

TODAY'S NEWS

IVRS and ISU Engineering Partnership

Iowa State University engineering students partner with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to create a cart-like device for an Iowa individual who uses a wheelchair.

“Improving quality of life is very beneficial as an engineer, to instead of just seeing problems, to see a person, and where improvement can be made,” Krynski said. “The biggest impact I think this will really have on our client is empowering independence with (their) current job.”

-Taken from the Ames Tribune

Caylin Lundberg

Special Interest Articles:

- ◆ IVRS and ISU Partnership
- ◆ 2018 Award Nominations
- ◆ President's Letter
- ◆ Step on Up

Iowa Rehabilitation Association
Membership:

319 Marie Avenue
Elk Run Heights, IA 50707

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

The graphic features the year '2018' in a large, stylized font. Each digit is a different color: '2' is red, '0' is green, '1' is blue, and '8' is purple. The numbers have a slight 3D effect and are set against a white background with a thin grey border.

**Award Nominations
Now Being Accepted**

It is time to recognize individuals you might work with, counselors, employment specialists and job coaches, who are deserving of recognition. The Iowa Rehabilitation Association would like to recognize those individuals whose commitment, passion and efforts have stood out

among their peers or within the community. The following are the awards given by the Iowa Rehabilitation Association at its annual conference. Please consider nominating individuals who are deserving of recognition due to their commitment and passion.



Chuck Wood Memorial Award

This award is given to recognize the achievements of a persons with a disability. This individual has attained and maintained a high level of independence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency in the community. This individual has demonstrated the achievement of his/her goals in the community and personal life.

Bill Donohue Memorial Award

This award is provided to a professional who has demonstrated the most outstanding efforts in assisting lowans with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment. The recipient of the Bill Donohue Award will be presented with a plaque and savings bond. There is no requirement of being involved with JPD, IRA or NRA.

Gerry Byers Award for Outstanding Service

Gerry Byers spent most of his adult life dedicated to helping persons with disabilities achieve their employment goals and to the Iowa and National Rehabilitation Association. He spent 30 plus years employed as a Placement Specialist for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Council Bluffs Area Office. He was a tireless recruiter for members in the National Rehabilitation Association. Often a recipient of a free membership for his recruiting efforts (but already a lifetime member) he would donate the membership to a new individual. He rarely missed a training conference on the state, regional and national level and throughout his tenure held several offices on those levels as well. He was a Bill Donohue Award recipient and the NRAJPD Margaret Fairbairn Award recipient for his exemplary achievement in job placement.

The recipient of this award will have demonstrated their commitment to assisting those with a disability in obtaining and maintaining employment, as well as their commitment to Vocational Rehabilitation Services and will have recruited others. This recipient of this award will have completed various trainings as well as held offices at the state, regional and national level.

IRCEA Counselor of the Year Award

The recipient of this award is recognized is a person who has given of their time and has demonstrated a strong commitment and gone above and beyond their call of duty. The

nominee for this award must be a current member of NRCEA/IRCEA. and be verified as working as a rehabilitation counselor.

IRA Achievement Award

The IRA Achievement Award is given to a job candidate who has an identifiable disability. This individual will have been an active participant in the rehabilitation process and has successfully obtained and maintained competitive employment for at least three months. This individual must also have shown competency in taking care of most personal daily living needs.

The Judd Jacobson Memorial Award

This award exemplifies the business entrepreneurial spirit of Judd Jacobson who was a committed, creative and innovative spirit in both his vocational and avocational endeavors. Funds for the award are made possible by a gift from the late Daniel J. Gainey, a lifelong friend of Judd and Barbara Jacobson. The recipient of this award will be recognized for their pursuit or achievement of a business entrepreneurial endeavor by an individual with a disability.

Please take the time to nominate those individuals who fulfill the criteria for any of the awards. Whether it is a consumer or an individual that you work with each day. Please take the time to recognize those who have demonstrated their commitment and passion as well as to those individuals who have successfully reached their employment, community and personal goals.

Applications for each nomination are located on the Iowa Rehabilitation Association website. Just click on the Awards tab to find the applications and a full description of each award.

<http://iraiowa.org/index.html>

If you have further questions, please contact Ellen Sokolowski at:
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ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov

Bronna Crase

President's Message.....

Time flies as we are looking at beginning the second quarter of the year. Hopefully, we have left winter behind us and the beginning of Spring and a season of renewal can begin.

Your IRA Board and the planning committee for the Leadership Summit have begun planning. This year IRA will be partnering with IVRS and the Iowa Department for the Blind for the Leadership Summit. *This is being held on October 17-19th in Ames, Iowa at the Quality Inns and Suites. Mark the date!!!!*

There will be sessions discussing leadership skills and development. This will be conducted by Ann Wright of Wright Solutions in Ankeny. There will also be sessions to increase your knowledge in the field of rehabilitation in order to become a good leader in the future. Topics being considered are Ethics, Deaf and Hard of Hearing experience, Business Panel, Dealing with Brain Injury, and many others. It is anticipated that the program will be finalized by the end of May.

Our keynote speaker is Aaron Cross, Mobility on Wheels. Aaron is from Minnesota and President of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association. He has a compelling personal story to share regarding his disability and the barriers he had to overcome as well as the support system he had in doing so. He was the keynote speaker at NRA last year and gave an inspirational speech.

Entertainment is also being considered as well for Thursday evening. So.....Mark your calendars for October 17th-19th!!!! We are looking forward to seeing you there.

As always, we are on the lookout for new leaders to come be a part of the IRA Board of Directors. If you would be interested and want to learn more about the IRA Board of Directors, you are more than welcome to attend a Board Meeting. Our next meeting will be on July 13th at the Starkweather Room in the Jessie Parker Building. The meeting starts. The meeting starts at 10:00 am.

Partnerships leading to employment for Iowans with Disabilities



Julie Propp of Marshalltown, Iowa, applied for her first job in the community last year.

“She is 57 years old and had NEVER worked in competitive community employment,” said her Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) Counselor Rhonda Draisey.

After working in a sheltered workshop for a number of years, Propp approached Kwik Star and expressed an interest in working there.

Draisey noted her self-initiative and put together resources and services to help her achieve her employment goal. Draisey worked with Mid Iowa Workshops (MIW) to provide a job coach to assist her with the interview. Once hired, the job coach helped her learn her work duties, get associated and comfortable with coworkers and to know who to go to if she had questions or problems.

“This really was a team effort between Julie, VR, MIW and Kwik Star,” Draisey said. “Kwik Star demonstrated a willingness to make sure her duties were matched to her individual strengths which has helped Julie to be successful from the very beginning, to develop more self-confidence and have a strong base from which she could improve and

grow. Another really wonderful

From left to right: Amanda Dunnick, Mid-Iowa Workshops Job Coach; Rhonda Draisey, IVRS Counselor-Marshalltown; Tammy McAnulty, DHS Case Manager; employee Julie Propp; and Keisha, Kwik Star Manager-Store #706.

thing is the personalities of store personnel and their openness to working with an individual with a disability. They are more like family than just coworkers and really care about one another — Julie included.”

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) partnered with Kwik Trip to create and fill retail helper positions throughout their stores in Iowa. These positions provide guest services such as cleaning (parking lot, windows, doors and counters), sweeping, mopping, facing shelves, taking out garbage and filling window cleaner at the pumps.

Kwik Star sees a need for these modified jobs; it allows necessary work to be completed in a timely manner while freeing up time for guest services staff to focus on guests. Kwik Star/ Trip is known for, and takes

pride in, their responsiveness to guests — the retail helper position makes this happen.

IVRS has placed 20 individuals with significant disabilities in Iowa in modified “retail helper” jobs.

Propp has been working at her retail helper position now for nearly two years.

“I really like it there and my co-workers are really nice to me,” Propp said. “I’m one of their big family at work and get along with everyone. The customers are so nice and friendly to me.”

Propp earns \$10.90 an hour at her position and is due for a raise in the near future.

“I do really good work,” she said, adding, “Without this job, I would still be in a sheltered workshop cleaning.”

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services provides employers with pre-screened job candidates and follow-up services after the hire to ensure that the employment partnership is a good fit. IVRS counselors also build relationships with store managers to learn about their employment needs prior to providing job candidate referrals.

Rehabilitation counselors continue their support for both the employer and employee after employment begins to assure a productive, long-term partnership.

“The Regional Manager of Kwik

Trip responded that every time she has brought an issue to us — we fix it!” said Michelle Krefft, business resource manager for IVRS. “These support systems enable store managers to have more confidence in hiring individuals with disabilities.”

Draisey credits much of the success of the program to Kwik Star and their business practices.

“Kwik Star is wonderful!!!!!!” Draisey said. “I work with four Kwik Star locations in Marshalltown and Toledo and have found all of them to be not just open to working with individuals with disabilities but genuinely excited to do so. If I'm thinking about referring a person but have some doubts about skills, abilities etc. I can go to them and talk through my concerns. Never, (not one time), have I ever heard a different response than, ‘Go ahead and have them apply. We'll give them a chance and see how it goes from there.’ I really can't say enough about this company!!!”

ABLE National Resource Center Launches New Monthly Newsletter: “AchievABLE”

March 1, 2018

Source: ABLE National Resource Center

The ABLE National Resource Center, managed by the National Disability Institute (NDI), has launched a new monthly e-newsletter, AchievABLE. The newsletter aims to bring up-to-date information about the latest ABLE implementation developments and other related news to individuals with disabilities, their families and ABLE-related stakeholders.

The ABLE National Resource Center (ANRC) is a collaborative whose supporters share the goal of accelerating the design and availability of ABLE accounts for the benefit of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Breaking News — Iowa Lost 2,975 Jobs for People with Disabilities but Still Leads Most States

Published by [Stephanie Farfan](#) on [March 15, 2018](#)

Washington, D.C., March 15 – As the economy expands, for the first time in decades people with disabilities around the country are gaining jobs, success and independence. However, according to [new data](#), 2,975 people with disabilities in Iowa lost jobs. Nationally, while Iowa has been significantly above the national average, people with disabilities previously have been left out of periods of economic growth. Today's workforce system around the country is catching up to Iowa's and is better aligned to enable people with disabilities to succeed, just like anyone else. Iowa lost jobs at the same time there was a four-fold national improvement in new jobs for people with disabilities.

According to RespectAbility, a national nonprofit organization that fights stigma and advances opportunity for people with disabilities, Iowa now ranks 8th on jobs for people with disabilities. In total, there are 175,367 working-age people with disabilities living in that state and 80,416 of them have jobs. Iowa has a 45.9 percent employment rate for its people with disabilities, outranking many states.

Governors have a critical role to play as the economy grows and states advance opportunities for citizens of all disabilities. Former Gov. Jack Markell of Delaware is a model of what a state chief executive can accomplish by making jobs for people with disabilities a key priority. As Governor, he chaired national initiatives with both the National Governors Association (NGA) and later the Council on State Governments (CSG). Both the Better Bottom Line Initiative of the NGA and CSG's Work Matters Report were focused on fighting stigmas, supporting strong public policies and using best practices at the state level. Former Governor Branstad, like former Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, made employment for people with disabilities a big priority.

Governor Kim Reynolds, though recently elected, can now use her leadership to bring attention to the employment issues people with disabilities face in Iowa. Iowa has one of the best vocational rehabilitation programs in the country and had many initiatives to increase the number of competitively employed people with disabilities such as the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), Employment First (E1st), and the Iowa's Money Follows the Person Grant (MFP).



Governor Kim Reynolds and Jennifer Laska Mizroh

Iowa has also shown that encouraging entrepreneurship and small business creation among people with disabilities can be a winning strategy. RespectAbility has previously profiled several small businesses owned and operated by Iowans with disabilities. A great example of success can be found in the small town of Independence, Iowa. There, Emilea Hillman runs her own coffee shop and has been an entrepreneur since 2010. Hillman left a segregated workshop and has since become a business owner thanks to support of her family, the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services' Self-Employment Program and other agencies.

A key finding in both reports was that people should look to major companies that have made a commitment to employing people with disabilities to see

what is possible. Nationally, big name businesses have been at the forefront of driving success and inclusion. Companies including [JP Morgan Chase](#), [Pepsi](#), [UPS](#), [SAP](#), [EY](#), [IBM](#), [Starbucks](#) and [Walgreens](#) have seen that people with disabilities are successful employees who improve businesses' bottom lines. Indeed, many people with disabilities also have spectacular abilities.

RespectAbility, like most governors and employers, emphasizes the critical link between education attainment and workforce development.

"Employment rates only tell part of the story," said Philip Kahn-Pauli, Policy and Practices Director at RespectAbility. "Educational attainment is critical to the success of youth with disabilities because the jobs of the future require technical education and skill training."

Iowa had an overall [high school graduation rate](#) of 91.3 percent in 2016, but only 70 percent of the students with disabilities graduated.

Nationally, 343,483 Americans with disabilities entered the competitive workforce last year.

"Our nation was founded on the principle that anyone who works hard should be able to get ahead in life," RespectAbility President Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi said. "People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to earn an income and achieve independence, just like anyone else."

[View data on all states: New Jobs for People with Disabilities, 4X the Previous Year – 343,483 new jobs for people with disabilities!](#)

For more information on state initiatives:

<http://wivedisabilityemployment.org>

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Sokolowski, Ellen <ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov>

Work requirements don't reduce poverty, but skill building can

1 message

National Skills Coalition <info@nationalskillscoalition.org>
Reply-To: info@nationalskillscoalition.org
To: Ellen Sokolowski <ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov>

Tue, Apr 17, 2018 at 12:45 PM



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

Work requirements don't reduce poverty, but skill building can

Last week, President Trump issued an Executive Order calling for new work requirements across a range of safety net programs. And, the newly introduced Farm Bill undermines otherwise promising investments in SNAP E&T with punitive work requirements that would likely result in millions of Americans losing access to basic food assistance. It seems like several lawmakers are trying to equate work requirements with workforce development – but in reality, work requirements aren't effective at lifting people out of poverty.

In a new Medium piece, Jessica Fraser, Director of the Indiana Institute for Working Families (and NSC board member) describes how imposing work requirements on Hoosiers insured through Medicaid is counterproductive to the goals of helping people find family-supporting careers and connecting Indiana businesses with trained workers.

Read [if my state was serious about ending poverty, we would focus on skill building, instead of work requirements](#) and share with anyone who thinks work requirements are a quick fix.

Contribute

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Gov. of Iowa calls for expansion of Pell grants to short term certificates

1 message

National Skills Coalition <info@nationalskillscoalition.org>
Reply-To: info@nationalskillscoalition.org
To: Ellen Sokolowski <ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov>

Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 12:32 PM



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

Gov. of Iowa calls for expansion of Pell grants to short term certificates

Today, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds called for the expansion of Pell grants to cover more short-term certificates in high-demand fields saying, "Iowans are eager for life-changing opportunities and employers want to hire them for good jobs that require postsecondary education or training, but less than a B.A."



NSC CEO Andy Van Kleinen joined Governor Reynolds along with leaders from Iowa community colleges, employers, and students for a press conference this morning. Andy praised Iowa's Innovative GAP Tuition program, calling it a model for other states and the

nation because it picks up where federal financial aid leaves off and enables students to attend short-term community college programs that lead to in-demand credentials.

Andy also acknowledged Iowa's Skills2Compete Coalition led by Central Iowa Works, United Way of Central Iowa and Kirkwood Community College for championing workforce and education programs (like GAP) that are responsive to the needs of today's students and industries.

"Washington really needs to catch up to Iowa," Andy said. "Congress could extend Pell grants to people taking short-term programs by modernizing the Higher Education Act or by simply passing bipartisan Senate legislation – the JOBS Act – that would end Pell's bias against students taking short term training."

To watch the press conference, check out [Governor Reynolds's Youtube channel](#).

Andy also appeared on WHO's News Radio 1040 in Des Moines this morning and spoke with host Jeff Angelo about how expanding Pell to short term programs would help the trades and growing industries in Iowa and across the country. You can listen to his [radio interview here](#) – by tuning in at the 19 minute mark.

Contribute

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