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BUSINESS Connections

VCU

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VCU Health Systems Project Search

The VCU-RRTC continues its commitment to transition age youth through an active partnership with Project SEARCH. This educational program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school is in its second year of implementation at the VCU Medical Center with Richmond City Public Schools. This past year, the project has reason for celebration. Through a series of 10 week internships, seven students gained new skills and completed the program in June, 2010. In collaboration with Department of Rehabilitative Services and VCU Business Connections, five of the VCU Health System's first year completers secured jobs at the VCU Medical Center or in the community. Departments that hired student interns include Ophthalmology, Patient Transportation, Human Resources and Pediatric Research. The new employees duties range from scanning medical documents, collecting and delivering specimens to a lab, pulling and filing patient medical records and preparing samples for research. The positions offer competitive wage and benefits.

Additionally, the Virginia Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) awarded Maria Curran, the Vice President of Human Resources, Large Employer of the Year. This honor recognizes the exceptional efforts Ms. Curran made to promote the project to department managers within the VCU Health System and her commitment to raising awareness about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities in the business community. Ms Curran and the project's business liaisons, Ms. Debbie Slayden and Ms. Laurette Anderson-Gray remain committed to the student interns, successful integrated employment and career advancement opportunities.

Supported by start up funds through the Virginia Department of Education, the project has expanded to two new sites in Virginia: Carilion New River Valley Medical Center in Christiansburg with Montgomery County Public Schools and Norfolk Sentara Hospital with Norfolk Public Schools. All three sites currently have students placed in their second round of internships for 2011.



2010
PROJECT SEARCH
CLASS

Notable News for VCU-RRTC

- VCU Business Connections has been accredited by CARF for a period of three years that will extend through August 2013. The accreditation covers all areas of employment services including: employment planning, job development, job supports, and job-site training.
- This achievement is an indication of our organization's dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of the persons served. The CEO of CARF stated:

"[VCU Business Connections] services, personnel, and documentation clearly indicate an established pattern of practice excellence".

Annual Review Highlights

2009 – 2010

This year we provided services to 94 individuals; 30 who either are or were employed during this time frame (34 total placements). Although our pool has more than tripled since last year, we have remained committed to providing superior service to our customers, employment partners and referral sources.

Sixty-Two individuals were referred for services during the year compared to 12 the previous year. We feel that the large increase in referrals can be attributed to several factors. First, the order of selection opened to serve all categories in April of 2010. Additionally, during this year we served a number of DRS clients through our involvement in special projects including the VCU Health Systems Project Search Program (highlighted on page 1), St. Mary's Project Search Program, and the Virginia Supportive Housing Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant. Look for more information on each of these special projects in future newsletters. We also feel that our efforts to maintain a highly qualified staff along with our proven results have drawn attention to our services. We intend to continue cultivating this relationship with funding sources and share our successes together.

All persons served have a severe disability as evidenced by referral documentation and/or receipt of social security benefits (shown below). Many of those served have secondary and tertiary labels as well. Similar to last year, the majority or 55% (51 individuals) of those served were male and 46% (43 individuals) were females. Forty-six individual (56% the previous year) were African American/black, while the majority of individuals served or 50 % (44% the previous year) were Caucasian/white.

Table 1: Individuals Served According to Primary Disability Label (N = 94)

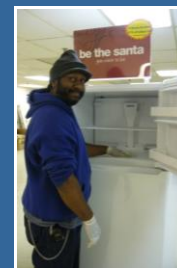
Disability Label	Frequency	Disability Label	Frequency
Mental Illness	11	Learning Disability	8
Traumatic Brain Injury	5	Substance Abuse	4
Cerebral Palsy	7	Depression	3
Mental Retardation	21	ADHD	1
Autism	26	Mobility	1
Hearing Impaired	2	Phonological Disorder	1
Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder	1	Multiple Pterygium Syndrom	1
Visually Impaired	2		
TOTAL		94	

Thirty people were employed during the year in a wide variety of industries (shown below). There were 34 overall placements as several individual had two placements during the year. The majority of individuals worked part-time. Everyone was paid minimum wage or greater. At the close of the year, Twenty-six 26 individuals remained employed.

Table 2: Type of Industries Where People Worked (N = 34 placements)

Industry	Frequency
Retail	16
Food -- Restaurant (2); Cafeteria (1); Fast Food (3)	6
Office / Clerical	3
Recreational / Fitness	2
Hospitality	2
University	2
Other - Greenhouse (1); Cabinet Maker (1); Garbage Company (1); Not-for-Profit (1)	4
TOTAL	34

SUCCESS Story



Antonio K. was hired by Sears Outlet in September 2010 as a merchandise

processor. Antonio has previous work experience that includes driving and janitorial skills. Chief among Antonio's strengths was dependability and a strong work ethic. With the support of his DRS counselor and employment specialist, Antonio was able to find employment that would demonstrate these skills.

In his current position, Antonio cleans and processes appliances before they are displayed on the sales floor. This position requires attention to detail, physical stamina, and speed. Sears Outlet set up many natural supports for Antonio including pairing him with an experienced employee, Lynda, who could take him through the entire training process. In addition, as Antonio gains more independence and skill in his position, the amount of support is adjusted to meet his specific needs.

Rick Willis, general manager of Sears Outlet, has been impressed with Antonio's punctuality and focus on the job. Mr. Willis and Antonio's direct supervisor, Dave, state that Antonio is always on time, gets straight to work, and never goes over his break time. In the last month, Antonio's hours have been doubled to assist with additional product load.

VCU-Business Connections would like to acknowledge

Sears Outlet

for their commitment to working with individuals with disabilities and commend them for their supportive work environment.



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