



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK....

Hello PRA Members,

Happy Summer to you all! I hope it is full of fun and spent with friends and family enjoying our beautiful state. Recently, I took a bike ride alongside the beautiful Lehigh River in Northeast PA, and the scenery was simply breath taking! As I watched the river flowing by, I was reminded of how much things change while simultaneously remaining the same. I often think those of us working and advocating for individuals with disabilities have seen so much change, so much has improved, and yet there is still so much to accomplish.

One way PRA works to meet our goals is to provide our annual Professional Development Institute. This year, it was titled, "Maximizing Opportunities: A Bridge to the Future". The evaluations confirmed that it was a tremendous success! The day started with a fascinating morning keynote by Dr. Allen Lewis from University of Pittsburgh and then included a myriad of terrific concurrent sessions and an update on the OVR state/federal program by Stephen Surovec, Executive Director of OVR. Additionally, for the 5th year in a row, we included student posters that received a great response. Thank you to everyone involved in the planning process and to all participants who ultimately are the ones who made the day a success! The 2014 PDI planning team is already off to a great start and we are always open to ideas, suggestions! If you are interested in helping, please contact us.

The PRA Board of Directors is a dynamic group! We meet four times a year in person, but our committees are working via phone and email all year long. In addition to planning next year's PDI, we are currently working to update our website and become active with a variety of social media tools. We are hoping to have our website redesigned by the end of the calendar year to make it more user friendly and current! We also are working actively to engage more employers in PRA, increase our young professional membership (which includes students), and are in the process of reviewing our By-laws. That is just a sampling of our work – and it does not even touch upon a cornerstone of PRA/NRA, which is advocacy. We make every attempt to keep our membership up to date on all state and federal legislative activity that relates to the lives of individuals with disabilities.

There are a number of openings for our Board of Directors and we need your energy, enthusiasm and expertise. All PRA members are welcome to attend our board meetings; the next one will be held September 13, 2013, in Camp Hill, PA. If you have an interest in attending or would like to run for the board, please contact me; the next election cycle is this November and ballots go out in the October newsletter. I know everyone is busy, so if you would like to participate more in PRA, but cannot commit to a board position, we still need your input! Call me at (570) 941-7819, or e-mail us at info@parehab.org with your questions, ideas, thoughts or concerns.

Finally, I hope that you are already registered for NRA's Annual Training Conference to be held in nearby New York City in August. I will be there representing PRA and I hope you will be too!

Sincerely,

Rebecca Spirito Dalgin

SAVE THE DATE!



2014 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

April 3, 2014

Location...

Central Pennsylvania College
College Hill & Valley Roads
Summerdale, PA 17093

<http://www.centralpenn.edu>

*If you'd like to volunteer to participate
on a great planning team for the 2014 PDI,
please contact Sue Soderberg,
ssoderberg@yourgoodwill.org.*

PRA Award Nominations Requested

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association (PRA) would like to encourage you to recognize an employee, boss, co-worker, organization or individual that you feel is doing an outstanding job in the field of rehabilitation. Please read over the PRA Award categories included in this letter. If you would like to submit a nomination, please complete the nomination form on page 6 and send it along with supporting documentation to:

Bonnie Bluett, PRA Awards Chairperson
49 Park Street
Seven Valleys, PA 17360

If you prefer to use the electronic version of the PRA Awards Nomination form, please go to the PRA website at www.parehab.org and click on the Awards link. You may also email award nominations to bonniebluett@yahoo.com. The deadline for our 2013 PRA Award nominations is November 1, 2013.

Please see the enclosed summaries of our award winners from 2012. It is inspiring to see the names of so many dedicated rehabilitation professionals and we encourage you to recognize some additional candidates! If you have any questions, please call Bonnie Bluett at 717-515-4995.

Thanks for your nominations and input,

Bonnie Bluett, PRA Awards Chairperson

2012 PRA AWARD RECIPIENTS

Charles L. Eby Administration Award: Ryan Hyde

Ryan Hyde was nominated for PRA's Charles L. Eby Administration Award by Denise Verchimak, Director of the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS) for PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). Last year when OVR's Central Office experienced significant turmoil in the fiscal and contracts/grants area, Denise stated that "Ryan stepped in and agreed to take over the supervision of a division that needed great intervention to turn the agency around and move in a positive direction. He did this without hesitation, because it simply needed to be done to benefit the agency. This is the kind of person he is... he is truly deserving of the Charles L. Eby Administration award to congratulate him on having such a positive impact on the field of rehabilitation."

Charles L. Eby Counselor Award for Independence: Ling-Mei "Chris" Tsai

Ling-Mei "Chris" Tsai was nominated for the Charles L. Eby Counseling Award for Independence by Mariann Houseweart, a supervisor in the Williamsport OVR office. During the past 19 years, Chris has been a vocational rehabilitation counselor serving individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities in the Williamsport area. Prior to her move to this country, Chris was an advocate for people with disabilities in Taiwan and continued her advocacy after completing her Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at Penn State University.

2012 PRA Award Recipients (Continued)

Charles L. Eby Counselor Award for Placement: Jennifer Radick

Jennifer Radick was nominated for the Charles L. Eby Award for Placement by Sue Soderberg, Senior Vice President of Workforce Development for Goodwill Keystone Area. Sue reports that Jennifer has had a passion for vocational rehabilitation since she earned her BS in Rehabilitation Services Education at Penn State University in 1995. Allison Croft Bernheimer, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, supports Jennifer's outstanding placement efforts by stating that "she is innovative, goes above and beyond to serve her clients as well as her Veteran's clients. She is extremely passionate about working with persons with disabilities."

Mary E. Switzer Award: Patricia Lapotsky

Patricia "Trish" Lapotsky was nominated for the Mary E. Switzer Award by her supervisor, Theresa Blackwell, and her fiscal assistant, Moria Dunkelberger. Trish began her professional career with OVR in March 1993, in the Allentown District Office and then transferred to the Reading District Office in July 1993, where she worked as an OVR counselor for the city of Pottsville for the next 17 years. Theresa and Moria reported that Trish developed some new liaison points throughout several communities to bring VR services to the Pottsville rural area, and the most unique of these was a field location within a PA State Legislator's office. This relationship led to in-roads, i.e., gave-a "voice" to people with disabilities who were becoming advocates for themselves and acknowledged the good work that vocational rehabilitation does in the community.

Theresa and Moria also reported that Trish has been a member of the PA Rehabilitation Association Board from January 2009-December 2011. She also worked on the Governmental Affairs Committee under the direction of Dr. Ralph Pacinelli and has done extensive outreach to legislators.

Ralph N. Pacinelli Leadership Award: Dr. Joan E. Kester

Dr. Joan E. Kester was nominated for the Ralph N. Pacinelli Leadership Award by Carl Marshall of the PRA Board. Carl described Dr. Kester's three decades of extraordinary experience in vocational rehabilitation as a direct service provider, supervisor and administrator with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. More recently, Carl related that Dr. Kester has distinguished herself as a leading educator and trainer for the Mid-Atlantic Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) headquartered at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. Dr. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz of George Washington University supported this assertion by stating that Dr. Kester is a "nationally recognized expert in the areas of transition and autism and speaks throughout the country." Prior to being a professor at George Washington University, Dr. Kester was a rehabilitation specialist for PA OVR and was instrumental in creating the Pennsylvania Statewide Transition Conference.

Carl also related Dr. Kester's contribution to PRA, since he stated "she has held every responsible position in PRA that is there begging for time, attention and unselfish dedication, including the job as President."

Here's a description of all of our award categories

KENNETH W. HYLBERT AWARD

Presented to an individual PRA member for significant contributions in the professional preparation and up-grading of rehabilitation manpower.

PRA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD – (AFFIRMATIVE ACTION)

Presented to an individual or organization in recognition of achievements in advancing equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

CHARLES L. EBY AWARDS

- A. **Administration** – Established to honor an individual who has shown unusual initiative and creativity in the development and administration of a program of demonstrated value for persons with disabilities. Sustained PRA membership is a requirement.
- B. **Counseling** – To honor a counselor who shows a special approach to assist persons with severe disabilities to gain independence.
- C. **Counseling** – To honor a counselor who has demonstrated the ability to match potential with job performance and has a consistent record in placement of persons with disabilities.

PRA ORGANIZATION AWARD

Presented to an organization with an outstanding record of sustained service to individuals with disabilities. The organization may be one whose principal objectives are in the rehabilitation field, or one that regardless of its major objectives, has demonstrated effective concern for the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities.

LLOYD O. GROVE MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Presented to an individual who has demonstrated years of faithful service and leadership to the PRA through any segment or combination of segments of PRA activities. Emphasis is placed on both the length of service and the levels of service.

THE PRA PHILADELPHIA FOUNDERS AWARD

Presented to an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding community leadership role by supporting activities that have a far-reaching impact and that have made a contribution toward the rehabilitation of a considerable number of citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

CECELIA E. JACOBS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Presented to a distinguished PRA member with a disability who has demonstrated imagination, tenacity, resolution, and an indomitable spirit in working to overcome obstacles and has contributed to the goals established by PRA.

MARY E. SWITZER AWARD

Presented to a Pennsylvania woman who has distinguished herself in the field of rehabilitation, has made significant contributions to that field of endeavor, and who is an active member of PRA.

MARK M. WALTER HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Presented to an individual who has exercised notable leadership in removing either environmental or legal barriers thereby overcoming discrimination that prevents individuals with disabilities from living normal lives and/or who has contributed to the attainment of independence of people with disabilities by significantly supporting the growth of rehabilitation services throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

RALPH N. PACINELLI LEADERSHIP AWARD

Presented to a Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association member who has exercised extraordinary national and/or state leadership to rehabilitation professionals in order to strengthen, broaden, and hone their professional development. These enlightened characteristics should serve to substantially impact the public/private vocational rehabilitation program, assist PRA in achieving its mission, and make a positive contribution to the lives of individuals with disabilities.

PENNSYLVANIA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION NOMINATION FORM

I. _____
(Name of Nominee)

(Street Address of Nominee)

(City) (State) (Zip Code) (Telephone Number) (Email)

II. The person/organization named above is being nominated for the _____ Award.

The nominee is () is not () a PRA member.

III. On a separate sheet, in narrative form, give professional background of nominee and state in detail why this individual or organization should receive the award. Your statement may be as long as you wish, but judging will rely more on content than length. Explanatory or corroboration statements from others may be added. Statements should be specific regarding nature, scope and importance of the contributions made by the nominee to the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities or their well being. All statements must be signed.

IV. _____
(Name of Nominator)

(Street Address of Nominator)

(City) (State) (Zip Code) (Telephone Number) (Email)

(Date Nomination Submitted)

Winners can be nominated for appropriate Mid-Atlantic or National Awards.

Award nominations should be submitted by: **NOVEMBER 1.**

To: **Bonnie Bluett, Chairperson**
PRA Awards
49 Park St.
Seven Valleys, PA 17360
717-515-4995
or you can email Bonnie at
bonniebluett@yahoo.com

Reauthorization. In our last report, we stated that action is expected on WIA (including the Rehabilitation Act) reauthorization this summer and certainly by early fall. The Obama administration wants a manpower bill to strengthen the economy and Senator Tom Harkin, D.IA, would like to finish his work in the Senate with WIA reauthorized before his 2014 retirement after more than three decades of distinguished service on disability legislation and rehabilitation policy. Since our last report, the House passed H.R. 803, by a vote of 215-202, setting the stage for Senate action and full reauthorization. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), chaired by Senator Harkin, shared a draft WIA bill for review and comment and scheduled a public hearing on the Senate bill on June 20, 2013. The hearing was titled, Developing a Skilled Workforce for a Competitive Economy: Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act. Four invited witnesses were heard. The State VR director of Iowa, David Mitchell, testified for the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), the state-federal program of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Rehabilitation Act.

Both House and Senate bills contain all of the weaknesses that have driven NRA review and comment over the past several years. Further illumination and understanding of these issues can be garnered by reviewing the NRA issue statements easily accessed on the NRA website, www.nationalrehab.org. For ready reference the titles of these papers follow: 1) Keep RSA in the U.S. Department of Education, 2) Common Performance Measures, 3) Maintain the 18 Months Legislative Language Currently in Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, 4) Governor's Waiver Authority, 5) Qualified Rehabilitation Professional, 6) Maintain In-Service Training in Title III of the Rehabilitation Act, 7) Infrastructure Funding for the One-Stop Centers, 8) Placing the State VR Directors on the State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, 9) Transition, 10) Downgrading of the Office of the Commissioner of the RSA, 11) Maintaining Mandatory Funding for Title I, 12) VR and Business—Partners in Employment, 13) The Community Choice Act, 14) Specialized Services for Blind Individuals, 15) American Indian VR Services Program, 16) Maintain Separate Funding for Supported Employment, Projects with Industry, and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, 17) CORE/CACREP Consolidation, and 18) Mental Health.

W. Alfred McCauley. A great national rehabilitation leader passed away at 98 in Williamsport, PA, in April 2013. Al McCauley started his career as a rehabilitation counselor in West Virginia. At the request of his state VR director, he wrote and won a grant for the master's Rehabilitation Counseling program at West Virginia University and was its first director. Later, he served in the Federal Region III RSA office located in Charlottesville, VA. He completed his career in rehabilitation as the first fulltime executive director of the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association (NRCA), a division of NRA. One of his principal works was the printed proceedings of a national think tank summit that brought together the best and brightest educators, researchers, clinicians and administrators to develop the blueprint for the future of Rehabilitation Education, Services and Research. Al was the perfect gentleman, scholar, humanitarian and all-around great guy.

RSA Commissioner Remains Unconfirmed. President Obama nominated Dr. Janet LaBreck as the Commissioner of the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. The position has been vacant for two years when unexpectedly The Honorable Lynnae Rutledge resigned. Currently, Dr. LaBreck is Commissioner of the Commission for the Blind in Massachusetts. Dr. LaBreck's nomination requires full Senate confirmation.

PRA Legislative Mantra. Never forget that informed, targeted and timely advocacy is imperative to maintain the integrity of the public VR program. If we don't do it, who will?

Pennsylvania Rehab. Association
1150 Goodwill Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17101

www.nationalrehab.org/pennsylvania

PRA Newsletter Disclaimer

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities, publishes the newsletter as a free membership service. Through the newsletter, PRA makes reasonable effort to provide quality information to its readers, but does not assume legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the material disclosed. The information is provided “as is” and not intended as legal or professional advice. Therefore, the original source or a competent professional should be consulted regarding specific circumstances. Unless otherwise noted, the expressed views and opinions of the writers do not necessarily represent those of PRA and reference to a product or service does not necessarily imply endorsement by PRA. You may visit our website at <http://www.nationalrehab.org/pennsylvania>



Upon request, this newsletter is available in alternate format.

CONTACT -
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ssoderberg@yourgoodwill.org