

TODAY'S NEWS

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.iraiaowa.org

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President's Note

Thank you to everyone attended the annual Iowa Rehabilitation Association conference in July! The Conference was held in Ames, Iowa. The session topics were educational and informative for all who took advantage. We had a small but mighty group this year. The IRA board would like to make sure it is known that there will not be another conference being held this fall (October). We are looking for individuals interested in sitting on the IRA board. Elections will take place soon. **If you or somebody you know has an interest in joining the board, please contact Jamie Schwickerath at jamie.schwickerath@iowa.gov.** There are a variety of positions available for next year.

Michelle Dickerson

President, Iowa Rehabilitation Association

At this year's conference, we recognized two award recipients. Steven Faulkner won the Bill Donohue Award, which recognizes a professional who has demonstrated the most outstanding efforts in job placement for lowans with

disabilities. Bruce Haugland received the Gerry Beyers Award, which recognized his outstanding service in the field.

Additionally, the IRA board recently nominated Michael Howell, supervisor of the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation office in Waterloo, IA for the National Rehabilitation Association’s Margaret E. Fairbairn Placement Award. We have since been informed that he was selected as this year’s recipient. Congratulations Mike! The award will be given at the 2017 annual National Rehabilitation Association conference in October.

It has been an honor to serve as the IRA President this year. Please continue to support the chapter and stay involved. Tis the season of change and there is so much opportunity for growth and restructuring. I encourage you to let us (IRA board) know what type of programming and education you’d like moving forward. The board is always available to assist with your professional growth. Take advantage! Until next time, work hard and continue impacting the lives you all do by assisting individuals with disabilities with reaching their employment goals.

IRA Board Call for Nominations

Hello IRA Members!

Shannon Myers

IRA is asking to put out a call for Board Nominations. We ask that nominat next Monday, 10/16/17 and will vote next week. They can be sent directly Michelle Dickerson at: michelle.dickerson@iowa.gov If you have questions to talk with Michelle, her personal cell phone number is 515-803-3780.

**Membership
Chair, Iowa
Rehabilitation
Association**

Being involved with IRA's Board is a tremendous networking and professional development tool. Plus it is a really fun and well connected group of passionate individuals in the rehabilitation field.

Positions Available Are:

President

Vice President

President Elect

Treasurer

Member at Large (3 total openings)

Secretary

Federal Legislative Report

As you may be aware, the latest plan put forth by the Senate, the Graham-Cassidy bill failed to garner the 50 votes necessary to bring this bill to the Senate floor.

Ellen Sokolowski

**Federal Legislative
Chair, Iowa
Rehabilitation
Association**

Senators McCain, Collins, Paul and Cruz, all Republicans voted no on bringing the bill to the floor for a vote. There reasons were various including the results of the Congressional Budget office. The CBO had projected that there would be many more individuals who would not have access to health insurance because of this bill. Some of the four Senators were concerned about pre-existing conditions not being addressed. Some of the more conservative members felt that it did not go far enough.

That being said, for those of you who called, e-mailed and faxed your respective Senators, thank you. Your voices count and this is how a democracy should work.

The NRA position has been that or realizing that the Affordable Care Act, while not perfect, should not be repealed and replaced, but rather have the portions that need to be changed, addressed and changed.

For the time being, we can look at this and be proud of not having members of Congress take away health care for millions of individuals who need it.

We cannot rest on our laurels by no means. We need to be ready not only this year but into the future.

“It is important to keep disability issues in front of our elected officials, both at a state level and on the national level.”

As many of you were witness to the mass shooting in Las Vegas on Sunday, October 1. 50+ people who went out for a night of music and fun, did not get to come home. There is an organization that keeps track of mass shootings (four or more persons) and since the beginning of this year there have been 273, which approximates to one a day since the beginning of the year.

Yes, we likely need some gun control legislation and this would likely be an excellent time for some bi-partisan support from Congress and the President to begin that dialog. What we need to be careful of is that we do not malign persons with emotional disabilities who are law abiding. I anticipate that this may be an issue in the future that will need to be addressed

It is important to keep disability issues in front of our elected officials, both at a state level and on the national level. Attending legislative coffees locally is one way to do this. E-mailing your legislator is another effective way of sharing your opinion. The bottom line is to let them know how you feel, let them know about the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation program and its impact.

Mike's Accomplishments – A Letter of Nomination

It is with pleasure that I'd like to nominate Mike Howell for the Margaret E. Fairbairn Award. Mike is a past recipient of the Iowa Rehabilitation Association's Bill Donohue placement award. Mike received his education and Master's degree from the University of Iowa. He is currently the supervisor of the Waterloo, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services office. He has had this position for 9 yrs. and prior to this, he was an IVRS counselor. He also spent 15 yrs. working at Bremwood in Waverly, IA. During part of his time there, he was a Career Counselor providing guidance, counseling, job coaching and oversight of a work program for youth. The population he worked with were often starting their first job. Many got jobs as CNA's in nursing homes, working at auto body shops, as well as other locations like HyVee, Pizza Hut, McDonald's, etc. He helped these individuals learn work skills that were much needed for them to be able to reach their goals. Many left Bremwood at age 18 and returned home. Most wanted their own apartments to be as independent as possible. They had a need to make income and he knew that their success towards independence would be highly impacted by their ability to obtain and maintain employment. He worked closely with several of the employers in that community to employ the youth he worked with.

**Michelle
Dickerson**

**President, Iowa
Rehabilitation
Association**

Mike has gone from directly providing work skills training and placement services, to training others to do the same. As a supervisor, he has trained several new counselors. He has helped many overcome their fears of placement. Many staff he trained had no experience with placement. He went with them to meet employers and help them identify employer needs, as well as explain how IVRS could assist. He made it less "scary" by being extremely supportive. He helped them make relationships with employers, leading to employment opportunities for job candidates.

Over the years, Mike has made great relationships with employers. Former job candidates have been able to benefit from these relationships. He has developed a strong relationship with Kwik Trip. He has worked with their human resources department and store manager to come up with ways to screen for job candidates who would be a best fit for the job. He has also helped make sure that supports have been in place for job candidates to succeed there (i.e. providing assistance with getting an interpreter and helping job candidate's as needed to get through orientation, etc.).

Additionally, he has worked with a company called Isle of Capri in his community. He participated in initial meetings with them to establish a positive relationship. He learned about the company and their operations as well as their rules, need for background checks, and so on; things that would be important to understand while determining which job candidates would be a best fit. He also was able to assist with getting the Transition Alliance Program (which works with youth in the schools) in his community involved. This opened up a larger pool of qualified job candidates and trainees.

Mike also worked with a company called VGM. They provide medical services to individuals, as a vendor to the insurer. They have hired a few individuals Mike has worked with in the past. He was working with one young man who had graduated from University of Northern Iowa with a Master's in Communication. He had no work experience and had applied to several different places. He started working for VGM, assisting with home and vehicle modifications. He had decided this type of work was not a good fit for him. Because of the hard work and dedication, the job candidate had shown, and with support from Mike, this individual was able to move in to another job with the company that was a better fit. He now oversees the front desk operations. This position is more aligned with his interests. He gets to use his education and skills. VGM also worked with the job candidate and Mike to ensure that the job candidate would only work part-time hours for now so that his social security benefits wouldn't be impacted, with the possibility of increasing his hours in the future.

Mike worked with another young man who had Autism and really struggled with the smell of cigarette smoke. He had left a job because people would leave for break and return smelling like smoke. This young man struggled with how to relay this message to an employer when asked why he left his last job. Mike helped this individual figure out how to relay his message in a way that would sound best in an interview. He helped him focus on stating how the environment was not a good fit for him, rather than going in to the specifics of the situation, which at first was difficult for this individual.

At IVRS, individuals with varying needs and varying needs for support come through the door on a daily basis. Mike has worked with individuals with mental and physical disabilities. He has helped them acquire skills to become more marketable for employment. He has also worked with employers to educate them on how best to work with individuals, accommodate and job carve when able. Additionally, to ensure stability for long-term placement for clients, Mike has helped them choose a career that has a solid market and one that, if they complete a training program would still have a need for their abilities post-education.

Mike understands the importance of recognizing both the employer and the job candidate as clients. They go hand in hand when trying to make successful relationships and assist individuals with employment goals. His strengths in the area of placement are overflowing. He not only has the skills, education and understanding of placement but he has successfully and positively impacted his community over the past several years in regards to employment of persons with disabilities. He has provided training, resources, support and so much more. He has educated others to do the same. And he continues to be a support to other professionals. His work in the field is not done and there is no limit to what he could do in the future. He has been an asset the Vocational Rehabilitation community in Iowa and I believe he is a great candidate for the Margaret E. Fairbairn award and I am honored to nominate him for this recognition.

Brag and Steal Conference 2017



Jami Schwicherath - Todd Ohnesorge presenting the President's Award to Michelle Dickerson



Michelle Dickerson