

HORIZONS

SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT

SCVRD strengthens partnership with Deaf community, employers

Trust. It's an essential ingredient in successful human relationships.

It's hard enough to come by among hearing people, but the gap between hearing people and the Deaf community can be especially wide.

"Deaf people have often felt that hearing people don't try to communicate with them; that hearing people ignore



Clara Gantes, left, and Linda Menefee, right, receive the Mid-State Quality Service Award from Commissioner Barbara Hollis and Chairman Derle A. Lowder Sr. of the agency board.

them," said Clara Gantes, an SCVRD job coach who is deaf. "They feel frustrated and discriminated against."

Gantes worked with Deaf services for 30 years in Florida before moving to South Carolina and joining SCVRD last year.

She told a story about Deaf people, some with college degrees, who were relegated to menial jobs because employers couldn't understand them.

Communication critical element, Deaf clients say

Eddie Hanna came to SCVRD because looking for a job is difficult. It's especially hard for Hanna because he's deaf.

"Many employers are uneasy with the Deaf because they can't communicate," Hanna said.

SCVRD's Lexington-Richland office has paired Linda Menefee, a hearing counselor, with Clara Gantes, a deaf job coach, to address the situation.

"It's important that the Deaf be able to share and communicate with the VR counselor," said Hanna, a bindery operator for the R.R. Donnelly printing company in Columbia.

"If we don't have communication, we're lost, we have no hope and we don't want to come back."

Hanna has a degree in printing production

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Florence honors VR pioneer

Family, friends, former co-workers and local and state dignitaries gathered recently to honor H. Bowden Powell Jr.

Powell was instrumental in the development of SCVRD's Florence Work Training Center, which was dedicated in his name during ceremonies May 9 at the center.

State Sen. Hugh Leatherman of Florence remembered when Powell approached him 31 years ago with the idea for the training center.

"This adds to their self-esteem, their self-worth," Leatherman said of clients at the center. "H.B. Powell said that; he knew that. It's a great honor and he's so deserving to have this building named after him."

David Lundgren, Powell's son-in-law, said the dedication is an honor for Powell and the whole family.

"It's people like Mr. Powell that are real examples of how communities can be such an important part of the growth of individuals and our society," Lundgren said.

A native of Rock Hill, Powell and his wife Dot moved to Florence in 1946 when he went to work for SCVRD. It was the beginning of a 35-year career during which he served first as a counselor and then as area supervisor for Florence, Dillon and Marion counties. He retired in 1981.

Along the way, Powell organized and served as chairman of the Florence Mayor's Committee on



Dot and H.B. Powell Jr. sit on either side of the plaque that dedicates the Florence Work Training Center in his name. Standing are Rep. Terry Alexander, D-Florence, left, and Sen. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence.

Employment for the Handicapped and helped establish the Pee Dee-area Special Olympics for youngsters with disabilities. A scholarship named in his honor at Francis Marion University provides aid to students with disabilities.

He also contributed to the planning and opening of what is now known as the Palmetto Center, one of the agency's two residential substance-abuse treatment centers. Mrs. Powell worked there as head nurse and their nephew, Tom Langston, is the project supervisor.

A colleague once described Powell as "a team man who graciously accepts the will of the majority and never hesitates to step out and be counted in matters important to our humanities."

Powell was active in a number of civic organizations as well as the S.C. State Employees Association.

The agency learned in June that Powell has passed away. He was 95.

His family said he had been greatly honored to have the training center named after him.

North American Rescue says thanks

When the folks at North American Rescue invited SCVRD Commissioner Barbara Hollis to Greenville in May to receive a certificate, she thought it was a nice gesture from a strong business partner.

She was stunned at the bronze sculpture she received on behalf of the agency.

"Wow," she said. "I'm speechless."

The sculpture, which depicts a wounded soldier receiving aid on the battlefield, was an expression of appreciation.

North American Rescue (NAR) provides the critical medical equipment and supplies for managing injuries until the victim can reach a medical treatment facility. It originally served combat soldiers in the military and is now expanding to law enforcement agencies, EMS facilities and other first responders.

The company estimates that use of its products can reduce preventable deaths by 60 to 90 percent.

Based in Greer, NAR supplies the components while clients at the Greenville Work Training Center do all of the assembly, kitting, inventory and shipping for the company.

Depending on demand, the



From left, Sam Wyman, NAR president; Barbara Hollis, SCVRD commissioner; Jim Carino, NAR general manager and chief operating officer; and David Turnipseed, SCVRD Greenville area supervisor pose with the NAR sculpture.

contract allows 25 to 80 clients to enhance their work skills, said Sam Wyman, NAR president.

"Partnering with VR has allowed us to be very cost effective," said Jim Carino, general manager and chief operating officer. "Our success would not be complete if not for the relationship we have fostered."

Carino said "four guys who think outside the box" started the company six years ago in 5,000 square feet of space provided by SCVRD.

NAR has since expanded into a 100,000-square-foot facility. It also makes its new line of thermal wraps, hypothermia prevention kits and IV heater components using thermal film technology it

purchased last year in a 6,000-square-foot facility VR refurbished behind the work training center.

"I think we've shattered the myth about people with disabilities," Carino said.

Clients provide NAR with cost-effective, high quality work, Wyman said. "The quality issues have been miniscule."

He added that clients get an education working on the contract and taxpayers benefit when they go back to work.

Johnny McKinney has been working on the NAR contract since

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Johnny McKinney assembles wire harnesses for thermal wraps and attaches the thermostats.

Governor's Committee honors excellence in employment of people with disabilities

A Summerville woman received the Employment Achievement Award and three employers were cited for their exemplary efforts in working with and hiring people with disabilities at the S.C. Governor's Committee



Liliana Kryzanowski, left, receives her award from Kelly Sieling, a member of the Summerville Mayor's Committee and SCVRD's Berkeley-Dorchester area office supervisor.



Robin Clevenger of the Summerville Mayor's Committee presents the Large Employer of the Year to Robert Smith, president and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina.

on Employment of People with Disabilities 2011 Awards Luncheon in May.

Liliana Kryzanowski of Summerville received the Employment Achievement Award. She has post-polio syndrome and wears a brace on one leg. She faced many personal and health setbacks after deciding to pursue a human services degree. Rather than bowing to adversity, she was determined to make a difference.

While still in school, she was the international coordinator for Partnership for Change in Communities and worked to create awareness of human services and early childhood education programs available through Trident Technical College.

She has served her church — El Faro Apostolico de North Charleston — as director for the Hispanic community and the church food pantry as well as assisting church members with translating between Spanish and English. She also helped organize a health fair for the Latino community.



Robin Clevenger of the Summerville Mayor's Committee presents the Medium Employer of the Year award to representatives of the Capital Restaurant Group. From left are Cheri Brown, Human Resources director; Clevenger; Maria Quinn, restaurant leader manager; and Tori Pinckney, district leader manager.

She has been outreach coordinator for the Disability Resource Center in North Charleston since October 2010.

Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina in North Charleston was named the Large Employer of the Year for its practices in hiring people with disabilities.

Goodwill Industries works with Vocational Rehabilitation and other social service and mental health agencies to provide job training and employment services to a wide array of individuals with disabilities. It trains all of its supervisors in the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the company is committed to promoting success through reasonable accommodations and job

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DDS collects national, regional awards

Two staffers from SCVRD's Disability Determination Services have won national recognition from the Social Security Administration, 13 have won Atlanta Regional Commissioner awards and three individuals and one DDS office won awards in the Atlanta Regional PRIDE celebration.

Vickie Stewart and Lisa Gunderson received an Associate Commissioner's Citation from SSA for Outstanding Achievement.

Stewart is a case processing supervisor in the Charleston Regional Office and Gunderson is the LAN (local area network) coordinator in the Greenville Regional Office.

On the regional level, Gail Davis, a case-processing supervisor in Greenville, received the Exceptional Customer Service



Stewart



Gunderson



Davis



Andrews

Award and Dona Andrews, an office support specialist in Greenville, received a Regional Commissioner's Citation.

The DDS team that put together the 2010 Tri-Regional NADE (National Association of Disability Examiners) Conference in Charleston also received a Regional Commissioner's Citation.

Team members were: Dr. Lisa Varner, Blake Monson and Christee Hunt, Charleston; Chris Porter, Greenville; Cindia Deith, State Claims; Sylvester Jackson and Glenda McMichael-Hawkins, Columbia; Nancy Schaeffer, Ken Norris and Diane Hare, DDS Administration; and Margaret Yeats, State Office.

Winners at the Atlanta Regional PRIDE Awards were:

- Herbert Wilson, a disability examiner in the Columbia Regional Office, who was named Rookie Examiner of the Year.
- Dr. Manhal Wieland, psychological consultant in Columbia, who received the Mary Simmons Special Act of Service.



Wilson



Wieland

- Cynthia Ellis, central control supervisor in Columbia, who received the Robert Hinrichs Humanitarian Award.



Ellis

- The Columbia Regional Office's XF 40 Review Process Team, which won the Thomas M. Leahy Creative Achievement Award, which is for the entire office.

Awards

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carving. Of its more than 1,000 employees, 43 percent have disabilities.

Capital Restaurant Group, which does business as Burger King, also of North Charleston, was selected as the Medium Employer of the Year.

Burger King has partnered with Dorchester School District Two in the Occupational Credential Job Training Program and uses the company's Right Track Training Program. Burger King has trained approximately 20 students with disabilities and hired six of them.

Biological Solutions LLC of Bishopville was named Small Employer of the Year.

Biological Solutions makes environmentally safe cleaning products. Company owners

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Deaf

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“I don’t work that way,” she said. “I ask ‘what do you want to do?’ and explain the job requirements. I provide them with the information and they make the decision.”

Gantes and her partner, Linda Menefee, a Lexington-Richland counselor, are on a two-person crusade to help Deaf people understand what is necessary to work in a hearing world and help employers understand about the Deaf culture and communication needs.

“The goal is to help [Deaf clients] understand the job—the responsibilities, requirements and experience—and make them ready to work and keep the job so they can build and grow with the company,” Gantes said.

Gantes and Menefee recently were honored with the Mid-State Quality Service Award.

Together, they have directly placed 19 clients who are deaf in the past year. Menefee has directly placed an additional nine, some of whom are hard of hearing.

In presenting the award, Commissioner Barbara Hollis commended Gantes and Menefee for helping the agency

strengthen its efforts within the Deaf community.

“The image and relationships have become very positive, which has resulted in more referrals since they took over that caseload,” she said.

“The key to helping Deaf people is communication. We help Deaf clients understand what VR can do for them.”

***—Clara Gantes
Lexington-Richland
job coach***

Tom Mayne, who coordinates Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for SCVRD, said, “They’ve done an outstanding job communicating with employers about the unique needs of the Deaf community and working with employers to provide the supports they need for employees who are deaf.”

Many of the Deaf clients who come to VR do not understand how important it is to make the right decisions and become serious about work.

“We have to build up to that,” Gantes said.

“The key to helping Deaf people is communication,” she said. “We help Deaf clients understand what VR can do for them.”

That often involves classes that teach how to look for a job and understand the working world, she said.

“We explain their responsibilities in regard to services,” Gantes said. “They cannot sit at home and wait for someone to find them a job. If they have problems, we help, but they have to participate.

“If they don’t have a part in looking for a job, they won’t keep that job,” Gantes said.

She and Menefee use ASL (American sign language), which makes Deaf clients feel freer to express what they want to say.

“ASL is a different language,” Menefee said. “If a person doesn’t understand, Clara can explain. It helps if a person who is deaf explains.”

Menefee said she didn’t know sign language very well before she and Gantes teamed up, but she’s improving every day as they both try to be involved in the Deaf community.

“It’s a wonderful partnership to provide services to individuals who are deaf through the VR service system,” Mayne said.

“Employers who contact [Gantes or Menefee] receive a quick and professional response,” he added.

Communication

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technology from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, N.Y. His job history includes Wentworth Printing and The State newspaper, so he was looking for a job that fit his skills and experience.

He's been at R.R. Donnelly for just over a year, thanks to the efforts of Menefee and Gantes.

"Linda and Clara have helped employers understand that the Deaf have skills and can do the job," he said.

Robert Folsom is working on a Skilled Workforce Apprentice Training (SWAT) internship at McEntire Produce in Columbia.

Folsom said his deafness also presented roadblocks in

looking for a job until he came to SCVRD. Although he was working part-time for a parcel delivery company,



Folsom

he has a wife and baby and needed a full-time job.

"It was a big help to have interpreters for interviews," he said. "Linda kept in contact, coordinated interviews and everything."



Eddie Hanna programs a paper-cutting machine.

Thomas Galloway, Human Resources manager at McEntire, said Folsom, who operates a machine that fills and seals bags of food that are shipped to restaurants in the Southeast, has done very well.

He said Folsom can look forward to a full-time job at the end of his apprenticeship.

"His acceptance in the workplace has been seamless," Galloway said. He noted that Folsom's manager can sign letters, so communication hasn't been a problem.

"It's great to have VR's help to place quality employees in quality jobs," he said.

"They understand our business and the clients are pre-screened. That's hard to find.

"It's great to have VR's help to place quality employees in quality jobs. They understand our business and the clients are pre-screened. That's hard to find. It bridges the gap. It's a great relationship."

***—Thomas Galloway
Human Resources manager
McEntire Produce***

It bridges the gap. It's a great relationship."

As far as hiring Deaf clients, "Linda and Clara have put me at ease," Galloway said. "We've not had a communication issue," he said. "They're readily available; we email weekly to see if anything needs to be addressed. It's an easy transition."

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The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department reports that it printed 5,000 copies of this newsletter at a cost of \$533.28, or about \$.11 a copy.



Amie and Benny Maresca of Biological Solutions with the Small Employer of the Year Award.

Honors

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Amie and Benny Maresca have hired five employees through the SCVRD's Skilled Workforce Apprenticeship Training (SWAT) Program and one more is in training. The program provides on-the-job training and soft skills that clients need to become skilled workers.

In addition, Biological Solutions outsources contract work to the Camden Vocational Rehabilitation Work Training Center, which enables clients there to learn new job skills as they prepare for employment.

It also is an active member of the VR Business Partnership Network and an outspoken advocate for vocational rehabilitation.

NAR

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January and was hired in a full-time position on June 1. He is one of several clients now working for NAR.

"It's been an overwhelming

experience; really, truly unexplainable," said McKinney, 38.

"When you're dealing with people's lives, it gives you a sense of feeling whole and complete. You know you're making a difference in someone's life."

McKinney said he struggled with

addiction for about 18 years.

"I had to get myself sober because I wanted this," he said. "I had to change my environment.

"NAR is willing to give people a second chance. It's a wonderful opportunity and I wouldn't have it except for VR."
