

Inside JEVS

Vol. 4 | Spring 2005

Direct Support Professionals

Recruitment, Retention, And Recognition of an Essential Workforce

They provide critical day-to-day support services that people of all ages, with any and all disabilities, must have. They are consummate multi-taskers we depend on for assistance with home management, health care, personal care, transportation, and more. Their work demands complex skills, ethical judgment, and the ability to create relationships of trust and mutual

respect. They are indispensable today and, as an aging society, crucial to our future. For their efforts, by and large, they are inadequately acknowledged, ineffectively supported, and insufficiently paid.

Despite the fact that quality Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are in high demand (Pennsylvania has over 250,000 consumers with mental retardation and mental illness and is the second grayest state), the DSP role is markedly undervalued.

(Full story continues on p.2)



Rebuilding Lives One Brick at a Time

Through **JEVS Home Maintenance and Repair Program**, Orleans Technical Institute in Northeast Philadelphia is literally equipping people with tools to help them rebuild their lives. For the past three years, the 12-session weekly course has taught homeowners a range of do-it-yourself skills and handy tips for properly and safely maintaining their homes.

Funded by grants from the city, state, the Philadelphia Housing Authority, and private foundations, the program targets homeowners with low to moderate incomes who need to tackle repairs and improvements from the inside out and prevent homes from falling into disrepair.

According to Bonnie Kaye, Director of Program Development at Orleans Tech, the course helps participants who don't have the money for upkeep and don't know about cost-saving measures to be better prepared for home ownership.

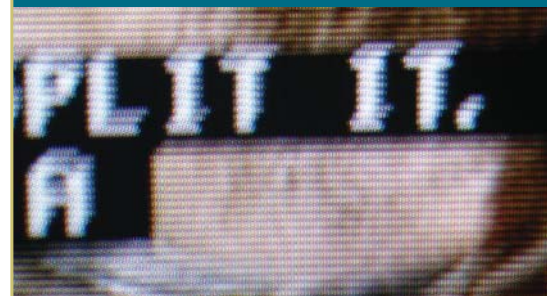
"We teach participants how to prepare for seasonal changes and make home modifications that can save them money," says Kaye. "For instance, they learn that insulating a home and fixing a leaky faucet can save hundreds on their utility bills."

About 70 percent of the participants are women, and a lot of them are single moms. "After completing the course, women tell me they feel empowered and find themselves doing things they never thought possible, and feel more independent as a result," says Kaye.

Approximately 350 homeowners have completed the course, and the response has been enthusiastic. As long as funding exists, the program will continue to empower homeowners with the knowledge and skills to improve their homes and lives.

For more information
Orleans Technical Institute • 215.728.4700

On The Inside



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I Was a DSP For a Day

*Reflections by Kristen Rantanen,
JEVS Vice President of Communications
and Public Affairs*

The modest duplex on a tree-lined street is home to five gentlemen. I arrive at 3 o'clock in time for afternoon routines. Brian, Frank, and John watch TV in their 2nd floor apartment while JEVS staff completes some chores.

We go out to dinner at Perkins and then to Target. The staff talks mostly about the rewards of their work. Their biggest challenge is "public misperception about our consumers" and "community integration"—specifically, neighborhood outings like the one we're on. I experience the range of reactions they're used to, from disgusted looks to a friendly Target cashier who asks what agency we're from and speaks directly to the men.

Back at the house, I hang out and do puzzles with Larry and a man affectionately called "Grandpa" who is 90. In their ground floor apartment, there are two large professional portraits of the roommates.

It's 11:30 p.m. when I get home, but I stay up to reflect. This is a family. Except, the staff is connected to the residents in a way that many real family members aren't. Seeing how "in tune" they are with the men, and how well they understand them is powerful. I'd learned some of the men have no contact with relatives. But, clearly, they have a family life many would envy.

(Continued from p.1)

Direct Support Professionals

This may stem from the widespread, untrue belief that direct care workers require little preparation or experience and are, therefore, easily replaced. The failure to define and reward these workers as professionals and to promote direct service as a real career path makes it hard to attract and sustain quality people who will make a lasting commitment to the field.

The Price of Quality

In Philadelphia, most DSPs earn on the average \$8.50 per hour. Some have health insurance, some don't. A few have retirement benefits, many don't. Many have chosen direct support service because they find the work meaningful and personally fulfilling. But the necessity to earn a self-sustaining living for themselves and their families often forces them to move on to better-paying jobs. There is an annual turnover rate of 57 to 80 percent in the direct support workforce. One can imagine the negative impact on consumers and families of disrupted relationships as support staff come and go.

Marian Baldini, Chief Operating Officer of Home, Health & Work at JEVS, sums up the situation succinctly: "Quality staff equals quality service. The people who do this highly personal work are very special. As a nation, we need to recognize them for what they contribute to individuals, families, and all of our society and do everything possible to make their career choice viable."

What Is Being Done

Clearly, more funding from all resources is needed to enhance wages. But, a number of other national, state, and local level strategies are being implemented to re-define and reinforce the DSP workforce. Many human

service providers are making gains in staff quality and stability by empowering DSPs through participatory management structures, professional development efforts, and continuing education.

Current recruitment efforts include: introducing people to direct support careers through "School-to-Work" and volunteer programs; agency tours for youth groups, guidance counselors, and career placement specialists; and incentive programs for existing employees to refer friends and acquaintances as job candidates.

Retention strategies include mentoring by seasoned co-workers, improving supervisory skills of DSP managers for DSPs who often feel they are "cast adrift" without support, and networking opportunities for those who feel isolated or that they are working "in a vacuum." Linking agency training with educational and career advancement opportunities, developing a competency-based certification program, and creating flexible benefit programs are other initiatives that may lead to a valued professional credential and wage increments.

JEVS is a member of The Philadelphia Alliance, a local collaboration of 42 agencies working to develop public policy and funding for mental health/mental retardation consumers and others. The Alliance's annual Direct Care Support Conference delivers an opportunity for DSPs across the region to exchange information and includes an awards ceremony honoring individuals for outstanding service. "The bottom line is, we need funding to pay people adequately," says Executive Director Tim Wilson, "but our Conference is a highlight of our efforts to provide the recognition, status, and appreciation of DSPs they deserve."

Technology Abounds

JEVS Training Helps the Deaf See a Promising Future

Imagine being unable to enjoy a Broadway show...denied the experience of a summer blockbuster on the big screen...excluded from a captivating poetry reading or college lecture. These situations are familiar to some 28 million Americans, 10 percent of the population, who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. But thanks to continuing legislation and advancements in computer technology, those with hearing disabilities are celebrating the "sound" of victory.

The advent of captioning has opened a new world of education, employment, and entertainment to individuals who've felt isolated for so long. A major crisis like September 11th further demonstrates the importance of television captioning to provide around-the-clock news and emergency information to individuals with hearing disabilities.

But captions don't magically appear on their own. The technology requires a highly trained, real person to "write" on a steno machine, and the information—including dialogue, narration, and sound effects—is instantaneously converted through computer software into readable text. FCC requirements

established by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 mandate that by January 2006 all new broadcast, satellite, and cable programming must be captioned, which has created pressure to produce a qualified workforce of captioning professionals.

Keeping Up With the Demand

According to the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), a leading advocacy and information organization for the captioning profession, there is a shortage of skilled professionals in this unique field. To help increase the "supply," JEVS' **Orleans Technical Institute** in Center City recently received its second captioning training grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Orleans Tech has the only training program in the tri-state region with a curriculum approved per the high standards of the NCRA. Students go through a rigorous minimum 28-month training, similar to that of court reporters, and graduate "writing" 225 words per minute.

The process of translating spoken words, however, goes well beyond the familiar closed-captioning that appears on television programs. Graduates can apply their skills to a similar interpreting service that encourages greater participation

in activities of daily living: Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). With this technology, a person who doesn't use sign language or has a limited ability to "read lips" can sit alongside a CART reporter who provides instant word-for-word speech-to-text on a computer monitor or other display.

CART services comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 in helping to provide deaf and hard-of-hearing people with opportunity, self-sufficiency, and choice. Therefore, these services are becoming more prevalent in classrooms, businesses, courtrooms, conventions, events, or anywhere access to communication is needed.

Recognizing the growth in assistive technologies, Orleans Technical Institute graduate Terry Tumolillo founded a captioning company called VoicePrint, Inc., the first of its kind in the Philadelphia area. Her company works with local colleges and universities to provide live, "in-person" CART technology that allows a student with hearing loss to participate fully in the classroom. The technology also enhances literacy skills of non-deaf populations and helps non-English speaking individuals to learn the language.

For more information
Orleans Technical Institute • 215.854.1853

Average income for Broadcast Captioners, who work for television stations or captioning companies, and CART Reporters, who supply communication access services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, is between \$45,000 and \$75,000+

Source: National Court Reporters Association

The Inside Track

For more information Development Department • 215.854.1827 • On-line donation form at www.jevs.org/supportjev.aspx

JEVS is fortunate to have many generous friends. The following lists include individual, public, corporate, and foundation donors who supported our programs during January 1 to April 1, 2005.

List may be incomplete. JEVS apologizes for any inadvertent errors or omissions.

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The campaigns that these individual donors supported include: The Friends Campaign, Board of Directors Campaign, JEVS Scholarship Fund, Facilities Improvement Fund, The Franklin C. Ash Scholarship Fund, and the Isabelle Schneider Life Enrichment Fund.



Donor Profile

In March of 2002, with guidance from the late Isabelle Schneider and her family, a bequest was made to JEVS to create the Isabelle Schneider Life Enrichment Fund. This fund provides cultural, recreational, and social enrichment for JEVS' clients with mental illness, mental retardation, and varying physical disabilities.

This generous gift has made a substantial impact on JEVS' ability to provide specialized programming to clients. The fund supports activities such as movement therapy, visual and creative arts, music and pet therapy, horticulture classes, and cultural trips.

JEVS continues to raise money to support this very important fund and the activities it has generated. At JEVS' Strictly Business event in October 2004, posters of the "Ability to Fly" mural painted on the façade of JEVS Community Collaborative were sold, netting more than \$100. This past March, JEVS raised nearly \$900 at a craft fair that featured crafts created by consumers of several JEVS programs.

For more information on this fund or to set up a special fund to benefit JEVS' clients, please contact the JEVS Development Department at 215.854.1827.

Pictured above: *The Schneider Family*

T: Mark, Bridget, Jodi, Eric

B: Carl, Mary Ellen, Cara, Debbie, and Adam

The following individuals designated JEVS as the recipient of their fall 2004 United Way Workplace Campaign gift:

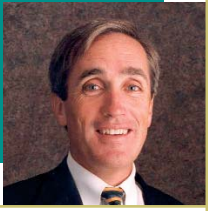
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United Way Donor Choice Number: 75

JEVS partners with the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and the United Way of Southeastern PA.



Save the Date!



John J. Brennan

Strictly Business

Strictly Business 2005 will be held on November 3 at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel. Chairman and CEO of The Vanguard Group John J. Brennan will keynote the event.

Strictly Business is an event that honors businesses that are contributing to the health of the region's economy through a commitment to workforce development. It also recognizes those employers who have developed relationships with JEVS to facilitate hiring and retention of trained, hard-working, and dedicated employees.

Proceeds from Strictly Business fund scholarships to JEVS' vocational assessment, job readiness, skills training, and career management services for individuals in need.

For sponsorship or ticket information, contact Katherine Shinholster at 215.854.1827.

Donor Levels

\$5,000 Sponsor will receive 8 seats (one table), table sign, and listing in the invitation, event program, JEVS newsletter and annual report, event slide show, and pre/post event publicity.

\$2,500 Benefactor will receive 8 seats (one table), table sign, and listing in the invitation, event program, JEVS newsletter and annual report, and event slide show.

\$1,000 Underwriter will receive 6 seats, table sign, and listing in the event program, JEVS newsletter and annual report.

\$500 Patron will receive 4 seats and listing in the event program, JEVS newsletter and annual report.

\$250 Contributor will receive 2 seats and listing in the event program, JEVS newsletter and annual report.

Ways to Give

On-Line Donations

Interested in making a gift to JEVS? JEVS now has the ability to accept on-line donations through its website at www.jevs.org. If you would like to make a donation using our secure on-line payment form, simply visit our website and click the online payment form. Once you submit the form you will be taken to VeriSign's site to securely process your donation. You will be

returned to JEVS' website when the transaction is complete. The information provided on the form will be used only by JEVS and its agents to process your donation.

Bequests

Please remember JEVS in your will. For more information on making a bequest to JEVS, contact the JEVS Development Department at 215.854.1827.

Grant Award

With a recent grant of \$21,000 from the Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board, **JEVS Retail Skills Center** will provide training and employment services to 30 at-risk, 16 to 21-year-olds enrolled in the summer 2005 Montgomery County Youth Empowerment Program. This program is an intensive 30-hour work readiness and interview preparation curriculum, beginning in early May and ending in mid-June, that leads to quick attachment to jobs for select young adults. By the completion of the six workshops, students will have learned fundamental employment skills, completed a "work portfolio" (which will provide the connection between classroom learning, employment, and real-life applications), earned a Certificate of Completion, entered into employment, and gained an opportunity to continue employment through the summer of 2005.

Through this program, the Retail Skills Center provides students with the opportunity to explore various careers, learn job readiness best practices and valuable customer service skills, gain work experience, and develop good work habits that will help them achieve throughout their lives.

To learn more, call
JEVS Retail Skills Center
at 610.337.7449.

The official registration and financial information of the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

More Than Just a Paycheck

Employment Works For People with Disabilities

Work. Some people define this as a dreaded, routine activity that takes up one-third of their day. To others, it merely means the thing you do that pays the bills. But for JEVs client Anthony Blackson, the ability to work—and be successful at it—is an achievement like no other.

As a long-time Eagle Scout, 36-year-old Anthony knows what it means to be a productive member of his community. *To help other people at all times* is part of his oath. He embraces each day with energy, purpose, and can-do spirit. As for his disability, Anthony shrugs it off saying, “I have CP [cerebral palsy], but I don’t have time for that.”

While it seems that nothing can slow him down, one roadblock kept stopping Anthony in his tracks: keeping his job. Anthony admits that bad habits and trouble with following rules were his downfalls. He knew he needed help “to work out these issues.”

Anthony checked out various agencies in the region, looking for a structured yet compassionate environment that would put him on the right path. He selected **JEVS Employment Network** in Germantown. Here, individuals with disabilities can benefit from a wide range of pre-employment curriculum, career exploration, and job placement services.

“Anthony came to us needing to work on patience and listening skills, as well as developing a solid work ethic,” said Ilene King, JEVs Program Director.

“We really focus on developing these kinds of life skills so that our participants feel confident about themselves and the notion of work.”

Empowering Employment

JEVS Employment Network follows the “supported employment” model by preparing individuals for community integration and a smooth transition into competitive employment. The program provides an educational, empowering environment where participants are recognized for their abilities, potential, and interests, and receive the individualized attention and supports they want and need.

Prior to 2003, this 46-year-old program was a “sheltered workshop” known as the JEVs Work Adjustment Center. In addition to community outings and volunteer opportunities, the Center provided vocational rehabilitation services through work evaluation tools (work samples), paid piecework, and supportive services. For many years, this model was viewed as an ideal work setting for persons with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. However, the environment was segregated, stagnant, and didn’t allow individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

“The new Employment Network is a terrific program that operates on the premise that people can work and can be employed, rather than that people can’t,” said Susan Shull, a Program Analyst for Philadelphia Mental Retardation Services, which reports that about 700 individuals in community integrated employment earned close to \$3 million in FY2004.



Job Developer Camille reviews job openings with Anthony.

Program Continuum

JEVS Employment Network provides a comprehensive system of employment supports and services:

Life Skills

Teaches individuals about personal care, socialization, and other skills to ensure independence at work and in the community.

Pre-Employment

Helps individuals build positive work habits by addressing topics like attendance, punctuality, and proper attire.

Community Based Instruction

Offers individuals career exploration and on-the-job experience through rotations/internships.

Job Development

Provides individuals with the tools to further explore career avenues, make informed choices, and find the right job.

Community Integrated Employment

Places individuals into a paid position with a job coach who assists with initial on-the-job training and effective performance.

On-Site Co-Op

Provides educational/training experiences in food service and craft design to develop transferable job skills.

An Important Milestone

While JEVS Employment Network provides a pathway for individuals to develop interpersonal skills and work behaviors, not everyone is in Anthony Blackson's shoes. Many have never experienced the joy of working, of receiving a paycheck, or achieving community inclusion. Therefore, the program allows each participant or "employment candidate" to experience a continuum of services at his or her own pace. When an individual is ready to take that exciting first step into community integrated employment, a staff member works side-by-side with that person to establish vocational goals and opportunities.

For Anthony, taking advantage of all that the program had to offer paid off. After much hard work, improvement and maturity were evident. Anthony was ready to get back to the workforce. With dedicated assistance from Job Developer Camille Grubbs, Anthony determined where he'd like to be.

"I took care of my grandmother at a nursing home and that really inspired me to want to help others. I had always wanted to work with the fire department, but that wouldn't work, so a hospital is the next best thing."

With the skills Anthony gained at JEVS Employment Network, he's now confident in his abilities to maintain employment and achieve success.

"I don't look at myself as a handicapped person. I just see myself working for a long time."

For more information

JEVS Employment Network • 215.848.6000

Mentoring Helps Turn Career Compass

Citizens Bank will soon participate in a new mentoring program created by **JEVS Career Strategies** that empowers and encourages employees to give their time, effort, and support to one another. In the Career Compass Mentorship Program, senior managers serve as mentors to employees. The relationship is mutually beneficial. While helping a colleague develop talent, mentors improve communication and networking skills, and mentees gain insights into their strengths and developmental needs within a supportive environment. Citizens Bank also reaps the benefits of instituting a mentorship program, as mentoring helps with long-term retention, establishes continual learning as a company value, creates a vehicle for sharing knowledge, and ensures participants know which direction their "career compass" is pointing.

For more information • 215.854.1885

Keeping Seniors Right At Home

The importance of senior citizens retaining an independent lifestyle is the driving force behind a new **JEVS Supports for Independence** home assessment program, Home Modifications. The goal of the assessment is to assist an individual in maintaining activities of daily living. Initially, an occupational therapist meets with a client to determine each individual's daily routines, interests, and challenges. Once a home is scanned for safety risks, home modifications are recommended, and funds are provided for simple modifications. To reduce the risk of an accident, changes can be made to address potentially dangerous situations. There is an increased interest in keeping elderly people living independently, and safely, in their own homes; this program is one step towards making this interest a reality.

For more information • 267.298.1300

Employing Those with Disabilities is a Win-Win

JEVS received a grant from AHEDD, a local organization serving as a catalyst to promote employment of people with disabilities, to inform young people with disabilities about the federal laws and benefits which can assist in their transition from school to work, and the tangible benefits to employers who hire these youths. JEVS job developers attended "Transition Fairs" at local high schools and hosted sessions at various CareerLinks to offer information about paths to employment, the impact of employment on medical coverage, and Work Opportunity Tax Credits for employers. JEVS currently operates a broad range of vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs for those with mental illness and mental retardation.

For more information • 215.629.5627

1845 Walnut Street, 7th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103-4707

JEVS provides a broad range of services, from health and rehabilitation to skills training and job placement, that help people from all walks of life across the Greater Philadelphia community achieve their personal and employment goals.

Helping People Help Themselves Since 1941
Learn more at www.jevs.org

Inside JEVS is produced by the JEVS Communications and Public Affairs Dept.
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please contact us: 215.854.1800 or insidejevs@jev.org

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Inside JEVS is the winner of the 2003 Apex Award for Publication Excellence

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From The Inside Out

The work of Direct Support Professionals (DSP) is the topic of our feature story in this issue of Inside JEVS. JEVS, like many human service agencies, relies on the hard work and dedication of these employees to meet our mission and provide all of our customers with the high-quality services they want and deserve. Whether they work in community homes, clinics, or vocational or day programs, these workers are at the heart of what we do. Frankly, JEVS couldn't exist without them.

While we do our best at JEVS to provide fair wages, benefits, and a dynamic work environment, there is no denying that DSPs have hard—and sometimes thankless—jobs. Limited public funding for programs for those who need services provided by DSPs puts an additional strain on employers and workers alike. There is no easy solution to the challenges of systemic under-funding and increasing demand for services provided by DSPs, but the first step is to acknowledge the tremendous contribution these workers make every day—and to continue to advocate for their needs and the needs of those they serve.

Jay Spector • JEVS President & CEO