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Governor's Committee on Employment  
of People with Disabilities



# ABILITIES

*Promoting the employment of Vermont citizens of all abilities*

April 2011 - Volume 5, Issue 1

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## Dear Friends ~ Creative Workforce Solutions



Fred Jones,  
GCEPD Chair

On behalf of the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, I would like to welcome you to the latest issue of "Abilities".

We are pleased to use this forum to introduce you to *Creative Workforce Solutions*, an initiative of the Agency of Human Services designed to simplify the hiring process for employers by helping them to find qualified, pre-screened job candidates through a consistent, coordinated process.

Thanks for reading on - and please feel free to share!

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Best regards,

**Fred Jones, Chair**

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

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## Creative Workforce Solutions

***"Hiring Solutions that Provide Smarter Staffing for Stronger Companies" -***

### ***Story Synopsis***

Meeting staffing needs can be a difficult challenge. How can employers find highly qualified, pre-screened candidates from a large and diverse talent pool that they can "try out" without risk?

Imagine this. What if you could make one call to one person and be connected with a state-wide pool of qualified candidates? What if you no longer had to try to sort your way through various state employment programs? What if you no longer were challenged to find the time to meet with a number of different job developers?

Imagine no more - for now you can benefit from Creative Workforce Solutions!

View our videos on 

[click here to read more](#)

### **Annya Lamothe - a Creative Workforce Solutions success story- *Story Synopsis***



Some people know from childhood what their life's work is. Twenty three year old Annya Lamothe of Fair Haven, Vermont is one of those people. As a little girl she loved animals. She would pick up turtles in the road and put them in her pool. She would bring salamanders home and



hang out with them. She bottle fed a pet raccoon for almost two years.

At age 13, Annya helped her dog, Cheyenne, deliver 12 puppies, instinctively knowing just what to do. She has brought home every animal imaginable, from a horse to pet rats to a tarantula. To Annya, no animal has its flaw.

A career working with animals was an obvious dream for Annya, and her dream was to attend college and become a veterinary assistant, and possibly even a veterinarian. Her life, however, took a different direction.

[click here to read more](#)

### **And now for something a little different**

#### **Disability Employment Awareness Month:**

Did you know that October is Disability Employment Awareness month? The GCEPD is in the beginning stages of planning an event to showcase this important designation. Stay tuned - you'll certainly want to attend!

#### **2011 Governor's Awards**

Also, we will soon be seeking nominations for candidates to receive our 2011 Governor's Awards that acknowledge employers, members of the media, and others for the exemplary work in promoting the employment of persons of all abilities, in presenting wonderful media representation of persons with disabilities, and in providing accommodations that allow for successful employment and living for persons of all abilities. More details will follow in our next newsletter.

#### **Test your Knowledge**

How much do you know about hiring a person with a disability? We invite you to take our [interactive test!](#)

#### ***MORE ON Creative Workforce Solutions***

Meeting staffing needs can be a difficult challenge. How can employers find highly qualified, pre-screened candidates from a large and diverse talent pool that they can "try out" without risk?

Imagine this. What if you could make one call to one person and be connected with a state-wide pool of qualified candidates? What if you no longer had to try to sort your way through various state employment programs? What if you no longer were challenged to find the time to meet with a number of different job developers?

Imagine no more - for now you can benefit from ***Creative Workforce Solutions*** (CWS)!

### **What is CWS?**

It is an initiative of the Agency of Human Services (AHS), designed to help employers to find qualified, pre-screened job candidates using a coordinated, consistent and simple process. It offers to employers a single point of contact for coordinated job development and placement services across all AHS programs.

### **How Did it Come About?**

The Vermont legislature in the 2010 "Challenges for Change" legislation asked various state agencies to look for greater efficiencies in their operations. The Agency of Human Services began looking at how to coordinate the activities and hiring teams of its various employment programs agency wide.

### **How Does it Work?**

Twelve "Employment Teams" have been established to cover the established AHS districts around the state. Each CWS Employment Team is made up of employment consultants and staff affiliated with a myriad of Vermont state employment programs that are housed within State agencies or contracted out to community agencies.

These Employment Teams meet weekly to discuss job leads and opportunities and to brainstorm potential employment opportunities for the individual job seekers they are supporting.

The activities of these Employment Teams are facilitated and coordinated by a single Business Account Manager.

An employer may plug into the broad CWS system through any individual job developer with whom they have a relationship. An employer may also contact

any state agency associated with the program. Likewise, an employer may be contacted by a representative of CWS to introduce them to the program, and the employer can rest assured that they will not be contacted by any other job developer unless the employer would like to meet with specific job candidates.

### **What are the Advantages of CWS?**

#### ***For Employers:***

1. Working with just one job developer eliminates confusion;
2. Access to a wider array of talented individuals in the job pool;
3. A single phone call will hook an employer into the CWS program and all of its benefits;
4. CWS's progressive employment options offer employers no risk trials of job candidates
5. Employers will communicate with an employment consultant who is closely connected to his or her counterparts throughout the state, ensuring minimal use of employer time with the best possibility of finding a qualified candidate from the widest talent pool possible.

#### ***For participating Employment Team members and their consumers:***

1. The state programs operate at a high level of efficiency;
2. Job seekers are exposed to a greater number of job openings, and they benefit from an individualized approach to their employment needs;
3. Job developers benefit from the contacts of their counterparts throughout the state, learning of openings and opportunities that previously might not have been available to them;

### **Which Employment Programs' Staffers are now Working Together as Part of the Larger CWS "Employment Team"?**

#### ***The following individuals comprise each of the twelve Employment Teams around the state:***

1. Employment consultants who work for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and for the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR);
2. Supported employment staffers associated with the Department of Mental Health's "Community Rehabilitation & Treatment" program;

3. Supported employment staffers associated with Developmental Services programs;
4. Employment Specialists within the Economic Services Division of the Department of Children and Families AND within the Department of Labor, all of whom support Reach Up participants (a program designed to provide temporary aid to needy families with children);
5. Employment Training Specialists associated with the Vermont Adult Learning program;
6. Employment Specialists within the Department of Corrections;
7. Youth Employment Specialists within the Department of Labor and the Department for Children and Families;
8. Supported Employment staffers with the JOBS (Jump On Board for Success) program.
9. The Vermont JOBS program is spearheaded by the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in partnership with the Departments of Corrections, Mental Health and Children and Families. It is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth ages 16 - 21 with severe emotional disturbance who are already estranged from the community. The targeted youth are out of school or seriously at risk of dropping out and are at high risk for involvement with Corrections, substance abuse, homelessness, physical abuse or abusive behaviors, or other concerning behaviors.
10. Employment Specialists working with the Refugee Resettlement Program;
11. Employment staff with Vermont Associates, which provides training and development services for Vermont's mature workforce.

### **Who are the Job Seekers Supported and Served by CWS?**

1. People with disabilities;
2. People with mental illness;
3. People with substance abuse issues;
4. People with developmental disabilities;
5. Members of needy families with children who are receiving temporary aid;
6. People without children who are temporarily out of work due to some barrier to employment and who receive emergency general assistance from the state;

7. Offenders;
8. Youth, including those in foster care;
9. Refugees; and
10. Older workers.

### **What Kind of Placement Programs can CWS Offer Employers?**

One of the highlights for an employer who hires an individual through Creative Workforce Solutions is that CWS offers employers expanded progressive employment opportunities. These alternative placement options began within the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation after receiving program funding through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

These placement programs allow an employer to "try on" a job candidate through a variety of progressive employment approaches without risk to the employer. These are all intended to help an individual job seeker get a foot in the door.

For example, an individual might be placed at a job site for a job shadow to see if a particular company or position might be a good match; be placed in a two-week work experience for assessment and to learn job skills; or be placed in a longer On-the-Job training option. Placements are individually tailored to the needs of both the employer and the job seeker. In many instances, liability, work training, and stipends may be covered by the placing program or by CWS.

### **What Else Should I Know?**

Through Creative Workforce Solutions, the Agency of Human Services is committed to raising the level of performance (as reflected in increased levels of employment) of its multiple employment programs. This performance-based evaluation is a crucial outcome for consumers of the Agency of Human Services.

### **As An Employer, How Can I Find Out More or Access the CWS Program?**

To access Creative Workforce Solutions, contact Hugh Bradshaw at 1-877-736-5667. Further information can be gotten at [www.cwsvt.com](http://www.cwsvt.com).

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## ***MORE ON a CWS Success Story***

Some people know from childhood what their life's work is. Twenty three year old Annya Lamothe of Fair Haven, Vermont is one of those people. As a little girl she loved animals. She would pick up turtles in the road and put them in her pool. She would bring salamanders home and hang out with them. She bottle fed a pet raccoon for almost two years.

At age 13, Annya helped her dog, Cheyenne, deliver 12 puppies, instinctively knowing just what to do. She has brought home every animal imaginable, from a horse to pet rats to a tarantula. To Annya, no animal has its flaw.

A career working with animals was an obvious dream for Annya, and her dream was to attend college and become a veterinary assistant, and possibly even a veterinarian. Her life, however, took a different direction.

During her senior year in high school, Annya became pregnant with her son, now 4. As a single mom, she strove quite hard to find employment to support

herself and her son. She received assistance through Vermont's General

Assistance program, which she would "earn" through volunteer activities.

However, her job hunting experiences were frustrating as she was shot down everywhere she went to find paid employment. It seemed that no one would step up and give her a chance. It was especially frustrating for Annya when she couldn't get her foot in the door of any animal-related business in her area.



Finally, Annya reached out to Vocational Rehabilitation and met with one of their counselors, who then referred her to Jessica Blanchard, an Employment and Training Specialist at VABIR (the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation). This kind of collaboration is one hallmark of Vermont's Creative Workforce Solution program. Jessica was able to make a few phone calls - reaching out to her professional network - and arrange for an interview for Annya at Riverside Veterinary Care in Rutland. Shortly thereafter Annya was brought on board at Riverside to be a kennel representative.

In this capacity, Annya is responsible for ensuring that exam rooms, cages, and operating areas are clean, sterile, and disinfected. She walks and feeds the dogs and gives them attention. She also cleans and disinfects the cat cages. To be able to do this work gives Annya great joy and pride. She loves and enjoys the work, and values the obvious pride her son takes in her and her ability to support them. Each day her son asks her "who did you save today, Mommy?"

For Annya, there is great excitement in going to work. She loves to support the clients who have brought their pets - their "children" - in for care, and relishes the good feeling of telling them things like "your dog was well cared for - or saved - today".

Riverside Veterinary Care is a strong proponent of the progressive employment programs that are part of Creative Workforce Solutions. At the time Annya went to work at Riverside, they were not in a position to hire an employee. So, through Creative Workforce Solutions, Annya was able to spend eight months working 12 hours per week at Riverside, receiving payment through the General Assistance program but doing work she loved. Riverside, meanwhile, was able to observe Annya in the workplace, so that recently when they were ready to hire again, they brought Annya on board as a formal, part time employee. Now Annya is paid for her 12 hours directly through Riverside.



Darcie Marshall, Practice Manager at Riverside, shared that Annya has blossomed at Riverside, displaying new confidence about her work. She feels that the Creative Workforce Solutions program is a great offering for employers. Riverside was able to see Annya in action and be reimbursed for its training costs. According to Darcie, such reimbursement made it a great incentive to bring Annya in and try her out.

Then, having seen Annya's good attitude, strong work ethic, openness to new duties, and happy nature, they were eager to keep her on. The program turned out to be a true "win win". Through the advocacy and offerings of Vocational Rehabilitation, VABIR, and the Creative Workforce Solutions program, Riverside found a good employee - and was happy to help Annya find her niche.

And *that's* something to bark about.

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## What's On Your Mind?

### We'd like your Feedback?

What's on your mind? How do you like this newsletter? Is there something missing you'd

like to read about? How else can we be of service to you?

Please share your ideas and feedback with us by emailing Melita DeBellis, Executive Director, at [melita@gcepd.org](mailto:melita@gcepd.org).

Thanks!

Thanks for reading this issue of "Abilities". We welcome your comments, feedback, and suggestions for future issues. Copies of past issues may be found on our website - [www.hireus.org](http://www.hireus.org), or in the [Constant Contact archives](#).

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