



Commission Edition



The Monthly Newsletter of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Executive Director

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Editor

From the Director's Desk

August, the culminating month of the summer season, has been full of progress and activity at the Commission. I want simply to share with you a sampling of the professional accomplishments that have been realized at CBVI during the last little while and, more important, to express my appreciation to all of our staff who have played a part in helping our agency achieve these milestones.

Throughout the course of the summer, CBVI has successfully re-adopted, with amendments, two chapters of the New Jersey Administrative Code that govern the delivery of services from this agency. On July 3, 2017, NJAC 10:97, the Administrative Code chapter related to our state's Randolph-Sheppard program, was published in the *New Jersey Register*. This notice announced a new program name for New Jersey's Randolph-Sheppard program (Business Enterprises of New Jersey BENJ), and introduced a number of new program rules that promise to grow and strengthen the BENJ program for our participating managers and their valued customers. Toward effectively implementing these new rules, I was delighted on Thursday, July 27, to conduct a training session with our BENJ staff and Elected Committee of Blind Managers to describe and orient them to the most significant changes outlined in the chapter. Similarly, on August 7, 2017, NJAC 10:92 was published, detailing the new parameters of CBVI's Blindness Education program. In relation to our new Blindness Education rules, in particular I want to acknowledge and thank both the internal and external members of the Commission's Education Reform Taskforce for their hours of deliberative work to help us develop a powerful and forward-looking foundation upon which to build an even stronger and better program for blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind learners in New Jersey.

During the first week of August, I, along with Amanda Gerson, CBVI's Coordinator of Vocational Rehabilitation and Transition Services, presented on the structure and operations of the Commission's new Business Relations Unit at a national conference, *Meeting Employer Demand in a Job-Driven Economy: Diversity, Inclusion, and VR's Evolving Role*. The conference was sponsored jointly by the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Demand-Side Strategies (Demand-Side RRTC). I was one of four panelists to set the stage for the conference, describing for conference attendees CBVI's strategies for employer engagement, a new activity required of VR agencies as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). Amanda ably represented CBVI by presenting in one of several concurrent break-out groups on the use of Labor Market Information (LMI) as a tool in the job search and managed a poster presentation on the role of Assistive Technology when educating employers. The fact that we were asked to play multiple roles at this conference reflects positively on how our agency is being perceived throughout the country in terms of embracing the new obligation to develop programs for employer engagement.

The Student Hands-on Alternatives Re-enforcement Program (SHARP), CBVI's summer training session for consumers in grades 1-8, ended triumphantly on Thursday, August 17. In our third summer of SHARP, we were filled to capacity and beyond, where we served 92 students. To be sure, you will learn more about the specifics of the SHARP program elsewhere in the *Commission Edition*, but I had the pleasure this month of visiting and observing the SHARP students in all three of our Service Centers, Newark, Freehold, and Cherry Hill. While visiting our SHARP students in Freehold, I was accompanied by a representative from the Department of Human Services' (DHS') Public Relations team, and 19 pictures of our students at work were featured on the DHS Facebook page, with a brief blurb about the SHARP program. A special shout-out is owed to all of our staff who played a role in making SHARP 2017 another real success. SHARP is a program that teaches and creates meaningful summer memories for New Jersey's youngest blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind learners.

In addition to serving our youngest consumers, 15 students in grades 9 and 10 participated in our annual Life 101 program, a two-week residential program held at our Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) in New Brunswick. This transition program introduces new blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind high school students to programs focusing on college exploration, career exploration, skills of independent living, and orientation to advanced Assistive Technology. Infused throughout this Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program is an emphasis on self-advocacy skills. Beyond the content of this intensive curriculum, our Life 101 participants enjoyed evening field trips, recreational activities, and informal interactions that were designed to foster critical social skills. I had the pleasure of speaking to this year's class of Life 101 graduates, their families, and our staff during the Life 101 graduation ceremony on Friday, August 4. The most encouraging aspect of the program was hearing this group of articulate students reflect upon their ambitions for the future and attributing some of their newly gained self-confidence to involvement in CBVI's Life 101 program. I offer my congratulations and gratitude to the staff of our JKTC for executing another successful year of Life 101.

August has also been a month for significant administrative strides, the kind of achievements that do not often garner public attention, but which are critical to the forward momentum of the Commission. The administrative team has made significant progress in moving our agency forward in relation to our migration from Libera's System Seven to Alliance's Aware Case Management system. This migration will be an approximately two-year project, but we are moving toward the next stage of the migration exercise. Additionally, the Commission has been working with our Federal partners at the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education, to affirm that we have made progress in implementing our new policies on Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS), a new category of service required as a result of WIOA. We also anticipate further training on PRE-ETS procedures in the early fall. Our dedicated Human Resources staff has been hard at work hiring new staff to add to the Commission's professional team. Please welcome some of the new hires and promotions that have been announced during the last month. Knowing that I will inevitably leave somebody out if I list particular names, I'll simply say that we've hired new supervisors in our Blindness Education Unit, new instructors at the Joseph Kohn Training Center, a new supervisor in our Business Relations Unit, and at least one new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in our Freehold Service Center.

As you can see, August, often the month for lulling around and taking vacations, has been incredibly productive at CBVI. I am keenly aware that this productivity could not be realized without the support of all of our staff. Please accept, again, my gratitude for the role that each of you play in making our operations happen. In closing, I want especially to acknowledge the work of John Reiff, our manager for the Northern Service Region, for his yeoman-like effort in recent weeks and months, to keep services under his watch smoothly operational. It occasionally takes extra effort on the part of all of us to maintain the quality services that CBVI is known for providing; John has truly stepped up to the plate to help the agency during the last little while. I salute you all.

Daniel B. Frye
Executive Director

Learning Lunch Reminder:

As previously noted, during each of these monthly sessions, I will meet with five CBVI staff and a member of our Executive Management Team to receive feedback or suggestions on what the Commission might do that is new and exciting. Please indicate your interest in being part of such an up and coming forum by sending an email with the subject line "Learning Lunch" to my assistant, Melissa Brown, at Melissa.Brown2@dhs.state.nj.us

Program Administration – John C. Walsh, Chief

New Program Initiative in VR – Blindness Learning Community

The agency strives to find ways to build the capacity of our community partners in order to improve the quality of service provision to our consumers with the ultimate goal of improving overall outcomes. Related to those efforts, on August 14, 2017, CBVI issued a Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA) and a Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) inviting Supported Employment provider agencies to participate in a Blindness Learning Community (BLC) that focuses on building the capacity of staff at these agencies to more effectively serve individuals who are blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind and require supported-employment services to obtain and maintain a job.

The Blindness Learning Community will provide targeted training and coaching on evidence-based, non-visual methods of instruction for individuals with low or no vision. It will also present an opportunity for CBVI staff to work with staff of provider agencies on building a community of practice that focuses on developing intervention strategies that serve individuals who are blind, vision-impaired, or deaf-blind, and who have multiple disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Below are the links with additional information about these opportunities:

Notices of Funds Available (NOFA): <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/providers/grants/nofa/>

Blindness Learning Community (Request for Letters of Interest):

[http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/providers/grants/rfprfi/RFPfiles/CBVI%20Blindness%20Learnin
g%20Community%20RLI.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/providers/grants/rfprfi/RFPfiles/CBVI%20Blindness%20Learning%20Community%20RLI.pdf)

The goal of the project is to improve employment outcomes for this consumer population. Participation in the BLC is voluntary, but all provider agencies that meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to participate. CBVI will be providing a one-time grant of up to \$7,500 to each provider agency who is found eligible to participate in the Blindness Learning Community. The agency will be accepting letters of interest until close of business on September 1st. It is anticipated that the learning community will begin to meet in early November 2017.

Organizational Logistics – Ines Matos, Chief

Talking Book and Braille Center Loan Program, submitted by Colleen Faupel: The TBBC loan program for computers and CCTV's has been a very successful program for CBVI consumers. It allows us to provide a loaner system to individuals who may not be eligible for purchase yet but, who have already begun training for technology skills or are participating in training programs, including college courses towards their VR goals. With this in mind, there are a few guidelines that are important to highlight as reminders to caseworkers and supervisors who are part of the process so that we can continue to offer this program with greater efficiency.

Overdue systems and late extension forms are two of the biggest hurdles we face with this program, and we are working to improve in these areas. Below are a few guidelines to remember when submitting a consumer's name for a loaner system and what is involved in the process for it to move smoothly and quickly. Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Colleen Faupel (TSS Supervisor) for clarification colleen.faupel@dhs.state.nj.us

1. Equipment loaner forms need to be filled out in FACTS to initially receive a system and should also be used for all extensions. The initial loan period request time is up to 6 months. An extension up to an additional 6 months can be requested upon the completion of the first 6 months if needed.
2. Extensions should be requested before the initial due date, preferably a few weeks prior to that date. We have received many extension requests months after the initial due date. When this occurs, the extension is approved from the original due date not this later date. When a system is delivered by the Talking Book and Braille Center (TBBC), caseworkers are notified that the due date will be in exactly 6 months. One suggestion for keeping track of this is to set a calendar reminder to check in with the consumer a few weeks before their due date.
3. If an extension beyond 12 months is necessary, an additional review will be done by the TSS Supervisor. Additional information may be required, including specifics as to how much longer the consumer will need the system for school or training.
4. When submitting a request for a loaner, the caseworker should send a copy of the Assistive Technology Assessment to Chris Riehl of the TBBC to ensure that he has the TSS recommended specs and software for the consumer. Please note that if an assessment form has not been dated, it has not been completed by the TSS. There are various reasons why an assessment form may not have been dated for completion and it is best to check with the TSS if you notice this before sending an incomplete form to TBBC.

5. When the form is completed in FACTS and sent to the supervisor for approval, the supervisor should then use the "Send to" feature within FACTS to send this document to Chris Riehl at the TBBC. Chris Riehl's email address is criehl@njstatelib.org . We recommend that supervisors also copy the caseworker. Although this process has been in place for a few years, there continues to be inconsistencies which result in delays. Adhering to this standard process will help eliminate any duplicates and will greatly improve the overall efficiency of the program.
6. While many of the loaner systems are laptops, some desktop systems continue to be distributed. Please remind consumers that these systems must be set up in a common area and not a bedroom or basement.

We will be reviewing all of the processes for this program over the next few weeks and will send out an updated set up guidelines as needed for everyone to reference. These are just a few tips to get things moving in the right direction. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact TSS Supervisor Colleen Faupel.

Educational Services – Eva Scott, Director of Blindness Education

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” - Walt Disney

This has been a very busy summer, and now we are able to celebrate the success of SHARP 2017 and the re-adoption of the N.J.A.C 10:92, that governs Blindness Education Services. But as this season ends, we're already preparing for the new beginnings of the fall. Our service agreements from school districts are arriving daily, and each week we are introduced to new students who need our services. Blindness Education is regrouping as we look forward to the 2017-2018 academic year. As Walt Disney has advised us to do, we "keep moving forward."

SHARP 2017 - Student Hands-On Alternatives Reinforcement Program: SHARP 2017 is now history. A total of 92 students in grades one through eight completed the program. The students were supported by Blindness Education teachers and supervisors, numerous instructors from the Independent Living Unit, and technology specialists from the Assistive Technology Services Unit. The students also had an opportunity to interact with high school students from our Employment Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) Program who worked within SHARP as interns. The program was also assisted by staff from the Meyer Center, Management Services, and Human Resources. My deepest gratitude to everyone who helped make SHARP 2017 a tremendous success.

Changes in Blindness Education and the Meyer Center: To help move the Blindness Education Unit and the Meyer Center forward and make sure that there is strong supervisory leadership in all locations, there will be some staffing changes that will take effect in mid to late August.

Cynthia Madric, who has been an Education Supervisor in the Newark Service Center, will be moving into the position of Meyer Center Supervisor. Cynthia's outstanding supervisory and organizational abilities will assure that the Meyer Center continues to fulfill its vital function in providing accessibility to general curricula for CBVI students.

Joan Boyle, who has been a Blindness Education teacher in the Freehold Service Center, will now serve consumers as an Education Supervisor in that location. Joan, who has demonstrated leadership as a colleague of the teachers in Freehold is looking forward to her new responsibilities as supervisor.

Jessica Cubberley, who has been a Blindness Education teacher in the Freehold Service Center, will take on the role of Education Supervisor in the Newark Service Center. Jessica, who has had supervisory experience prior to becoming a teacher, is eager to exercise her leadership ability in Blindness Education.

I welcome each of these wonderful colleagues to their new positions. They are all to be commended for taking on new challenges and responsibilities in a field that is constantly evolving as the needs of our students change. These three capable individuals have the talent and ability to lead and support our staff and assure the ultimate successful outcomes for our students.

A Milestone for a Teacher in Blindness Education: It is my pleasure to announce and celebrate a milestone for one of our Freehold teachers. On August 21, 2017, Mr. Richard Dunning marked his 46th anniversary as a teacher at CBVI. In 46 years of service Richard has experienced many organizational changes as well as changes in the field of Blindness Education. Richard began his career prior to the federal law mandating free and appropriate public education for all students including those with disabilities. Despite the absence of a federal mandate, Richard taught blind and vision impaired students because he and CBVI saw the importance of doing so. Over the years, Richard's hard work and dedication has helped many New Jersey students realize success in their lives. His years of successful teaching have made Richard a wealth of knowledge about teaching blind and vision impaired students, and this experience has been of benefit to his colleagues. Anyone who interacts with Richard knows that he demonstrates the same level of enthusiasm for the work that I am sure he demonstrated as a newly graduated teacher. Congratulations to Richard for 46 years of successful teaching, and we're looking forward to his continued service to CBVI consumers. Just keep moving forward.

From the George F. Meyer Instructional Resource Center- "Blindness Education- Clean Data Initiative", submitted by Christine Hinton, Deputy Director of Blindness Education: The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Blindness Education Services Unit's leadership is launching the "Blindness Education- Clean Data Initiative" beginning September 2017. This initiative is an effort to allow this unit to produce and submit reports electronically and efficiently to both internal and external state and federal agencies that govern services to CBVI education consumers. Having clean data also supports the integrity of the agency and it's consumers by having current and accurate information about this community.

The process of cleaning data includes determining and identifying specific areas of concern to be addressed and corrected in the process. The Blindness Education Unit will focus on these areas in Phase One:

- **Accuracy:** To determine if collected data is a true reflection of the consumer in real time;
- **Completeness:** To assess if data fields are completed as required;
- **Consistency:** To ensure that date is consistently entered across the system to produce accurate reporting; and
- **Uniformity:** To apply procedures so that the data is recorded by the same measures throughout the unit.

Applying these measures will help the Blindness Education Unit to position itself for future opportunities for its consumers in the field of Blindness Education.

Independent Living & Clinical Services – Elizabeth DeShields, Coordinator

Project Better Eye-Health Services and Treatment (BEST) – Teamwork Leads to Success, submitted by Sunil Parikh, Supervisor of Project BEST: Not too long ago a gentleman approximately 45 years of age attended a Project BEST eye screening with his brother. The gentleman appeared to be nervous and anxious, fiddling with the clip board, and pacing. The Project BEST team determined that he needed assistance in filling out the screening form, and he was helped accordingly.

He then received a thorough eye screening as provided by the Project BEST Field Representatives and the assigned eye physician on site. He was diagnosed by the physician to be legally blind and have Strabismus (a condition in which the eyes do not properly align with each other when looking at an object). During the post screening interview, it was found that he had diabetes for more than 10 years. He also mentioned that he was employed successfully for a long time, was presently on temporary disability, but knew he would soon be losing his job due to his vision issues. This was upsetting to him as the sole bread winner in his family of four (a wife and two daughters). He also shared that his vision loss was also negatively impacting his family life.

He was immediately referred to our Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Unit where a team proceeded with addressing his needs. The VR counselor, eye health nurse, rehabilitation teacher, supervisor and manager, all got involved in serving this consumer. Their dedicated efforts combined with the consumer's initiative had positive results. The consumer not only was able to return to his place of employment, but was quickly promoted to a supervisory position. His adjustment to his vision impairment renewed his self-confidence, and being back in the work force, helped to resolve his family issues.

Project BEST, which serves more than 37,000 consumers annually, is often the first introduction and first point of entry into CBVI. Through the diverse populations and target groups that are served by the various eye screening initiatives, (preschool, fixed sites, Diabetic Eye Disease Detection, migrant workers, and community health fairs), Project Best is a vital source for referrals to CBVI's other units. Project BEST provides not only community education on sight conservation, vision screenings, diagnoses, follow up examinations and treatment, it also promotes all of CBVI's services and instructional programs by educating potential consumers and the community. Project BEST shares information about how CBVI professionals make it possible for individuals with vision loss to develop skills that enable self-sufficiency through a variety of rehabilitation and education programs for people of all ages to facilitate personal independence, employability, and full integration into their community.

For a list of Project BEST fixed site screenings, please contact Sunil Parikh by email: Sunil.Parikh@dhs.state.nj.us .

Business Enterprises of New Jersey – Deacon Truesdale, Manager

Recently a business enterprise location at the U.S. Postal Service Dominick V. Daniels Processing and Distribution (DVDP&D) Center in Kearny, NJ became available to BENJ. This location had been successfully managed for many years by U.S. military service veteran Albert "Skip" Robinson, who is retiring from the Randolph-Sheppard Program. The DVDP&D is a large 24/7 facility with many vending machines and a Dunkin Donuts. The availability of this location created a great opportunity for a licensed manager in the program and will also create promotional opportunities for other BENJ managers through the bidding process.

The bidding process is implemented when a location becomes available. A licensed manager or qualified individual on the BENJ certified for placement list submits their interest in the location and an interview is scheduled shortly thereafter. The candidates are then interviewed by a panel from within BENJ and CBVI staff.

The bidding process for the DVDP&D will mark the first time the new applicable rules and regulations of the re-authorized N.J.A.C.10:97 will be put into practice.

Staff Development – Kenya Whitehurst-Percell

The following documents are posted on CBVI's Intranet (<http://cbvi-web/intranet/>). They are there as a resource for you to assist you in working with CBVI consumers:

- The **2017 DHS Division of Disability Services Resource Guide**: This publication identifies all levels of government, community organizations and professionals working to assist people with disabilities. It provides access to up-to-date information that individuals with disabilities may need to flourish in their physical, professional, and recreational lives.
- The **2016 CBVI State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) Annual Report**: This report provides an update on CBVI programs, achievements, and accomplishments. With an emphasis on vocational rehabilitation services, this publication chronicles the ongoing teamwork and collaborative efforts of CBVI and the SRC.
- The **2017 Red Book**: This is a summary guide to employment supports for people with disabilities under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs.

The links for locating these documents on the intranet are listed below:

2017 DHS Division of Disability Services Resource Guide

http://cbvi-web/intranet/ftproot/LocalFTP/DDS%20RD_17-final-web.pdf

2016 CBVI State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) Annual Report

http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/publications/srcar/2016_SRC_AR_Final.pdf

2017 Red Book

<http://cbvi-web/intranet/ftproot/LocalFTP/TheRedBook2017.pdf>

Regional Updates

Southern Region – Jack Thompson, Manager

First Annual Reverse Job Fair Event, submitted by Heather Candelaria, VR Supervisor: On Thursday, June 29th, the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit of the CHSC held its first annual Reverse Job Fair Event at the Cherry Hill Library. Under the direction of Andrea Askie-Rosario and Caroline Ziemiak from the Business Relations Unit (BRU), we were able to host a well-organized and successful presentation to the attending employers.

Just what exactly is a reverse job fair you might ask? A Reverse Job Fair is a new and interesting concept where instead of the employers being stationed at a table and having consumers walk up to them and ask questions, it's flipped to where the employers get a chance to walk around to the consumers stationed at the tables and ask the consumers questions about themselves. To better

illustrate the set-up, each consumer is seated at a table with a tri-fold designed to showcase their skills and abilities with exhibits demonstrating their talents including hobbies, educational credentials, and work history.

This effort required an extensive amount of planning. VR counselors were responsible for identifying and prepping job-ready consumers (eleven in total) who would be up to the challenge and willing to put in the work. Before the main event the consumers attended a Job Ready Boot Camp and a dress rehearsal. During the boot camp VR counselors broke into groups of two and collaboratively facilitated a discussion with the consumers on job hunting skills, resume building, interviewing skills, and appropriate dress. During the dress rehearsal VR counselors worked with the consumers in designing their tri-folds including brainstorming on what they should display.

On the day of the event the consumers came well prepared, dressed in business attire with their resumes, tri-folds, and assistive technology. VR Coordinator, Amanda Gerson, provided welcoming remarks and discussed the benefits of hiring and working with individuals with disabilities. Some of the employers in attendance were Princeton University, Rowan at Gloucester County College, Goodwill Industries, Longhorn Steakhouse, and ShopRite. At the closing of the event, the employers provided us with positive feedback. Some employers said it was very creative and a more visual way to think about the recruitment process. Shoprite HR recruiters discussed customizing a position at their store for possibly two consumers. And the Longhorn Steakhouse HR recruiter who was very impressed with one consumer in particular is considering that individual for a position at one of their locations.

Overall, the Business Relations Unit and the CHSC VR counselors did an excellent job in working together to make this event a success. The Reverse Job Fair definitely exceeded expectations, and we look forward to planning for next year.

Below are a few photos from the event:

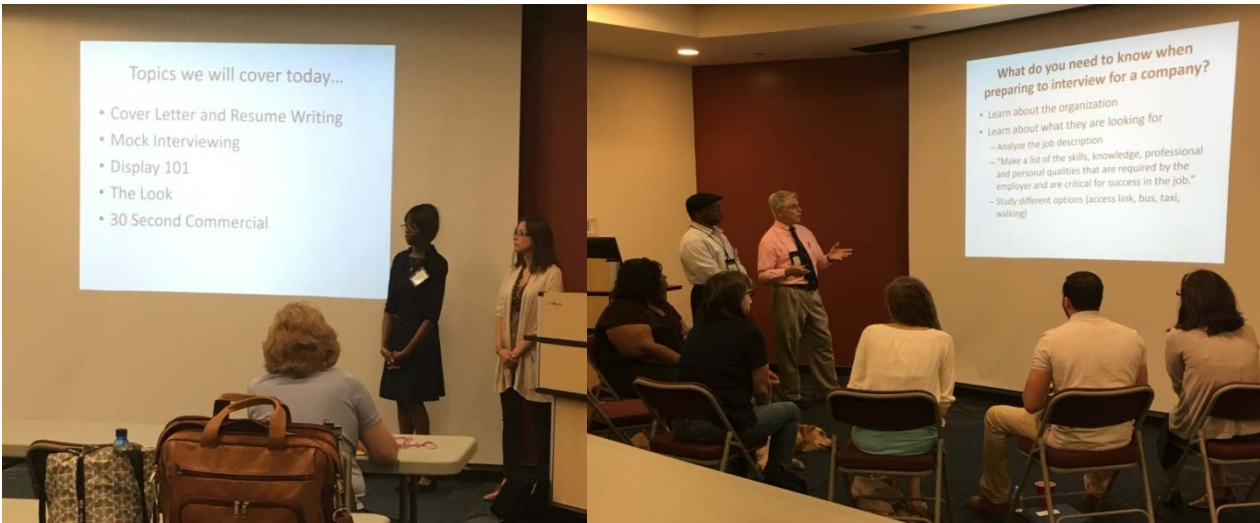


Photo #1: Andrea Askie-Rosario and Caroline Ziemak opening the Job Ready Boot Camp.

Photo #2: Another boot camp photo with VR counselors and consumers discussing – “What you need to know when preparing to interview”.

Photo #3: Consumer Adiel Mendez, dressed in business attire with his resume and assistive technology on the table in front of him.

Photo #4: Consumer Robin Hester, also dressed in business attire, standing next to her tri-fold display with her business cards, diplomas, and assistive technology on the table.

The Last Words

“Work joyfully and peacefully knowing that right thoughts and right efforts will inevitably bring about right results.” – James Allen

Please send items or suggestions for the next issue of the *Commission Edition* by or before 11 a.m., Monday, September 18, 2017:

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