

on the Job

Transitional Jobs Program Offers a Bridge from Welfare to Work

Vocational Guidance Services' Transitional Jobs (TJ) program makes the difficult move from welfare to work a reality. Transitional Jobs is a subsidized employment program of the Cuyahoga County Department of Employment and Family Services. After a successful pilot program in 2003, VGS received an 18-month contract to continue the TJ program at VGS' East and West side facilities. Since 2003, the program has served more than 400 consumers.

The program's goal is to move welfare recipients into unsubsidized jobs by providing a bridge from assistance to gainful employment. The transitional work experience enables



the consumer to build a work history, develop job-keeping behaviors and gain the self-esteem that comes with earning a paycheck.

"The consumers become confident that they can work in a professional setting," reports TJ Program Coordinator Karen Carter-Bell. "They have the chance to make mistakes and learn



Having successfully completed the Transitional Employment Preparation course, consumers gather for a photo with their instructor, Kevin A. Johnson. (Below) Kelsi Bly gains experience in her transitional work assignment with VGS' Finance Department.

from them in a supportive environment, while they are adjusting to the changes they are making in their lives."

The program begins with an orientation week which addresses personal issues such as childcare, housing and transportation. This is followed by a two-week Transitional Employment Preparation course that prepares the consumers for their work assignments and job search. The course addresses employer expectations, interpersonal skills and interview preparation.

The consumers are then ready to begin their transitional work assignments with the program's work site partners. The partners, a wide variety of employers willing to mentor TJ consumers on-the-job, play a critical role in the path to employment. "We wouldn't be able to have the Transitional Jobs program without the cooperation and support of the work-site partners," Carter-Bell said.

The work-site partners provide consumers with not only the opportunity to gain work experience, but also

the chance to learn in a real work environment. VGS pays the TJ participants during their assignments, which last anywhere from eight weeks to six months.

The TJ program culminates with a VGS Placement Specialist working with each consumer until they secure full-time, unsubsidized employment. For more information about the Transitional Jobs program, call Barbara Pace at 216-881-6009. If you are interested in becoming a work-site partner, call Karen Carter-Bell at 216-881-6021.

in this issue

- 2 Letter from the Board Chair
- 2 New Contracts=More Jobs
- 3 People at Work
- 3 The Signature Society
- 4 2004 Award Winners



New Contracts = More Jobs!

Just as our number of training programs is growing, our list of contracts to provide services is getting longer—enabling us to provide jobs to more people with barriers to employment. Already in 2004, we have acquired 24 new contracts that will employ 61 full-time equivalent employees and ultimately serve more than 600 consumers. This means that our Contract, Facilities and Operations division has increased our earning-while-learning employment base by more than 9% in just eight months—and more jobs are on the way!

These new enterprises include custodial services that began in October in two Youngstown Federal Courthouse buildings and the facilities at the Lake County Metroparks. In November, our “Job Match II” location will serve Lakeview and Riverview Housing Residents, thanks to a contract with the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. Modeled after our successful Empowerment Zone Job Match program, Job Match II will offer vocational training referrals, job-readiness training and placement services to the housing residents.

We are thrilled about the new opportunities that these contracts make possible for the people we serve. For more information about custodial contracts, call Dan Nelson at 216-881-6030. For information about the Job Match II program, contact Robin Smalley at 216-881-6003.

Dear Friends,

As I complete my first year as Board Chair of Vocational Guidance Services, I’m thrilled to read about the success of yet another new program at VGS. The Transitional Jobs program, the subject of this *On the Job’s* cover story, is designed to help consumers transition from welfare to work. With the latest census reports emphasizing Cleveland’s high poverty rate, programs like Transitional Jobs are critical for people with significant economic disadvantages.

The Transitional Jobs program is just one example of the efforts at Vocational Guidance Services that *prepare people with barriers to employment for a brighter future*. Last year alone, VGS placed 1,100 people into community jobs. The services provided to these consumers through wage-paying training programs, gave them the work experience, skills and references needed to obtain and keep permanent jobs in our community. I’m also very proud that VGS employees have worked hard to create 61 new jobs so far this year—for more about this, see the *New Contracts=More Jobs* story on this page.

At VGS, finding employment for people with disabilities is a year-round focus. However, in October, this priority was placed in the national spotlight because it was National Disability Employment Month. This effort for heightened community awareness emphasizes the importance of giving everyone who wants to work a chance to do so—what we do every day at VGS. Thank you all for your contributions and efforts to help make this goal a reality.

Sincerely,



James B. Griswold
Chair of the Board



EDITOR’S NOTE

***On the Job* is published by Vocational Guidance Services, a nonprofit organization that provides vocational training and job placement services for individuals who are disabled or disadvantaged. If you would like additional information on any subject covered in *On the Job*, contact Robin M. Fink at 216-881-6014, or robinfink@vgsjob.org. Address corrections or additions should be faxed to 216-431-5123.**





People at Work

Ralph was laid-off from his job at a discount retailer and was ready to find something new. He had worked on a variety of tasks including cleaning, stocking and collecting shopping carts, and along the way, he found cleaning to be the most satisfying. Ralph already had experience behind him, but he needed assistance with the job search. After a visit to the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, he came to Vocational Guidance Services to begin Job Search Skills Training (JSST) and Placement Services.

Soon, Ralph was learning about every aspect of the job search. His JSST instructor, Jessica Schantz, teaches consumers about developing career goals, completing job applications, writing résumés and cover letters, and preparing for job interviews. The training was exactly what Ralph needed. “I learned a lot about how to find a job,” Ralph shared. “I also learned how to tell an employer about myself in an interview.”

Ralph, now equipped to begin his job search, began working with Chuck Skoczen, a VGS Employment Specialist. “Ralph came to VGS with his heart set on finding an office cleaning job,” Chuck explained. “With the drive, training and support behind him, he was well on his way to employment.”

With Chuck’s help, it didn’t take long before Ralph was offered a job with Amick Cleaning Services to clean at Roadway Express. Ralph is doing very well at his new job and is thrilled to have found one that he enjoys. To sum up his experience with Vocational Guidance Services, Ralph simply said, “they really care about you and they do help you find a job.”



Ralph wanted to find a full-time job that he would enjoy. He completed VGS’ Job Search Skills Training to help him with résumé writing, job searching and interviewing. After working with a VGS Placement Specialist, Ralph was soon hired at Roadway Express.

Leaving a Legacy through The Signature Society

Vocational Guidance Services’ *Signature Society* provides a way for generous individuals

to ensure the future financial security of VGS through estate planning.

Including VGS in your will, or as an IRA or insurance beneficiary, are strategies that make it easy to leave a significant legacy that will benefit the agency for years to come.

The Signature Society recognizes and celebrates donors who demonstrate their commitment to Vocational Guidance Services by making a planned gift. To learn more about how you can become a member of *The Signature Society*, please call Mick Latkovich, Vice President, at 216-881-6024.

The Signature Society



Preparing People with Barriers to Employment for a Brighter Future

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2004 AWARDS

Each year at its Annual Meeting, Vocational Guidance Services takes time to recognize those who have helped the agency achieve success. Congratulations to the 2004 Award Winners, and thank you for your role in preparing people with barriers to employment for a brighter future.

Frederick C. Crawford
Outstanding Achievement Award

Willie Alston

Partner in Rehabilitation

American Red Cross, Greater Cleveland Chapter

Volunteer of the Year Award

Garnett Smith

Employer of the Year Award

InterContinental Hotel and Surplus Packaging