Milton began services with VGS in May of 2017. He is a very shy person who likes to stay to himself. Milton has a cognitive impairment that makes it harder for him to communicate and comprehend information. He is a dad and wanted to get a steady job to help out more with his son. When he was referred to VGS by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), he was seeking a job and needed help obtaining it. He wanted to make his life better by doing something productive.

Milton’s vocational goal was to get a good-paying job with good hours. He had some limited work experience, but had previously been unable to maintain a long-term job. When asked what he felt was his greatest barrier to employment, he said that because he doesn’t talk much, people think he doesn’t know much. But Milton has a lot to contribute and only needed the right opportunity to let his abilities shine.

OOD referred Milton to VGS for a one-week Community Based Assessment, in which, after conferring with an individual about their abilities and fields of interest, VGS places the person in a real work setting to observe their strengths and weaknesses. Milton was placed at Constantino’s Market in the kitchen area and immediately made an impression. The kitchen manager at Constantino’s loved Milton’s work ethic and on the last day of his assessment, insisted that Milton be able to keep working. Less than a week later, Milton was officially hired by Constantino’s as a part-time dishwasher and stocker.

Milton’s manager refers to him as the “perfect employee.” He is always on time and is getting his job done beyond expectations. He’s been working now for over six months and it’s going great. Milton just needed an opportunity to show what he could do.

*Congratulations, Milton!*

**Why is Vocational Guidance Services important to our community?**

Vocational Guidance Service (VGS) is important because it is the one place in our community that people from all avenues of life can engage services that will enhance their personal abilities, break down their barriers to employment, and help them realize their potential.

In VGS programs, individuals with mental disabilities and/or physical disabilities; individuals injured on the job; veterans injured in defense of our freedom; and individuals with a history of substance abuse, economic challenges, or a history of incarceration move towards their brighter futures by embracing opportunities inside and outside the classroom that deepen their existing skills, develop additional skills, and allow them to build their own track record of success so that they are able to accomplish their goals.

VGS is an opportunity incubator. VGS works with individuals and corporations to create real-world work training, work experiences, and paid work opportunities that enable individuals to gain marketable skills as we develop relationships with employers, enabling VGS’ Job Placement Services to annually place more than 560 individuals into competitive employment.
Dear Friends:

For years people in our field have been asked, “What do individuals need to overcome their barriers and successfully realize their brighter futures?” And for years the answer has been the processes that VGS developed back in the 1950s and taught to the rest of the industry: that if you mix classroom learning with paid real work opportunities, an individual is able to develop employable skills, ingrain them, and put them into action on the job site. And while I still believe that method to be the best path to employment, I have a new answer to the question. What I have found over the past 30+ years of serving individuals as they progress toward their brighter futures is that for someone to overcome their barriers in order to enter the workforce, something needs to be created before a person even enters our training facilities.

**Individuals need OPPORTUNITIES.**

All of us need the same things: the opportunity to learn, develop, make mistakes, and be successful.

That is what we do at VGS: we create over 3,800 opportunities every year for individuals to embrace and further their own abilities to create their brighter futures.

Our methods of creating those opportunities are tried and true and have been successful for over 127 years.

As we enter into the holidays, my hope is that you and your loved ones will experience all the great joys of the season. If I can make one request of you during this time of year, it is that if you are able you would consider supporting VGS and helping us continue to create opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment so that they might be able to do the same.

Together we can change lives and strengthen our community!

Robert E. Comben, Jr.
President and CEO

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In Memoriam: Arthur D. Baldwin II

Arthur (Art) D. Baldwin II joined VGS’ Board of Directors in 1964. Art represented the third generation of his family to serve the agency and his family’s involvement with VGS dates back to the original Sunbeam Circle formed in 1890. It’s truly remarkable to think of the generations of commitment and service to the community that the Baldwin family has given. Art, as one of VGS’ longest-standing and most dedicated Board members, helped to solidify VGS’ future and his family’s legacy.

It is with heartfelt sadness that we announce that Art Baldwin, age 85, passed away October 27, 2017 after a valiant battle against prostate cancer. The world has lost a pillar of the community: dedicated public servant, committed civic leader, and loving husband, father, and grandfather. Art’s civic and philanthropic leadership was unmatched; in addition to his decades of service to VGS, Art also served The Village of Waite Hill for over 50 years, first on the Village Council and then for 46 years as Mayor, the longest tenure in Lake County history and the longest continuous service in Ohio.

Art is survived by his wife of 60 years, Margot; four daughters, eight grandchildren, and numerous family and friends.

All of us at VGS will miss his guiding hand.

**HELP VGS CHANGE THAT**

**Hire. Advocate. Donate. Volunteer.**

65% of working age individuals with disabilities in Ohio are unemployed.

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Robert E. Comben, Jr.
President and CEO
MAKE YOUR GIFT GO EVEN FURTHER!

From now through December 31, 2017, The Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust will match your donation toward much-needed capital improvements at VGS. The Trust will match $1 for every $3 that is designated to VGS’ capital needs up to $250,000. For more information about the match or to make a gift, please contact Adam Ross, VGS’ Vice President of Development, at 216.881.6014 or AdamRoss@vgsjob.org.

VGS IN OUR COMMUNITY

VGS has provided custodial services for the Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL) System since 1997, delivering quality services to the CCPL Administration Building and six library branches located in the southwest communities of Cuyahoga County. Earlier this summer, VGS was awarded the Custodial Contract for the additional 21 branches of the CCPL system. This expansion represents employment opportunities for 45 additional people with disabilities. The total contract now employs over 65 people.

We are grateful for the continued support and encouragement we get from our CCPL partners. CCPL Facilities Director Jeremiah Swetel stated that “I am very impressed with the system and approach that VGS had in taking over 21 library branches at once.” CCPL Projects and Services Manager James McLaughlin said “VGS had better quality at these facilities in their first week than the previous contractor did in the past three years.” These comments are especially meaningful because they are a direct reflection on the work being done by individuals with disabilities. Thank you, CCPL!

Thank you to everyone who supported the 2017 Sunbeam Holiday Boutique, held November 1-3 at The Country Club in Pepper Pike! Many thanks to event Co-Chairs Catherine Levy and Sabrina Davies (pictured below) and to the entire Sunbeam Board, as well as the vendors who came from across the country in support of VGS. Special thanks to our generous sponsors.

By making a gift to VGS today, you can provide someone in our community facing a barrier to employment with an opportunity to:

- strengthen their skills
- develop new skills
- redefine themselves by showing what they can do
- begin to break the cycle of poverty
- move beyond the mistakes they might have made in the past

CHANGE THEIR LIFE & STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY

Give today at www.vgsjob.org or use the envelope that came with this issue of Pathways.

Hope to see you @ the 2018 Sunbeam Holiday Boutique

Winter 2017
Vocational Guidance Services is a highly acclaimed, successful, private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) vocational rehabilitation agency with 127 years of dedicated experience serving individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment.

By making a gift to VGS in honor of someone who has given you an opportunity to succeed, you will be creating an opportunity for someone with a disability or other barrier to achieve their own brighter future.

Make a gift today in honor of a person who helped make you who you are today. VGS will send them a card letting them know you made a gift in their honor and that the impact they made on you is now being passed on to another individual in our community.

VGS will also list their name on our new OPPORTUNITY MAKERS wall.