

Vocation Rehabilitation Department holds open house

The Warm Springs Vocational Rehabilitation program held an Open House Wednesday, September 20 to share with the public what the program does and the people they serve. Brief tours were conducted, and staff were available to meet the public and answer questions.

Successful clients who went through the program were also on hand throughout the day. Most shared their success stories and spoke of the assistance they received from the program that helped them to achieve employment. Successful clients spoke of the places they worked and how they enjoyed their jobs.

Two VR Board Members, Emma Smith and Dr. Creelman, were present showing their support

to people with Disabilities. Other Board members include: Chaz Mitchell, Carol Parra, Leo Washington, Harold Blackwolf, Charlotte Pitt, and Mitch Conley.

The Open House was well attended. To commemorate the occasion free T-Shirts, Magnets, and Pens were given out. Food and snacks were available, and information was displayed, including the Mission Statement & Goals, Eligibility Criteria, Examples of Disabilities & Substantial Impediments, Listing of Advisory Board Members, Policy Manual, Annual Budget, Year-To-Date Consumer Statistics, Current Project Period Consumer Statistics, Program Costs, and a Client Case File Example.

The VR program is 100%

federally funded and operates on a Fiscal Year (October to September). No funds from the Warm Springs Tribal Budget supports the operation of the VR Program. VR has been in operation in Warm Springs since October 1992. At the end of this month, VR is ending their first year of a five-year Grant.

There are 55 Indian VR programs in the United States. Each must compete for funding. There are only two Indian VR programs in Oregon, they are Warm Springs and Grand Ronde.

Because citizens all across the United States pay Federal taxes, VR cannot limit services to only Warm Springs Tribal Members. They must serve any Native American as long as he or she meets all eligibility criteria.



(Staff Picture) left to right. Front row: Laurel Wheeler, secretary, George Aguilar Jr, counselor, Lucinda Jim, secretary assistant. Back Row: Rhonda Atencio, intake coordinator and statistician, Cecil Ballou, counselor, and Tricia Sahme, director. Not pictured is Corina Brunoe. Corina is on Maternity Leave until December. Rhonda Atencio is filling in while she is on leave. Also, Jonathan Smith who is preparing to return to Mt. Hood Community College. Jon worked with VR for the summer.

Successful Clients. These are individuals who over a minimum four-month period, had worked either part-time or full-time in a job for more than 90 consecutive days. This is the Federal standard that must be met in order to successfully close a person from the VR program.



John Finch, Warehouseman, Food Commodities Warehouse
Employed since 2/3/97 (with a break)
Disability: Addiction
How did VR Help? Guidance and putting me in touch with other resources that were available to me. I received an on-the-job training contract, vehicle repair, CPR training, and computer training.



Marena Florez, Registrar, Boys & Girls Club
Employed since 5/8/00
Disability: Addiction
How VR Helped: increased confidence and self-esteem, obtained stability in my life, supported me in getting my ODL back, and helped me with transportation problems. Marena enjoys working with the Boys & Girls Club. Their mission is to provide a positive, safe place for kids and teens to inspire and enable all young people to realize their full potential as productive and responsible caring citizens.

Lamont Brown, Groundskeeper & Custodian, Museum at Warm Springs
Employed since 03/00
Disability: Addiction
How VR Helped: I was jailed and a friend referred me to VR. VR helped me get the charges dropped. I have been sober and free of marijuana since May 1999. Each day makes my sobriety get easier. It took me 15 months to get my ODL back. I also run a lawn mowing business on the side called MowMo. VR also helped me with computer classes. I use the computers at work to change the room temperatures and control the heat pumps.



Sandy Henry, Secretary/Purchasing Agent, Warm Springs Police Department
Employed since 8/99
Disability: Addiction
How VR Helped: [They] Helped me with day-to-day problems at work and in my personal life. VR provided fuel, clothing, transportation and computer classes to help me maintain my job.

Jack Quinn, Bookkeeper, Unitel Inc., Portland
Employed since 4/00
Disability: Addiction
How did VR Help? Encouraged the opportunity and interest in office work and to pursue my hobbies. VR supported continuing education.



Walt Quinn, Private Janitorial Contractor
Employed since 1997
Disability: Addiction
How did VR Help? They helped me to realize the difference between an addictive path versus a get-out-of-life-what-I-want path. I enjoyed the talking more than anything else because that's what I needed most. There was a connection.



Lori Switzler, Senior Staff Accountant, Tribal Finance, pictured with Dr. Creelman
Second Term on VR Advisory Board
Employed since 11/97
Disability: Rheumatoid Arthritis
How did VR Help? Computer training at COCC, vehicle repair, on-the-job training contract, insurance, and professional office clothing. I also received support in dealing with my disability and how it effects my job. I appreciate the support of the staff and the program intent. I am glad VR is here to help others like me.



Marlon LeClaire, Press Operator, Warm Springs Composite Products
Employed since 3/98
Disability: Addiction
How did VR Help? Helped with GED, on-the-job training contract, and getting the job I have now. I am glad they were there to support me and give me guidance. They're really good People.



Randy Scott, Realty Technician
Employed since 1996
How did VR Help? I got back on my feet. I was incarcerated and was able to get a Work Release. VR helped me to get a chance to prove myself at the job by offering a "on-the-job" contract where they reimbursed the employer my wages at 100% the first month, 80% the second, and 50% the third. By the end of the reimbursement time, I proved that I could do the job, show up to work, and get it done. So I was hired after that.

Emma Smith, Secretary, Tribal Relations, Second Term on VR Advisory Board
Employed since 1997
Disability: Addiction
How did VR Help? Supported me, I am more confident, I've come to terms morally, I received help with clothing, fuel, vehicle repair, and have made new friendships.



VR Mission

The mission of the Vocational Rehabilitation program is to help Native Americans WITH DISABILITIES obtain, maintain, or become promoted in employment. The eligibility criteria are: 1) Be an enrolled member of a federally recognized Indian tribe. 2) Reside on the WS Indian Reservation or within a 65-mile radius. 3) Have a physical or mental disability that can be confirmed by a professional. 4) That disability must result in a

substantial impediment to employment. (Definition of a Substantial Impediment: Disability which impedes an individual's occupational performance by preventing or making very difficult his or her obtaining, retaining, or preparing for employment consistent with his or her capabilities and abilities.) If you are interested in the program, VR holds weekly Orientations on Monday at 3 p.m. Anyone interested in learning more about the program is invited to attend.

Thank you for success

The Vocational Rehabilitation program director, Tricia Sahme, would like to thank the following people for making the day a success: Jonathan Smith for working with the program during the summer and getting the Policy Manual updated. Jon also designed and ordered the T-Shirts, Magnets, and Pens. Jon will be returning to college majoring in computer sciences at Mt Hood Community College. Lucinda Jim for greeting our customers and helping at the Reception Desk. Lucinda is on assignment at VR until October and is supported by Work Force Development. Marcia Givens for answering the phones and recording messages. Laurel Wheeler for conducting the Tours, helping our customers feel welcomed, and keeping us all organized. Rhonda Atencio for distributing the Give-A-Way items and managing the Reception Desk, especially since she was not feeling well that day. Cecil Ballou for conducting the Orientations and providing a Q&A session for the participants. George Aguilar Jr for volunteering to answer questions and conducting Orientations. George also provided support and entertainment with his wonderful sense of humor and his ability to use "story telling" to demonstrate his points. George acts as program director during Tricia's absence. KWSO Radio for the public service announcements, Spilyay Tymoo for Publishing the event ahead of time, and Food Commodities Warehouse for letting us borrow their refrigerator to hold our food and refreshments. And lastly, all the people who attended and were interested in the program. Without you and your support, we wouldn't be here! You give us job satisfaction.

