

May 2013

Iowa Rehabilitation Association

Special Interest Articles:

- President's Letter
- New Drake Student Chapter
- Brag and Steal
- Report from Government Affairs Summit

President's Report



Jeffrey Morgan
President

Wow, the past three months have been busy and eventful. Elsewhere you will read about the Legislative Breakfast and Government Affairs Conference I attended. I also was privileged to appear on "Hello It's Us", a local Iowa City Public Access TV show that focuses on disability issues. I did two episodes and talked about Vocational Rehabilitation services and how they have changed to become more focused on community employment. Though it was taped late in the afternoon, the power of coffee was

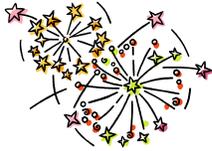
still strong and people who have seen it say that I'm reasonably coherent. Judge for yourself as both parts are on the IVRS website and Facebook page.

Last newsletter, I warned you that I was going to keep coming back to a theme and so here it is. We have to stop being the World's Best Kept Secret! Whether you work for Voc Rehab, Department for the Blind, state agencies in general or any of our partners who assist citizens with disabilities, we have to get the word out about what we do -- because it's impressive! We have data and numbers to back it up. You've all heard the joke about when we tell people we belong to the NRA; they ask us about gun control. Then when we follow up by saying our state chapter is the IRA, they get very frightened. We have to let them know who we are and what we do.

A way we can do this is to grow our membership and widen our contacts. Support for what we do has to come from our administrator and management team. I've said before that I truly appreciate Dave Mitchell's commitment to IRA, but that commitment has to be shared to all IVRS supervisors who in kind need to encourage membership and participation in IRA with all staff. Everybody knows how hard our jobs are but it is through participation in organizations like NRA/IRA that we can feel supported as professionals, as we are offered training opportunities that help us look at our jobs differently and try new things to affect a positive outcomes.

Speaking of training, with the coming of spring, I expect to hear more about Brag and Steal and our annual conference. Plan to attend as I know the programs will be valuable and exciting. Hope to see you there.

Jeffrey Morgan



Congratulations to the New Drake University Chapter of IRA

Drake University and the NRA have formally recognized Drake University – Iowa Rehabilitation Association (DU-IRA) as an official organization. Congratulations go out to all the students who worked extremely hard to make that happen.

The first two meetings provided educational opportunities. Both students and IRA members were given a chance to learn about the services of The Homestead and saw some of the assistive technology provided by Advanced Rehab Technologies. If you are an IRA member and would like to join the trainings, watch your e-mail for dates and times.

Officers for this semester are: Board-Terry Thomas, Rodney Dunn; Treasurer-Matt Lundeen; Secretary-Kevin Dalin; Vice-President-Brian Dennis; President-Elect-Shannon Oakley; and President-Rosie Thierer.

IRA Legislative Breakfast-Feb 7th

On February 7, IRA sponsored a legislative breakfast at the State Capitol. It is estimated that at least 25 of our state senators and representatives met with members of our board over coffee and rolls to discuss issues that were important to individuals with disabilities. We presented fact sheets and data that showed how our programs are efficient, saving taxpayers money, and putting thousands of Iowans back to work.

The idea for the Legislative Breakfast was developed by members of the legislative sub-committee of our Board's Strategic Plan. Hopefully, this will turn into a yearly event, as it is a great way to get the message out about our agencies and their quality services. Thanks to all the board members who attended and Dave Correy of Treat America for providing the coffee and food items that got us up and going.



Mike Williams and State Senator Rita Hart



State Senator Joe Bolcom and Jeffrey Morgan

Notice – At the April 19 board meeting a motion was proposed that the awards chair be moved from a presidential appointment to a job responsibility of the vice president.

Thoughts in regard to this motion should be addressed to Jeffrey Morgan --
(319) 354-4766 Email: jeffrey.morgan@iowa.gov



Brag and Steal

The newly formed Drake Student organization is planning the annual Brag and Steal training for Friday, June 21 on the Drake campus. More information on sessions and registration will be on the way!



IRA Wins Membership Award



While attending the Government Affairs Conference, I was honored to accept an Award of Excellence from the National Rehabilitation Association on behalf of our Iowa Rehabilitation Association. IRA was recognized for the most student members recruited from August 1, 2012 to February 28, 2013 in our chapter.

Although we have student members from all over the state, it's no secret that Drake University has really been our Lil' Engine that Could in producing not only NRA members but current and future leaders of our association. I will formally recognize this achievement at our next board meeting on April 19th but please join me in congratulating the Drake Chapter for making this happen by posting a message on their website at <http://www.du-ira.org/> or their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DUIRAorg>.

Jeffrey Morgan

Save the Date – 2013 IRA Conference

The conference will be at the Quality Inn and Suites in Ames (2601 E 13th Street) October 2 - 4. A trainings needs survey has been distributed to rehab professionals, educators, students, and community providers within the state to briefly review training needs. These will be analyzed to focus on speakers and topics of interest. Organizers are also expecting to have the biggest silent auction to date!!! A ton of items are being donated, and the profits will be split between the RCEA and IRA.



Government Affairs Summit Summary by Ellen Sokolowski

The Governmental Affairs Summit began on March 17th, with Patricia Leahy providing training on the People's House and Senate 101, providing a legislative overview including the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and a discussion on Sequestration as well as other issues..

Kathy West-Evans led an Employer Panel consisting of Maggie Roffee of the USBLN and Michael Murray of the Office of Disability and Inclusion/US Office of Personnel Management.

Ms. Roffee brought some rehabilitation experience to the table so to speak, as she has a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Also her husband is combat veteran and has been in a wheelchair for some time. She stressed what rehabilitation can do for business is to: 1) Identify business needs; 2) Be a catalyst for innovation; and 3) Provide the Public-Private partnership. She also discussed the NPRM on Section 503 and pending changes in the compliance requirements for federal contractors, including public and private sector companies.

Michael Murray of the Office of Disability and Inclusion/US Office of Personnel and Management discussed the progress that the federal government has made since Executive Order 13548 was signed in 2010. He also discussed the changes in Schedule A regulations which impact the hiring requirements and processes in the federal government. The federal government has made some significant progress in the hiring of persons with disabilities and Mr. Murray presented statistics to support this. He indicated that when you create an environment of inclusion, people with disabilities will self-identify. In his data, he noted that individuals as the GS-14 and GS-15 levels, which are at the higher levels of government, are showing an increase in the hiring of persons with disabilities as well. If persons with disabilities can be leaders in government, they also can be leaders in business.

He concluded with the following: Disability=Diversity Diversity +Inclusion=Innovation

Kathy West-Evans of the CSAVR National Employment Team (NET) reported on the progress that had been made by the NET and how business was also a customer of Vocational Rehabilitation in addition to the job candidate.

Janet LaBreck, Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, was the luncheon keynote speaker. Commissioner LaBreck has been nominated by President Obama to be the next Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. She spoke of her experiences as being a person with a disability as well as serving as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

A Legislative Panel consisting of Lynnae Rutledge, past Commissioner of RSA; Brad Thomas of Rep. John Kline's (R-MN) office; and Lee Perselay, Disability Policy for Senator Tom Harkin's (D-IA) office.

Ms. Rutledge discussed the need to "tell the story about Vocational Rehabilitation" and what the return on investment is. It is important to convey the work we do and the impact that it has on a persons with a disability life. She stressed that being an advocate is not a bad word. She stressed being vigilant in the advocacy for Vocational Rehabilitation as there as attacks on the Vocational Rehabilitation program. She concluded that "Your ability can describe you, but never let your disability define you."

On March 18th, Brad Thomas of Representative John Kline's office addressed those in attendance. Rep. Kline chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and had developed the legislation for the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. He stressed that advocacy needs to reach legislators more. It

may be necessary to repeat your message, but it is the personal message that has an impact, the success stories that an agency might have or an individual would be willing to share. He stressed that it is important to convey the ways in which Vocational Rehabilitation changed the job candidates' lives. Mr. Thomas indicated that sometimes repetition of the message is necessary. He indicated that sometimes 6-8 bullet points including information regarding what is being done in the district, who uses the VR program, how does the VR program connect to people and business, providing information regarding location of the offices in the district, who the supervisor is of those offices as well as the name of the Director/Administrator of the VR program.

Lee Perselay, Policy Director from Senator Harkin's office reiterated many of the same points but stressed the individuals who are transitioning from school to work. Every person deserves an opportunity for competitive employment. He also noted that this is the "ADA Generation" and that they will have expectations as well as the desire to Aim High.

A member of the Appropriations Committee spoke of the vote on the Continuing Resolution to keep the government afloat. She readily recognized that a continuing Resolution was no way to govern but expressed that a Continuing Resolution put the government on "auto pilot" so to speak.

Michael Yudin, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and the programs that are being developed for students with disabilities to be able to graduate from high school and be ready to proceed to college. He spoke of one of the innovations would be to have IEPs aligned to college career ready standards.

Edward Anthony, Interim Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and Deputy commissioner Thomas Finch PhD, Director of Training for RSA both spoke on the status of programs in RSA.

Time was spent on Capitol Hill visiting with members of the Iowa delegation. The obvious sign of sequestration were the extremely long lines in being able to get through the security at the various House and Senate Office Buildings. The members of the Iowa delegation were attentive to the message that was being sent. They expressed interest in return on investment and the individuals who had achieved self employment.

I apologize for the length of this summary, but hopefully it will give you an idea of not only the advocacy but the education that goes on at the Governmental Affairs Summit. Thank you again for the opportunity to attend.

At this Summit, I was asked to present to Senator Harkin the National Rehabilitation Association LEAD ON Award at his weekly breakfast that he sponsors for Iowans who are visiting Washington, DC. As an Iowan, a member of the National Rehabilitation Association and a person with a disability this was indeed an honor. Thank you.



Ellen Sokolowski presenting Senator Tom Harkin with the NRA Lead On Award. Also pictured is Patricia Leahy, Interim Executive Director and Governmental Affairs Policy Director for the NRA. Williams and State Senator Rita Hart

Thoughts about the Government Affairs Summit – From Jeffrey Morgan

Madame NRA President-Elect Ellen Sokolowski offers a description of the conference, but I also wanted to share some of my impressions with you. Through the kindness of the IRA Board, Ellen and I went out to Washington DC for the Government Affairs conference March 17 -19. The first thing I want to say is that if you ever want an education about youth culture, travel anxiety, and current trends in sweatpants; go to a conference during spring break.

The conference was amazing. This was my second time and I got to reconnect with people I'd met last year and meet new professionals from around the country. I got to meet former RSA Commissioner Lynnae Rutledge and Janet LaBreck, President Obama's nominee for RSA Commissioner who is currently the Massachusetts Commissioner for the Blind. I got to tease Janet's husband Russell about his ignorance about Iowa (Omaha is our largest city? John Mellenkamp is an Iowan?) and invited the couple to visit our lovely state to get the real scoop. Of course, NRA Interim Executive Director and Director of Government Affairs, Patricia Leahy is a whirlwind of thought and energy and a force of nature. Ellen and I got to have dinner with Steve Wooderson, who used to be the Administrator of IVRS.

The real treat for me was to go to the offices of the members of Congress and talk to their respective aides about our programs and issues that are important to us. Hard to believe but sometimes I get nervous about meeting people and thinking of something to say. What saved me was just telling our client's stories and the success our programs have. Our friends from both sides of the aisle were most impressed with the cost savings we provide to the Social Security system, our self-employment program, and our networking with businesses.

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Legislative Affairs

Feds Take Stand against Sheltered Workshop... The Obama administration is looking to become directly involved in a class-action lawsuit that has people with developmental disabilities seeking greater employment opportunities.

The US Department of Justice filed a motion recently to intervene in a federal lawsuit brought on behalf of thousands of persons with developmental disabilities against the state of Oregon. The individuals behind the case allege that the state is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by not providing supported employment services, which help people with disabilities work in the community.

The first of its kind lawsuit is being closely watched by advocates as the disability community remains split on the appropriate role of sheltered workshops and subminimum wage.

Plaintiffs in the case argue that they have requested assistance to be able to obtain competitive employment for years with no luck and are trapped in a system where sheltered employment-typically paying less than minimum wage-is their only option.

Now in a move that could add weight to the proceedings, the Justice Department wants to become a plaintiff as well. In a filing with the court, government attorneys allege that the "state of Oregon discriminates against individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities by unnecessarily segregating them in sheltered workshops and by placing them at such risk of segregation."

The action comes nearly a year after the Justice Department filed a statement of interest with the court arguing that limiting persons with disabilities to employment in sheltered workshops is no different than restricting them to live in institutions.

Attorneys for the federal government say they had tried unsuccessfully to work with the state of Oregon to resolve the complaint before asking to intervene.

The US Office of Personnel Management Issues final Regulations that Simplify the Hiring of Persons with Disabilities... The Office of Personnel and Management (OPM) issued final regulations that are related to a special hiring authority for the appointment of persons with certain disabilities. The final rule for "Excepted Service-Appointment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, Severe Physical Disabilities and Psychiatric Disabilities" removes the requirement for certification of job readiness for persons with disabilities.

The NRA's 2013 Issues Statements can be found on the website <http://iraiowa.org/>.

Iowa Rehabilitation
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We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.iraiaowa.org

**And Now to Start Getting Ready for
Next Year**

**2013 IRA Conference
October 2, 3 & 4**

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