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# BUSINESS Connections

E-Newsletter | Issue 7 | December 2011

## Developing Business Relationships



Unemployment rates, although lower than at the beginning of 2010 in most large metropolitan areas, remains very high. This meant employment specialists needed to engage in organizational marketing and career search. This duplicate function is known as developing corporate relationships and business linkages for building strong future business partnerships. If relationships are carefully built, then partnerships will be developed with the business community. This approach can make the difference between success and failure in the career search process. Generally, the mistake that many employment specialists make during this process is to focus exclusively on contacting employers for the sole purpose of obtaining a job. Although the ultimate goal is to assist persons with significant disabilities in obtaining employment and building careers, solely pursuing jobs is shortsighted.

Employment specialists who are successful and enjoy the career search process have built solid and trusting relationships with the business community. Employment specialists, as well as individuals with significant disabilities who spend time conducting informational interviews will be rewarded with a rich pool of businesses who are interested in the services offered by the community rehabilitation organization. These companies will know that the employment support organization understands their business and is interested in establishing a mutually satisfying relationship.

We have an example of this philosophy in action with our business partner Sears Outlet, a discount appliance superstore, on Tomlynn Road. VCU RRTC first began working with Sears Outlet in September of 2010 when a client was hired for a warehouse position. During the initial job site training, the employment specialist cultivated a relationship with management and gathered information about the business in general. Based on a previous successful placement and strong working relationship, the employment specialist stressed that the RRTC would be happy and willing to help fill any other employment needs that developed. This communication paid off when in August of 2011 management approached RRTC about a warehouse technician position and Sears hired another client. You can read this Success Story in the [January 2011 Newsletter](#). It came as no surprise when Sears called again in September with employment needs. It is not often an employer seeks out an employment services organization with open positions, but because of the strong foundation our Employment Specialist has built Sears contacted us for two open positions within two months. It should also be stressed that the job leads were shared with all employment specialists at RRTC, and the most appropriate candidate referred for employment. Building a successful relationship starts with a successful job match. Read more about our most recent placement with Sears featured as the [Success Story](#) on page two of the newsletter.

# VCU Business Connections Team

We would like to welcome our two newest Employment Specialists:

Erica



Schwartz

Employment Specialist  
804.828.1873  
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Erica has been an employment specialist with VCU since August 2011. After receiving a B.S. in sociology from Virginia Tech, Erica went on to graduate with an M.S. from VCU's Department of Rehabilitation Counseling. In addition to working with DBVI clients, Erica is currently working with individuals with ASD with Project SEARCH at St Francis Medical Center. Erica is completing the supported employment web-based certificate series in order to obtain an ACRE-certification.

Jonathon



Tolbert

Employment Specialist  
804.827.0749  
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Jonathon joined the team in July of 2011 to continue our work serving individuals with Autism as well as other DRS customers. Originally from Roanoke, VA, Jonathon relocated to Richmond in 2001 to obtain a BA in English from VCU in 2005. After graduating, Jonathon was an elementary school instructional assistant and went on to teach special education in Henrico County Public Schools for 5 years and worked with the County's Inclusion and Therapeutic Recreation programs.

Vicki



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## SUCCESS Story

After previously hiring two VCU-RRTC Business Connections clients, it came as no surprise when Sears Outlet on Tomlynn Road called again with employment needs. This time the discount appliance super store had an opening for a warehouse associate to unload incoming products. The employment specialists put their heads together and one clear choice emerged,

Ben.



Ben completed the Project Search program at MCV in 2010, but was unable to secure employment when his internship rotations concluded. His experience in Central Supply at MCV as well as his physical strength made him a prime candidate for the warehouse position at Sears.

Ben began impressing immediately when, during the working interview, the store manager remarked, "Ben, if you keep coming in dressed so well, the other employees are going to have to buy whole new wardrobes." Ben continues to impress with his work ethic while unloading refrigerators, washers, and mattresses from incoming trucks, stripping off packaging and staging them for delivery.

Supervisors remark he has the uncommon ability to maintain a consistent work rate throughout a shift without tiring. Because of his intrinsic motivation and ability to self monitor, Ben works unsupervised in the afternoon prepping items for delivery and resetting the warehouse floor for the next business day. The chemistry that develops among employees during a placement is another telling sign of a successful job placement. Here again Ben shines.

"We are committed to helping you achieve your placement goals through providing person centered and customer directed supported employment services to individuals with all types of disabilities with a focus on job retention."

Vicki Brooke

VCU Business Connections

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