a speech during the completion ceremonies for his internship site. Following graduation, Zach began working in environmental services at the hospital and interacts with coworkers with confidence.

After the event celebrating her graduation from the CVS Health jobs training program at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, **Kaylee Merrick** was handed an official CVS shirt by the Stafford store manager and told, "You are now employed."

Kaylee completed the four-week CVS training curriculum at WWRC followed by an internship. "I'm employed and it feels wonderful. It feels like all the struggles that I went through here and in life have finally accomplished." She now works part time as a service clerk at two CVS locations in Stafford.

Since she was a young girl, Kaylee has battled learning disabilities, depression, abuse, ADHD and other psychological challenges, including the suicide of her brother in 2015.

After his death, Kaylee and her mother got tattoos featuring semicolons. "It means the story is not over; life goes on," she said. For Kaylee, the semicolon symbolizes the opportunities that lie ahead for her.

### KAYLEE MERRICK



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL 2016

## SRC MEMBERS



Dack Axelle, Henrico  
Robbin Blankenship, Henrico  
Suzanne Bowers, Bealeton  
Pamela Cobler, Martinsville  
Tonya Milling, Danville  
Linda Garris-Bright, Virginia Beach  
Samantha M. Hollins, Richmond  
Deloris Johnson, Harrisonburg  
Richard Keene, Abingdon  
Ellen A. McIlhenny, Montpelier  
Bruce Phipps, Roanoke  
Jim Rothrock, Richmond  
Lauren Snyder-Roche, Poquoson  
Sally J. Thompson, Hampton  
Julie Triplett, Richmond

### ATTEND A MEETING:

The quarterly State Rehabilitation Council meetings are open to the public. Meeting locations, dates and times are posted at [www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2](http://www.va-src.org/bulletin.asp#2), [www.vadars.org/events.aspx](http://www.vadars.org/events.aspx) and <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov>.

## SRC ACTIVITIES

The SRC held its annual planning retreat in November 2015 to review the effectiveness of the VR program during 2015 and to develop recommendations for the program.

Members attended the Independent Living Conference, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Samantha Hollins, Robbin Blankenship and Ellen McIlhenny staffed a booth to share information about the Council and recruit new members.

Bruce Phipps and Tonya Milling represented the SRC at the National Consortium of State Rehabilitation Councils' Leadership and Training Sessions in Seattle and Bethesda, Md.

The SRC renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with DARS on the administration

of the VR consumer satisfaction survey and approved the annual reports on survey results. The SRC has participated in assisting with the survey's design and the use of the results for program quality improvement.

The SRC reviewed results of the agency's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment; information from this three-year assessment was used to develop the VR Services portion of the Combined State Plan, which was reviewed and approved by the SRC.

Ellen McIlhenny continued to represent the SRC on the Return on Investment (ROI) Advisory Committee and the SRC supported the agency in its ROI grant submission.

The Council revised its by-laws to operate without its two standing committees. All business will be

conducted before the full Council, with leadership provided by the Executive Committee.

The Council reviewed and endorsed the 2016-2018 WWRC Blueprint for Direction.

The Council recommended renewing the contracts for the four Hearing Officers.

The Council provided input into the implementation of the Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, specifically those affecting the Order of Selection process and services to youth and students with disabilities.

## SRC RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal Rehabilitation Act requires that the State Rehabilitation Council "(r)evolve, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the State unit's responsibilities under this part, particularly responsibilities related to eligibility, including order of selection." The SRC would like to be advised on a quarterly basis about the status of order of selection and establish a more consultative role with DARS on the implementation of Order of Selection, especially plans for the opening and closing of priority categories. By better understanding the intricacies of order of selection and the factors that impact decisions, the SRC can play a more effective role in advising the agency and serving as an asset with community partners in explaining the rationale and need for these decisions.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2016, the agency spent \$20 million in case service funds for services for VR clients. While FFY 2016 was a successful year for the program with more than 4,000 successful employment outcomes, the SRC would like to see the agency return to its 2015 spending pattern of \$22.5 million in case service funds to help open all Order of Selection priority categories and provide stability in service provision.

The SRC looks forward to the agency's continued work in developing and delivering innovative programs, in collaboration with other state agencies and community partners, to better serve VR

consumers and assist them in obtaining good paying jobs with opportunities for advancement. The SRC encourages the agency to expand these programs to geographic areas of Virginia that are underserved and to increase opportunities for VR counselors in these areas to learn of the success of these programs and utilize them for the benefit of their consumers.

The SRC continues to be pleased to see a gradual increase in the wages of VR consumers. The SRC recommends continuing focus on wage quality for consumers and opportunities for obtaining career credentials and training that may lead to stable and high paying jobs.

## SRC EMPLOYEE LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT



The SRC honored Beth Groff, business development manager and counselor manager in the Petersburg office, with the Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Recognition Award. The award is given annually to a Division of Rehabilitative Services employee for outstanding service in the disability community and vocational rehabilitation field. Groff was recognized for nearly 30 years of helping individuals with disabilities rejoin the workforce and strengthening relationships with area businesses to provide a pipeline of qualified candidates.

## DARS/WWRC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### CAREER PATHWAYS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES PROJECT

The Virginia Departments for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Blind and Vision Impaired received an initial five-year grant of \$4.3 million from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration to develop and implement a demonstration project to enhance the capacity of existing regional career pathways systems in Virginia to serve individuals with disabilities, including youth and veterans.

The project's primary goal is to help individuals with disabilities acquire marketable skills and recognized post-secondary credentials that enable them to secure competitive, integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations. Together with career pathways system partners in the Commonwealth, the project will develop and test a model for implementing promising practices and strategies for youth and adults with disabilities to effectively access existing career pathways in at least two high-demand occupational clusters. Virginia has since received a supplemental grant of \$342,000 to provide national dissemination activities and expand the project into the Peninsula area.

### PROJECT SEARCH

About 130 high school students in Virginia with developmental and intellectual disabilities participated in internships in the 2015-2016 school year to gain valuable work experience and skills as part of the innovative Project SEARCH program.

The program in Virginia began during the 2009-2010 academic year. Since then, more than 600 students have participated in Project SEARCH, a national career program for high school students with disabilities that provides hands-on training during the senior year.

DARS, the Virginia Department of Education, local host businesses and public school systems coordinate the program. DARS provided more than

\$700,000 in funding for job coaches to work with students throughout the 2016-2017 academic year to ensure that students learn the responsibilities and duties of the workplace. There are 17 Project SEARCH sites in Virginia, including new host sites in Lynchburg and Loudon County.

Throughout the school year, DARS vocational rehabilitation counselors guide participating students, working with teachers from the local school districts, job coaches from local Employment Service Organizations and staff from host businesses who serve as liaisons and mentors. These partners work each school day to make



PROJECT SEARCH  
EXCEPTIONAL OUTCOMES AWARD

the students' transition seamless from the initial interview for the program to its completion.

At the 10th annual Project SEARCH conference in Orlando, Fla., all 13 Virginia programs that operated during the 2014-2015 academic year received awards in recognition of their employment outcomes. In addition, Virginia won the first and only "Exceptional Outcomes Award" because 100 percent of its programs complied with their data entry submissions; all programs had 70 percent or higher employment outcomes; and six of the programs had 100 percent placement when the data were reported.

### CVS HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

Gov. Terry McAuliffe visited the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center on April 11, 2016, to recognize the first graduates of WWRC's materials handling curriculum who received supplemental training and customized retail skills development. A mock store donated by CVS Health serves as an on-campus teaching facility for this training program.

Program graduates qualify to apply for jobs at any of the company's more than 340 CVS Pharmacy locations across the Commonwealth. Student enrollment began in January 2016, with eight individuals enrolling and completing the CVS curriculum. Graduates work with staff from DARS and local CVS Pharmacy hiring managers for employment consideration. Four of the eight individuals from the initial group have found employment, including two at CVS stores. Learn more about this training at <http://bit.ly/29o8uOB>.

In August 2016, CVS corporate executives Duane Rohr and John White visited WWRC to see the progress of the program. Mr. Rohr told WWRC staff that the center is considered a model for how to operate a mock store for training and CVS officials refer to the WWRC program in discussions with other entities about similar ventures. CVS Health has hired 12 DARS consumers this year and several are preparing to leave WWRC as CVS job seekers.

### WWRC MANUFACTURING ACADEMY AND MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

This summer, WWRC held its first week-long manufacturing academy for 12 youth with disabilities selected through its PERT (Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition) Program. Each consumer represented a DRS district.

The purpose of this "Dream It, Do It" Academy was to pilot a career exploration pathway for transition-aged youth with disabilities as a means to introduce them to careers in advanced manufacturing. The Academy was highly successful and two sessions are planned for 2017. Watch a video about the Academy at <http://bit.ly/2atR9D2>.

In August 2016, WWRC enrolled eight participants in its Manufacturing Technology Training (MTT) Program, designed and developed in partnership with the Virginia Manufacturers Association and the Manufacturing Skills Institute. Participants interested in the MTT Program are required to receive a customized vocational evaluation recommendation for manufacturing and to attain OSHA 10-hour certification for enrollment eligibility.

The 15-week MTT Program offers graduates the opportunity to test for two industry-recognized credentials: Manufacturing Specialist and Manufacturing Technician Level 1 (MT1) certifications. Participants are also encouraged to attain at least the silver level of the nationally recognized Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) as part of their curriculum. Agency consumers who possess the MT1 credential are highly sought after by manufacturing employers across all industry sectors.

WWRC's initial MTT Program cohort underwent testing in November 2016 and five of the seven participants passed their MT1 exam to earn this capstone certification. Screening and enrollment is underway for new MTT Program participants, with three cohorts scheduled annually beginning in January 2017.

# VR 2016 PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

## HIGHLIGHTS AND OUTCOMES FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016

The VR program empowers Virginians with significant disabilities to become employed or retain or advance in the workplace through specified training, services and supports provided them to reach their employment goals. VR's unique model pairs the consumer with a qualified VR counselor to develop an individualized plan for employment leading to employment in a competitive and integrated setting.

This past year, DARS continued under an Order of Selection due to insufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals. However, the agency made great strides in reducing the waiting list. More than 5,700 individuals came off the waiting list to receive services and by the end of the federal fiscal year, only 41 individuals remained. Effective Nov. 1, 2016, all categories once again were closed. DARS expects the waiting list will again grow in the coming federal fiscal year.

Other program performance highlights include:

- 10,448 individuals applied for services, an 8.7 percent increase from the previous year.
- 29,399 individuals were served, 470 more than the previous year, of whom 49.8 percent were transition age (14-24). Of those served, 87.9 percent were most significantly disabled.
- 8,380 individualized plans for employment were developed, a 45 percent increase from the previous year.
- For the third year, DARS surpassed its goal for successful employment outcomes: 4,060 consumers became successfully employed after receiving services, with 99.2 percent employed in a competitive job. Their average hourly earnings were \$10.24, an increase over the previous year.
- The program achieved a 56 percent success rate.

During the past year, DARS purchased about \$20.5 million in services needed for consumers to reach their employment goal, a \$2 million decrease from the previous year. About \$14 million was spent through Employment Services Organizations. The next largest category of purchased services was training, including college tuition costs, at \$1.2 million.

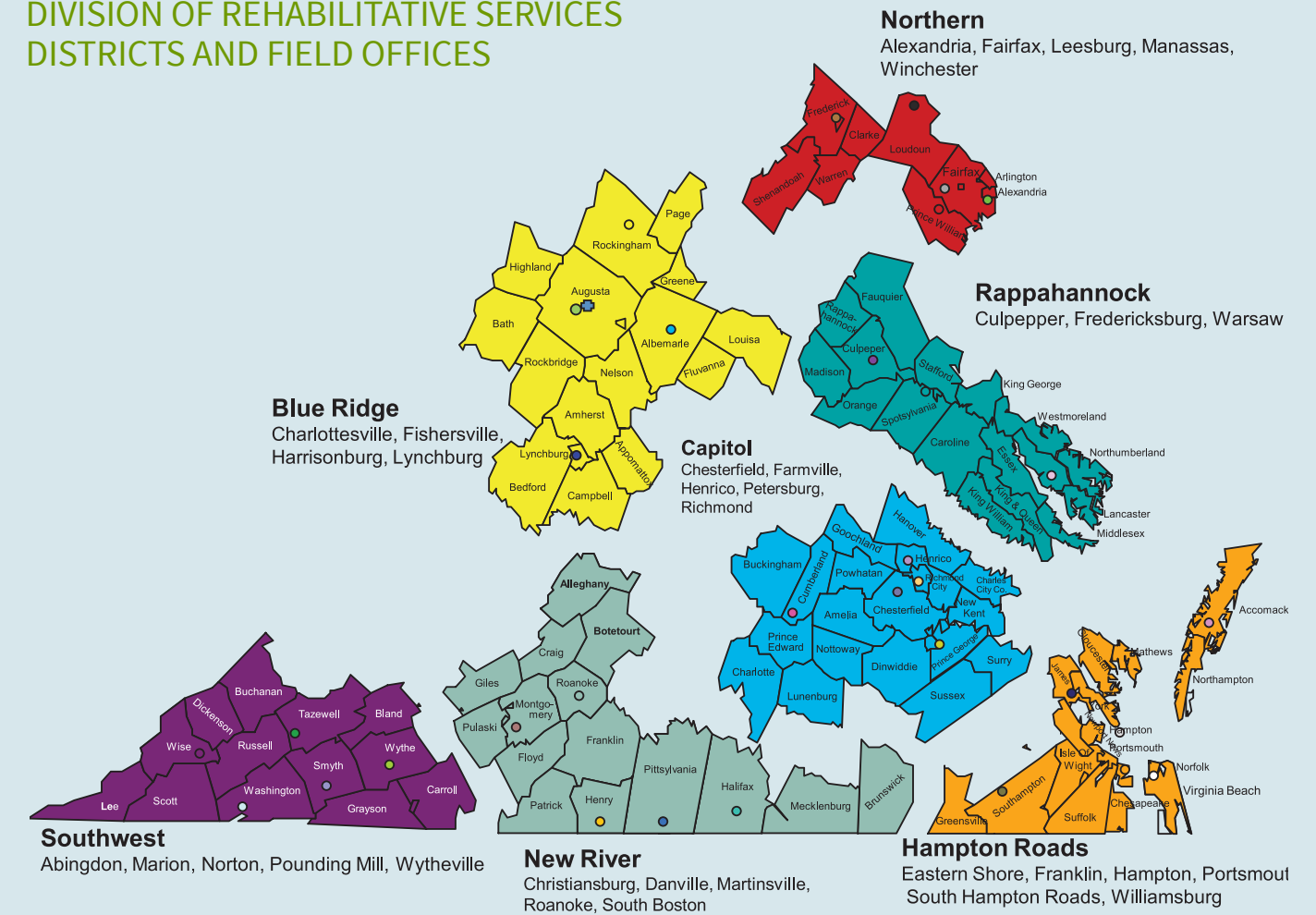
## CONSUMER SATISFACTION

The SRC works in partnership with DARS to assess consumers' satisfaction with their VR services. Since 2014, DARS has used a model of assessing a sample of consumers in service delivery (following development of the individualized plan for employment, but prior to employment). This model aids in capturing consumer perception during service delivery and provides an opportunity for direct feedback to management and counselors.

Highlights from the FFY 2015 survey are provided in the accompanying table. Survey results show that most consumers were aware of things that had helped them move closer to their job goals. The top areas were related to staff assistance and self-perception (consumer). Not surprisingly, the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and school/training were mentioned more frequently among transition age consumers.

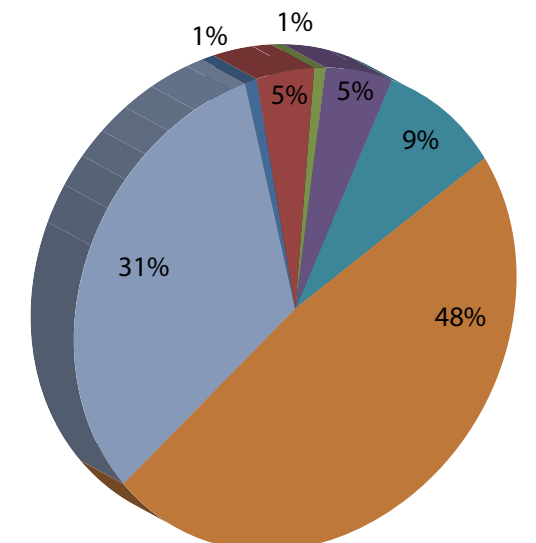
SURVEY ITEM	Percentage of "Yes" Responses
Have agreed with counselors on a plan for reaching their job goal	74%
Counselors were helpful in making connections	71%
Counselors kept in contact	71%
Counselors were meeting timetables	62%
Counselors were doing what they said they would do	69%
Consumers believed everyone was working together to help	67%

## DIVISION OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DISTRICTS AND FIELD OFFICES



## IMPAIRMENTS OF DRS CONSUMERS SERVED IN 2016 (TOTAL 9,759)

- Blind/Vision Impairments
- Deaf/Hearing Impairments (Includes Deaf-Blind)
- Communicative Impairments Expressive/Receptive
- Orthopedic, Neurological, Mobility/Dexterity
- Physical Respiratory Fatigue
- Cognitive/Other Mental Impairments
- Psychosocial Impairments



# WWRC 2016 PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Located in Fishersville, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center is a premier center for providing vocational rehabilitation evaluation and services, annually serving about 3,000 Virginians with disabilities. In 2016, 740 of the 4,060 VR consumers successfully moving to employment were served at WWRC. In addition, approximately 36 percent of the VR consumers of transition age who became successfully employed received services at WWRC and 45 percent of VR consumers with autism whose cases were successfully closed also went to WWRC for services. This demonstrates the changing demographics at WWRC.

WWRC continues to emphasize the attainment of workforce credentials within its training programs. The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is a portable skills credential assuring employers that a job applicant has the skills sought in today's work environment. It has become a valuable assessment and training tool for employers throughout Virginia. As driving is often critical to employment, it is of note that 94 consumers earned their learner's permits and 102 earned their driver's license.

## WWRC DATA

### FFY 2016 WWRC VOCATIONAL TRAINING OUTCOME DATA

	Number of Successful Vocational Closures	% of Successful Vocational Closures (Rehabilitation Rate)	Average Hourly Wage
Auto Mechanics	3	50.0	\$11.67
Building Trades	21	75.0	\$10.20
External Training Option	35	71.4	\$9.46
Food Service	36	75.0	\$9.02
Health Occupations	15	88.2	\$9.89
Materials Handling	51	76.1	\$9.57
Business & Information Technology	25	67.6	\$9.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>73.2%</b>	<b>\$9.53</b>

Note: Preliminary year-end data

### Number of DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers Served by WWRC Service Area FFY16

Vocational Evaluation (VE) Total	1,069
VE (Non-PERT)	549
PERT	484
PERT Transition Academy	36
Vocational Training - Fully Enrolled	421
LSTP (9-week program)	469
Medical Rehab Services	1,219
Primary Medical Rehab Services	582

### Workforce Credentials Obtained, FFY 2016

STEM-H	
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	13
Personal Care Aide (PCA)	6
CPR and First Aid	41
CompTIA A+	8
OSHA-10	11
NET+	1
CEB Microsoft Tech Call Center	5
<b>STEM-H SubTotal</b>	<b>85</b>

Other Industry Recognized	
Career Readiness Certificate (CRC)	173
ServSafe	80
Customer Service Certificate (CSC)	171
VDOT Flagger	4
<b>Other Industry SubTotal</b>	<b>428</b>

## WOODROW WILSON REHABILITATION CENTER HONORED BY MANUFACTURING SKILLS INSTITUTE

The Manufacturing Skills Institute honored WWRC as the recipient of the **Virginia Manufacturers Association Workforce Partner of the Year Award** for outstanding leadership in changing perceptions about careers in manufacturing and in increasing access to industry certifications for Virginians with disabilities. Utilizing MSI workforce solutions, WWRC established a new job skills academy to close the career interest/skills gaps and connect its consumers with careers in advanced technology industries, such as manufacturing. Earlier this year, WWRC launched its Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities project, which is overseen by DARS.



## CHAMPIONS OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT, CHARLOTTESVILLE

In October, as part of activities celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the DARS Charlottesville office was one of several DRS offices to host an event to recognize local employers for their efforts in hiring individuals with disabilities. Honored as "Champions of Disability Employment" were Care Advantage, the City of Charlottesville's Commissioner of Revenue Office, CVS Health and GE Energy Connections. Robert Alley, district manager for CVS Health, was the keynote speaker for the event. WCAV-TV interviewed Commissioner Rothrock as part of its coverage: <http://bit.ly/2edc51S>.



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and in collaboration with advocacy groups, consumers and their families, is to ensure that Virginians with disabilities receive quality services while seeking to achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

## OUR VISION

All Virginians with disabilities will have access to quality services leading to meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.



## CONTACT US

### CALL:

Voice: (800) 552-5019 | (804) 662-7000.  
TTY: (800) 464-9950 | (804) 662-9040; Fax: (804) 662-7663.

### WRITE:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Henrico, VA 23229  
Email: [dars@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:dars@dars.virginia.gov) | Online: [www.va-src.org](http://www.va-src.org).

## STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

If you are interested in a gubernatorial appointment to the Council, you may begin the application process with this form. Please indicate your:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email, fax or mail this form to the SRC Administrative Assistant at:

[Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov); 804-662-7663 (fax)

**Jennifer Woodward**  
**DARS/State Rehabilitation Council**  
**8004 Franklin Farms Drive**  
**Henrico, VA 23229**

Upon receipt, someone from the SRC will contact you to discuss your interest. However, to officially apply for this appointment, you must contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office. You may obtain information about the formal application process by calling the Secretary's office at (804) 786-2441 or you may apply online at <https://commonwealth.virginia.gov>.

Thank you for your interest in the SRC.