



ABILITIES

Promoting the employment of Vermont citizens of all abilities

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Dear Friends ~ We've been busy!



On behalf of the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, I would like to welcome you to the latest issue of "Abilities"

This month we're pleased to share with you some of the GCEPD's recent activities and to educate you on two wonderful programs that the GCEPD is pleased to support and promote.

We have recently begun a comprehensive strategic planning process and look forward to a very active and productive 2010.

Best regards,

Fred Jones, Chair

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

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Our Annual Meeting with Governor Douglas - *Story Synopsis*



One aspect of the GCEPD's mission is to "advise the Governor on current issues affecting the employment of people with disabilities". To that end - in addition to providing him with regular updates of our activities - the GCEPD meets with the Governor annually to discuss issues and our efforts to address them. This year that meeting was held on October 13, 2009 at The Pavilion building in Montpelier.



[click here to read more](#)

Copley Hospital Summer Youth Program - *Story Synopsis*

"Magic Happens". That's the best way to describe the program carried out in the summer of 2009 at Copley Hospital, utilizing a grant for summer youth employment given by the Department of Labor (using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funds) to support youth in transition.

A collaboration of Voc Rehab VT, the VT Department of Labor, the Lamoille County Court Diversion's JOBS program, and Copley Hospital, this program was designed to encourage economically disadvantaged and disabled youth between ages 18 and 24 - who were either out of school or in their final year of school - to explore careers in the



health field.

[click here to read more](#)

Job Developer Coalitions - Story Synopsis

Historically, various communities and regions around Vermont have been served by an assortment of agencies, service providers, and staff whose work in their local communities was to provide job placement and support for individuals with barriers to employment. The problem with such an approach has been that employers were feeling overwhelmed by the multiple number of job developers looking to meet with them and they didn't understand the differences between the various agencies and services. The solution? The formulation of Job Developer Coalitions, designed to help businesses meet their workforce needs through coordinated job development and placement.

[click here to read more](#)

MORE ON our Annual Meeting with Governor Douglas

We were pleased to share with Governor Douglas our activities in supporting the establishment of Resource Coordinators in area businesses. More about this program can be found by clicking [here](#).



We also spoke of efforts to establish Job Developer Coalitions (more on this in the third article in our newsletter) and to develop a presentation to share with employers intended to debunk the myths around employment of people with disabilities.

We were also pleased to share that since September 2009 the GCEPD has been participating in a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide our efforts through 2010.



Among our goals for 2010 which we shared with Governor Douglas is to support the



employment of youth with disabilities who are in transition from school to the workplace. An example of a stellar program that was extremely successful in this regard is the "Summer Youth Transition Program" carried out at Copley Hospital in the summer of 2009. Please

read the next article to learn more about this program.

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MORE ON the Copley Hospital Summer Youth Program

Launched in July 2009 with ten youth between ages 17 and 20 enrolled, the 5-week program focused on helping them develop work readiness skills as well as providing actual-on-the-job training.

The youth spent the majority of each afternoon working in a specific department at the Hospital, such as Human Resources, Health Information Management, Radiology, Rehabilitation Services, Orthopedics, Wellness and Outreach, Housekeeping, Food Services and Health Sciences Library. They were treated as regular employees. They were also required to abide by hospital and department policies and procedures. Each participant wore employee badges and signed confidentiality agreements. They worked in departments where high-level expectations were set for them.



Of the ten youth who were initially enrolled in the program, eight successfully completed it. This is an extraordinary retention rate. The quality of their



performance was outstanding, driven in large part by the support and belief that the Copley staff and program administrators had in the ability of these youth. Copley Hospital is working with Voc Rehab to provide ongoing work-study opportunities to three of the participants with the intention of hiring them into open positions for which they are qualified. The other participants have indicated their interest in pursuing further

education relative to healthcare.

The major learning of this program was that a little risk taking, coupled with support, can help young people to soar in the workplace - and that young people, whatever their challenge, are worth the investment.

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MORE ON the Job Developer Coalitions

Over the past year and a half, with funding from VocRehab Vermont's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, these Job Developer Coalitions have been formed around the state to provide streamlined services to the "employer customer". This occurs through well coordinated communication and strong collaboration between the various job developer providers. By fostering an environment of cooperation, information sharing and collaboration, these Coalitions have offered employers a seamless avenue for recruitment, while at the same time offering community placement staff the benefits of networking and enhanced agency coordination. By offering a single point of contact for employers seeking candidates, the Job Developer Coalitions have streamlined the referral process while at the same time offering a wider, more diverse candidate pool as represented by the various programs and partners. Employers have also benefited from the shared expertise and resources of the various Coalition members.

Begun with five pilots, there are now twelve coalitions, one in each of the AHS districts. Each coalition has between 10 and 20 active members from a variety of community organizations. These include:

- VT Dept of Labor
- Voc Rehab/VT Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR)
- Economic Services (TANF)
- Corrections
- Mental health and developmental services organizations
- Schools and adult education programs
- The Workforce Investment Board
- United Way
- VT Refugee Resettlement Program
- Other training programs such as ReSource and VT Works for Women.

Participating members of the Job Developer Coalitions have identified many of the benefits of these coalitions:

- Internally, it has strengthened the working relationships of the employment staff with each other, which leads to more effective work and better outcomes.
- Externally, it has helped the employment staff become a coordinated sales team with the business community - a private industry approach.
- The type of contacts are based on the preference of the employer.
- The contact person becomes a facilitator.
- The employers benefit from a wider pool of applicants.
- Employers have access to a large network to find the best candidates.

- Employers feel listened to and respected about their need not to be inundated.
- It is easier for employers as they don't need to figure out who to call for which positions.
- A person with a disability has access to more job leads.
- The employment consultant can survey coalition members for specific job types, specific hours, who has contact at a particular business, etc.
- A web-based database is available for coalition members with a list of businesses and the name of any contact person (or coalition) they already have.
- Employment consultants maintain their relationships and either stay the intermediary or make a warm transfer.

The coalitions recently held a statewide meeting and shared their successes and challenges. The group of coalitions has named itself " The Vermont Employment Network" and is actively working on issues such as a common code of conduct, training opportunities, best practices for working effectively with employers, and building trust and a sense of team with each other.

For more information on these Job Developer Coalitions and the Vermont Employment Network, please email [Hugh Bradshaw](#) in VocRehabVermont, or telephone him at 802-241-2728.

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Thanks for reading this issue of "Abilities". We welcome your comments, feedback, and suggestions for future issues. Copies of past issues may be found on our website - www.hireus.org, or in the [Constant Contact archives](#).

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