

*Employment
Opportunities for
Tennesseans with
Disabilities*



**2015
ANNUAL REPORT**



To Governor Bill Haslam, the Tennessee General Assembly, and our valued partners and supporters,

On behalf of the Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Disabled, it is my pleasure to present to you the 2015 Annual Report for Tennessee's employment program for people with disabilities, administered by Nashville nonprofit

Community Rehabilitation Agencies of Tennessee (CMRA). Created by T.C.A. 71-4-701 – 71-4-705, this program seeks to employ Tennesseans with disabilities in providing goods and services to state and local government agencies. People with disabilities often face unemployment levels of 60% or more. Currently there are over 300 people with disabilities across the state productively employed staffing rest areas, cleaning offices, inspecting and washing government vehicles, maintaining kitchen equipment and facilities, packaging drug-testing kits, and becoming increasingly self-sufficient thanks to the benefits of stable employment, thus reducing the need for public assistance.

Since 1991, the State of Tennessee, and CMRA, as the designated non-profit agency (NPA) selected to administer the State Use Program, have worked diligently to identify opportunities for workers with disabilities in local communities across the state. The state Certification Committee and the Central Procurement Office (CPO) evaluate proposals submitted by CMRA to insure that government purchasers receive products and services that are highly competitive in quality, availability, and price. Thanks to the efforts of many professionals, various non-profit rehabilitation centers, select for-profit industries, and advocacy groups across the state, Tennesseans with disabilities play an integral role in the effective function of state and local government as a result of their meaningful employment contributions.

The Tennessee State Use Program is truly one of those rare “win/win” programs where all parties involved dramatically benefit: employees with disabilities, support staff and programs, State purchasers, and Tennessee taxpayers. We are all grateful to be able to assist so many of our fellow citizens through the employment opportunities that the State Use Program provides for those truly wanting to better themselves and their families.

Please take time to carefully review this report— we hope that reading about how Tennesseans with disabilities are succeeding daily will be inspiring and informative and the grave need for this program will never be diminished.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob G. Rosenbaum". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Robert G. Rosenbaum, Ed.D.

President, Goodwill Foundation of Knoxville, Inc.

President & CEO Emeritus, Goodwill Industries-Knoxville, Inc.

Chair, The Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Disabled

EMPLOYING TENNESSEANS

During fiscal year 2014-15, a total of 489 people with disabilities provided 302,138 hours of direct labor towards fulfilling certified contracts, and an additional 13 people with disabilities contributed in supervisory roles. Over the course of a year, 502 Tennesseans with disabilities found employment on CMRA contracts!

PROVIDING GOODS & SERVICES

With over a dozen different certified products and services and 16 business partners, CMRA saw \$9,684,055 in total sales during fiscal year 2014-15. By statute, agencies and employers are expected to cover the costs incurred in providing commodities to government purchasers, and every certification proposal includes a detailed budget for review by the state Certification Committee, which ensures that every product or service will meet standards for quality, availability, and fair market price. The Certification Committee then sends its recommendations for review by the Central Procurement Office before the contract is finalized. It can take a bit longer than a conventional bid process, but it guarantees that local and state government purchases will be competitively priced, and that all costs are properly evaluated before the contract begins, which benefits everyone involved, providers and purchasers alike.

The Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Disabled

Robert G. Rosenbaum, Ed.D, *Chair*

REPRESENTING WORK CENTERS THAT SERVE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Patti Bell-Norris

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

John Bissell

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Bob Currie

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Amy Gonzalez

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF INTELLECTUAL AND
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Martha Nichols

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION



2015 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Jamalica Shorter – Journeys in Community Living

*Department of Safety –
Driver's License Testing, Murfreesboro*

Jamalica Shorter has been working at the Driver's License Testing office in Murfreesboro for nearly three years, and she looks forward to going to work every day. While Jamalica has never been described as shy, one of her challenges at work has been to keep conversations within a reasonable time, and she has worked hard to maintain her friendliness while staying busy. Vicki Weaver of the DLT office says that Jamalica “definitely brightens our mornings at work...while she works so diligently to provide us a clean and organized work space. Jamalica is a hard and dedicated worker and takes pride in doing a good job.”

Because many of her work tasks need to be modified for her, Jamalica worked with a job coach until she was able to perform all of her work completely independently. Now she has become so adept at problem-solving that she can usually modify any new tasks on her own.

Not only has Jamalica benefited from the stability and consistency of her work at DLT Murfreesboro, but she has formed real friendships with the DLT staff. Clover Norton (pictured with Jamalica, above) writes “Trying to describe [Jamalica] with one word is impossible. She is loving, kind, compassionate, funny, a hard worker, and I am so happy that she is my friend.” Jamalica has not only expanded and enriched her own life through her employment and gained useful personal and work skills, but she clearly brightens others' lives by her presence at work. Jamalica Shorter is a perfect example of how stable employment on CMRA certified contracts benefits not only the employee, but those around them, in and out of the workplace!



EMPLOYEE SUCCESS STORIES

Pamela Hendley – Hilltoppers, Inc.

Rest Area Maintenance, I-40 Cumberland County

Pamela is a classic example of determination paying off. When she started at the Cumberland County rest areas in early 2015, she was in a difficult economic position and having a hard time caring for herself. Fortunately, a stable work routine allowed her to gradually stabilize her daily life, soon resulting in much-needed weight gain and a move into a better home environment. Today, Pamela has gained confidence, is respected by her peers, and is always willing to help others, going above and beyond her job duties to truly excel. Supervisor Troy Duncan observes that Pamela “always has a positive attitude and she is always willing to help out in any way she can.”

Charles “Charlie” Welch – Goodwill Industries-Knoxville, Inc.

Janitorial services, TN Emergency Management Agency and TN Department of Environment and Conservation

Charlie started with Goodwill in Knoxville in late 2007, after a history of short-term employment and with a referral from the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Fortunately, his supervisors soon adjusted his tasks to allow him to work independently, and coached him on his time-management and communication challenges. Nearly eight years later, Charlie is a reliable worker who never has an unscheduled work absence, and he feels a great sense of accomplishment at the end of every day’s work. Best of all, he is now confident in his interactions with others at work. Charlie has benefited greatly from the stability of a consistent work environment, and a few minor adjustments have allowed him to gain independence and self-assurance.

Billy Gilbert – Easter Seals of Tennessee

Rest Area Maintenance, I-40 Benton County

Billy has been described by supervisor Larry Bullion as always “giving 110%.” From the time he clocks in every morning, he is busy mowing lawns, cleaning restrooms, or any other tasks that are necessary to keep the rest areas clean and functioning well. Younger employees respect Billy and see him as an example to follow, both in terms of his work ethic and positive interaction with the many travelers that stop in, but also as a model for developing their own life skills. Billy has been a great representative for the state and a great role model for his coworkers!

David Bartlett – Independent Opportunities, Inc.

Janitorial Services, Pickett State Park

After experiencing a serious illness and social isolation, David Bartlett was able to return to work at Pickett State Park and see his friends and park employees again, and he continues to work on mastering new skills, which increases his confidence and self-esteem. Michelle Pittman of IOI says that “being around the park rangers and other employees has really brought David out of his shell.” She also notes that his workload and pay have increased as he becomes more confident, and that he has formed many positive relationships through work at the park. David is a great example of how employment not only improves a person’s financial situation, but connections to the community as well.



PRIDE IN THEIR WORK

*This year, workers with disabilities packaged and shipped almost **10,000 cases** of incontinence products such as briefs, pads, and wipes to state facilities. Nearly **80,000 drug-testing kits** were prepared and shipped out for government employees to administer in offices and out in the field.*



*In the first nine months after CMRA certified a contract to clean the grease traps in commercial kitchens at schools, correctional facilities, and park lodges statewide, employees working for Liquid Environmental Solutions helped remove a **quarter of a million gallons** of waste from traps across the state.*

ABOUT CMRA

CMRA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency designated to function as the Central Nonprofit Agency (CNA) according to the program's statute. CMRA's staff works with both community agencies and business vendors to provide products and services to government purchasers, ensuring that at least 51% of the direct labor for all products and services is provided by employees with disabilities. CMRA staff members look for contracting opportunities, negotiate with prospective partners, seek competitive bids from vendors, assist in staffing contracts, create certification proposals, and implement the contracts once certified. In addition, CMRA inspects work sites, handles all invoicing and payment distribution, ensures compliance with the program statute and all other applicable regulations, provides educational resources to both partners and customers, and mediates any questions or differences involving business partners and customers. As employment concerns and expectations for people with disabilities change, CMRA will continue to work with other agencies and advocates to help provide increased opportunities for employment and advancement.

CMRA Board of Directors

Evelyn Robertson Jr., *Chair*

Jennifer Krahenbill, *Secretary*

Tonya Copeland, *Treasurer*

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Mary Jenkins Kline, *Immediate Past Chair, 2014*

Donna Goodaker, *Immediate Past Treasurer, 2014*

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Amanda Dean, *Finance Director*

Kevin Scarborough, *Contracts Manager*

Laura Kinard, *Projects Manager*

Tara Lawson, *Operations Manager*

CMRA Legal Counsel

William B. Hubbard

INTEGRATED WORKPLACES

While CMRA is committed primarily to the employment of people with disabilities, a paycheck isn't the only benefit for employees. **Integration**, in the field of disability services, means providing opportunities for interaction with non-disabled people at work and within the community. In *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999), the Supreme Court held that Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits unreasonable segregation of individuals with disabilities, and both policies and legal decisions since then have supported the idea that in work environments it is inappropriate to segregate people with disabilities. CMRA has been working with its business partners over the past year to integrate all contracts, with a goal of ensuring that an employee with disabilities will have the same level of interaction with non-disabled people as would an employee without disabilities. While there is no single formula or number that will define a workplace as fully integrated, CMRA staff and partners are always working to ensure that people employed on certified contracts can develop and enjoy ties to their coworkers and the broader community through their work.

Agency and Business Partners

Chattanooga Goodwill Industries

Dawn of Hope, *Johnson City*

Easter Seals of Tennessee

Goodwill Industries-Knoxville, Inc.

Hilltoppers, *Crossville*

Impact Centers, *Columbia*

Independent Opportunities, Inc., *Jamestown*

Journeys in Community Living, *Murfreesboro*

Liquid Environmental Solutions, *Nashville*

Madison-Haywood Developmental Services, *Jackson*

Memphis Goodwill, Inc.

New Horizons Inc., *Nashville*

Pacesetters, *Cookeville*

Progressive Directions, Inc., *Clarksville*

Prospect, Inc., *Lebanon*

Shelby Residential and Vocational Services (SRVS), *Memphis*

Certified Products and Services

Janitorial services
Drug-testing kits and laboratory-confirmation services
Grounds-maintenance services
Commercial grease-trap cleaning
Recycling of used cooking oil
Incontinence products
Staffing and maintenance of 18 Tennessee rest areas
Parks maintenance
Custom printed forms
Car wash and vehicle-inspection services
Feminine-hygiene products
Custodial services
Premium coffee

ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD

Employment for individuals with disabilities is a constantly-changing field, and the pace of change has been increasing. With such developments as the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act at the state and federal levels, new laws proposing expanded financial trusts for people with disabilities, and efforts to increase the number of federal employees with disabilities, it's clear that the prospects for prospective workers with disabilities are improving. And with increased opportunities, groups that serve these employees will need to rethink the kinds of support systems that are required. Prospective employers will need to learn the benefits of having employees with disabilities and how simply accommodations for disability can be made. CMRA will continue to follow the changes in services and employment issues for people with disabilities, and expect to incorporate these changes into our employment model.

CMRA

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