Vocational Rehabilitation

2013 - 2014 PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

EMPLOYMENT IS OUR **BUSINESS**

VR Mission

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

VR Vision

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Statutory authority and governing guidelines may be found in 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapter III, Part 361 and Chapter 413, Part II, Florida Statutes (FS).

Message from the Director

Aleisa McKinlay

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has enjoyed another productive year. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013-14, 7,214 Floridians with significant disabilities found or kept a job through the good work done by VR staff and community partners – an 11% increase over SFY 2012-13. Major initiatives and events within the division include:

- Re-establishment of waiting lists for all priority categories under the Order of Selection (OOS)
- Ongoing improvements to our management information systems
- Implementation of a division-wide learning management system
- Ensuring our offices are customer-friendly and fully compliant with the ADA
- Continued collaboration with Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Statewide implementation of the Discovery assessment model
- Increased quality improvement and performance management activities

People want to work, and we want to give them the tools they need to achieve that goal. Our modal customer has changed a great deal since 2008 (establishment of the OOS), as has Florida's business climate. We continue to work with our community partners to help VR customers succeed in careers that meet their needs and those of Florida's employers, as well.

We look forward to the next year as we begin to understand and implement provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). This landmark legislation was enacted on July 22, 2014 and will bring increased collaboration across all federally-created work programs, increased attention to Florida's employers as new VR customers, additional attention to youth transitioning from school to adulthood, and increased opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to engage in competitive, integrated employment. It is a privilege to be part of this most exciting joint venture!

VR Facts at a Glance

	2013-14	2012-13
Persons with disabilities who got or kept jobs	7,214	6,523
Average hours worked per week	30.2	30.2
Average hourly earnings	$11.15	$10.98
Projected average annual earnings	$17,536	$17,242
Total projected earnings in the first year	$126,503,044	$112,467,902
Median monthly caseload per counselor	105	127

Overview

The Florida Department of Education's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation administers the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, Florida's employment service for people with disabilities. The division maintains 89 offices across the state, and has 931 employees.

VR is a federal/state partnership that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job. According to the 2012 American Community Survey Year Estimate, there are 2.3 million Floridians age 16 and over who have a disability. Of those, only 17.3%, or 402,665, are employed.

Our mission is to increase that number. VR differs from other state agencies that provide support and other services to individuals living with a disability, in that we do not maintain long-term caseloads or ongoing responsibility for the health and welfare of vulnerable individuals. Once an individual has been successfully employed for a designated period of time (90 or 150 days), the VR case is closed.

Another focus of VR is transitioning students from school to work. The School-to-Work Transition program helps students with disabilities train for a job, continue their education, and/or find a job after high school. Students who apply for services while in high school are served by 163 VR transition counselors. The number of youth employed following VR services has increased in each of the last four years.

Four additional programs receive funding through VR. The Adults with Disabilities program provides funds to 42 school districts and 8 state colleges to give adults and senior citizens with disabilities who are unlikely to enter the workforce skills consistent with their abilities and needs.

The Independent Living Program provides services through a statewide network of private non-profit, non-residential, locally-based, and consumer-controlled Centers for Independent Living. Their mission is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities. Services are intended to lead to the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in their communities of choice.

The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) provides assistive technology products and services.

The Able Trust partners with VR on 'High School-High Tech' programs for high school students with disabilities.

Discovery Program Helps People with Significant Disabilities Find the Job Best Suited for Them

ORLANDO – Four years ago, **Joey Cunio**, who has an intellectual disability, came to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). He needed help finding a job that fit his needs. He had tried other jobs in the restaurant and fast food industry, but never stayed for very long.

"It wasn't going very well for a long time, because Joey doesn't like anybody getting into his business," said his VR Counselor Timothy Seaman. "Anytime we tried to place him, he'd want to quit. I was at the point where we couldn't do anything else. Discovery made finding employment for him much easier."

With Discovery, trained employment specialists spend extra time with the VR customer examining his/her likes and dislikes, and see how they handle situations in their daily lives. "It was really catered to him, where everything else he had done catered to the people running the program. The Discovery program worked really well," said Timothy.

Joey was paired with Donald Blair from Easter Seals as his Discovery coach. "Joey is somewhat private," said Donald. "Although I had asked him several times if he was involved in any other activities or groups in the church, he had always said no. It wasn't until late in the Discovery process that I learned that he walked to his church several times during the week and hung out, occasionally helping the maintenance staff."

That information was crucial for Joey's job search. Donald sent a letter to the church's pastor and facilities director outlining a plan and specific job duties for Joey if they would consider hiring him. They agreed.

Joey is now employed as a maintenance helper at his church, East Coast Christian Center. He works on average 8-10 hours, three days a week. Timothy is very proud of where he is now. "He's doing very well at his new job," said Timothy.

Timothy believes that what makes Joey a success at his job is that he likes what he does and does it with ease. "He does it with very little supervision, and it meets all of his needs," said Timothy. "I didn't think this was going to go anywhere. But this is important to him. It hit our purpose of finding what Joey really likes."

Aside from setting out specific job duties for Joey, his supervisor writes and submits a time card for him that states the days and hours that he works each week. They provide Joey with a second set of time cards that he can use to help keep track of the days and hours that he works and the wages he receives. Donald explained, "This is a creative and thoughtful 'accommodation' to help Joey, due to his memory issues. As of last report, he has not forgotten to go to work or been late for work."

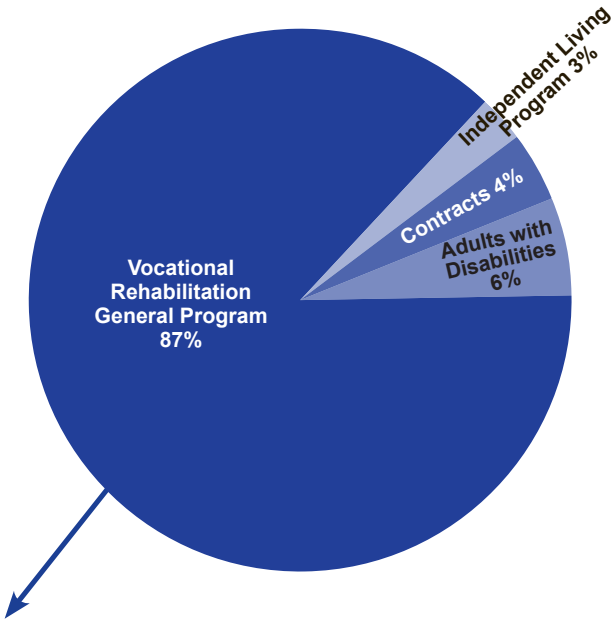
Joey is thankful to his counselor because without his assistance, he would not have been able to get the Discovery evaluation. "My counselor made a difference by being patient and suggesting that I try the Discovery program." He is also grateful to VR for the opportunity to change his life. "My feelings toward VR are good," said Joey. "VR helped change my life by getting me a job. I do not think that I would have been able to get my own job without VR's help."

Performance Highlights

VR is a federal/state partnership – 78.7% of funds for VR program expenditures come from federal sources and required match of 21.3% from state general revenue.

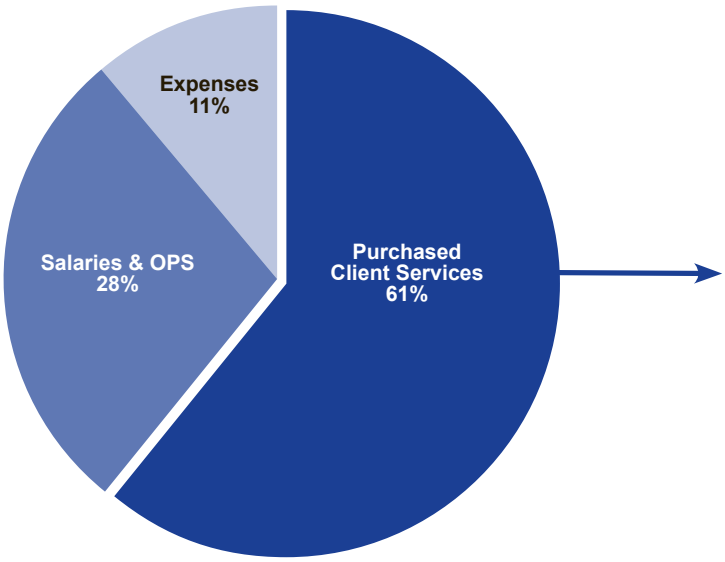
2013-14 Division Programs

Total Division Expenditures $190,174,782



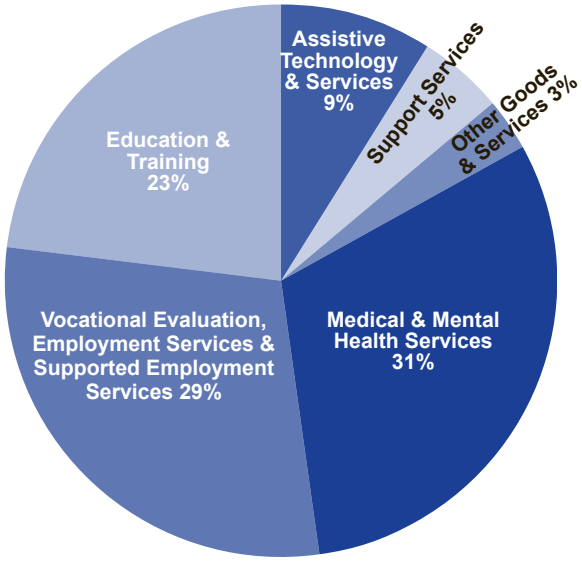
2013-14 VR General Program Expenditures

Total VR Expenditures $172,618,544



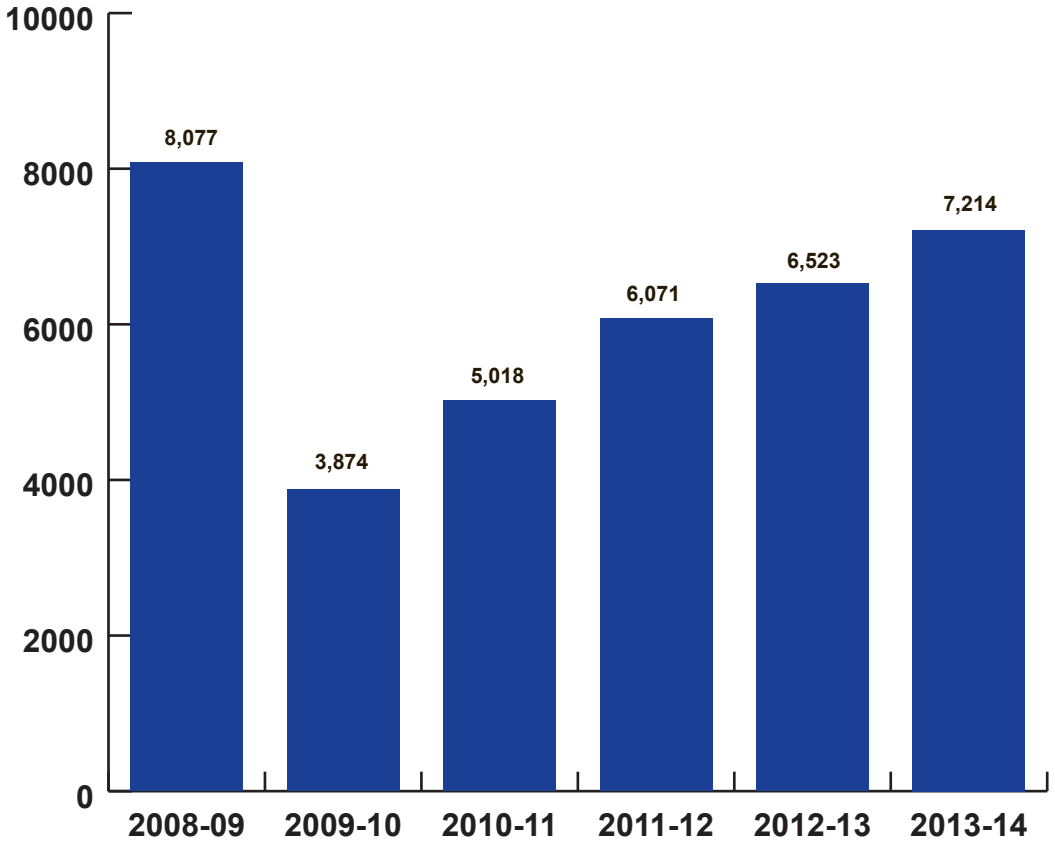
VR Purchased Client Services (PCS) Expenditures by Category

Total PCS Expenditures $105,590,220

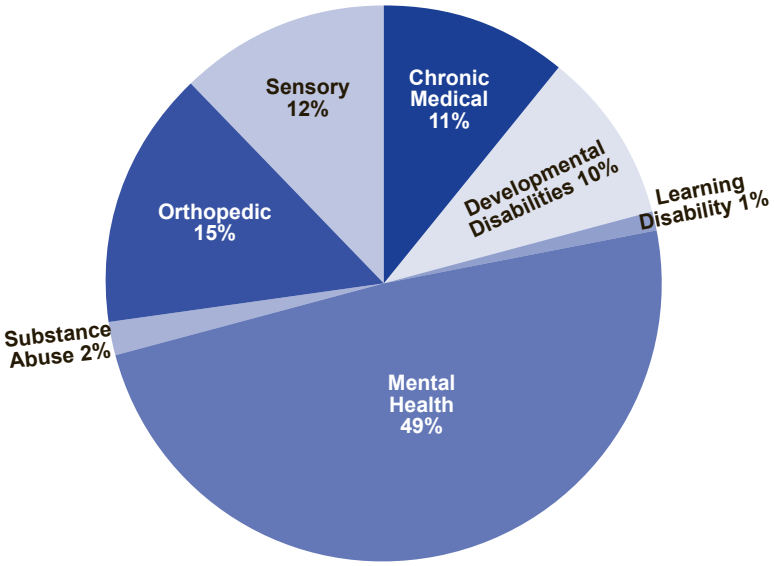


For every $1 invested in rehabilitating the customer, an estimated $10.73 was returned to the economy in state fiscal year 2013-14.

VR Customers Gainfully Employed*



VR Customers Gainfully Employed* by Primary Disability Category



The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) defines primary disability as the individual's primary physical or mental impairment that causes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.

* Gainful employment occurs when a customer has job stability for at least 90 days and is placed in employment that is competitive, integrated into the community, and for which they receive at least minimum wage.

Order of Selection Waiting List Status Summary

as of June 30, 2014

Under Order of Selection, all eligible individuals are placed on a prioritized waiting list based on the significance of their disability. Significance is assessed by the number of barriers created in getting or keeping a job and the nature of VR services needed. Federal law requires that individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first.

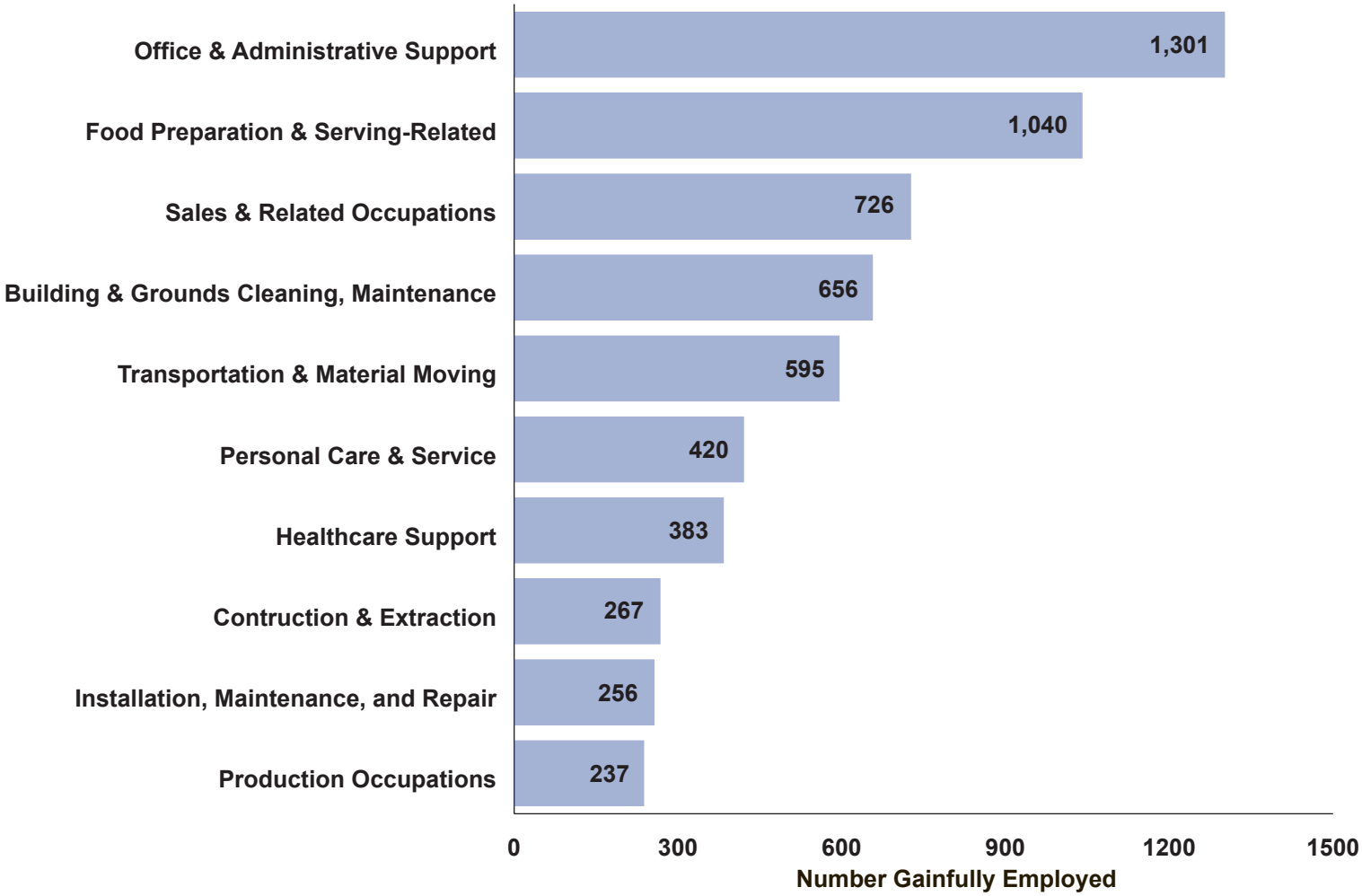
Category 1 – Most Significant Disabilities (6,199)

Category 2 – Significant Disabilities (6,615)

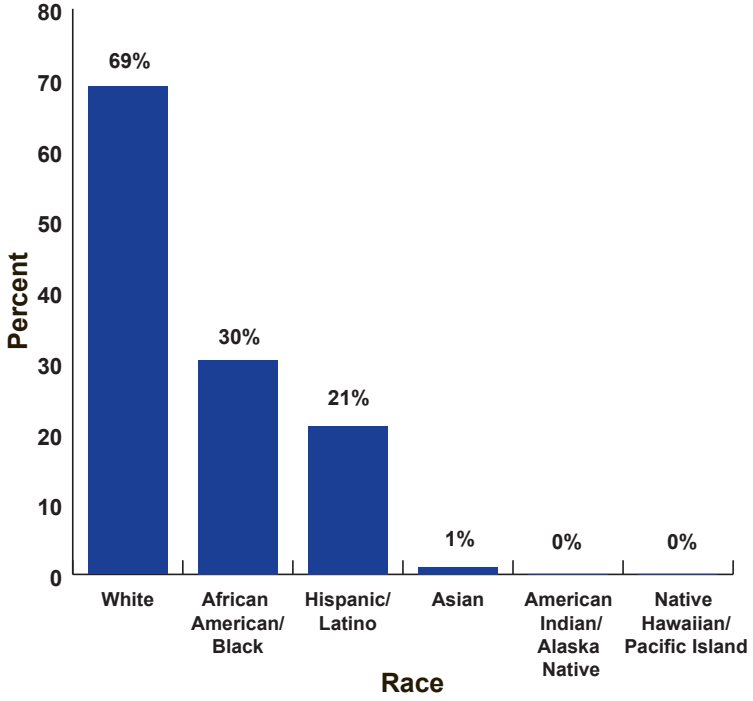
Category 3 – Other Disabilities (1,476)

Category 1 customers are currently being released from the waitlist.

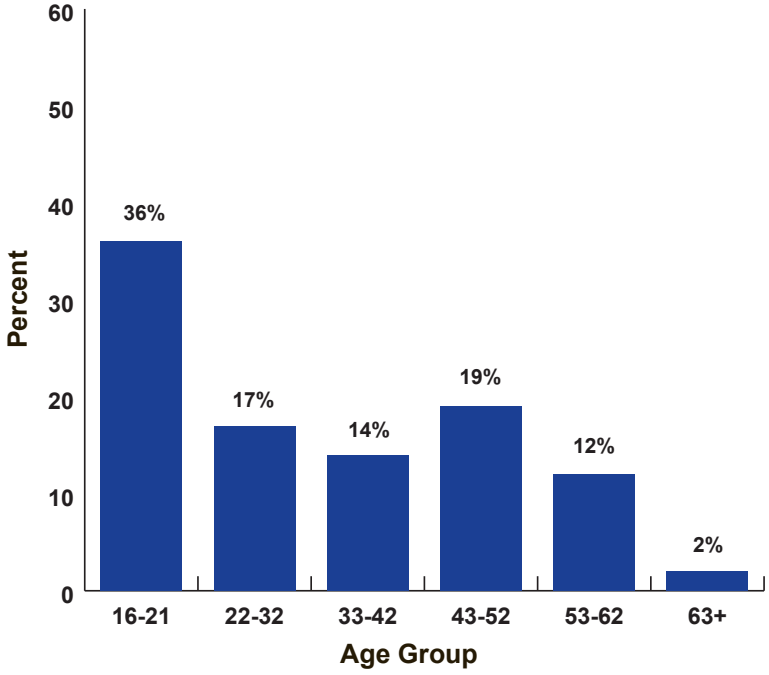
Top 10 Occupations for 2013-14 Customers Who Got or Kept a Job



Number of Customers who Received Services Under an Individualized Plan for Employment by Race and Ethnicity



Age Groups of Customers who Received Services Under an Individualized Plan for Employment



How to Live Independently After You Graduate from College

PANAMA CITY – **Kristen Gusmus** was born with arthrogryposis, a neuro-musculo-skeletal disorder that affects various joints in the body. By the time she was two years old, she'd had seven surgeries, along with multiple rounds of physical therapies. Doctors told her parents she would never walk. Kristen took that as a challenge. Today she walks wearing braces – using a walker for short distances and only using a wheelchair for long distances. "That's basically how I am," Kristen says. "You tell me I can't do something, so I do it."

Kristen is an independent woman, living on her own and working full time as a financial sales representative in the lending department at Tyndall Federal Credit Union. If you've called to apply for a loan recently, that energetic, young woman you spoke with could very well have been Kristen. She received help and guidance along her career journey from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

Kristen first learned about VR when she was a senior in high school. VR Counselor Pam Cramer worked with Kristen to decide on a job goal and the services she would need along the way. Kristen's parents bought her a mini-van, and VR provided the vehicle modifications so she could drive for the first time on her own. VR also helped her purchase an electric wheelchair. Although the Bright Futures scholarship covered the majority of her college tuition, VR helped pay for her other school expenses. Kristen also worked outside jobs to earn extra spending money.

After graduating in August 2013 with a bachelor's degree in business administration, Kristen immediately began looking for a job in her field. Within a month, she was working at the credit union. Having a full-time job was the last piece of the puzzle in Kristen's independence. She's totally independent now, living in her own place, employing a part-time caregiver to help, driving on her own, and working at a good job. "I love living on my own," she says.

The long journey with Kristen has been absolutely worth it to Pam. "Kristen was a fantastic client. We worked together for five years; she never complained, and she always did everything she said she was going to do. Kristen was just a regular college student going to school, and now she's reached her job goal. I'm so proud of her."

Kristen encourages other people with disabilities to find their independence. "There are ways that you can become independent. You just have to find them and do it. I would never have been able to drive or finish school debt-free without VR."

Making Candy Beautiful!

ORLANDO – **Dawn McCleary's** bright, colorful designs have to be seen to be believed. That three-tiered wedding cake? There's no cake in there. It's made up of hundreds of pieces of brightly wrapped candy woven into an intricate design that mimics a cake but is even better – it stays fresh for weeks. You can eat her creations; you just don't want to because they're too pretty.

Dawn has Stevens-Johnson syndrome – a rare, serious disorder in which your skin has hypersensitivity to medication – but that doesn't keep her from spending hours making her specialty cakes. She also makes bouquets and baby favors. The cakes are made of candy, the flowers in the bouquets are really a blowpop wrapped in colorful paper with candy pieces attached to look like petals, and the tiny baby buggies are made out of a real diaper and candy.

Dawn launched her new business, Candy Dezign Studio, on April 10, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the West Orange Chamber of Commerce. She began her quest years ago with a clear vision of her designs and business. She just needed help in putting all the pieces together. That's where Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) came in.

While looking for assistance with her housing needs, Dawn was referred to VR, where she met VR Counselor Anna Bachman. Anna paired Dawn with April Schauer and Rogue Gallant from the Central Florida Disability Chamber for guidance in creating an official business plan so the business could be successful. VR also provided Dawn with a website (candydezignstudio.com), business cards, a computer, candy, fabrics, craft tables, shelves, paints, easels, and custom boxes.

Dawn worked hard to create her business and appreciated the support she got from April and Anna. "Whatever I needed to do to make this happen, that's what I was willing to do," said Dawn. She also appreciated the support she got from family and friends throughout the long journey.

Anna has enjoyed watching Dawn's progress through the VR program. "It's wonderful watching the process as she's been moving along with her business. The best part is seeing the finished product. You hear about it and know it's going to be great, but seeing it is wonderful. It keeps you in awe."

Dawn's first goal is to have a successful home business. She was recently asked to be a regular vendor at the Orlando Lake Eola Farmer's Market on Sundays. Her long-term goal is to grow her business and one day franchise it. "I'd also really like to have a boutique to teach kids how to do this. People don't like every kind of candy, but everyone likes some type of candy. It would be customized. Customers can come in, pick their candy, tell me their ideas, and I can draw up a picture of it right then. I just love doing this!"

Vocational Rehabilitation

For more information, contact:

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