

Aug. 31, 2018

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Acacia McGuire Anderson, Statewide Employment First Coordinator

Re: Employment First: VR In-Service

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

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A photo slideshow from the VR In-Service is at: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmoRBBrn>

VR holds two-day In-Service in Salem



Keynote speaker Bonnie Milletto with the In-Service host Clayton Rees at the 2018 event.

Photo: Andre Harboe

Vocational Rehabilitation held a two-day In-Service at the Salem Conference Center on Aug. 21-22.

More than 200 VR counselors and other staff from across the state gathered for two days of learning, sharing and networking.

VR Director Trina Lee introduced the VR Executive Leadership team. She also noted that, in 2020, the public VR program will be 100 years old. To prepare for the future, a vision for the VR program has been created nationwide. She said the Vision 2020 mission is that “VR is

driven by a commitment to people with disabilities and businesses at the intersection of the ability and the demand for talent.”

“Pete Karpa (VR Deputy Director) and I are committed to making these In-Services happen annually,” she said. “We need to commit to coming together for training, learning and an opportunity to share as we go through so many changes.”

More than 35 sessions were offered to VR counselors and staff during the two days. Sessions ranged from topics such as Reasonable Accommodations, VR Ethics, Visual Impairment, Working with Tribal Partners and Apprenticeships.

Staff from the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services' Employment First team led sessions on Serving People with More Significant Disabilities, Lane v. Brown Update, and Why Employment First?

At the Why Employment First? session, two self-advocates who experience I/DD came to tell about their employment journey. Stephen Potter and Steven Mendez both were in a sheltered workshop for many years, and were reluctant to leave. Through a conversation with ODDS Regional Specialist Micah Sischo, they told about their initial resistance regarding transitioning to community employment. Stephen Potter now works at Kilgore Blackman and Steven Mendez works at Parr Lumber.



ODDS Regional Specialist Micah Sischo (left) leads a Q&A with advocates Steve Potter (center) and Steven Mendez.

Photo: Andre Harboe

“I didn’t want to change at all, but I did change. And I love it,” Stephen Potter said.

Keynote speakers were John Evans, a former beneficiary of the Vocational Rehabilitation program who worked for 31 years for the state of Washington, and Bonnie Milletto, who worked on the team under the original Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the predecessor to the Workforce Innovation

and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Milletto is now a motivational speaker and author who led the crowd in some dynamic activities, while also sharing her personal story of growing up in foster care and facing adverse conditions.

“Do you ever wonder if you are doing enough for your clients? Do you ever wonder if you are not enough?” she asked. “I want you to know that you are amazing and the work you do is so important. It always boils down to one at a time and being present and there in the moment for that one person.”

At the end of the two days, awards were given out to honor VR counselors and staff. Award honorees were nominated by their peers.

The recipients for “URock Awards” were: Ron Barcikowski, Mark Mastoff, Lisa Catherwood, Saideh Harif-Kazemi, Lori Mashek, Kathy Eckhart-Mason, Deanna Hensley, Christy Kik, Rachellie George, Kathryn Stevens, Michelle Day , Cary Brock, Wendy Wall, Diane Ashley, Renata Beck, Bob Stevens, Jeff Sneddon, Clint deLongpre, Sheila Blain, Kris Collins, Emma Duncan and Leela Black.

Performance awards for highest rehabilitation rates went to the Springfield VR office and the Clackamas VR office received an honorable mention. Awards for eligibility went to Clackamas and Corvallis VR offices. Awards for retention went to Clackamas VR with an honorable mention to the Central Oregon VR office.