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Heading— Newsletter Title: The Rehab Council Connection, a quarterly e-newsletter. August 2010 Volume 3, Issue 3.

Announcement: The WSRC is coming to Spokane! Page 3.

Left side box— Our Volunteer Members: Jeffry Abe-Gunter, Spokane; Valerie Arnold, Elma; Don Brandon, Mountlake Terrace; Sandra Carr, Spokane; 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

Top article—Titled: Evaluation of Project HIRE Under Way. Body: The first year of Project HIRE, a DVR initiative to expedite job placement for a subset of customers who are prepared for employment and possess the skills to earn good wages, is complete. DVR is halfway done with a two part evaluation of the project. One part of the evaluation involves assessing contract compliance. The second piece of the evaluative process will be a review of every case file of the DVR customers who have participated in Project HIRE. Representative of the state office will also be seeking input from the DVR Supervisors and the liaisons who have staffed Project HIRE for DVR. When the initiative was rolled out, the original expectations were that one thousand rehabilitations would be achieved in a two year period. Three hundred and ninety-four rehabilitation were expected the first year, to date 94 rehabilitations have been achieved.

Depending on what is learned in the evaluation process DVR will continue the project, discontinue the project, or modify it. The

WSRC applauds DVR for acting on our recommendation to examine Project HIRE closely before implementing it on an ongoing basis.

Bottom article—Titled: A Veteran Rehabber Shares Insight. Body: Kathi Richards, a Lead VRC based in the DVR office at WorkSource Thurston County, staffs a caseload of 130. She has worked in the field of Rehabilitation for seventeen years. Richards began supporting people with disabilities to become employed when she worked for a Community Rehabilitation Program. Then she was recruited by Vocational Rehabilitation and has worked with customers in Texas as well as Washington. Richards' positive orientation and faith in the possibility of those she serves is evident. She said, "Although the work is difficult, the rewards come when a customer calls and is excited about the new job they have accepted." Each quarter, in addition to sponsoring a forum where we learn about the experience of customers, the Council invites a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to share his or her perspective about working in the field. This quarter, our members enjoyed learning from Kathi and her range of experience. Her balance of big heartedness and professionalism made an impression on the Council. Gaining input from colleagues with active caseloads helps the Council to make salient, practical recommendations to DVR. For her part, Richards said, "It was interesting for me to hear myself talk about the job of the VRC and what it means to me."

Right side top box—Titled: Debra Uhlenkott. Body: The members and staff of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council celebrate the life and public service of Debra Uhlenkott. Debra, a dedicated Pullman- based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, died recently. She was a dynamo. Debra was well- regarded by her

peers and those she served. The Council extends condolences to her family, friends, and colleagues.

Right side bottom box-- Inside this Issue: ...Evaluation Under Way 1, Veteran Rehabber 1, ADA at 20 2, FMAP Action, Pierce County Customers

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Left side box—Title: Milestones. Body: The members and staff of the WSRC wish our colleague Sharey Cleveland well. Sharey concluded her service as the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for the Colville Confederated Tribes. She has also completed her service as the representative of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation to our Council. Sharey made our Council stronger because of willingness to learn and her good listening skills.

Top article—Title: Celebrating the ADA at Twenty. Body: Twenty years have passed in a blink. I was sixteen years old when President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law. Two decades later I'm well on my way to forty and America is still not a utopia for people with disabilities. Nonetheless there is reason to celebrate. Meaningful progress is undeniable.

In reflecting on the anniversary I made a list of changes I link to the passage of the law for which I am grateful: For every day I made it to work on time on a lift equipped bus; for the accessible hiring process and workplaces that make employment possible; for the phone calls I've enjoyed with my nephew using relay or videophone; for being able to use sidewalks; for access to

national parks and monuments; for not being barred on flights to Yakima, Boise, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, New York, Boston, D.C. and Orlando; or audible cues; for accessible toilet stalls (need I say more?); For the access my friends have; For accessible polling places; for the awareness that if someone is injured they can still build a fun life; for accessible hotel rooms with roll in showers; for the ramp that allowed me to receive my diplomas with classmates; for reasonable accommodation on standardized tests; for alternatives to turnstiles; for the older folks who now “get by fine, thank you”; for accessible teller windows at the bank, and; For the knowledge that the next generation has the basic access to do more.

Lower article—Title: States Applaud FMAP Action in Congress.  
Body: People in Washington State seeking social services and those who care about them are breathing a sigh of relief after Congress approved the FMAP extension. FMAP, or Federal Medical Assistance Percentages, determine the matching rate allocated each year from the Federal Government to the states for programs such as Medicaid, State Childrens’ Health Insurance Program, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The Senate unexpectedly voted down the FMAP extension twice during the week of August 2, because the expense of the proposed legislation would increase the deficit. On August 4, the Senate overcame the impasse when a smaller package was approved. The House quickly followed suit. Because Washington, like 29 other states, built the budget for the current fiscal year on the presumption the extension would pass, this action preserves the nation’s social safety net for another round.

Washington State will receive nearly \$530 million from the federal government. Our state has already reduced spending and services by \$5.1 billion since the recession hit. When federal matching dollars are received cuts to programs due to the unexpected shortfall will be avoided. Even with the extension, State Legislators will be left to address a daunting state budget deficit of approximately \$3 billion and hard decisions when they convene in January. With House action on FMAP a bad situation will not be made worse.

Even though DVR's federal match is not funded by FMAP, the positive development, impacts DVR and the customers it serves. Washington State is unlikely to cut the General State Fund further before the legislative session which may have reduced DVR's budget. Of course, the people with the most to celebrate are DVR customers who receive Medicaid. Their benefits are intact which increases their ability to go to work.

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Left side box—Title: WSRC Quarterly Meeting. Info October 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 9 am -4pm. 115 W. North River Dr. Spokane, WA 99201.

Page article--Title: Pierce County Customers Provide Input. Body: Would you ride the bus on a hot day from Tacoma to Olympia, to deliver a thank you? That is what the first speaker at our July 15<sup>th</sup> quarterly forum did. She rode the bus for two-hours one way, to appreciate her VR Counselor. She and 9 others made the trek across the county line to share their thoughts about what it has been like to be served by DVR. The comments were focused, constructive and to the point.

The mother of a young man receiving DVR services expressed frustration about working with several Community Rehabilitation Programs. She was disheartened by turnover on the vendors' staff and was flummoxed as to why her son is experiencing ongoing delays in his process. Her frustrations were compounded by difficulty accessing services in a rural area.

Another mother of an adult son receiving services from DVR came to inquire about whether DVR is a resource for people seeking self-employment.

A customer experiencing hearing loss explained the challenges she faced trying to reach the VRC she works with. She wondered how long she might expect to wait for an email response from her counselor.

Another comment came from a customer who dialed into the forum by telephone. He expressed a range of frustrations, some of which seemed to stem from the barriers created by his disabilities, as well as others which were related to working with DVR. He expressed doubts about whether DVR is effective at supporting jobseekers with education in going to work.

After the comment period ended, representatives of the Client Assistance Program and of DVR followed up individually with those who spoke to assist them in resolving their case concerns.

Outside of processing the content of the comments we received, the Council revisited its current practice of taking comments from customers in person and by phone at the same time. We remain committed to prioritizing the convenience of the public by providing various modes for making comment. We will still take comment by phone or in person, just not at the same time.

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