Executive Director: John Lui, PhD, CDMS, CRC

We are delighted to inform you SVRI has been awarded a three-year CARF accreditation with one particular service program area, Intensive Evaluation, cited for exemplary performance. Many thanks go to Al Noll for his lead on coordinating the internal review process, the Management Team members’ cooperation and preparation, and more importantly, to all the staff’s dedication to their profession, which genuinely reflects the quality of services that the Institute is committed to provide. We appreciate very much the University and college administration’s continued support of SVRI.

We are sad to say goodbye to two valuable staff members who recently left SVRI: Jim Hubbard and Marci Griesbach. We appreciate their many years of service for SVRI and more importantly to individuals with disabilities. We wish them well with their new endeavors.

There are new assistive technology devices that provide advantages and opportunities for people with disabilities:

- SVRI, in partnership with the Department of Health Services, WisTech, and Pathways to Independence will be launching the second round of Assistive Technology Tool Kits for Aging and Disability Resource Centers throughout Wisconsin.
- The Driver Simulator is a new technology addition to SVRI services. We hope to use this simulation device as a training assessment tool to teach the basics of driving to persons with disabilities. Stay tuned for more information to come on this exciting piece of new technology.

Your contribution, feedback, and support are always welcome. Thank you.

SVRI Executive Director Update

SVRI Receives Three-Year CARF Accreditation

CARF, the accreditation body for vocational rehabilitation, has awarded the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (SVRI) a three-year accreditation. This is the highest award that can result from a survey.

Programs/services surveyed included: Assistive Technology Supports and Services, Comprehensive Benefits Planning, Employment Services, and Vocational Evaluation Services.

The surveyors cited SVRI for its strong leadership and excellent staff team. The staff was commended for their “genuine compassion” and “atmosphere of mutual respect.”

The Intensive Evaluation program was cited as “exemplary” by the survey team. This designation by CARF is reserved for programs that would be worthy of dissemination for replication by other organizations. This program was noted to be “unique and provides highly individualized and extremely creative evaluation experiences to persons with complex needs.”
Jim Hubbard

Jim Hubbard, Assistive Technology Professional and Rehabilitation Engineering Technologist, is resigning after 19 years at SVRI. Jim has accepted a position in Dublin, Ireland, with the National Disability Authority.

Jim graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stout and accepted the position to work in the fabrication lab. He has worked in the lab for 19 years developing his skills in power mobility and seating. Jim has been well-respected by professionals and consumers.

A consumer served by Jim stated, “I have never had service so GREAT like I did from Jim Hubbard. He was always so courteous, concerned, and went out of his way to answer my many questions. I now have a new outlook on life.”

Jim will be greatly missed and we wish him all the best.

Marci Griesbach

Marci Griesbach, Employment Specialist for SVRI in Marathon and northern Wood counties, recently accepted a position with Community Care of Central Wisconsin. Marci began her career with SVRI in January 2001 and was a key player in the workforce development field in north central Wisconsin. In her new role as a social service coordinator, Marci will be coordinating long-term care services for consumers in Wood county. Marci will be missed but we wish her all the best in her new position.

Online Training

Would you like training that accommodates your busy lifestyle? SVRI's online training program provides additional training that will accommodate your busy lifestyle as well as your individual learning style. Our online courses are more frequently including video, audio, and interactive tutorials to avoid flat written content as the basis for the course and engage learners on a different level. Written discussions facilitated by qualified professionals provide opportunities for Practitioners to share their valuable work experiences with each other. Activities are relevant to practitioners who want to advance their skill. Upcoming course offerings include Rehabilitation Ethics, Working with individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, a CRC Exam Workshop, and a course on Physical Disabilities.

We anticipate offering a Vocational Evaluation course starting later in 2009. We will post as much information as possible about new courses as they are developed. Please log onto the SVRI website for upcoming course listings http://www.uwstout.edu/svri. If you would like to be notified of future offerings, please email the online training coordinator, April Pierson (piersona@uwstout.edu), to be added to our list.

If you are looking for courses on specific topics, notify us as this information will be very valuable in determining future offerings.

Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes - Henry David Thoreau
Wisconsin SSDI Employment Pilot

Preliminary findings from the Wisconsin SSDI Employment Pilot indicate improvement in employment outcomes, especially earnings, is associated with participants receiving SSDI beneficiaries. While participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group, there was no difference between the groups in their access to benefits counseling services. The 468 pilot participants were not representative of the population of either working age SSDI beneficiaries or of those with serious disabilities in Wisconsin.

The data presented was strictly descriptive. Participants who received benefits counseling after entering the pilot posted, on average, a 23% gain in quarterly earnings between the quarter they entered the pilot and the seventh quarter thereafter. Those who did not receive any benefits counseling saw a 3% reduction in average earnings. Participants who reported no employment between the time they became SSDI beneficiaries and when they entered the pilot increased their average quarterly earnings from $86 in the entry quarter to $706 in the seventh quarter.

The authors, all SVRI staff, expect to provide a more extensive analysis of the impact of benefits counseling as part of their final report.

If you would like more information on these preliminary findings, contact Christopher Sell at sellw@uwstout.edu or 608-266-5279.

WorkSource Wisconsin

WorkSource Wisconsin was developed to provide easy access to the information necessary to actively recruit, hire, and retain employees with disabilities. WorkSource provides these resources by using a collaborative statewide training and technical assistance approach; a professional, accessible, and user-friendly website; a 1-800 phone number with direct access to Charlie George, an Employment Resource Specialist; free or low cost statewide training; and free technical assistance available to employers.

Upcoming trainings:
New Richmond: May 21, 2009; Wausau: June 18, 2009; and Superior: September 24, 2009.

For topics and registration for upcoming training events, as well as WorkSource information and resources, please log on to:
http://www.worksourcewi.com/

Continuing Partnerships

SVRI Employment Services is continuing the partnership with the Eau Claire county jail, Chippewa Valley Technical College, and the UW Eau Claire Service Learning Center/AmeriCorps to deliver job seeking skills training to inmates with Huber privileges. Six classes will be conducted at the jail during 2009. Classes in February and March served 13 individuals.
New Technology Update

Apple Computers continue to develop and support some of the latest opportunities for people with disabilities. Two recent editions of the popular iPod now come equipped with voice output for the navigational features of the device. This is great news for anyone with a vision loss as it now grants them access to the device. Both the iPod Nano and the latest Shuffle have this feature. In other news for the iTouch and iPhone, there are two new applications available that provide augmentative communication possibilities for the device. The SpeakIt program, available through iTunes for $1.99 generates a keyboard where a person can type what they wish to say and then use the external speaker on the device to voice that information out loud. A second program, Prologue2Go, will be released within the next month and provides a comprehensive augmentative communication program for consumers who are unable to speak. That product will retail for around $199. For more information on the latest electronic gadgets and how they might apply to people with disabilities please contact SVRI.

Assistive Technology Tool Kits for ADRCs

The Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute in partnership with the Department of Health Services, WisTech, and Pathways to Independence will be launching the second round of Assistive Technology Tool Kits for Aging and Disability Resource Centers throughout Wisconsin. Once again, each of the new ADRCs will receive an AT Kit filled to the brim with gadgets that they can demonstrate to their customers. The staff at each site will also have the opportunity to learn about assistive technology resources available in Wisconsin through the three-hour in-depth training that goes along with each kit. After receipt of the kit, each ADRC is required to complete quarterly reports to gauge the effectiveness of the project. For more information or to learn how these kits are being used please contact Laura Plummer at plummerl@uwstout.edu or by phone at 715-232-3300.

Pathways Employment Resource Center (PERC)

The Pathways Project is located within the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and has a rich history of promoting innovative policy and practices specific to integrated community-based employment for individuals with disabilities. In collaboration with an inclusive and representative array of national, state, and local stakeholders, Pathways actively works to promote a system that encourages and enhances employment and earning opportunities. DHS, as well as key partners, are designing the Pathways Employment Resource Center (PERC) intended to increase the knowledge, skills, and service capacity across the state in offering community-based employment supports for people with disabilities.

The Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (SVRI) at UW-Stout, the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Employment Resources, Inc. (ERI) in Madison, Wisconsin, are forming a partnership to administer the center. This partnership is designed to capitalize on the strengths and resources of three highly reputable organizations with a long history of conducting cutting edge applied healthcare and employment research; providing training and technical assistance for healthcare, disability, and employment professionals; and providing effective disability and employment services for people with chronic illness and disabilities. (cont. on pg 5)
This partnership will also address the needs for technical assistance and training in the area of employment for care managers at the managed care organizations (MCO), members and their families, community-based disability and employment service organizations, and affiliated partners.

The objectives for the project are directly related to the mission of the Department of Health Services in supporting the findings of the Managed Care and Employment Task Force (MCETF) related to meeting the training and technical assistance needs of the Managed Care Organizations (MCO), community-based disability and employment service agencies, and other key stakeholders. PERC will be guided by evidence via needs assessments to provide high quality training with proven universally-designed adult-learner methods and media platforms, and technical assistance consultation and services primarily to MCO and ADRC staff and community disability and employment service partners contracted through the MCO provider networks, as well as to other stakeholders in state Executive Agencies (DHS, DWD, DPI), schools, community organizations, and interested participants in the state’s self-directed supports (IRIS) system.

The Pathways Employment Resource Center will be located in Madison.

**Driver Simulator**

SVRI is excited about a new addition, the Driver Simulator. The Driver Simulator is used as a training assessment tool to teach the basics of driving to individuals with disabilities. The individual will learn basic driving skills, rules of the road, how to operate a vehicle, and assess their reaction time. Within the menus of the simulation program, an individual will progress through chapters until full completion of the simulation program.

The Driver Simulator chair can be removed for wheelchair access. It also has the option of using a conventional accelerator and brakes, or utilizing hand controls. It also allows a driver to choose and utilize a left foot accelerator and brake. The hand controls allow the driver to push up on the control to accelerate, push down to slow down, and push the hand control in to brake.

SVRI would like to set up a program where an individual can go through the simulation chapters at their own pace. The individual will have their own username to log into the Driver Simulator and can work through each chapter at their own pace until completion. Each chapter requires the individual to take a test on what they have learned. The evaluators will have access to the individual’s performance and feedback throughout each chapter. With the feedback the evaluator receives from the Driver Simulator, they can make appropriate recommendations for further driving skill assessment.

If you would like more information, please contact Jeff Annis at annisj@uwstout.edu

“Limitations only go so far.”

Robert M. Hensel
Finding Answers,
Providing Solutions,
Ensuring Futures
- SVRI Motto