Change can be difficult, but if we aren’t changing, then we aren’t moving forward. This has been another year of transition for the Division.

This year has brought about several moves resulting from the state Fire Marshal’s immediate closure order of the former WV Rehabilitation Center Complex on March 28.

While identifying new office space and relocating approximately 160 employees was challenging and difficult, the Division used this experience of being handed lemons as an opportunity to make lemonade.

The results of the moves make us more accessible to the customers we serve. The Charleston District Office is now more centrally located in Kanawha County, allowing easier access for county residents.

We opened a new Teays Valley Branch Office in Putnam County, which will provide greater access to the county’s growing population. This office also will serve residents of western Kanawha County, including Institute, St. Albans, Cross Lanes and Nitro.

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Services provided by the Division's Rehabilitation Programs section are centralized out of the new Nitro location. Services include rehabilitation technology, assistive technology, driver’s education, blind services and the Randolph-Sheppard program.

The Division's Administrative Offices, now located in downtown Charleston, are more conveniently located closer to the state's center of government.

If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies. I’m proud of our employees who worked through this transition period in order to ensure that client services continued while we were identifying permanent office space and moving into the new locations.

I am proud to have served the Division, the vocational rehabilitation program and West Virginians with disabilities for the last 35 years.

It has been my great pleasure to work with the Division's dedicated rehabilitation professionals. Their hard work, dedication and persistence have brought about great changes for the vocational rehabilitation program and West Virginians with disabilities. I extend my gratitude to all of the Division's partners and stakeholders for your support of me and the vocational rehabilitation program.

I have had a wonderful career, but it is time for me to move on. I’m looking forward to spending time with my family and my granddaughter, Sophie.

I am pleased that Governor Tomblin has appointed Donna Ashworth as the Acting Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services as of Nov. 16, and I know the agency is in good hands! With DRS for 31 years, Donna has served as a Rehabilitation Counselor, a Rehabilitation Program Specialist, an Information Technology Manager, Assistant Director for Administrative Services and Administrator of the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center. Her most recent position was as Assistant Director for Field Services. This wide range of experiences has well prepared her for the challenges and responsibilities of this new role.

“It is an honor to serve as Acting Director and a privilege to follow such a distinguished Director as Deborah Lovely,” Donna Ashworth said. “DRS has a proud history of commitment and performance in enabling and empowering individuals with disabilities to work and to live independently. Together, we can and will continue that fine record.”

We’ve moved!

Administrative Offices
107 Capitol Street
Charleston, WV 25301-2609
304-356-2060

Charleston District & Branch Office
4701 MacCorkle Avenue, SE
Charleston, WV 25304
304-356-2371

Rehabilitation Programs
10 McJunkin Road
Nitro, WV 25143
304-760-7166

Teays Valley Branch Office
115 Liberty Square
Hurricane, WV 25526
304-760-7082

*Complete address and telephone list is available at www.wvdrs.org
As part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month celebrations, DRS honored six outstanding individuals who have benefited from vocational rehabilitation services and have reached their employment goals.

Awards were presented at the annual Ability Works Recognition Ceremony on October 20 in the West Virginia Culture Center Theater, with keynote remarks by Education and the Arts Cabinet Secretary Kay Goodwin.

The ceremony honors six individuals for their abilities and their tremendous determination to achieve. These individuals represent the thousands of West Virginians that DRS rehabilitation professionals work with throughout the year.

**Award recipients were:**

**Jeremy Smart, State Winner, Wheeling District**

Jeremy Smart, a 23-year-old office aide at REM Community Options in Williamstown. Jeremy has some significant physical limitations due to cerebral palsy. He was referred to DRS by a counselor at Williamstown High School for help in transitioning from school to work. DRS connected him with REM Community Options, whose services allowed Jeremy to determine his work interests, develop life skills and gain valuable training. Working with a job coach also helped Jeremy learn job tasks and skills needed to live on his own. The managers at REM must have been pleased with Jeremy’s accomplishments. They hired him, earning him recognition as the State Ability Works winner.

**Amanda Staats, Charleston District**

Amanda Staats, a 21-year-old data entry clerk at Jackson County Development Center (JCDC) in Millwood.

A Ravenswood High School counselor referred Amanda to DRS because she had a learning disability, and her DRS rehabilitation counselor found her to be very capable but shy, lacking self-confidence. Her first progress report in work adjustment training showed her to be outperforming more experienced workers, and Amanda’s confidence grew as steadily as her skills. Amanda is pleased to be working side by side with some of the same people who trained her.

**Cindy Gunning, Clarksburg District**

Cindy Gunning, a 37-year-old Elkins resident and teacher. After surviving lung cancer, Cindy decided she wanted more out of life. She returned to college to complete a degree in nursing, but a change of heart led her to teaching. A DRS counselor recognized Cindy’s talents, supported and encouraged the change, and today Cindy is a respected substitute teacher hoping for a full-time job with Randolph County Schools.

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Stephen Sturm, Beckley District

Stephen Sturm, a 24-year-old cashier at Wal-Mart in Lewisburg. Diagnosed with autism as a child, Stephen had unique perceptions and preoccupations that resulted in unusual behavior, making life challenging for him and his family. He had an aptitude for computers and technology, even when he was quite young, so his mind was set on being a computer technician when he came to DRS for employment assistance. With the local market for such workers saturated, Stephen found his employment niche in the electronics department at Wal-Mart.

Max Black, Huntington District

Max Black, a 20-year-old service clerk at Walgreens in Huntington. Diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, Max gained valuable experience in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Huntington High School. His self-discipline and enthusiasm served him well during work adjustment training at Goodwill Industries, where he learned about his job options, and he pursued the job he wanted at Walgreens.

Nichole Ellifritz, Martinsburg District

Nichole Ellifritz, a 21-year-old janitorial worker at the Developmental Center and Workshop in Keyser. Nichole knew she wanted to work, but a cognitive disability led her to shy away from any job that required reading or math skills. She worked with a DRS rehabilitation counselor to explore other options. Today, she enjoys her work and the people she works with.

For more information about the 2011 Ability Works winners, visit the newsroom page of the division’s website at www.wvdrs.org.
West Virginia businesses honored for vocational rehabilitation contributions

**Center Hardware**
- Center Hardware, Inc., St. Albans – Charleston District
- Harrison County Board of Education
- Westbrook Health Services
- A Place to Grow Children’s Center
- Walgreens, Barboursville
- Kohl’s, Ranson

DRS held its second annual Employer Recognition Banquet at Stonewall Resort on Sept. 22. The purpose of the banquet is to show our appreciation to the businesses nominated and selected by our vocational rehabilitation professionals for their consideration and contributions to the employment of our clients.

“The partnerships with businesses that are jointly developed and nurtured serve as the foundation for our ultimate success,” said DRS Director Deborah Lovely. “The employers recognized are progressive in their attitudes and they empower people with disabilities by providing them with job opportunities.”

One West Virginia business from each DRS district received an Employer of the Year award. They are:

- **Center Hardware, Inc., St. Albans – Charleston District**

Center Hardware, Inc., a family-owned business with a history of serving the St. Albans community, frequently provides work exploration opportunities to high school students. DRS appreciates the store's willingness to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to learn and work at the store.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, Charleston; Quality Inn, Ripley; Charleston Town Center/Network Parking, Charleston; NGK Spark Plugs, Inc., Sissonville; and PTI Inc., Point Pleasant.

- **Harrison County Board of Education, Clarksburg – Clarksburg District**

The long-term partnership with Harrison County Board of Education has supported and enhanced DRS' ability to serve people with disabilities in the Clarksburg and Harrison County area. The Harrison County school system's devotion to local youth has been proven by its commitment to providing DRS with opportunities to promote awareness of its services, providing office

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space for DRS’ rehabilitation counselors to meet with students and clients, and referring students who may benefit from services to DRS.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: Fairmont State University, Fairmont; Fiberglass Operations, Preston County Sheltered Workshop, Reedsville; Big Lots, Bridgeport; Sodexo Dining Services, Alderson Broaddus College, Philippi; and Advanced Hearing Solutions, Inc., Elkins.

- Westbrook Health Services, Inc., Parkersburg – Wheeling District

Westbrook Health Services, Inc. provides comprehensive care to individuals with mental health, developmental, substance abuse and addiction challenges. They focus on empowering people to achieve their greatest potential and, as a partner with DRS, they help the division fulfill a similar mission. Westbrook Health Services has a history of providing on-the-job training and internship opportunities for clients of the division.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: Indigo Joe’s, Triadelphia; Watchdog, Wheeling; Serra Village Retirement Community, Weirton; Hampton Inn, Wheeling; and Bureau of Public Debt, Department of the Treasury, Parkersburg.

- A Place to Grow Children’s Center, Oak Hill – Beckley District

A Place to Grow Children’s Center is in its 16th year of business and has partnered with DRS for the last 10 years. The business has grown from employing six individuals to now employing 25 people, with a license to care for 104 children. The growing business has developed and nurtured relationships with DRS clients by providing on-the-job training and placement opportunities, as well as workplace accommodations to give people with disabilities a chance for employment success.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: City of Lewisburg, Lewisburg; Mountain Quest Institute, Marlinton; Saunders Staffing, Inc., Bluefield; Raleigh County Community Action Association, Inc., Beckley; and Precision Services, Inc., Gassaway.

- Walgreens, Barboursville – Huntington District

With an overall philosophy of creating a workforce built on diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities, Walgreens is working to fulfill that mission. The Barboursville store has demonstrated a willingness to hire DRS clients and has gone out of its way to provide workplace accommodations to employees with disabilities. The company values training, technology and awareness to build a productive workforce that includes providing opportunities to people with disabilities.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: Okuno International Inc., Prichard; Huntington Veterans Administration Medical Center, Huntington; Sodexo Campus Services, Marshall University, Huntington; Midland Meadows, Ona; and Marshalls Department Store, Barboursville.

- Kohl’s, Ranson – Martinsburg District

A strong partnership between Kohl’s, Horizon Goodwill Industries and DRS is providing work experience opportunities for clients of DRS. Kohl’s has become an enthusiastic site for community based assessments, which provide a short-term job “tryout” with the goal of discovering vocational strengths and weaknesses, for clients of the division.

Distinguished Employer awards presented to other businesses in the district earlier this year include: Food Lion Store #1189, Martinsburg; Harper’s Auto Parts and Service, Petersburg; and Kmart Corporation, Martinsburg.

DRS Director Deborah Lovely also presented Delegate Bonnie Brown with the “Mountains of Gratitude” award for her continuous support of the division, its mission and its employees. The award was presented to Delegate Brown, with mountains of gratitude for her ongoing support of the vocational rehabilitation program.
DRS is paving the way for its future through its Emerging Leadership Program, a management and leadership skills development program for DRS employees. Participants graduated Nov. 8 from the year-long program designed to develop and prepare qualified candidates for future management and leadership positions within DRS.

"As long-term employees leave DRS through retirement, it is imperative that we take proactive steps to preserve critical knowledge about the agency and the vocational rehabilitation program and to ensure business continuity at all levels of the agency," said Education and the Arts Cabinet Secretary Kay Goodwin. "We want to prevent gaps in knowledge, expertise and leadership experience and I am genuinely delighted and appreciative that an agency in my department has taken the initiative to develop such a worthwhile training experience as part of its succession planning goals."

The 13 participants came from various backgrounds within the agency and went through an application process last fall. Each individual was required to submit a short essay outlining one thing they would change about the agency, if they had the opportunity. Each applicant had to present and defend his or her position to the agency’s 10-member leadership team.

Training sessions focused on the real management and leadership issues the agency faces in order to implement and administer the federal/state vocational rehabilitation program in West Virginia.

Training sessions have included the application and effect of the federal Rehabilitation Act on the administration of DRS, the agency's history and organizational structure, the impact of state and federal legislation on DRS, as well as fiscal accountability and managing state and federal appropriations.
The sky’s the limit when you think outside the box,” according to the new slogan for The Op Shop, a Community Rehabilitation Program in Fairmont, West Virginia. Job creation for people with disabilities is the “sky” that Jan Smith, Executive Director of The Op Shop, was reaching for when she sought grant monies from the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

In 2009, DRS began a significant initiative to expand services that assist people with disabilities to prepare for employment and obtain jobs throughout West Virginia. These grant opportunities were awarded to Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) using a competitive process.

With grant assistance from DRS, The Op Shop created a specialty custodial training program and DRS clients are benefiting through training and employment opportunities. The Op Shop had a thriving custodial services operation, contracting with entities such as Fairmont State University and Department of Highways to provide janitorial services. With more than 20 years of experience in the custodial business, The Op Shop recognized the most common customer complaint related to the difficulty of cleaning and sanitizing ceramic tile and grout in restrooms.

Smith, who thoroughly researches opportunities for expansion and development, became intrigued by SaniGLAZE, a tile and grout restoration process. While vacationing in Jacksonville, FL, Smith visited the SaniGLAZE headquarters for a demonstration and immediately believed the product could solve the problem of cleaning some restrooms.

The first step of the SaniGLAZE process extracts deep-rooted contaminants and odors from grout. During the second phase an armor-like polymer material is bonded to the clean grout, making it non-porous. The final step coats the entire surface with a protective coating that prevents penetration by contaminants and restores the original look of tile surfaces.

Smith recognized this as an opportunity to expand services to DRS clients. DRS grant funds enabled The Op Shop to purchase a SaniGLAZE franchise for the state of West Virginia.

In addition to the SaniGLAZE franchise, The Op Shop purchased window cleaning equipment, window blind cleaning equipment, pressure washing equipment to clean parking lot surfaces and concrete resurfacing equipment, to utilize the Granitex coating system to restore indoor or outdoor concrete.

DRS clients referred to The Op Shop begin training in mobile work crews at actual worksites in public facilities. Clients receive basic custodial training, as well as “specialty custodial” training, which ultimately leads to employment.

“Clients are trained in all the different areas and then are placed in full-time employment wherever a position is open,” said Smith. “Once full-time employment status is achieved, an individual may work on different jobs at different locations, depending on the contracts we have with our customers at a particular time.”

Presently, The Op Shop is providing SaniGLAZE services primarily in northern West Virginia. However, Smith would like to develop a crew to provide these services that can be located in southern West Virginia.

Bob Fox, Branch Office Manager for DRS’ Fairmont location and liaison to The Op Shop, speaks highly of the partnership between DRS and The Op Shop. “The Op Shop hires more DRS clients in our district than any other employer,” according to Fox.

For this reason, The Op Shop received recognition as the 2010 Employer of the Year for the DRS Clarksburg District, which consists of Barbour, Gilmer, Harrison, and Harrison counties.

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Northern Rehabilitation Technology Unit opens

DRS officially opened its Northern Rehabilitation Technology Unit on Aug. 1. The purpose of the unit is to more quickly and effectively serve DRS clients from West Virginia's Northern regions who need rehabilitation technology services.

Rehabilitation technology means the systematic application of technologies and engineering methodologies to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in specific functional areas that may be preventing them from obtaining or maintaining employment.

Rehabilitation technology specialists provide services that help DRS clients work more efficiently. DRS has a group of experienced engineers, driver's educators, computer specialists and technicians who specialize in job accommodations, custom-designed assistive technology, product fabrication, driver training and vehicle modifications.

DRS strives to provide all services in a timely fashion. The creation of this unit enables rehabilitation technology services to be provided more effectively and efficiently to DRS clients throughout the state. In addition to being more convenient for clients and counselors to access, the creation of this unit will result in decreased travel costs for the agency.

Located in Morgantown, the unit will be home to six employees, including a rehabilitation engineer, an information systems specialist, two environmental modifications technicians, a driver's educator and an office assistant. Recruitment to fill these positions has been ongoing for the last few months.

Division of Rehabilitation Services
Rehabilitation Tech Department – North
5000 Greenbag Road  F14 and F15
Morgantown, West Virginia  26501
Telephone 304-285-3163
Fax 304-285-3167

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Lewis, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, Randolph, Taylor, Tucker and Upshur counties.

Smith concurs that the relationship between DRS and The Op Shop is stronger than ever. “Our relationship has grown tremendously over the past few years,” said Smith. “DRS and The Op Shop are working together toward one mission – providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.”

Smith has not finished “thinking outside the box” or “reaching for the sky.” DRS recently awarded The Op Shop a grant that will enable them to begin a food service training program.

Through this initiative, The Op Shop purchased a building in Fairmont. Renovations are underway and the location will ultimately house the “Work Day Café,” a restaurant and food service training facility. Initially, the Work Day Café will be open for breakfast and lunch, with online ordering and delivery service.

“I already have a list of clients who are interested in this training,” said Fox. “These individuals will receive training at this location. Ultimately, the training will lead to employment at the café or open up job opportunities in food service at other restaurants and businesses.”

Smith, an eternal optimist, hopes for this training program to be up and running by next summer.

LuAnn Summers, DRS Rehabilitation Program Manager who oversees the CRP initiatives, couldn’t be more pleased. “DRS has invested more than $728,000 in The Op Shop,” said Summers. “This is just one example of the positive changes that are resulting from these grant initiatives. This CRP has created an environment of integration that values and includes people with and without disabilities in the workplace.”
The second annual DRS Consumer Affairs Conference was held on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 2011, at the Marriott Town Center hotel in Charleston, West Virginia. With the theme “Power Is Freedom,” the conference informed participants about resources and opportunities to enhance personal empowerment and to voice their opinions on state and federal issues that affect their lives. About 110 persons participated, including members of the DRS Consumer Affairs Committees and a variety of DRS professionals and representatives of partner agencies and organizations.

Presenters included: Kathy Muscari, Ph.D., Executive Director, West Virginia Mental Health Consumers Association (Power is Freedom); Teresa Holt, Regional Human Resources Representative, City National Bank (Work Is Power); Perry Bryant, Executive Director, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care (Health Care Reform); Tina Maher, Coordinator, Olmstead Council, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (Olmstead: Keeping the Promise); Gaylene Miller, State Director, AARP West Virginia; Karen Rudder, Coordinator, Adolescent Education, West Virginia Department of Education (Learning for Life); Kelli Hinkle, Program Manager, West Virginia Alliance for Sustainable Families and Ronald K. Hatfield, Assistant Professor, WVU Extension Service (Money Matters); Regenia Mayne, Attorney, West Virginia Advocates (We Have Rights?); Honorable Bonnie Brown, West Virginia House of Delegates (Our Voices Have Power!); and Jan Lilly-Stewart, Director, Fair Shake Network and Ann McDaniel, Executive Director, West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (State and Federal Issues for Advocacy).

A primary goal of the conference was to strengthen DRS’ Consumer Affairs Committees statewide. With local leadership, these committees work independently as concerned citizens to support the mission of DRS by empowering people with disabilities in making informed choices and achieving equal opportunity, meaningful employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency. The volunteer committees plan and carry out a wide variety of activities in cooperation with community partners, including leaders in business, government, health care, and education.

For more information about this conference or the DRS Consumer Affairs Committee working in your area, contact either your local DRS District Office or Gene Defabio at the DRS Administrative Offices (telephone 304-356-2364 or email Gene.A.Defabio@wv.gov).
Multicultural Competency Training: Opening the Box on Perspective

DRS sponsored multicultural competency training in each of its six districts during May and June. Keelon Hinton, Ph.D. presented "What's on your box? Conversations on Race, Culture and the Development of Perspective." Hinton used children's A, B, C building block toys to demonstrate that all people have life experiences or perceptions that need to be addressed or broken down to get past barriers.

Hinton's discussion-style training focused primarily on two issue areas. Racial salience deals with one's personal experiences with race. Racial centrality is how important an issue is to an individual. Salience feeds centrality. In other words, the experiences we have feed how we think about the world and what we view as important.

The purpose of the training is to strengthen the interaction between DRS counselors and minority consumers in order to increase adherence to individual rehabilitation goals and to produce successful employment outcomes.

"The Division of Rehabilitation Services is in the business of working with people. We work with people who have various disabilities, health conditions and cultural backgrounds," said Program Development Assistant Director Michael Meadows. "We believe it's important for our staff to consider and respond to our consumers' varied perspectives, values, beliefs and behaviors during the vocational rehabilitation process so that they can be successful in reaching their employment goals."

DRS rehabilitation counselors and paraprofessionals throughout the state participated in the training, an initiative recommended by the DRS Minority Outreach Team. Participant feedback was very positive. "This training opens my eyes to changes that I can make on my job daily," expressed one attendee.

Keelon Hinton, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at Marshall University, came highly recommended by Shari Clarke, the university's Vice President of Multicultural Affairs. With a Ph.D. in psychology from Howard University, Hinton specializes in racial socialization, racial identity, family functioning, multicultural competency and intimacy and attachment issues.
Culture, language, privacy emphasized at conference

DRS held its annual State Training Conference Sept. 21-23 at Stonewall Jackson Resort. This agency-sponsored training provides continuing educational opportunities for DRS employees, including rehabilitation counselors, managers and support staff, in areas specific to the field of vocational rehabilitation. This year’s training focused on cultural and linguistic competence, clients dealing with poverty and substance abuse issues and privacy concerns.

Presenter Michael Dames (left) helped DRS staff to be more aware of how we form our perceptions of the people we meet.