



RVR, Ink

April-May 2003

A newsletter for employees and friends of River Valley Resources

From Don...

By Don Richardson, RVR President



While things remain somewhat tumultuous within and around the organization, the overall picture is, little by little, looking up. Of special note: While we are not on the verge of re-instating diminished administrative wages, full pension options and other concessions we recently made to reality, neither do we anticipate any radical additional adjustments in the immediate or foreseeable future.

And, life does go on. As many of you know, **Helen Johnson** is planning to "retire" at the end of this program year and go on a much deserved road trip with her husband Bobby through the western and northwestern states....visiting some family and generally casino-hopping. **Gina Meyer** will be assuming Helen's role as Vice President/Director of Operations, joining myself, **Margo** and **Connie Ahlers** as the "Executive Team"--- you know, the people you blame when things don't go the way you wish they had.

Mike Hedden, with whom we have worked for many years as Regional Manager of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, has been bumped "upstairs" to become the statewide Director. **Kevin Blevins** has assumed Mike's regional VR role. **Richard Rampley**, an old and valued friend, is now Acting Program Director for all things DWD-related and we welcome him in that position. Mike, Kevin and Richard are all very competent and very valued collaborators.

Internally, Connie Ahlers (and Co.) has scored a contract to provide WIA monitoring oversight for the Indianapolis PIC/WIB. Following up on **Lori Henry's** "discovery" of the potential grant, Gina Meyer (and Co.) has scored a Fathers and Family contract in Fayette County. **Terri-Ann Blanton** has scored a Homemaker and Teen Parenting grant from the Decatur County Office of Family & Children. **Peggy Hans** and **Carolyn Bunzendahl** are off to Ohio to provide yet another workshop on our mentoring model and a group of us are heading to Chicago to make several presentations to Region V states concerning our "Best Practices" WtW program.

Of special note, I want to congratulate **Connie Brewer** and **Teresa Cantu** for their exceptional work on the Indianapolis contract to place Non-Custodial Parents. Those guys earned every cent of available money on a contract that was as challenging as any we have ever administered. I couldn't be prouder of them!

I also want to thank each of you who are embracing RVR's

program of vocational rehabilitation services. I know it is challenging work, success coming in tiny increments in many cases.....but each month since we began the project, our earnings have crept up. I am confident that within a year, the revenue from this effort will translate into a much stronger RVR and improved services for persons with disabilities in the communities we serve.

Another promising initiative we are involved in is the pursuit of a federal "earmark" set-aside attached to any of several pieces of proposed legislation involving welfare reform and responsible parenthood. Margo, Peggy, Gina, myself and others have met with several groups of state legislators, IPIC, and others to form an Indiana Team of advocates for that earmarked funding. RVR would serve as the grant recipient and program coordinator.

The initial program would be a demonstration focused on limited communities with an option for the program to go statewide. We are essentially proposing to administer a modified version of our already proven alliance with the courts and prosecutors to strengthen families. The modifications would include increased emphasis on the children and the custodial parents. Our presentations have been very well received by state and federal legislators.

Our next step is to approach (with state legislators) appropriate State department heads (DWD, FSSA etc.). That meeting is tentatively scheduled for the second week in May. We will also make a presentation on this proposal to a statewide convention of Indiana Child Support Alliance administrators, most of whom represent the courts around Indiana. We have already met with the Executive Board of this group and they were also receptive to the proposal.

A few more notes of special interest: We recently received the conclusions of our most recent audit and monitoring reports, both citing **NO FINDINGS**. Connie Ahlers and her staff deserve praise for their work (Connie went to the mat on a number of potential issues) regarding the audit. **Bobbie** and **Bob**, **Helen** and **Gina** (and **all of you**) deserve praise for the monitoring outcomes. Our collective performance on accountability for the past 20-plus years never ceases to simply amaze me. These kinds of outcomes (non-findings) don't happen by chance and, for many similar organizations, they are the exception. We are remarkable.

And finally (but not least), we are about to bid for another round of IMPACT contracts. I express my appreciation to all of you who have worked with those participants, with some special emphasis to **Shelly Shirley** (and again, Teresa Cantu) and **Karen McKinley**, who are in a position to bill out nearly 100% of their contracts in Bartholomew and Decatur counties and to others, I'll use **Roberta Burnette** as an example, who have simply endeared themselves (and our organization and our services) to their communities.

All of that and it is a simply beautiful day here in southern Indiana.

SUCCESS!

By Carolyn Bunzendahl
Fayette County RVR

People who are working hard to improve their situations are the ones who also keep **Deb Howard** and I working hard and loving our jobs. One such individual is **Jack**. Jack was referred to us by the local child support office. Although he was not too far behind on his support, he had recently lost his job and had gone there to tell them about it. They told him we might be able to help.

Jack was definitely motivated to work, and after his enrollment in the WtW program, we began job development activities. Meantime, Jack was working from his garage doing car detailing in order to pay the rent and other bills. Jack's driver's license had been suspended due to driving with no insurance, so job possibilities were limited.

In searching old CS3 job orders, I found one, already closed, for a warehouse worker for DNA Water. On the off chance that they still needed someone, I called the manager about Jack. Yes, they were interested in him, as the person they previously hired had not worked out. Jack interviewed the next day, and went to work the next week.

He has now (in January) been there 2 months, and according to his employer,

"has been a very pleasant employee to have." They would like him to be able to also do salt delivery and therefore receive a pay raise.

Jack is working hard to get his license reinstated. He came in to our office to take the Defensive Driver Home Study Video Course and passed the tests the very same day! He is now saving toward fees needed for insurance and part of his reinstatement fees. Hopefully, the WtW program will be able to help out with part of it.

Jack has proven himself to be a hard worker who sets goals and follows through. We are proud to have him as part of the Fayette County caseload.

Update: This story was actually written in January, and since then, Jack's success has continued. He did save enough money to pay for half of his reinstatement fees and to buy the required insurance. The program paid the other half, and he is now "on the road" again! He has changed jobs (since he now has a license and can drive out of town) and is working at Steel Works as a Warehouse Worker. He is making a better wage with benefits after 90 days!

University of Indianapolis honors Daryl Caldwell

RVR's **Daryl Caldwell** is being honored with the University of Indianapolis Distinguished Young Alumni Award.



This award recognizes alumni 35 and younger who have gone "above and beyond" within their professional and volunteer life.

Daryl, who is RVR's Business and Community Services Director and also works with many of our clients with disabilities, has a full plate once he leaves the office. He is President of the Ripley County Red Cross and President of Safe Passage, the domestic violence assistance group that serves Ripley, Ohio, Franklin, Dearborn and Switzerland counties.

He is the past chair of the Step Ahead Council and has coached youth football in Batesville. He is also involved with the Batesville Kiwanis and Relay for Life.

Daryl's selection for this award is also based on his professional responsibilities helping individuals find employment and bettering their lives.

The award will be presented to Daryl on May 30 during Alumni Weekend at the university.

phone calls, and have said they will do anything to see that this program continues. This is a tribute to the NCP staff and management who have made it work so well.

Even the 5-year-old daughter of an Indy Parent program participant had something to say for the record: "I like my daddy coming here because they help him get a job, so he won't go to jail."

As this newsletter goes out to you, an application for a grant from the Tiger Woods Foundation is literally winging its way to California. The name of this particular NCP project? "**PAR Three!**" - **Parents Assume Responsibility Through Healthy Relationships, Employment, and Education!**

All-out NCP effort underway

As **Don** mentioned in his column on the first page of this RVR, Ink, we've been working hard to find funding to continue, re-establish, or implement for the first time the very successful Non-Custodial Parent Program.

We've developed a colorful packet of information about Indy Parent, Hoosier Parent, and CHAMPPS, along with fact sheets about each program. Audiences have included State Senators and Representatives, the Board of Directors of the Indiana Child Support Alliance, local County Commissioners and County Councils, and more. We have a slide show (PowerPoint) that describes the program and is the starting point for discussions about funding options.

State legislators, led by **Senator Bob Jackman** of Rush County, and Repre-

sentatives **Bob Hoffman** (Fayette), **Cleo Duncan** (Decatur), and **Terry Goodin** (Jackson) have been writing letters to our U.S. Senators Bayh and Lugar and to Congressmen Baron Hill and Mike Pence and Congresswoman Julia Carson requesting earmark funding from the federal level.

Senator Jackman is also setting up a meeting for RVR staff, state legislators, and the Commissioners of FSSA and DWD to explore ways to tap into federal money coming to these state agencies.

The support from local judges, prosecutors, and child support enforcement staff has been phenomenal. They all want to see the program in their counties. They've written letters, made

Developing resources

By Gary Behnke

Grants and Contract Management

The Grants and Contract Management Department is presently working on a Regional Skills Alliance grant in partnership with five hospitals within the Southeastern Indiana WSA. If approved, the \$200,000 grant will enable the training of 38 lower level hospital workers to become registered nurses.

A recent application to provide monitoring services for WIA operations of the Indianapolis Private Industry Council has been approved. The contract award ensures that **Connie Ahlers**, **Gina Meyer**, and **Bobbie Bryant** will be very busy over the next two months conducting this extensive monitoring effort.

We received word this week that RVR has been awarded a Fathers and Families grant to provide CHAMPPS services in Fayette County.

Another major activity underway is in the area of next year's IMPACT contracts. Several field, fiscal, and grant management staff will be involved in this effort, through which we will be applying for IMPACT contracts in approximately 19 counties, with applications due at the end of May.

Finally, we have become aware of two major funding opportunities that are to be announced soon by the Department of Health and Human Services. One of these is an application for a program called Job Opportunities for Low Income Individuals, under which we will be applying for a project to train women in non-traditional careers.

The second HHS opportunity to be announced in the near future is the Compassion Capital Fund. This grant opportunity will be seeking "intermediary organizations with demonstrated expertise in working with and providing technical assistance to faith-based and community organizations in a variety of areas." We are presently considering applying for a grant under this program as well, depending upon specific requirements included in the RFP, and whether or not there is a good match with RVR's mission.

Let's give a big RVR welcome to **Bethany Mishell Dashzeveg**, born April 13 at King's Daughters' Hospital in Madison. She was 8 lb., 6 oz and 21 1/2 inches long at birth. Dad **Batbold (Rusty)** and Mom **Suzanne** brought Bethany in to visit with the Admin staff at the ripe old age of 1 1/2 weeks! Congratulations to the new parents!



The newest member of the RVR extended family

Dislocated Worker news

By Ed Miller
DW/Rapid Response Unit

Many of you know that K-Mart announced the closing of 323 stores nationwide. The idea is for K-Mart to get itself out of bankruptcy by later this year. Our area has lost the K-Mart in Greensburg which employed 60 people.

We are in the process of getting together with management staff and the affected employees as this is being written (earlier this year). When Rapid Response is necessary, WorkOne, Unemployment Insurance, River Valley Resources, the State Workforce Transition Unit and any other community resources are brought together to assist those being laid off.

K-Mart has done a number of things nationally to assist the over 34,000 workers who will lose or have already lost their jobs. However, we all know that the

local people with WorkOne, UI and RVR are the ones who will be there to help get the local workers through the hard times.

Dana in Richmond has filed another WARN. This WARN basically states that the Dana machining plant will be closing most of its operation by June 2003. Dana has filed TAA petitions for the machining plant and for the foundry, which is next door. The foundry has announced that it will close by mid-2004. The foundry has laid off personnel the past few months and it looks like it will continue to do so for the next year.

All agencies are continuing to work with Dana's two Richmond plants to ensure that all workers who need help will receive it during this transition.

Read a good book lately?

Ok, all you RVR bookworms. I know you're out there. What have you been reading lately?

We've been asked to have a little space in this rag where you can share some of your good reads. Books on tape count, too. I saw a Recorded Book of Clyde Edgerton's *Walking Through Egypt* in **Carolyn Bunz's** car the other day. She said it was hilarious and that "reading" this one by listening was actually work-

ing out better for her, because there was so much detail that she probably wouldn't have had time to plow through it on the printed page.

Karen McKinley has some recommendations to share from the Decatur County staff next time. Why don't the rest of you send along something, too? Summer's almost here.



Training tidbits...

By Carolyn Bunzendahl
Director of Staff Development and Training

Connie Brewer and Carolyn Bunzendahl recently spent six days (3 in February and 3 in March) in training at the Crossroads Rehabilitation Center in Indianapolis. The training was delivered by the Indiana Supported Employment Training Team with support of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.

After learning about such topics as Person Centered Career Planning, Job Development, Assistive Technology, Off-Job Site Support and Ongoing Support, Connie and Carolyn spent many hours at their desks completing the exit tests. Once those tests are reviewed and “approved” (meaning they answered all the questions right!), they will receive certification as Employment Specialists. Connie and Carolyn both state that even though the training was long and the tests grueling, they are both appreciative of this newly-acquired knowledge and are anxious to pass it on to the rest of the staff.

VR Services

The first installment of VR Services training was delivered March 31. Those in attendance were (in no particular order): **Deb Howard, Susan Logan, Bev Smith, Carla Harsin, Jennie Miles, Leslie Sharer, John Taylor, Julie Himes, Terri Ann Blanton, Daryl Caldwell, Shelly Shirley, Teresa Cantu, Elaina Freeman, Helen Johnson, Gina Meyer and Carolyn Bunzendahl.** We had a very full day of information, plus had some fun, too. (Have you ever heard a whole room full of people singing “Bring On The Rain”?!)

Our guest speaker for the day was **Sue Hochstetler**, Rehabilitation Counselor for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Sue was an excellent speaker who outlined the specifics of qualifying for VocRehab services. She also told us what criteria need to be followed when she purchases goods and services for the consumers. Sue has provided us with a resource directory for interpreter services in our area. Copies of this di-

rectory will be handed out to all at our next meeting.

We were able to cover some of the basics of this new program on the 31st and will meet again April 28 to continue. VR Services is a program that continues to evolve as we learn more about the customers we are serving and additional resources that we need. There will be further training and staff meetings scheduled in the future to address all these needs.

CTA Training

Lori Henry, Bev Smith, and Gina Meyer attended the April 15 CTA (Certificate of Technical Achievement) training in Indianapolis at the Eastside WorkOne Center. The training was sponsored by the Department of Workforce Development. The challenge now is to implement the development of CTAs in the Workforce Service Area (and across the state). One positive result of this implementation could be an increase in youth and adult credential rates.

Mentor Training

On a different note, RVR has been on the “provider” end of some recent training engagements. **Peggy Hans and Terri-Ann Blanton** delivered two “Mentoring 101” workshops at the 2003 Building Better Opportunities for Ohio’s Youth conference in Columbus, OH in mid-March.

In early April, **Carolyn and Peggy** trained the first batch of mentors for the Wood County Educational Services Center in Bowling, Green, OH. What an enthusiastic bunch of staff and mentors who participated in the evening training session!

Both of the above “gigs” came about because some of the Wood County staff and Ohio state youth staff had attended the Mentoring 101 session that Carolyn, Peggy, and Terri-Ann conducted last October at the DOL Region V Youth Conference in Chicago.

Things have a way of building....as a result of the Columbus presentation, RVR was contacted about helping a 3-county youth service provider in Wapakoneta, OH get its mentoring program rolling and also training the first group of mentors.

Peggy and Carolyn are scheduled to head up that way next week (April 28-May 1) to do that training.

Peggy has a question: Does anybody know of some service provider in Charleston or Savannah, Honolulu or Aspen or West Palm Beach who needs some mentoring facilitation?

Community Liaison Training

The following people met for training on Feb. 28 - “Funky Friday”:
Dearborn and Ohio: Bev Smith; Decatur: Terri-Ann Blanton; Fayette and Wayne: Carolyn Bunz; Franklin and Union: Bobbi Burnette; Jefferson: Peggy Hans; Ohio: Switzerland: Carla Harsin; Ripley: Daryl Caldwell; Rush: Karen McKinley.

Our purpose that day was to re-invigorate and re-define the role(s) of the community liaisons. After everybody was given a “round tuit,” we got down to work discussing RVR’s overall mission and becoming familiar enough with it to be able to explain it to others.

Peggy did a whizbang PowerPoint presentation giving us the “big picture” about the WIB/RVR relationship. We completed the afternoon by defining our purposes as we work with local agencies, Chambers of Commerce, media, WIB members, potential funders, Local Elected Officials and others.

We plan to have CL meetings at least quarterly and to also add others who are working programs in counties not in the WSA.

Business & Community Svcs

By Daryl Caldwell

The WIB has asked RVR to lead the charge in implementing customized customer service training for business in the Southeast WSA. Currently, negotiations are underway with employers in Dearborn and Fayette counties.

The WIB’s goal is to answer the call of the business survey. Customer ser-

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RVR's voc rehab services help people with disabilities

RVR staff have been working with more people with disabilities as a result of increasing referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.

Under our purchase of service agreement, we have received referrals for service in Dearborn, Decatur, Ripley, Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Washington, Bartholomew, and Marion counties.

Elaina Freeman, who is directing RVR's voc rehab efforts, said, "We anticipate the expansion into additional counties as the good news spreads about our services."

RVR's VR clients are going to work through the efforts of our "employment consultants," our staff who have been designated to work with this program. They include **Carla Harsin, Bev Smith, Jennie Miles, Leslie Sharer, Terri-Ann Blanton, Julie Himes, Carolyn Bunzendahl, Deb Howard, Daryl Caldwell, Susan Logan, Lori Henry, John Tay-**

lor, Shelly Shirley, Connie Brewer, and Teresa Cantu.

* * *

Two members of the RVR team above, Carolyn and Connie, have completed Employment Specialist training and are in the process of receiving certification.

As RVR continues with these efforts, it will become necessary to seek accreditation from the Commission for the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). RVR's CARF task force is working to implement the necessary policies and procedures that are part of this accreditation process.

Case managers increased their awareness of disability-related issues by attending a teleconference about working with people with disabilities. RVR has also conducted its own in-house training, the second session of which takes place April 28. (See *Carolyn Bunzendahl's "Training Tidbits" on page 4*)

RVR invited to present at final WtW Roundtable

By Margo Olson

Vice President/Deputy Executive Director

April 29 is the last Welfare-to-Work Roundtable in Chicago for Competitive Grantees. We have distinguished ourselves among Region V DOL Grantees by being one of only 11 evaluation sites out of 680 grantees. We have also met and exceeded all program goals.

Members of our staff attending this last Roundtable have been asked by Region V officials to make presentations on two agenda items. **Bobbie Bryant**, representing RVR, will be addressing "Data Validation." RVR is also being "highlighted" (DOL's term), along with a grantee from Minnesota, regarding efforts to "Access Other Funding Sources." **Gina Meyer** and **Connie Ahlers** will contribute to the discussion of this topic.

Data Validation

The Data Validation project, which

has consumed approximately five weeks of **Mike's** and **Bobbie's** work lives, stems from an Office of the Inspector General report which assessed the effectiveness of the WtW competitive grant program using a sample of 19 grantees (we were not one of those). The reported data from that sample contained significant errors. Therefore, DOL requested that grantees conduct the data validation audit which has been an arduous task.

Completion of this audit by **Bobbie** and **Mike** distinguishes them from among their colleagues and makes RVR one of only two Region V grantees to have complied with this DOL request. Thanks to their tireless efforts we may be in a good position to provide technical assistance to others. We are very proud of them for accomplishing this extremely difficult and complex task.

Deb Howard in Fayette Leadership program

Deborah Howard was accepted into *Leadership Fayette County*, a program of Whitewater Community Education, and began attending classes in late January. She was awarded a scholarship for tuition by the Step Ahead Council, the second of RVR's Fayette County "family" to receive this award. (**Roberta Burnette** completed this course last year, and is now serving on the Advisory Board of this organization). Deb spent one night a week (for a total of 12 weeks) learning more about the community, how the local government works, and learning about specific leadership skills and methods.

She said: "I'm extremely grateful to the Step Ahead Council for their support in awarding me a scholarship to attend Leadership Fayette County. Being a relatively new resident, I am interested in our county's history as well as what it has to offer its citizens. Leadership Fayette County has provided me with an opportunity to network with those who share a vision for our county to improve the quality of life for all those who live here."

Graduation Day is May 14.

In other Fayette news, the 6th Annual Fayette County Business and Education Forum took place March 13. Deb and Carolyn were on the planning committee for this event. Theme for this year's forum was "It's About Them." Sessions focused on the "them" who benefit from increased communication between business leaders and educators, and a sampling of the new programs that have been initiated since the forums began. These include internships for high school students, Character Education at the Middle School, and "Hippity Hop Pop," a business that 3rd graders have begun—making and selling popcorn! The evening was well-attended - over 125 registrants representing education, business and the community at large. Deb and Carolyn set up new display boards in the exhibit area, and invited folks to "Be a Smartee" - use RVR services — and gave them Smartees candies.

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At RVR how long?

Connie Ahlers	01/01/01
Carla Harsin	01/03/94
Julie Himes	01/05/98
Peggy Hans	01/07/85
Bev Phillips	01/09/98
Teresa Cantu	01/11/00
Rose Pate	01/11/88
Bobbie Bryant	01/15/76
Jim Freiberger	01/22/01
Connie Brewer	02/05/01
John Taylor	02/11/02
Elaina Freeman	02/12/01
Gina Meyer	03/04/86
Bob Smith	04/21/80
Roberta Burnette	05/14/01
Susan Logan	05/28/97
Don Richardson	05/29/75
Beverly Smith	05/25/80

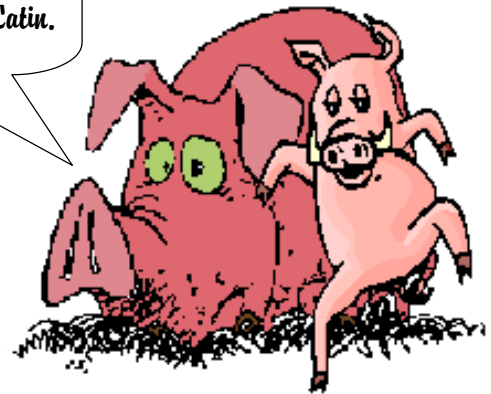
Business & Community Svcs

(Continued from page 4)
vice was listed as a need by 66 percent of organizations polled, making it the greatest need as noted by employers in our survey.

Also, an initiative to energize our Worksights division will be getting underway very soon. I will be contacting RVR "experts" who work in certain fields to assist in promoting and partici-

pating in the RVR fee for service division. The top categories at this point are training, organizational development, pre-employment screening and contract management.

I don't know why Junior is so happy. He has to go to summer school because he failed Pig Latin.



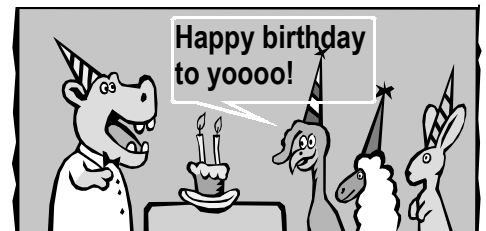
From RHS, the "Toon Man"

What's RVR cookin'

All of you who wolfed down **Carla Harsin's** wonderful Chicken & Biscuits at the all-staff meeting in December in Greensburg will be happy to know that she is sharing the recipe. Happy cooking! Happy Eating!

Carla's Chicken & Biscuits
4 cups cooked chicken
1 container of sour cream
1 can of cream of chicken soup
1 onion (browned)
1 pkg. of cheddar cheese
1 jar of pimentos
Frozen biscuits

Brown onion in large skillet. Add chicken and cook until done. Mix sour cream, cream of chicken soup, and pimentos in large bowl. Add chicken and onions. Put mixture in a 15 x 9 x 13 baking dish. Top with cheddar cheese, then put frozen biscuits on top of the mixture. I used the new ones by Pillsbury that you can bake while they are frozen. Bake at 350 for about 1 hour.



January	
Tammie Smith	26
LaTonya Buchanan	30
Gina Meyer	31
February	
Bobbie Bryant	5
Ed Miller	7
Gail Stockdale	13
Mark Smith	13
Peggy Hans	20
Susan Hood	26
March	
Karen McKinley	9
April	
Batbold Dashzeveg	8
Lori Henry	16
May	
Don Richardson	1
Susan Logan	15
Connie Brewer	17
Cathie Dunigan	19
Bev Phillips	26