A Note from the Executive Director
John Lui Ph.D., MBA, CRC, PVE

As you eagerly await warmer weather and the changing of the season, let me direct your attention to SVRI and the exciting news “springing” up here.

It pleases me to share with you a major development that has occurred pertaining to SVRI’s involvement in piloting the Individualized Placement and Support Model. Johnson & Johnson, the funding resource behind research relating to this model, has declared Western Wisconsin’s four-county consortium (Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire) an official site involved in their project.

I am pleased to have added three new staff members recently. Meghan Donahue-Rehabilitation Engineer, Lyndsey Ebling-Associate Rehabilitation Specialist, and Amber Miller-Graduate Assistant. I look forward to working with these new members of the SVRI team.

April 2012 brought us exciting news; we learned that CARF, the accrediting body for rehabilitation facilities, re-accredited us for another three years.

I hope you enjoy reading about these new developments, and others within the newsletter. There is also news about our new customized evaluations beginning March 2013 and a segment highlighting our staff member, Erika Peterson, on her Seating and Mobility Specialist certification.

Enjoy your New Year and feel free to contact me with any inquiries about SVRI.

John Lui
Exciting news is upon us here at the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute. Johnson & Johnson, the funding resource behind Dartmouth’s Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) for supported employment research, has partnered with SVRI to be the main integrator for piloting the IPS model in the following counties: Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire. This four-county consortium will now be declared an official Johnson & Johnson (J&J) site, making Wisconsin the latest state to have joined in the IPS J&J initiative. Currently there are 13 other states in the U.S. that have implemented the IPS model. The Western Wisconsin region brings uniqueness in that it allows an opportunity to examine the discrepancies that may occur amongst rural areas, as opposed to metro areas. The IPS model is an evidence-based practice that centers on the individual’s talents and aspirations regarding employment, in conjunction with the desire to be included in their community. An employment specialist works one-on-one with the individual, along with a team of mental health and vocational rehabilitation professionals. This team approach is used to identify and support the individual’s personal goals for finding and maintaining employment. In return, allowing them to benefit from the positive effects employment and inclusion in our communities can have on an individual’s overall, well-being. Sally Scheidegger, the IPS Fidelity Assurance Specialist at SVRI, is responsible for assuring training and providing guidance to consortium members. As an evidence-based practice, there are consistencies that must be maintained throughout piloting the program and goals to be reached in the four-county consortiums, to ensure fidelity is met. Fidelity is assessed with a 25-point checklist; the criterion on the checklist are numerically rated to assess each goal. The numerical goal on the fidelity checklist is 100; Chippewa County has already met their fidelity checklist goal, with the other counties well on their way. As part of meeting those goals, Sally Scheidegger incorporates into her training the eight principles of the IPS model. These eight principles are well-defined and are the basis of Dartmouth’s IPS model.

SVRI, pairing with Dartmouth to recently become a J&J site for the IPS model of evidence-based supported employment, means great things not only for SVRI, but for our community, surrounding communities, and most importantly consumers in community support programs. Becoming a J&J site allows for major technical support from the state and Dartmouth College. The Wisconsin Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has been a supporter and advocate of the IPS model of employment and inclusion; their state and local partnerships are significant in the success of IPS. SVRI’s research that accompanies the piloted program will now become part of the greater body of research being conducted by Dartmouth relating to the IPS model. As the program continues, successful employment and anticipated decline in reports of crisis in individuals with severe mental health issues, will potentially gain recognition and increase awareness, allowing SVRI the lead position in guiding other rural communities in the IPS model.

8 PRINCIPLES

Every person who wants to work is eligible
Competitive jobs are the goal
IPS supported employment services are integrated with mental health treatment
Personalized benefits counseling is provided
The job search starts soon after a person expresses interest in working
Employment specialists build relationships with employees
Individualized job supports are time-unlimited
Individual preferences are honored
We would like to welcome and introduce SVRI’S newest arrivals. Congratulations on your bundles of joy!!

**Tyson** 07/31/2012 (Erika Peterson)
“Loves to move and jump. He’s very ‘talkative’ and demands everyone’s attention!”

**Elsie Sue** 10/11/12 (Andrew Berlin)
“Attempts at talking sound more like a growl, which has earned her the affectionate nickname—Little Monster”

**Liam Jerry** 03/05/2012 (Casey Lubinsky)
“A sweet boy that is spoiled by mom, dad, and sister Stella. A perfect addition to the family.”

**Callan T.** 09/20/2011 (Cayte Anderson)
“Another paddler in the family!”

Lyndsey Ebling began her time at UW-Stout as a student in 2008. She completed her Vocational Rehabilitation degree in December of 2012 with a focus on Independent Living. She now holds the job title in SVRI as an Associate Rehabilitation Specialist working in Job Placement and focusing on Work Incentive Benefits Analysis. Lyndsey spends her free time outdoors fishing, biking, going on walks; and spending time with her family and friends.

Lyndsey is a board game enthusiast and loves to expand her collection. Lyndsey states she is “excited to jump in and continue to get to know everyone in the SVRI team!” Welcome Lyndsey!

Meghan Donahue holds the job title of Rehabilitation Engineer here at SVRI. Meghan obtained her M.S. in Bio-engineering with a focus in rehabilitation technology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has previous work experience as a clinical rehabilitation engineer specializing in spinal cord injury and central nervous system related disabilities. She enjoys her dog, Orion, and a number of hobbies including sailing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. If Meghan isn’t dancing ballet, swing, or learning the fiddle, you can find her in the woods, hunting or hiking. We are excited to have Meghan on board here at SVRI!
In hopes to focus attention on current issues surrounding transition services, Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, with the help of consultant Steve Gilles, has learned of a potential opportunity to assess how the U.S. Department of Labor’s newly developed curriculum, Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success, could meet transition needs and improve outcomes.

The focus of Skills to Pay the Bills, developed through the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, is workforce readiness and educating youth, including youth with disabilities, on the importance of “soft” skills in acquiring employment and being successful in their workplace. The program was created for youth, with hands-on, engaging activity as the basic structure, focusing on eight key areas: communication, enthusiasm, attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving, critical thinking, and professionalism.

**Communication** activities will help participants understand how they prefer to receive information, as well as to help them consider how they provide information to others.

**Enthusiasm & Attitude** activities will focus on how to show enthusiasm in interview situations and how a positive attitude is helpful to everyone in the workplace.

**Teamwork** helps the participants understand how their role, as an individual supporting others, is an important part of overall success in the workplace.

**Networking** activities allow the participants to develop skills to take initiative and overcome fear and begin understanding the importance of networking to career development.

**Problem Solving & Critical Thinking** activities allow the participants to practice effective strategies to identify solutions to problems, and learn ethical decision making isn’t just about the answer, it’s what it takes to get to that answer.

The last key area, **professionalism**, is the key to success regardless of industry; it takes the previous five skills and examines how they interact to maintain an overall framework to becoming successful at the workplace.

In October 2012, the transition team at SVRI submitted a proposal for an innovation grant to train and assist select pilot school districts in the implementation of the Skills to Pay the Bills curriculum for transition students. In addition, if individuals in these districts are eligible, this would also be paired with an On-the-Job Training or Internship program. Along with providing technical assistance to the Skills to Pay the Bills pilot program, SVRI would be central in the research component of this program: to assess progress, document and identify successful elements, and to study the measurable outcomes of the participants.

SVRI is waiting to receive word if their proposal will be accepted for this exciting new opportunity. Along with trying to capture this opportunity, many individuals from SVRI’s transition team have been involved in several activities throughout the state such as, County Communities on Transition, Keys to Success Conference, Youth Transition Conference, Wisconsin Transition Conference, WSTI’s Transition Academy, Technology for Special Educators Conference, and the Let’s Get to Work Consortium. In collaboration with graduate student, Amanda Schlegelmilch, SVRI is also conducting an intensive research project focusing on the Health Literacy of Transition Students. It is expected that the results of this research will be analyzed and used to develop conclusions leading to improved health literacy, and career and life development of youth with disabilities.
The Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), granted a three-year re-accreditation to SVRI that began in April 2012. Here are just a few commendations that were reported in their Survey Report…

“The executive director is an experienced individual who is dedicated to the advancement of consumers who have barriers to independence. He has developed many solid national and international relationships that benefit the organization and consumers with disabilities.”

“Services are administered in an environment that is attractive, well maintained, and welcoming.”

“A high level of dignity and respect is given to each and every consumer, and confidentiality is highly maintained.”

“...all persons interviewed and observed were highly professional, dedicated, and caring individuals.”

“It is evident that the rights of consumers are respected and protected by the staff members.”

“Evidence exists that the organization makes good use of the input received from its various customers by incorporating it into the organization’s strategic planning.”

“SVRI has a comprehensive safety and health program. Personnel at all levels are committed to provide a safe and healthy environment for consumers, staff, and visitors.”

Erika Peterson at SVRI recently received a Seating and Mobility Specialist (SMS) certification. The SMS is a specialty certification for professionals working in seating and mobility. The SMS exam focuses specifically on seating, positioning, and mobility. The program is intended for clinicians, suppliers, engineers, and others involved in seating and mobility service provision. Erika is only one of four ATP/SMS credentialed professionals in the state of Wisconsin. Congratulations Erika on your achievement!!

SVRI provides training opportunities to rehabilitation professionals, employers, classes and others interested. If you would like to register for a course, visit www.uwstout.edu/svri/training.cfm

Courses Open for Registration

CRC Exam Preparation Workshop
 Begins May 16, 2012 for people taking the exam July 12-20, 2013

Apples to Androids: Using Cool New Technology to create Consumer Buy-In
 March 21 - May 2, 2013

Psychiatric Disabilities
 April 11 - May 23, 2013
Individuals with disabilities experience poverty at over twice the rate of their peers without disabilities—27.8% for those living with disabilities compared with 12.4% for those without disabilities (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2013). For an individual living in a household of one, the annual federal poverty rate is currently $11,490. To put this in context, someone who works full-time earning minimum wage ($7.25 per hour) makes approximately $15,080 per year (before taxes)…just $3,590 above the federal poverty line. If one has a disability resulting in additional expenses and complexity, it quickly becomes apparent how difficult it can be to make ends meet and why strategies beyond employment are needed to move out of poverty.

Despite the fact that almost two-thirds of adults living in long-term poverty have disabilities, poverty and disability have historically been treated as separate issues, addressed by separate advocacy groups, and separate government programs. However, the reality is that poverty and disability work to reinforce one another to perpetuate inequalities across systems (Pokemper & Roberts, 2001). While employment is certainly a critical factor for moving out of poverty, additional tools are necessary for long-term success. Given that individuals with disabilities experience poverty at disproportionately higher rates than their counterparts without disabilities, recognizing the importance of including financial literacy and asset development strategies, in addition to employment, is essential. The National Financial Educators Council defines financial literacy as: “possessing the skills and knowledge on financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills an individual's personal, family and global community goals.” In order to enhance the possibility of moving out of poverty, rather than joining the ranks of the “working poor,” individuals with disabilities must have access to resources that help provide viable, sustainable options. Increasing financial literacy rates in combination with improving access to progressive financial tools are important steps in changing the economic outlook and wellbeing of those living with disabilities.

Initial resources you can use in assisting individuals with disabilities improve financial literacy and move toward economic empowerment include:

Learn more about financial education and asset building services locally. Key elements of a solid approach typically include financial education courses, information on savings and Individual Development Accounts (IDA), information on getting banked (many individuals with disabilities have no formal relationship with a financial institution such as a bank or credit union), managing credit and debt, tax credits and filing assistance, and information on additional benefits and services. The Assets for Independence Resource Center [www.idaresources.org](http://www.idaresources.org) has good information on these tools.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax preparation services and information on tax credits services to low-income workers and underserved populations. People with disabilities may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) but unknowingly forgo a refund because they don’t file a tax return.

### Work Incentives Benefits Counseling Studies Update

The SVRI Research Team continues its work in this area with a new 2013 study focusing on learning about Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors’ perspectives regarding work incentives benefits counseling. The survey is being sent to vocational rehabilitation counselors working in the state-federal program across the country. The goal is to develop a better understanding regarding the utilization and perceptions surrounding this specialized service within the VR system.

This research follows in the continuum of a scholarship established by Dr. Ellie Hartman, Dr. John Lui, Cayte Anderson, and Dr. Juliet Fried (University of Northern Colorado) during Fall 2011. Both studies are endorsed by the National Association of Disability Benefits Specialists (NADBS) and are helping inform the field about where and how work incentives benefits counseling services are purchased and provided in order to better understand and inform future policy and funding.

### 2013 Poverty Guidelines (100%)

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Source: Federal Register
January 24, 2013
About The Editor

Hi, I am excited to be part of the SVRI team. I recently have accepted the position of the SVRI Graduate Assistant to John Lui and am enrolled as a full-time graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. I am working towards a dual concentration degree in Vocational Evaluation and Rehabilitation Counseling. Along with being the editor of the SVRI Newsletter, I am looking forward to this experience to get to know and learn from the professional, dedicated, and helpful staff here at SVRI. I enjoy spending time with my son, Reece, and dog, Thea. I am looking forward to warmer weather, running outside, traveling, and furthering my education.

Customized Evaluations

Beginning March 4, 2013, SVRI will be offering Customized Evaluation Services in order to better meet the needs of participants, referral sources, and employers. Each Evaluation is developed based on individual need so that maximum results can be attained. The Evaluation Team is ready to work with you to design the best assessment for you and your client’s needs. Services may include:

| Achievement, aptitude, and interest testing | Post-secondary education navigation |
| Work skills assessment (utilizing work samples) | Community living skills |
| Community-based assessment | Pre-driving evaluation and training |
| Transferable skills analysis | Case management services |
| Work readiness assessment | Plan development |
| Identification of customized employment options | Goal validation |
| Skill set identification to assist with the Job Development process | Career exploration and counsel |
| | Job shadows and/or Informational interviews |

Contact SVRI’s Evaluation team today at 715-232-2513 to schedule your Customized Evaluation Service.