

**The Rehab Council Connection, a quarterly e-newsletter**  
**Volume 3, Issue 1**  
**January 2010**

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**Aguirre Serves as Interim DVR Director**

On Jan. 7, Andres Aguirre was appointed to serve as the Interim Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation following the departure of Lynnae Rutledge, who was appointed as the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Aguirre, who worked for the division for 13 years as a Counselor and Supervisor in Central and Eastern Washington before coming to the State Office, brings an informed perspective about the challenges of delivering services statewide. In 2007, He joined the Field Services Unit focusing on a range of DVR's partnerships particularly those with Community Rehabilitation Programs and Centers for Independent Living. Aguirre served with the National Guard and was deployed to Iraq in 2004. He accepted this short term appointment as Interim Director with the understanding that doing so would leave him ineligible to seek the permanent position.

Andres Aguirre is taking the helm of DVR during a legislative session in which it is imperative for the division to secure the \$4 million dollars in State General Funds to receive the full federal grant allotment needed to provide services in Federal Fiscal Year 2011. Governor Gregoire included the supplemental funding in the budget proposal she sent to the legislature but the final disposition will not be known until the short session concludes. This is just one example of the issues on his plate. In the video announcing the appointment Secretary Susan Dreyfus, details her expectations for Aguirre's tenure which can

be summarized as *continue on the course charted by your predecessor.*

Aguirre is both humble and realistic. His own priorities during his time as Director are to ensure a sound operation and to support the work of the field. “I appreciate the good work that staff does on a regular basis. There are instances of frustrations but there are many more instances when things go right” he said.

Aguirre’s ability to focus on people and the practical services they need to create change in their own lives precedes his work at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In fact, it is what drew him to DVR in the first place. Before coming to DVR Aguirre worked for a community-based organization providing mental health services. “As a case manager I was always including employment goals in treatment plans. The people I worked with needed to stay occupied and make some money. My clinical supervisor said, ‘That’s not what we do.’ I accompanied someone on my caseload on an intake with DVR and I just thought what they do makes sense.”

Our members look forward to working with Andres Aguirre during this time of transition.

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Content of Sidebar text from Page 1:

Our Volunteer Members

Jeffry Abe-Gunter

Spokane

Valerie Arnold

Elma

Don Brandon

Mountlake Terrace

Sandra Carr  
Spokane  
Sharey Cleveland  
Nespelem  
Vickie Foster  
Seattle  
Rudy Hernandez  
Burien  
Michael Hudson  
Bellingham  
Jerry Johnsen  
Seattle  
Susan Kautzman  
Grandview  
Jim Larson  
Olympia  
Vanessa Lewis  
Tacoma  
Martin McCallum  
Olympia  
R.L. Roberts  
Spokane

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Additional Sidebar Content from Page 1:

*SAVE THE DATES*

WSRC Quarterly Meeting Activities

*Customer Forum*  
*April 15<sup>th</sup>*  
*2:00 pm-4:00pm*

*Full Council Meeting  
April 16th  
9:00am-4:00 pm*

All activities held at:  
*Doubletree Seattle Airport  
18740 International Blvd.  
Seattle, WA 98188*

ASL Interpretation provided

Bus route 194  
Stop at 188<sup>th</sup> & International Blvd.  
To RSVP or request accommodation e-mail:  
[langjk@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:langjk@dshs.wa.gov)

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Additional Sidebar Content from Page 1:

The WSRC is saving tax dollars and trees by making our 2009 Annual Report available online or by request on CD. View the report at: [www.wastrehabcouncil.org](http://www.wastrehabcouncil.org) then click Annual reports on the left upper sidebar.

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## **Boston to Impact Rehab in New Way**

Kelly Boston sought no fanfare when she left DVR. She invited co-workers to share cake and memories for a half hour, spending less than a minute being recognized for each of the 32 years she was a Washington State employee (the last 20 of which have

been with DVR). Characteristically, modest, she said, “I have been successful because I wasn’t in the spotlight and I loved it. I’ve done just about every job here.”

Boston learned Rehab from the ground up. She developed a well-deserved reputation for a formidable work ethic. She could be trusted to keep her word and provide good counsel based on reliable information. In parting remarks Boston said to workmates, “In some ways I grew up in DVR. I was meant to be here.”

Kelly Boston possesses an uncommon ability to support a VR agency to use the technical aspects of the Rehab Act in service of the spirit of the law. This is something she grew into. Boston admitted, “I didn’t always know how to see people. I learned that from people with disabilities.” She learned it from DVR customers and colleagues. What she thought she knew was reshaped and enriched in 2002, when she met her partner Duane French. French, the former Director of Alaska’s VR program now heads Disability Determination Services within DSHS. He acquired a spinal cord injury in a diving accident, an event which led him to become a fierce and accomplished advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

Boston has a gentle interpersonal style. Her tenacity and resolute faith that Rehab can be the powerful transformative process customers deserve is evident in her analysis. “The Rehabilitation Act is the only law I know of that directs a program to be tailored to the needs of individuals. We can do just about anything. It is possible. People are capable of so much more than we imagine. They are the experts in their own lives. They know what they need and want. Our expertise [at DVR] is most useful when it brings them closer to the lives they want to lead.”

Next month Kelly Boston will begin working for Alliance Enterprises, the Thurston County company that develops case

management software for VR programs around the nation including here in Washington State. She looks forward to having a wider and continuing influence in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation and making a positive impact in a new way.

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Pull quote from previous story reappears in sidebar on page 2:

“The Rehabilitation Act is the only law I know of that directs a program to be tailored to the needs of individuals. We can do just about anything. It is possible. People are capable of so much more than we imagine. They are the experts in their own lives. They know what they need and want. Our expertise [at DVR] is most useful when it brings them closer to the lives they want to lead.”

-Kelly Boston-

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Additional Sidebar Information from Page 2:

WSRC Election  
Results 2010  
Congratulations to:  
Jim Larson  
Council Chair  
&  
Jerry Johnsen  
Council Vice Chair

Subcommittee Chairs:

Jeff Abe-Gunter

Customer Satisfaction  
Don Brandon  
Employer & Rehab Partnerships  
Rudy Hernandez  
Member Recruitment & Participation  
Martin McCallum  
Planning, Policy & Advocacy

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Page 2 Blurb advertising training opportunity:

The WSRC and the Northwest ADA Center present:

How to Out Yourself at Work: A Workshop on Requesting  
Reasonable Accommodation

Join us for this FREE, one hour workshop on:

Thursday April 15, 2010 from 5:00 pm-6:00 pm

Doubletree Seattle Airport – 18740 International Blvd., Seattle,  
WA 98188 (bus 194)

ASL interpretation provided

Space is limited. Registration is required by April 1. Register by  
calling or emailing Joelle at:

(360) 725-3690 or [Brounjm@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Brounjm@dshs.wa.gov)

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### **Scarcity Reflected in Public Comment at January Forum**

At first blush, and even second, the tone and content of the comments offered by 25 of the 776 customers with open cases in Thurston, Mason and Lewis Counties, who were invited to the Jan. 14 quarterly Customer Forum, were tough to hear.

We heard raw frustration and a sampling of instances when the VR process did not lead to employment. Speakers expressed their disappointments in an unvarnished manner. While these comments represent a small portion of the experiences of the whole DVR customer base there were some themes in the comments we heard. One theme among speakers was a desire for timely responses to phone messages. Another repeated point was a need for more information about the services DVR offers. Speakers request that such information be presented clearly to the customer at the beginning of the VR process. Some who offered comment sought to include training or higher education in their Individual Plan for Employment and concluded that it was difficult to secure DVR's support for tuition. One speaker encouraged the local DVR office to capitalize on its proximity to employment opportunities with State Government to secure work for customers.

In past quarters the Council has heard concerns about timely communication between Counselors and customers expressed in different ways. We have seen customers who were unclear about their VR process. What made this forum different was the level of frustration apparent in those present. There was a certain collective desperation in the group that came through with a greater degree of intensity than in recent memory. Our members were humbled by the challenges facing people who had, in some cases, lost their homes or who had a legitimate fear of eviction on the horizon. Some needed services from other organizations that were not available. Others could not identify the next step on the path towards success. One customer said, "I won't give up on DVR but I don't want DVR to give up on me."

Customer comments are pieces of complicated stories. The work of the Council is to listen in a nuanced way for the systemic issues reflected by individual experience. It is our role to support

DVR to use this feedback as a catalyst for positive change. We appreciate the willingness of our colleagues at DVR to attend as listeners and to support customers requesting follow up regarding individual case concerns.

On Jan. 21 the Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Subcommittee provided a short summary of what we heard to DVR as a first step in promoting further dialogue.