

VR



Images of Success

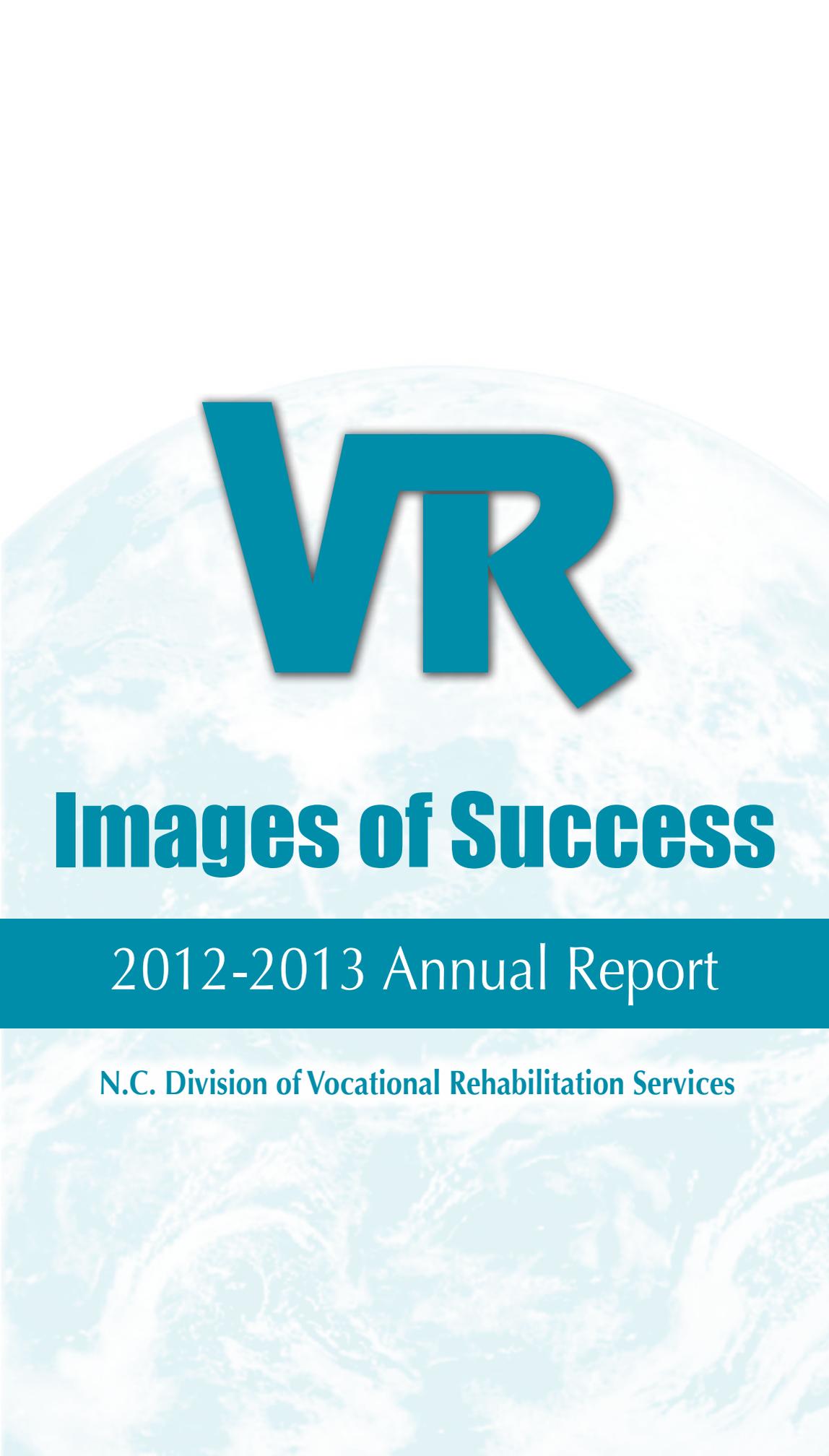
A photograph of three individuals smiling. On the left is a Black woman with braided hair adorned with gold beads, wearing a light blue patterned shirt. In the center is a man with white hair and a beard, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt over a grey t-shirt. On the right is a Black man with a shaved head, wearing a dark blue v-neck shirt. The background is a satellite-style image of the Earth, showing the Americas.

VR's Year in Review 2012-2013

N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services



Our cover photos are of VR consumers on the job – (l to r) Loretha Ward, housekeeper at Sue’s Bunkeroo in Kinston; DeWayne Coons, IT Support Technician at Graystone Eye in Hickory; and Ernest Moore, kitchen manager at the White Swan Restaurant in Atlantic Beach.



VR

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2012-2013 Annual Report

N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Year by the Numbers

- VR assisted 6,723 North Carolinians in achieving successful employment outcomes.
- Independent living objectives were achieved by 1,788 Independent Living program participants.
- Assistive Technology provided 6,333 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Disability Determination closed 209,746 cases involving Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid Disability benefits.

VR in 2013: Partnering and Piloting for Improved Consumer Outcomes

In federal fiscal year 2013, our division's 93-year record of service to people with disabilities was advanced by steady progress in our core endeavors and by exploring new ways to improve services.



Elizabeth Bishop
Acting Director

**N.C. Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services**

Through VR's core employment services, 6,723 consumers either obtained employment or were able to stay on the job despite a disability.

State to state, people for whom VR services lead to employment are able on average to "pay back" the cost of their services in two to four years through taxes. Further, their employment generates big savings for the federal treasury in the cost of no-longer-needed benefits

In 2013, after receiving independent living services, 1,788 people with disabilities began to take a bigger part in the lives of their families and communities. Many of these individuals might otherwise have had to move into nursing homes. In fact, our agency has become increasingly involved with helping people move out of these institutions.

Last year, as part of a multi-year, state-federal agency coalition, VR assisted Medicaid-eligible North Carolinians with moving out of in-patient facilities into their own homes – while helping improve their access to long-term supports that will help them maintain their independence. In 2013, this program transitioned 40 individuals out of nursing facilities, with a resulting savings in the cost of Medicaid services. These 40 were in addition to those transitioned by VR's independent living program.

In March Asheville and Forest City VR offices began a pilot initiative to determine how the average hourly wage of VR consumers exiting the program into new jobs might be increased.

Asheville staff have created a more integrated, team approach to optimize the match between local job opportunities and the VR consumer's highest-level skills and abilities. Early indications reflect that better-matched placements are occurring faster and that better paying jobs are resulting.

The Forest City office has inventoried local employers to determine the qualifications and certifications they require of applicants and has joined with employers and staffing agencies to increase training, certifications and overall marketability of applicants. The hoped-for result: local employers can attract more qualified candidates with better-paying jobs.

Last year the number of VR consumers' employment outcomes kept pace with our improving economy. From October 2012 through September 2013, while the state's employment rate went from 90.9 to 92.3 percent, VR consumers getting jobs numbered more than 6,700 for the second straight year.

These outcomes and our progress overall are attributable to a professional, committed staff across the state. It's also made possible by the agencies and policymakers we partner with – and the administrators and legislators who provide the leadership we'll need to continue to serve North Carolinians with disabilities.



Evaluation and Counseling

VR provides services to people with disabilities to assist them in getting or keeping a job. Rehabilitation begins with an assessment of the consumer's strengths, skills and experience. Jointly developed by the consumer and counselor, each individual's plan for employment is carefully monitored and, if needed, adjustments are made. Plans may include: diagnostic services; physical and mental restoration; assistive technology; transportation; modifications to vehicle, home, job and worksite; and others. Among consumers who completed their rehabilitation plans in FFY 2013, VR provided:

- Assessment services to 13,272 individuals;
- Diagnosis and treatment of impairments to 8,044;
- Counseling and guidance to 3,985.



Ernest Moore
Atlantic Beach

Categories of services offered beyond the assessment stage include: employment services, rehabilitation technology, training and personal assistance services.

Benefits Counseling

Under a system of work incentives, eligible individuals with disabilities who are receiving SSI or SSDI can look for work, get a job and in many cases continue to receive benefits until they are able to support themselves. These incentives help remove barriers to work so that beneficiaries can find the right job and succeed in the workplace.

- VR's benefits specialists are available in 42 counties of North Carolina.
- VR's benefits specialists have served more than 16,286 Social Security beneficiaries since the program's inception in 2000.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

VR provides services to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or late-deafened to assist them in preparing for, obtaining or maintaining employment. Counselors work with consumers to help them make informed choices about their job goals and what, among a range of specialized services and equipment, is needed to help meet those goals. Based in 12 of VR's local offices, specially trained counselors assist citizens with hearing loss across North Carolina.



In FFY 2013, VR:

- Provided services to 2,717 consumers with hearing loss.
- Assisted 375 consumers with hearing loss to achieve successful employment outcomes.
- Continued to equip local offices with advanced technology to improve consumers' access to services and their employment outcomes.

School-to-Life Services

VR has partnered with local schools across the state to assist students in making a successful transition from their school life to jobs and careers. Services are designed to assist individuals with disabilities – physical, mental or learning-related – who require assistance to prepare for, locate or maintain employment compatible with their interests, skills and potential. For eligible students, VR offers vocational guidance and assistance with training, job placement, and other services. Referrals may be made by a parent, teacher, social worker, school counselor or nurse, or an individual may refer himself or herself.

- In FFY 2013, VR served 23,535 youth, 22 and under, with disabilities.
- VR counselors provided services to 12,881 high school students in 357 high schools across the state.



**DeWayne Coons
Hickory**

Employment Services

Getting or keeping a job is the main goal of the partnership between the consumer and VR. The process begins with evaluation of the consumer's interests, abilities and aptitudes for different kinds of jobs. The employment plan may include college or vocational training, on-the-job training, job coaching, or supported employment. VR staff often provide information on résumé preparation, interviewing, developing job leads, and assistance in locating a job. After employment, the VR counselor and consumer stay in contact to help make sure the job is a good match.

- In FFY 2013, VR assisted 6,723 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome.
- Consumers' weekly earnings before receiving services averaged \$51. After employment, the average increased to \$280.
- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$1.88 million per week.





**Loretha Ward
Kinston**

Services to Employers

Crucial to VR's mission are North Carolina's businesses who each year hire thousands of individuals served by VR. Because each of our referrals is screened, employers can feel more confident that they are a good prospect for their company, and they benefit from services like customized follow-up and on-the-job training that can help make sure the new employee remains a good match for the job. For more than 90 years, VR has been the state's premier resource on issues related to disabilities in the workplace.

- Screening, job-matching and training can reduce employers' recruitment time and costs.
- Employers can benefit from on-site consultations by professionals like our rehabilitation engineers who help ensure that the physical workplace is a good fit for the new employee.
- Employers can benefit from these services at no cost. They may also enjoy tax incentives for hiring a VR referral.

Community Rehabilitation

VR is able to extend its services for people with disabilities through programmatic partnerships with community rehabilitation programs across the state. These programs are equipped to offer a range of job-placement and support services to VR consumers with specialized needs. Community rehabilitation services include: vocational evaluation; job development; job coaching; individual or group supported employment; and work adjustment activities designed to help individuals improve work skills, work behaviors, and emotional/physical tolerances for a range of jobs.

- In FFY 2013, 11,160 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR.
- Of that number, 2,602 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- VR directly administers two community rehabilitation programs – WorkSource East in Goldsboro and WorkSource West in Morganton.

Supported Employment

Because of varying levels of readiness for work, many consumers benefit from more intensive support services to become acclimated to new employment or remain on the job. After placement, supported employment can mean job training at the worksite for as long as needed or a job coach to assist the employee on a longer-term basis – perhaps with daily, weekly or intermittent visits.

- In FFY 2013, 3,979 consumers received supported employment services.
- Of that number, 989 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- Supported employment services may be supplemented by or directly provided by a local, VR-approved community rehabilitation program.

Rehabilitation Engineering

With technology and a commitment to creative problem-solving, VR's rehabilitation engineers help consumers overcome physical barriers in a number of areas, including education, transportation, employment, independent living and recreation. Services can cover: adaptive computer access; augmentative communication; seating/mobility; and home, vehicle and worksite modifications. Engineers often consult with employers to assist in removing architectural barriers so that new employees with disabilities or current employees who have acquired disabilities may be accommodated.

- In FFY 2013, 1,300 barrier removal projects at consumers' residences were successfully completed, allowing them to remain independent and avoid moving to a care facility.
- During the same period, vehicle modification projects were completed for 94 consumers.
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$5.9 million in cost.

Independent Living

Independence can often mean living in the home and community of choice. To help its consumers achieve that end, the Independent Living program offers evaluation and counseling, vehicle modifications, peer counseling and advocacy, rehabilitation engineering, prosthetics and orthotics, personal assistance services, and assistance with leisure activities. Independent living counselors and program participants jointly plan how to achieve a viable, cost-effective alternative to institutional living.

- In FFY 2013, 4,125 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living.
- IPIs were completed by 1,788 program participants.
- Personal assistance services were provided to 287 individuals at an average cost of \$12,838 per year.

Assistive Technology

For people of all ages and disabilities, assistive technology devices can make everyday living more independent. Offering access in all 100 counties, VR's Assistive Technology (AT) staff demonstrates how assistive technology can improve computer use, daily living activities, mobility, communication, education, leisure, alarm systems, and environmental controls. AT offers short-term loans for trying out devices, information/referral services, rights advocacy for individuals and families, and financial resource information. During 2013, the Assistive Technology Program:

- Provided 6,333 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Provided training and information to 17,234 individuals.
- With the N.C. Rehabilitation Association, hosted a joint conference in Concord with 300 attendees.

Disability Determination

Under an agreement with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services receives applications from SSA offices across the state and adjudicates Social Security disability and Supplemental Security Income disability payments. Disability Determination Services performs the same function with Medicaid claims received from the state's county departments of social services. In FFY 2013:

- DDS closed 209,746 cases involving Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid disability benefits.
- The average time for processing SSDI cases – from receipt to closure – was 89 days.
- The average time for processing Medicaid claims – from DDS receipt to closure – was 31 days.

Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that serves anyone seeking information, applying for services or receiving services from agencies receiving federal monies under the Rehabilitation Act. These include the Division of Vocational

Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Services for the Blind, the independent living rehabilitation programs within those divisions, and the state's centers for independent living. Services include bridging gaps that may occur in accessing rehabilitation services, assisting with the appeals process and providing information and referral. In FFY 2013:

- Issues, for 79% of CAP consumers, were resolved fully or partially in their favor;
- Printed information was distributed to more than 18,117 consumers and professionals and;
- Evaluations indicated that 83% of consumers were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with CAP services.

'VR Helps Us Believe in Ourselves'



Chris (right) with Al Van Handel

Not long ago, Chris Simpson would shy away from shaking hands or making eye contact. Chris has social anxiety plus obsessive-compulsive disorder. With no work experience, he felt "terrified of going through another day without a job."

In May 2012, Chris became a VR client. While apprehensive about his prospects, his counselor, Ashley McKenna, was optimistic.

"Ashley gave me confidence," Chris remembers. "She took the time to talk with me and get to know me."

There were disappointments; jobs fell through that seemed like sure things. Then one day: "I was at home, feeling really in the pits. Ashley called and said 'Do you want to work this week?'"

Al and Maxene Van Handel of Van's Advertising in Burlington had previously hired two VR referrals and were interested in Chris. They offered him a position, and he started work in early 2013.

The Van Handels have come to rely on Chris more and more for handling customers. "The people VR referred have filled a big gap in our business," Maxene offers.

Ashley recalls: "In May I ran into Chris at a networking event. He was speaking to everyone – and shaking their hands!" Chris says: "Thanks to people like Ashley, VR helps us believe in ourselves."

North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Data Summary: Federal Fiscal Year 2012-2013

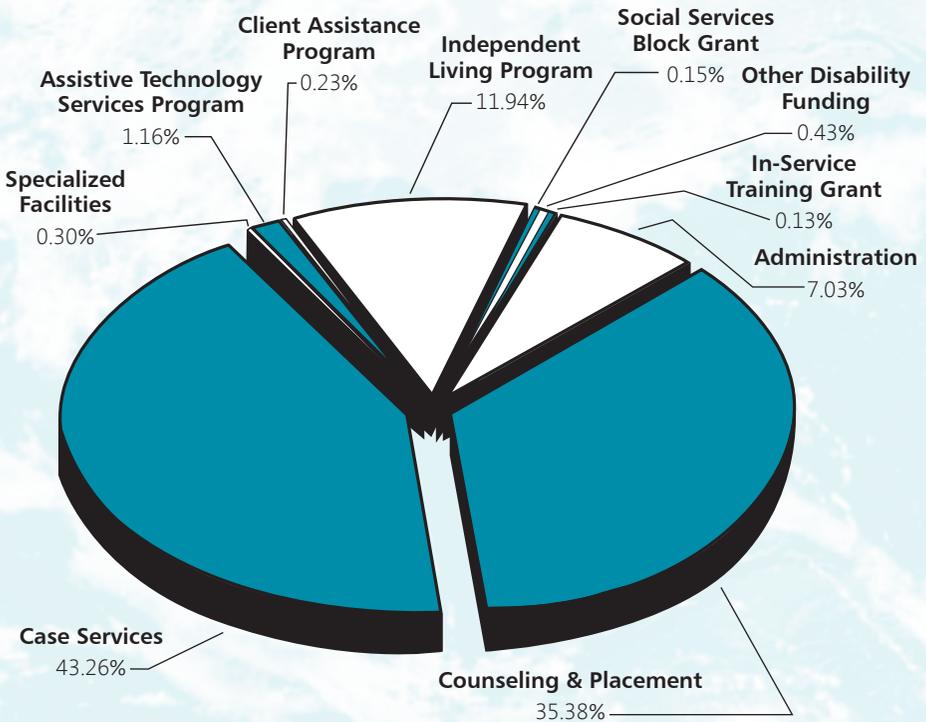
Overview: Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services	
Consumers Served in FFY 2013	59,282
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY	4,730
Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment	46,613
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	33,070
Successful employment outcomes	6,723

Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes			
Average Earnings	Weekly Earnings	Monthly Earnings	Annual Earnings
At Case Opening	\$50.78	\$220.05	\$2,640.59
At Case Closure	\$280.39	\$1,215.04	\$14,580.45
Average Increase	\$229.61	\$994.99	\$11,939.87
Total Increase	\$1,540,013.00	\$6,673,389.67	\$80,080,676.00

Consumers by Disability: Vocational Rehabilitation / Independent Living		
Primary Disability	VR Eligible Served	IL Eligible Served
Sensory/Communicative	2,927	228
Physical	15,414	4,740
Cognitive	18,241	3
Mental Illness	16,298	5
Other Mental Disabilities	6,401	2
Major Impairment not yet recorded	1	0
Total	59,282	4,978

Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program	
Consumers Served in FFY 2013	4,978
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	2,130
Independent Living Plans of Services Completed	1,788
Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services	287
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$12,838

FFY 2013 Program Expenditures



Administration \$9,769,493	Counseling & Placement \$49,181,417
Case Services \$60,147,457	Specialized Facilities \$421,907
Assistive Technology Services Program \$1,606,547	Client Assistance Program \$320,702
Independent Living Program \$16,596,514	Social Services Block Grant \$206,081
Other Disability Funding \$591,931	In-Service Training Grant \$184,482

VR “All-Stars”

The division honored staff members in Wilmington, Greenville and Raleigh with its 12th annual, statewide “VR All-Star Awards.” The categories and winners are:



Becky Setliff



Becky Tyndall



Lynne Deese

- **Leadership** – Becky Setliff, unit manager in the Wilmington office, was cited for outstanding achievement in leadership. The award praises Setliff for her “knowledge, leadership, dedication, experience and compassion” and for helping her staff “develop and use their skills to produce quality services for their consumers.”
- **Customer Service** – Honored for customer service was Becky Tyndall, a rehabilitation casework advisor office in the Greenville office. The award cites Tyndall for “her dedication and drive, coupled with a caring and compassionate manner” and for “testing the boundaries of policy if it’s in her consumer’s best interest.”
- **Creativity** – Cited for creativity was Lynne Deese, an assistive technologist in the agency’s Raleigh assistive technology service center. The award honors Deese for creating the “Assistive Technology Daily” blog which has developed an international following and “her dedication to finding the most appropriate and effective assistive technology her clients.”

The three were chosen from 13 recipients of the division’s regional “Superstar Awards.” Employee volunteers manage the awards program in which agency staff nominate and vote on their co-workers.

“To be named All-Stars by their peers reflects a commitment to people with disabilities that benefits all North Carolinians,” said Acting Director Elizabeth Bishop. “We are fortunate to have such stellar public servants among us.”

Health and Human Services Secretary Aldona Vos told the recipients that the work of the division is “an integral part of the Department’s mission to serve our fellow North Carolinians with disabilities. The dedication for which you’ve been recognized has been indispensable in carrying out that work.”

State Rehabilitation Council: 2012-2013

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Celeste Hunt – Vice Chair
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Quintin Boston
Doreen Byrd
Davan Cloninger
Robert Gilmore
Trish Hussey
John Marens
Ping Miller
Laurie Ray
D. Jason Reynolds
Brenda Savage
Carol Walker
Lisa Ward Ross

Ex Officio:

Elizabeth Bishop, Acting Director

Counselor Advisory Council Representatives:

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Melanie Harrington,
Central Region
Collis Niro, Eastern Region
Bret Philbeck, Western Region

State Independent Living Council: 2012-2013

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Sandra McMillan
Sandi Sinnott
Kay Miley
Jeffery McLoud
Teresa Staley
Sierra Royster
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Zachariah D. Commander
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Joshua J. Kaufman
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Sandy Ogburn
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Mark Steele
Deidre L. Dockery
John Marens
Stephanie Johnson

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N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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