

on the Job



Basic Life Skills Program Fills a Need in Our Community

Vocational Guidance Services has always been committed to meeting the changing needs of people with disabilities in the Northeast Ohio area. With knowledge of this in mind, the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (CCBMRDD) approached VGS in 2004. There was a need for a new program that would serve the area's growing population of people with severe and profound mental retardation.

True to its commitment to people with disabilities, VGS began Phase I of the Basic Life Skills (BLS) program in July 2005; and Phase II is scheduled to begin in 2006. The program is designed to help people with severe and profound mental retardation optimize their personal, social and community skills.

Located in VGS' East Side building, the program space is a recently refurbished area that now includes two classrooms and a large multi-purpose space. The entire area allows plenty of room for the program's three workstations which include activities such as arts & crafts, academics, games and computers. The consumers in the Basic Life Skills program also enjoy community field trips, a nearby playground, and a wellness program that allows them to stretch and move to music.

The program's supervisor, Mark Bass, believes that providing meaningful daytime activities is at the heart of

the program. "The purpose of the program is to engage our consumers—to use safe, therapeutic and enjoyable activities to connect with them," Bass said. "We give consumers the opportunity to get out of their homes and enjoy meaningful activities."

Three new staff members work closely with four consumers each in Phase I of the program. As the program grows with Phase II, which includes more renovated space, more staff members will be hired. Eventually, the program could serve more than 40 consumers referred from the CCBMRDD.

The program's Multi-Sensory Stimulation Areas are highlights of the BLS classrooms. Using vibrant lights, colors and sounds in the form of bubbles, moving patterns and a variety of materials, all in a darkened space with glow-in-the-dark and fiber optics—it's a wonderful feature to offer to the consumers involved with this program.

VGS' Basic Life Skills program is about giving every person in our community the opportunity to participate and enjoy each day. "When they see us as they are getting off the bus and they smile—that's what makes this program a success for everyone," Bass shared. "It's about offering these consumers enjoyable and meaningful experiences."



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VGS EXPANDS ITS SERVICES TO COLUMBUS

Vocational Guidance Services has established a Custodial Services presence in Columbus that is quickly growing! We have 70 people with disabilities working in central Ohio already.

Since August 2005, we have been providing custodial services at the James A. Rhodes State Office Tower in downtown Columbus. This contract employs 42 full-time employees, and is VGS' second largest custodial contract, next to the A.J. Celebrezze Federal Building in Cleveland.

At the Ohio State University, we provide custodial services in six buildings on campus—employing 12 consumers. The VGS community is thrilled with its new relationship with OSU and is working to expand services to other parts of the campus.

And that's not all—VGS is also keeping the Ohio National Guard Beightler Armory in Columbus clean. We are excited about the new opportunities that these contracts provide for people with disabilities and we look forward to continued growth in central Ohio. For more information about VGS custodial contracts, please call Dan Nelson at 216-881-6030.

Dear Friends,

In my first *On the Job* letter to the Vocational Guidance Services community, I would like to express my excitement for both my new role as Board Chair and the tremendous growth taking place at VGS. As you can read in our cover story, the new Basic Life Skills program enables us to fulfill a local need of people with significant disabilities. And in another direction, our expansion to the Columbus market allows us to extend our reach and serve consumers in a new region (see story to the left).

When we found out that people with severe and profound mental retardation needed program services, we worked quickly to launch Basic Life Skills. This program is designed to help the consumers optimize their personal, social and community skills. We were happy to answer the call from the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to provide these services.

As always, striving to broaden the opportunities for people with disabilities is at the core of what we do at Vocational Guidance Services. It's for this reason—and countless others—that I'm honored to begin my tenure as Board Chair of this exceptional agency.

Sincerely,



William G. Caster
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 Sharon Williams at 216-881-6034, or sharonwilliams@vgsjob.org. Address corrections or additions should be faxed to 216-431-5123.



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One Person Can Make a Difference. What Legacy Will You Leave Behind?

Have you put off writing your will? You are not alone! Without a will, your property will be distributed regardless of your wishes.

Taking the time to select your recipients and specify your favorite organizations is well worth the effort. In doing so, you may choose to leave a legacy that will benefit the Greater Cleveland community for years to come.

Vocational Guidance Services' *Signature Society* is made up of wonderful, generous people, who want to ensure that VGS can continue its good work.

As you make your plans, please consider including Vocational Guidance Services in your will. You can contact Sharon Williams, Director of Development, at 216-881-6034 to learn more about becoming a member of *The Signature Society*.

The Signature Society

People at Work

Beth Miglets doesn't have to look too far back to remember being homeless and eating her meals in soup kitchens. After several years of unemployment, the struggle to obtain food and shelter became exasperating. Those days are now over for Beth. Today, she has a job making nearly \$12 an hour, and has her own apartment and cat.

Her path to self-sufficiency began when the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation referred her to Vocational Guidance Services. At VGS, Beth excelled at Custodial Skills and Job Search Skills training before working with Placement Services to reach her goal of employment. Beth's determination to turn her life around was impressive, and she was soon hired by VGS, Inc. Since October of 2004, she has been cleaning in the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building in downtown Cleveland.

This life-changing opportunity was available for Beth and thousands of other people with disabilities thanks to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act. This legislation assists agencies with acquiring federal contracts like the custodial contract that enables Beth to work for VGS, Inc. With the help of NISH, a national nonprofit organization, agencies can develop and maintain employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities under JWOD.

Beth was thrilled to attend the NISH Grassroots Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C., in June of 2005. Her first trip to the Capitol, Beth also only enjoyed touring the city and meeting politicians, as well as sharing her story. She had the perfect opportunity to express her appreciation for the support and services from agencies like Vocational Guidance Services and NISH. Now able to support herself, Beth is quick to share, "I really love getting up every morning and going to work."



VGS consumer Beth Miglets attended the NISH Grassroots Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. One of the highlights of the trip was presenting Senator Mike DeWine with a "JWOD Champion" award for his efforts for VGS in the 2005 Appropriations process.

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Preparing People with Barriers to Employment for a Brighter Future

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2005 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 2005 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

Herodis "Harold" Barlow

Employer of the Year Award

Model Box Company

Partner in Rehabilitation

Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency and the **Stephen Gould of Ohio Corporation**

Volunteer of the Year Award

George "Skip" Tusa