



NRA - VEWAA Bulletin

Summer 2007



VEWAA is a
division of NRA

Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association

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Message from the President

by Paige Tidwell, MRC, CRC, CVE

Greetings! I hope that everyone has had a wonderful 2007 so far, it seems to be passing by so quickly. The VEWAA Board has been very busy this year with various activities, but primarily addressing how to make our division the best it can be. Sure, you have seen me say this before and I have asked many times for feedback from the membership. However, the 2007 Board of Directors knows that we can not continue with "business as usual." Membership is declining among all divisions, but we know that OUR division addresses a very specific and crucial part of the rehabilitation process and it is essential that we celebrate that.

Many states are seeing the pendulum starting to swing back in the direction of evaluation and assessments, but perhaps in a new and improved manner... we are seeing assistive technology evaluations increase, community work assessments are more prominent, OT evaluations are more utilized and Vocational Evaluations are making a come back. These disciplines are the very areas that the VEWAA division addresses and we are very excited to form new partnerships to promote these fields. As you will read in this newsletter, National VEWAA is sponsoring a half-day pre-conference workshop at the 2007 Annual NRA conference in September. Presenters include CARF, RESNA and Pathfinders and Associates. This presentation is an excellent example of how VEWAA is moving forward.

In closing, I hope that everyone took a moment to complete the survey sent out in June. Your feedback is vital to our strategic planning process; after all, this is YOUR organization. Results from this survey will be presented at our membership meeting during the national conference in Tucson. Until then, you are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns at paige.tidwell@dol.state.ga.us

13th Annual VECAP Conference

by Susan Scott, VEWAA Board Member

The VEWAA Board sponsored a speaker at the VECAP conference April 25-29 in Auburn, Alabama. Our speaker was Jack Dial, Ph.D., neuropsychologist and co-developer of the McCarron Dial Vocational Evaluation Systems. The title of his presentation was "Evolution of the McCarron Dial System: Back to the future."

His presentation was great and well attended. There were other professional organizations that sponsored sessions including NRCA. There were several VEWAA Board Members that presented at concurrent sessions. The atmosphere was fun and the speakers were top notch. VECAP recognized VEWAA and our support of Dr. Dial in their General Membership Meeting. There was a spirit of "collaboration" as both VECAP and VEWAA face the challenges of declining membership, fewer universities that provide undergraduate and graduate degrees in vocational evaluation and fewer opportunities for continuing education. After all, we are in the profession of Vocational Evaluation no matter what organization we belong to. I met people who were Past Presidents of VEWAA and members of both VECAP and VEWAA. I left the conference with a positive feeling and I believe this is a new beginning for all of us. The spirit of collaboration is a good thing.

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VEWAA Website

www.vewaa.net

VEWAA members have commented, through our strategic planning documents, that the VEWAA website has been inaccessible over the past year. The VEWAA board has been in communication with NRA, under whose auspices our website is run, to remedy the situation. The NRA office assures us that our website should be up and running in the very near future just as soon as their website redesign is complete. The VEWAA board recognizes that an active website is vital to staying in touch with its members, and we appreciate your patience through this trying time.

VECAP Forum

The 13th National Forum regarding issues on vocational assessment was held April 25-29 at Auburn University and was jam-packed with informative sessions and workshops, activities, and social events. Our keynote speaker, Oligario (“Ollie”) Cantos opened the conference with a stirring account of his own experiences as an individual with a disability and how his rehabilitation counselor helped give him support and encouragement at just the right times. In his role as Associate Director for Domestic Policy for the White House, he advised us to build synergy through a networking approach and gave us the names and emails of a number of individuals and agencies that are involved in disability issues, such as the National Council on Disability and the New Freedom Initiative. He invited us to contact him via email (ollie.cantos@usdoj.gov) and include him as a network connection; he also asked that we share our knowledge of best practices with him so that he may share these practices with others.

The opening session was followed by a general session entitled, “How We Can Work Together: Vocational Evaluation, Customized Employment, and Evidence-based Practices.” Customized employment was presented as a process involving a flexible blending of services, supports, and strategies that is driven by the job seeker involving negotiation of job tasks with employers. Its focus on discovery, exploration, consumer choice, and identification of consumers' strengths, needs, and interests are closely aligned with key concepts of vocational evaluation. This presentation highlighted the important role vocational evaluation can have in improving outcomes for consumers through customized employment.

After lunch, there were 16 workshop sessions to choose from between 1:30 and 5:00pm, covering a wide variety of topics areas, including assessment of specific populations, substance abuse screening, graduate training in vocational evaluation, research on outcomes in vocational evaluation, innovative comprehensive service models, and an update on CVE certification. For anyone who wanted a little exercise to re-energize after sitting in sessions all day, Landa Bell-Carson offered an hour-long session on Pilates mat exercises, which was well-attended. For baseball fans, tickets were available for the Auburn University Baseball vs. University of Arkansas game.

The second day of the conference opened with two featured sessions to choose from: “Evolution of the McCarron-Dial System: Back to the Future” by Jack Dial (please refer to the accompanying article) and “The Relationships Between Rehabilitation Counselors and Vocational Evaluators” by Jeanne Patterson. Dr. Patterson stressed that both rehabilitation counselors and vocational evaluators share many of the same goals: work and promoting careers and meaningful lifestyles for individuals with disabilities. Discussion of common complaints that vocational evaluators have about rehabilitation counselors and vice-versa led to a spirited (but friendly) discussion among the participants, some of whom included rehabilitation counselors, who spoke openly about some of their issues in implementing evaluation recommendations. A common request from rehabilitation counselors was that vocational evaluators should put their recommendations on the first page, rather than at the end of a report.

Another highlight that day was a session on work sample and test sharing. This session attracted a standing-room only crowd (fortunately, enough chairs were on hand to make that a temporary situation) and generated considerable interest and excitement among the participants. Many practitioners shared with us the work samples they had developed to meet their consumers' assessment needs, such as medical transcription, vet assistant, computer repair, plumbing, arc welding, web-based development, nail technician, hotel concierge, and retail sales clerk, among others.

The afternoon of the second day was again filled with many interesting workshop sessions 18 scheduled in all so there was guaranteed to be something of interest to everyone. Afternoon topics included Universal Design for

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Learning, changing trends in vocational assessment, community-based assessment in transition programs, forensic evaluation, vocational assessment in private rehabilitation, work capacity evaluation, and the interfacing of vocational evaluation with Social Security. The evening was filled with social events, starting with a student reception, after which everyone filed down to the hotel lounge and patio for an evening of socializing, accompanied by the musical entertainment by the Country and Bluegrass group, In Cahoots.

On Sunday morning, the conference closed with a session entitled, "Vocational Assessment: A Look to the Future." The presenters reviewed the roots of vocational evaluation and discussed some of the challenges facing the field now, such as a decline in graduate programs, which are crucial to preparing future practitioners. This session ended on an upbeat note, with a focus on future opportunities, the role of technology and universal design for learning, and innovative evaluation programs that underscore the important role of vocational evaluation in helping empower individuals to achieve their maximum potential.

On a personal note, I found this conference to be very worthwhile and plan to make it a point to attend future forums. The forum offered specific training in areas that are difficult, if not impossible, to find in any other conference. What other national conference would offer a session where vocational evaluators can share work samples or other tools they have developed? This forum offered much that would be of interest to both assessment practitioners and educators. In addition to the ample training sessions, the opportunities for networking with other vocational evaluation professionals was priceless. Being a small field, we are often limited to sharing information with perhaps a handful of other practitioners in our states or immediate geographic area. This forum was a wonderful venue for sharing concerns, solutions to problems, ideas, and strategies. I strongly recommend being on the lookout for the next forum in 2009.

VEWAA Call for Nominations

VEWAA Service Award

The VEWAA Service Award is presented annually to a VEWAA member who has made a significant contribution to the organization. This service could have been provided during the past year, or over several years. Only VEWAA members may nomination candidates for this award and more than one person can receive this award each year.

Paul R. Hoffman Award

The Paul R. Hoffman Award is given in recognition of innovation and creativity in service to persons with disabilities through professional or technical achievements in vocational evaluation or work adjustment. A VEWAA member may nominate a member or a nonmember for this award.

Nominations for either of these awards should include the following:

1. Name, address & telephone number of the person making the nomination.
2. The nominee's name, address, telephone number, job title & place of employment.
3. A narrative explanation of the nominee's contribution or service to VEWAA and to the field of vocational evaluation or work adjustment.

Nominations should be sent to:

Paige Tidwell
GDOL/Vocational Rehabilitation Services
150 Evelyn C. Neely Drive

Welcome VEWAA members (new and renewed)! We are constantly striving to increase our membership and we need your help!! Please invite your co-workers, students, and any other professionals interested in the world of Vocational Evaluation. If you have additional ideas on how to increase membership, please contact me via e-mail or snail mail at:
shawn.zimmerman26@gmail.com
4220 W Old Shakopee Rd.
Bloomington, MN 55437. Vocational Evaluation is an important piece in the rehabilitation process for people with disabilities; let's make sure it stays that way and continues to grow! I hope to meet all of you at the NRA Conference in Tucson, AZ!

Sincerely,

Shawn L. Zimmerman M.S., CRC, CVE
Membership Chair for VEWAA



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SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER

AT THE

NRA CONFERENCE

IN

TUCSON, ARIZONA

SEPTEMBER 6TH THROUGH 9TH

VEWAA PRE-CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 6TH

MEMBERSHIP MEETING: SEE CONFERENCE MATERIALS FOR TIME/DATE