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Communications Office  
**News Release**

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### **VR Customer Helps Others Who Have Disabilities Live Independently**

**ORLANDO, FL** – Roger Cyr has spent most of his adult life fighting for his right to work. Roger has a number of medical issues, including diabetes and depression, and his employment outlook seemed grim. “I’m a bilateral amputee,” Roger says. “I’ve been an amputee since 2004, and I have ongoing issues that a lot of doctors and surgeons wouldn’t have encouraged me to return back to work, even part time.” Roger refused to resign himself to a life spent homebound and unemployed.

“Back in October 2010, I applied for VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) services,” Roger says. “I was accepted. I met my VR counselor, Vanessa Lopez, and she explained the program and how she was going to work with me to come up with a career goal and a plan for me to reenter the workforce.” Roger committed to the program and worked with Vanessa to find a business that could benefit from a friendly, well-organized employee like himself.

Shortly after he started working with VR, Roger hit the career jackpot, but the situation didn’t last long. “I was assigned to the Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Winter Park,” says Roger. “I worked with my employment specialist here for several months until March 2011, when I became gravely ill and spent eight and a half months in the hospital and lost my second leg.”

After recovering from his surgery, Roger was ready to prove his strong work ethic. “The first thing I did when I got out of rehab was rejoin VR,” Roger says. Vanessa worked with Roger a second time to help him regain his employment at the CIL. “Being hired by the CIL, of all places, as a part-time employee was great,” Roger says. “I work as a trainer and mentor and work closely with the rest of the staff and attend all meetings and functions. There’s complete inclusion, and I’m happy with my growth.”

Roger’s manager, Jascinth Lawrence, is grateful for what he brings to the table. “Roger has a unique opportunity to talk about his own experience,” Jascinth says. “He helps customers understand that maintaining a positive attitude and following through with your employment specialist really does lead to employment. We are very happy to have him on board. Roger is a really positive person, and he gets along well with everyone. If we have any concerns as a team, we can go to him.”

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VR also helped modify Roger's home so he could take care of himself and continue on the path to success. Vanessa explains, "Roger is able to do his job now with no problem, after receiving the home and vehicle modifications he required to become more self-sufficient and independent again."

Roger agrees wholeheartedly. "Between Vanessa and my employment specialist through VR, I've come to gain new independence and be more involved with my community," he says. "If it wasn't for Vanessa, I'd still be looking at four blank walls at home with no life schedule, like getting up at a certain time, making sure I'm well-groomed, that I have responsibilities, and am not totally reliant on my caregiver, my wife. It's like she's gaining new independence as a caregiver, too."

Roger attributes his career success to his determination to work, but also to the personalized attention he received from VR. He says he wouldn't be where he is today without Vanessa's guidance. "She never gave up on me," he says. "She wanted me to do better, and therefore, I wanted to be more committed to finding employment. Without VR's help, I would still be living out there in limbo."

Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation program is committed to helping people with disabilities become part of America's workforce. Our employer-focused website, **FLJobConnections.com**, allows businesses to search at no charge for employees who are ready to go to work, as well as to post available jobs. VR has 80 offices across Florida, and last year helped 6,071 Floridians with significant disabilities find or keep a job. For more information about VR and its services, call (800) 451-4327 or visit **Rehabworks.org**.

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REMINDER FOR MEDIA--When reporting on stories about people with disabilities, remember to use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability. For example, use phrases such as "people with disabilities" (instead of "the disabled") and "person who uses a wheelchair" (rather than "wheelchair bound"); and "people with a mental illness" (rather than "the mentally ill").