

*Employment  
Opportunities  
for Tennesseans  
with Disabilities*



**2016  
ANNUAL REPORT**





## 25 YEARS...

### **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 2016 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. Through this program, there are at any given time over 300 people with disabilities employed statewide, providing products and essential services to state and local governments. In turn, these employees benefit through increased independence, involvement within their communities, and reduced need for financial and personal supports.

Since 1991, the state of Tennessee, and CMRA, as the designated central non-profit agency (CNA) selected to administer the 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 contract proposals submitted by CMRA to ensure that government purchasers receive products and services that are highly competitive in quality, availability, and price. With the cooperation of various non-profit rehabilitation community organizations, select for-profit industries, and advocacy groups across the state, Tennesseans with disabilities have long played an integral role in the effective function of state and local government as a result of their meaningful employment contributions.

Employees with disabilities, support staff and programs, state purchasers, and Tennessee taxpayers all ultimately benefit from the opportunities that this program provides. Having so many dedicated, enthusiastic workers meaningfully engaged with local business and community groups, developing self-sufficiency, and providing reliable, competitive goods and services to local and state government has shown consistently positive results.

As always, it has been an honor to work with the committee and all other involved groups to fulfill such a positive, productive mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob G. Rosenbaum".

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

## **The Committee**

The State of Tennessee Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Disabled is comprised of eight members: five from state departments, designated by their commissioners, and three appointed by the governor to represent the business and disability-services communities. This cross-departmental approach ensures that the interests of all parties in the employment and procurement processes are represented, and that program operations work smoothly. As an advisory group, the committee focuses on the quality and positive benefits of the employment program, advises on contracting processes and issues, and provides valuable input regarding ways to promote and support employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.

### **The Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Disabled**

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

REPRESENTING WORK CENTERS THAT SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Michael Barbour

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF INTELLECTUAL  
AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

John Bissell

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Bob Currie

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Paula Knisley

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Betsy Loveday

REPRESENTING WORK CENTERS SERVING PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Conya Mull

REPRESENTING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Martha Nichols

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

## Tennesseans at Work

During fiscal year 2015-16, a total of 484 people with disabilities provided 297,597 hours of direct labor towards fulfilling certified contracts, and an additional nine people with disabilities contributed in supervisory roles. Over the course of a year, 493 Tennesseans with disabilities found employment on CMRA contracts!

## Employment In the Community

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 in their communities. 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 makes it a priority to work with business partners to integrate all contracts as much as possible, 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.

## About CMRA

CMRA, or Community Rehabilitation Agencies of Tennessee, is the 501(c)3 nonprofit agency designated as the Central Nonprofit Agency (CNA) managing program operations, according to the program's statute. CMRA's staff of five works with both community provider agencies and business vendors to provide products and services to government purchasers, while ensuring that at least 51% of the direct labor hours for all products and services is provided by employees with disabilities. CMRA staff members seek 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 and operational resources to both partners and

customers, and mediates any questions or differences between business partners and customers. As employment-related 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.

### **How it Works**

CMRA saw \$10,082,136.10 in total sales during fiscal year 2015-16, an increase of approximately \$398,000 over the previous fiscal year. 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 to the Central Procurement Office before the contract is finalized. This can take a bit longer than a conventional bid process, but it ensures that local and state government purchases will be competitively priced, and that all costs are properly documented, which benefits everyone involved, including employees, purchasers, and ultimately, Tennessee taxpayers.

### **CMRA Board of Directors**

Evelyn Robertson Jr., *Chair*  
Rep. Johnny Shaw, *Vice Chair*  
Jennifer Krahenbill, *Secretary*  
Tonya Copeland, *Treasurer*  
Tiffany Hall, M.D.  
Parke Pepper

### **CMRA Staff**

Robin Atwood, *Executive Director*  
Amanda Dean, *Finance Director*  
Kevin Scarborough, *Contracts Manager*  
Laura Kinard, *Projects Manager*  
Tara Lawson, *Operations Manager*

### **CMRA Legal Counsel**

William B. Hubbard



## **EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

**Preston Vienneau**

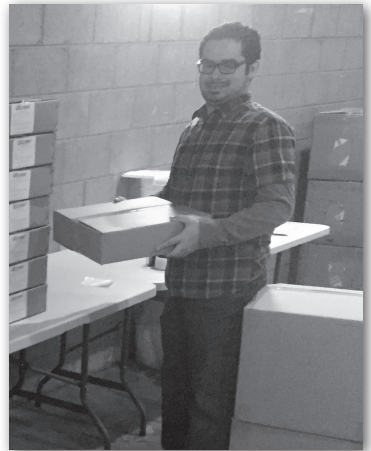
*Woodard Brothers Distributing*

As Woodard Brothers began implementing a certified CMRA contract to package and distribute drug-testing kits for state agencies in 2015, their very first hire was Preston Vienneau. Managing partner Tom Woodard was confident that Preston was able to do excellent work, but wasn't sure how Preston would react to the Woodard Brothers work environment. Before long, however, he had not only mastered his own job but was teaching new hires how to fill the orders properly. Tom describes Preston as "a great teacher to the other staff," and as the "cornerstone and inspiration" of their operation.

Woodard describes Preston's influence on other employees as overwhelmingly positive, saying "What's been really cool is that Preston has helped other employees with focus, and in a way, gratitude. It's a great thing for everybody."

Not only does Preston work on the contract for drug testing kits, but he has developed different interests and talents through other work-related projects. A Salvation Army campaign helped identify his interest in photography, so now Preston has his own camera and is working on his technique.

Over the past year or so, Preston has not only become a mentor to coworkers, but he has moved into an apartment with a roommate and loves attending sports events and concerts. In fact, the distribution center has a poster of Bob Dylan, one of Preston's favorite artists, on display. Woodard says "he's just a really sweet guy." Working with a committed, supportive employer has clearly been great for Preston, not just in terms of financial independence, but as an individual and a member of his community, and we're proud to recognize him as CMRA's 2016 Employee of the Year!



## **Agency and Business Partners**

Aleve - *Gretna, Louisiana*  
Dawn of Hope - *Johnson City*  
Easter Seals of Tennessee  
Evergreen Life Services - *Tennessee*  
Goodwill Industries-Knoxville, Inc.  
Hilltoppers - *Crossville*  
Impact Centers - *Columbia*  
Independent Opportunities, Inc. - *Jamestown*  
JLL - *Global*  
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*  
Taylor Communications - *Murfreesboro*  
U.S. Diagnostics - *Huntsville, Alabama*  
Woodard Brothers Distributing - *Nashville*

## **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





## COMMODITIES

*This year, **183,600 drug-testing kits** were prepared and shipped out for government employees to administer in offices and out in the field. Staff working at Goodwill Industries-Knoxville, Inc. packaged and shipped over **1,000 cases** of feminine hygiene products, as well as over **3,800 cases** of incontinent products such as briefs, pads, and wipes.*

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## RENEWABLE RESOURCES

*Through a partnership with Liquid Environmental Solutions, CMRA has two employees working on a contract for cleaning commercial kitchen grease traps at state and local facilities. During fiscal year 2015-16, over **three-quarters of a million gallons** of waste were removed from traps at 44 schools, park lodges, and correctional facilities across the state.*

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## TRUE STORY

***Terry Stanley** is employed through Evergreen Life Services at TDOT Region 2 in Chattanooga. Dr. Luke Queen of Evergreen recalls that on his first day as support professional at the age of 21, he was assigned to care for Mr. Stanley in a group home environment, which he describes as a “powerful memory” and says that this photo “took my breath away.”*



## **Looking Ahead**

The field of disability services is constantly changing, and in recent years increased focus on employment, independent living, and community involvement has been reflected in funding and supports at all levels. People with disabilities are increasingly being recognized as valuable employees by both public and private employers and technology is helping employers make low-cost, simple accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

In a competitive workforce, it only makes sense to encourage and develop opportunities for talented, dedicated employees, and CMRA is committed to working with community provider agencies, employers, and prospective employees to ensure that Tennessee stays at the forefront of states seeking to make the most of our citizens' talents!

### **CMRA**

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**Nashville, TN 37210**

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*Employment Opportunities*