

GVRA History: A Century of Collaboration, Growth and Change

Wednesday, October 11, 2023
Mike Shadix, Librarian/Historian



1920 – Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act becomes Law

Creates the State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Georgia officially joins in August.

Fort E. Land was the first supervisor of vocational rehabilitation.

A deaf man became the first client receiving training to operate a linotype machine.

Five clients rehabilitated in the first year of operation.



Jobs for the Handicapped!



1936 - Randolph- Sheppard Act

First Vending Stand in Georgia.
Clyde Archer operated this vending stand in the old Atlanta Post Office from 1936 until he retired in 1954.

The Business Enterprise Program opened its 200th vending stand in 1969.



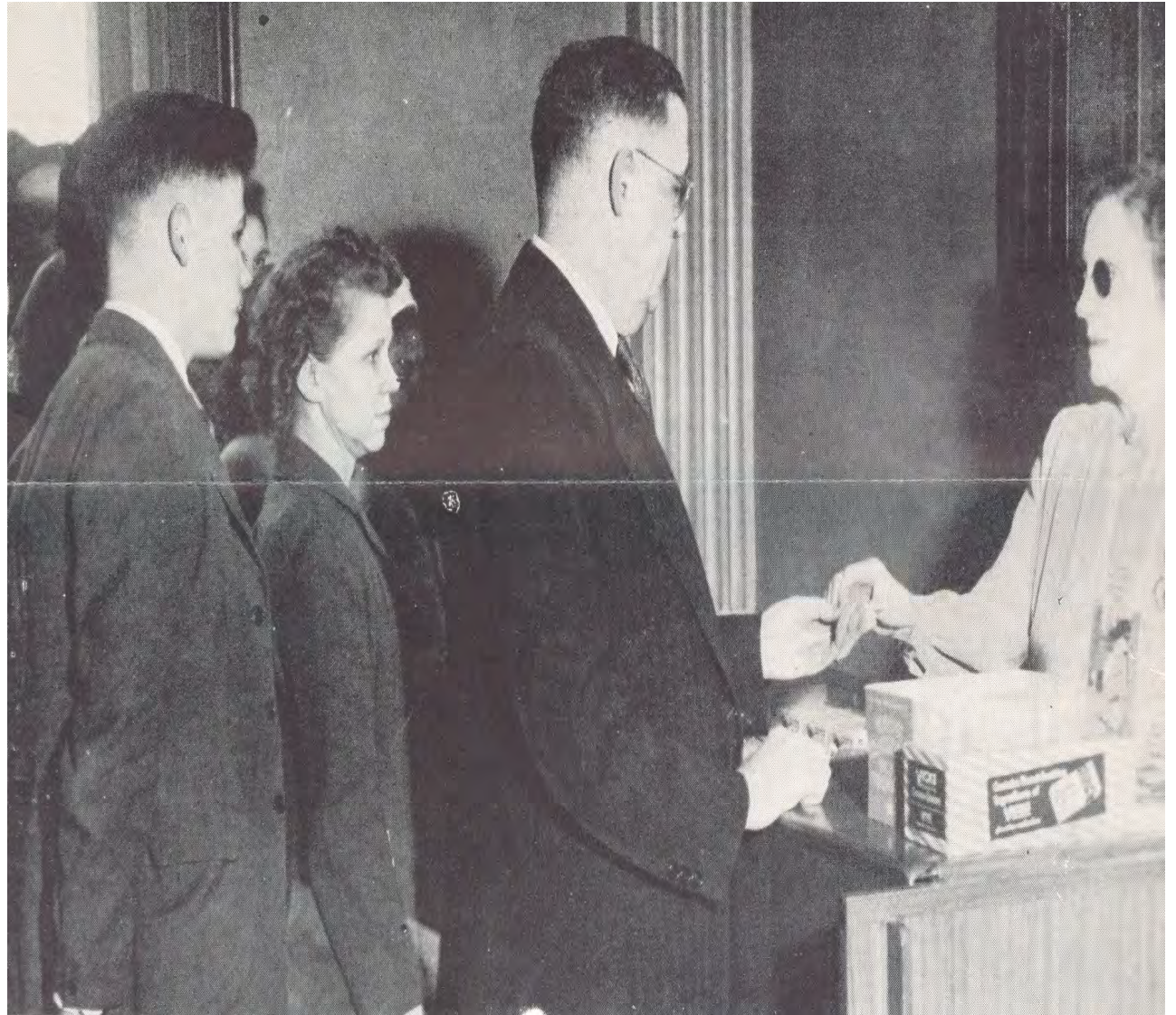
1954 – Archer
Retires After 18
Years of Service



1936 – Second Blind Vendor, Pearl Dozier

Lagrange Post Office.

The third vending stand opened in
the DeKalb County Court House.



1937 – Paul Barrett becomes Georgia Director

Worked for passage of Barden-LaFollette reforms of 1943.

Established “Rehab Clinic” initiative to funnel people with disabilities into war production industries.

Elected president of the National Rehabilitation Association in 1948.

Served until 1955.



1944 – First “Rehab Clinics” held around the state.

First clinic held at the state capital.

1,500 people with disabilities
employed from clinics held during
this first year.

Other states in the southeast and
across the nation adopted the
technique.



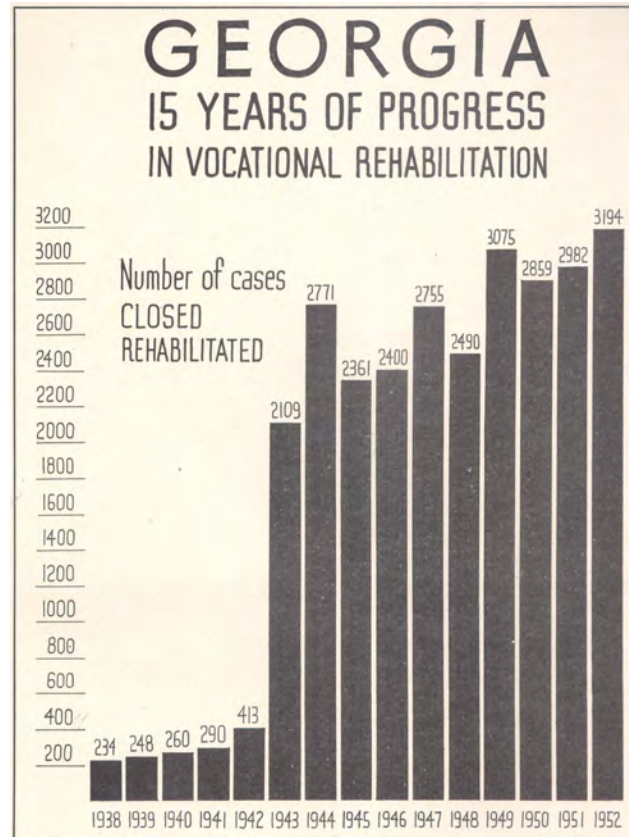
1944 –
More Rehab
Clinic Photos



1943 – Barden-LaFollette Act

Allowed vocational rehabilitation funding to be used for physical restoration, for the mentally ill and for those with mental disabilities.

Greatly swelled rehabilitation programs across the country.



1949 – Georgia Industries for the Blind Plant Opens in Bainbridge

The second plant in Griffin opened in 1953

GIB now operates satellite service centers in Warner Robins and Pendergrass.

Bainbridge plant established in an old Army Air Base.

Operated by the Welfare Department and a board of managers until 1972.



Griffin Plant



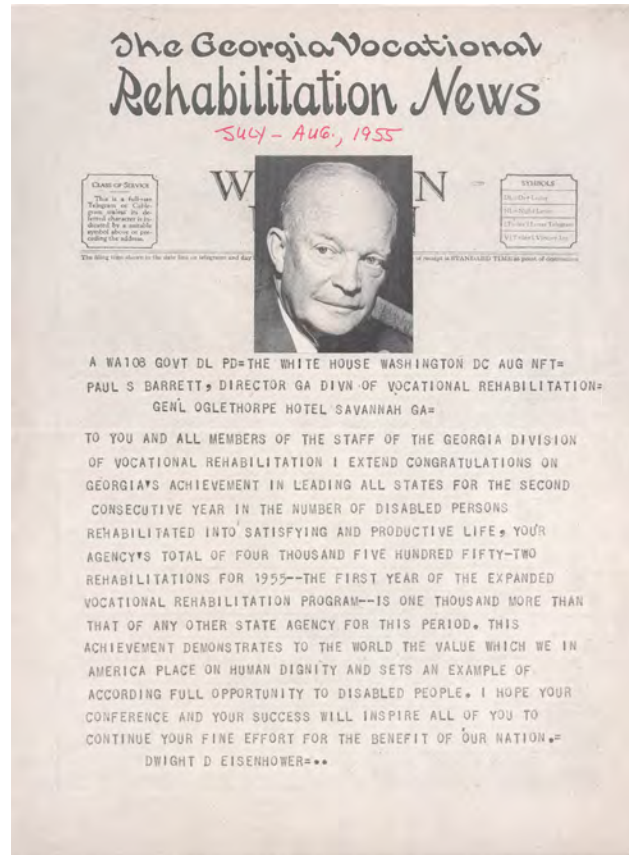
Bainbridge Plant

Early Images of the Bainbridge Plant



GVRA #1 In Total Number of Persons Rehabilitated

1969 – First year that GVRA reported more than 10,000 individuals rehabilitated.



1946
1954
1955
1956

1955 – A.P. Jarrell becomes Georgia Director

Managed the new medical restoration services made possible by the Barden-LaFollette Act.

Many new facilities constructed during his tenure.

Elected president of the NRA in 1964

Served until 1967



1963 – Evaluation Center for the Deaf Opens

New building was an addition to the vocational training building at the Georgia School for the Deaf in Cave Spring.

By 1970 the program here was being called the Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center.



Mid 1980s –
Cave Spring
Center moves
into old dorms
of the Georgia
School for the
Deaf.



Built in the early 1960s, these buildings were the home of Cave Spring Center from the mid 1980s until the new facility was completed in 2012.

Cave Spring Center, c1990



2012 – New
Cave Spring
Center Facility
Dedicated



1965 – Dedication of the Georgia Rehabilitation Center

The facility was completed in 1964.
The first students were admitted in
June of that year.



1965 – More Images of the GRC Dedication



Governor Carl Sanders

1964 – First GRC Students

Both young women had
suffered from polio.



Glenda Faye Myers of LaGrange



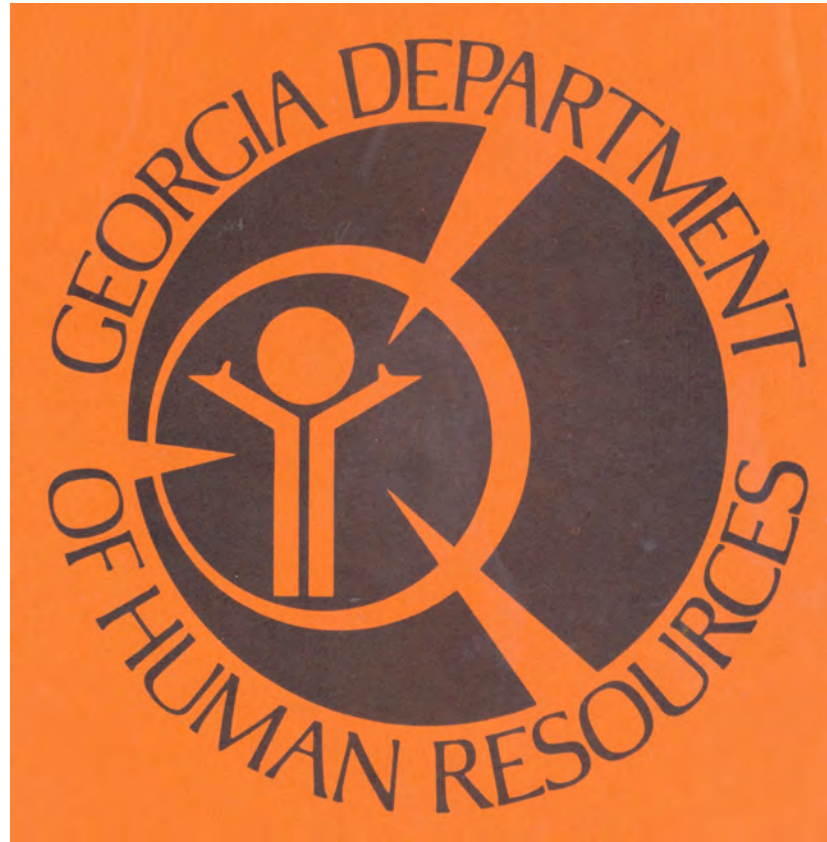
Linda Meeks of Vidalia

GRC Students

Christmas, 1965



1972 – GVRA
moved into the
Department of
Human
Resources



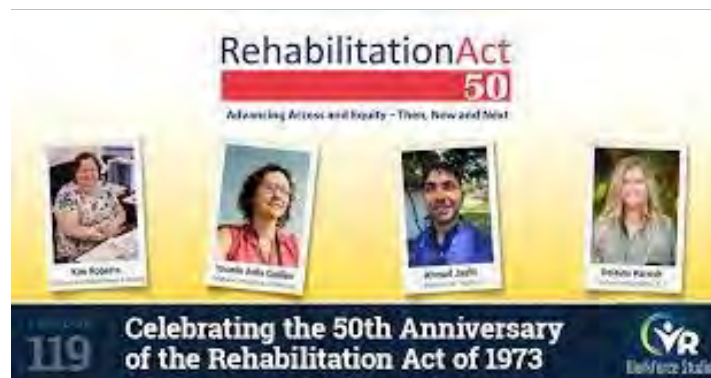
1973 – Rehabilitation Act

Title V establishes civil rights for people with disabilities.

Focuses vocational rehabilitation services on the most severely disabled.

Section 504 requires all federally funded programs and services to be accessible to people with disabilities.

2023 is the 50th anniversary of this legislation.



1974 – GVRA
Assumes
Operation of the
Georgia Warm
Springs
Foundation



1980 – GRC &
the Foundation
Hospital
become RWSIR



1996-RWS
Dedicates
CTR/Camp
Dream



2000 – GVRA
moved to the
Department of
Labor



2011 –
Opening of
the Roosevelt
School



The Roosevelt School



2012 – GVRA Becomes Stand-Alone Agency

“Working to achieve
employment and
independence for
Georgians with
disabilities.”



2014/2015 – RWS Medical Rehabilitation Services Transferred to Augusta University Health System

AUHS merged with Wellstar Health System this year.



2015 – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Aligns vocational rehabilitation program with other workforce development programs in each state.

Made improvements to the one-stop-shop concept put forward in the Workforce innovation Act of 1998.

Emphasized pre-employment services to young people with disabilities to launch them toward career success.



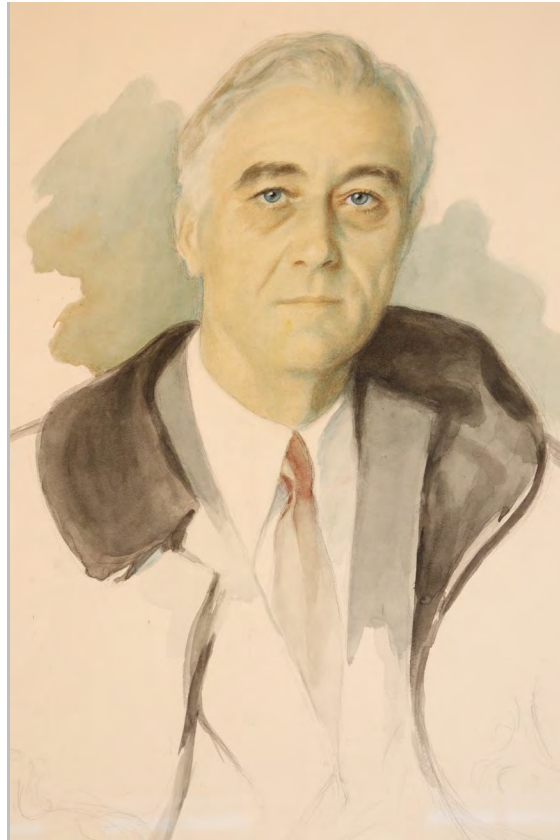
2023 – Looking To The Future

"The Warm Springs of the past to the Warm Springs of the future"

"The GVRA of the past to the GVRA of the future."



Inspiration



“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.”





BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

A PROCLAMATION

**DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTH**

WHEREAS: Workplaces welcoming the talents of people with disabilities are a critical part of our efforts to build an inclusive community and strong economy here in Georgia; and

WHEREAS: The State of Georgia seeks to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities. The state recognizes the importance of the perspectives of individuals living with disabilities, and calls upon employers, schools, and others to recognize that people with disabilities are up to the task throughout the year; and

WHEREAS: Activities during this month will reinforce the value and talent that people with disabilities add to our workplaces and communities, and affirm the State of Georgia's commitment to an inclusive community; and

WHEREAS: The history of National Disability Employment Awareness Month traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week of October "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month; and

WHEREAS: Americans of all abilities must have access to good, safe jobs, and including different perspectives in problem-solving situations leads to better solutions; now

THEREFORE: I, BRIAN P. KEMP, Governor of the State of Georgia, do hereby proclaim October 2023, as DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH in Georgia.

In witness thereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Executive Department to be affixed this 28th day of August in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three.

GOVERNOR

ATTEST

CHIEF OF STAFF



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRS) Board Meeting

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Chairman Tom Wilson



GVRA



Chairman's Welcome

- Welcome and Remarks
- Roll Call and Agenda

Consent Agenda

- Previous Board Meeting Minutes Approval
- Budget Report
- Completed Strategic Plan

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
August 9, 2023
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
Roosevelt Warm Springs Vocational Rehabilitation Residential Campus
6135 Roosevelt Highway
Warm Springs, Georgia 31830**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chair)
Faye Perdue (Vice Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Craig Camuso
Suzanne Dooley (attended virtually)
Louise Hill
Vincent Martin
Jane McCall
Johnathan Taylor (attended virtually)
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance, and the meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. The Chairman asked Dr. Bob Patterson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Warm Springs, to deliver the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Wilson introduced a motion to approve the agenda, Vice Chair Perdue seconded the motion, and the board unanimously approved the agenda.

Consent Agenda

The Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 budgets, as well as the minutes from the May 10, 2023, GVRS board meeting were unanimously approved.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports:

Executive Director Report – Executive Director Chris Wells

- Executive Director Wells recognized the following special guests and thanked them for attending: Congressman Drew Ferguson; State Representative Debbie Buckner; Mark Butler, Executive Director of the Three Rivers Regional Commission; and Steve Stanfield, Roosevelt Warm Springs Development Fund.
- Executive Director Wells provided updates regarding the agency's mission, vision, and values.
- He discussed strategic planning objectives including improved recruitment and retention; continual process improvement; improved service delivery; enhanced partnerships; and investments in infrastructure.

MEETING MINUTES OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD

August 9, 2023

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- Executive Director Wells touched on key initiatives, including the Disability Innovation Fund and the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE). He announced other initiatives, including revamped residential services, which are imminent through a partnership with the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC); a restrictive policy initiative that removes restrictive policies including those that are based on financial need; a partnership with the Shepherd Center to transition clients from Shepherd into VR; and the second year of an initiative that provides a dedicated GVRA counselor to the Georgia Academy for the Blind.
- Executive Director Wells provided updates on other key initiatives, including Georgia Pathways to Coverage, which offers Medicaid coverage to Georgians between the ages of 19 and 64 who have a household income of up to 100% of the federal poverty level, and who are not otherwise eligible for traditional Medicaid.
- Executive Director Wells discussed two educational partnerships, one with the Bobby Dodd Bridge Academy and the other with the Tommy Nobis Center.
- He shared information about prospective initiatives, including the Disability Innovation Fund/Pathways that involved GVRA's application for a second grant in collaboration with the Centers for Independent Living, Georgia Department of Education, and local school systems to offer pre-vocational rehabilitation services to middle and high school students.
- Executive Director Wells also mentioned other prospective initiatives, including Project Search, which is fully funded by GVRA; and the IPSE Grant, which would increase funding through a federal match with adjustments that align with vocational services requirements.
- He addressed agency challenges, including education and training; balancing pre-vocational rehabilitation services; and balancing local education agency needs.

Roosevelt Warm Springs Updates – Residential Director, Dennis Medders

- Director Medders introduced Roosevelt 2.0, an initiative to increase the number of clients served.
- He stated RWS will be a post-secondary option for any qualified student.
- He confirmed that RWS offers industry-recognized certifications.
- Director Medders expanded upon the following educational pathways, offering examples of jobs that graduates may obtain once they complete the pathway: 1) Hospitality, 2) Certified Nursing Assistant, 3) Auto Detailing, 4) CVS/Retail, 5) Logistics/Warehouse, and 6) Low voltage wiring.
- He indicated additional pathways coming to RWS include 1) CVS/Pharmacy Technician, 2) Heavy Equipment Operator, and 3) Landscaping Maintenance and Design.

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD**

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GVRA Experience – Sam Armas, Summer Internship Program

- GVRA summer intern Sam Armas discussed how he learned about GVRA, and how the agency has made an impact on his life.
- Armas was born with Spina bifida; he underwent fetal surgery to limit the severity, but he was still disabled after the surgery.
- He participated in wheelchair basketball for 13 years before attending Auburn University. While at Auburn, he was a starter on the college’s wheelchair basketball team and eventually was named captain.
- Armas has competed internationally in wheelchair basketball as a member of Team USA.
- He recently graduated magna cum laude from Auburn University.
- Armas hopes to return to GVRA as a full-time employee.

Old Business/New Business

- Chairman Wilson announced the upcoming GVRB Board Meeting on October 11, 2023. The meeting will be held in Perry at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter. GVRA is the presenting sponsor that day, so it is designated “GVRA Day at the Fair.”

Public Comment

- Chairman Wilson asked members of the audience to stand and be recognized.
- The following individuals identified themselves: Congressman Drew Ferguson; State Representative Debbie Buckner; Mark Butler, Executive Director of the Three Rivers Regional Commission; Steve Stanfield, Roosevelt Warm Springs Development Fund; Carolyn McKinley, President of the Meriwether County Chamber of Commerce; Kandy Westbrook, Heard County Schools; Kitty Crawford, Troup County; Tamika Brown, Troup County; Dr. Bob Patterson, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Warm Springs; Ruth Nash, Mayor of Gay, Georgia; Greg Teems, Cave Spring Campus; Rhonda Denton, Meriwether County Family Connection; Debron Walker, Eleanor Roosevelt School; Jenna Dunaway, Thomaston-Upson Schools; Laura Gower, Congressman Drew Ferguson’s office; Dawn Woodard, Meriwether County Schools; Robert “Al” Griffin, Superintendent of the Meriwether County Board of Education; Tonya Waller, Meriwether County Schools; and Cathie Wilson, Chairman Wilson’s wife.

Adjournment

- Chairman Wilson called for a motion to adjourn, Vice Chair Perdue seconded the motion, and the board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
August 9, 2023
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The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the August 9, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on October 11, 2023.

Tom Wilson, Chair

Date

Sandy Adams, Secretary

Date

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency

FY 2024 Program Based Budget

Program Name	FY 2023 Expenditures	FY 2024 Current Budget			
		State	Federal	Other	Total
Business Enterprise Program	\$2,925,020	\$326,141	\$2,443,269	-	\$2,769,410
Departmental Administration	9,535,556	2,436,787	7,846,048	284,597	10,567,432
Disability Adjudication Services	57,945,139	-	66,908,724	-	66,908,724
Georgia Industries for the Blind	5,010,339	-	-	4,365,888	4,365,888
Vocational Rehabilitation	70,390,121	23,625,421	69,425,542	5,063,038	98,114,001
Total	\$145,806,175	\$26,388,349	\$146,623,583	\$9,713,523	\$182,725,455



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency FY 2024 Budget Comparison

GVRA	Total Expenditures	Current Budget	Percent of Budget
300-Personal Services	\$11,912,560	\$90,204,873	13%
301-Operating Expenses	1,639,734	6,297,731	26%
303-Vehicle Purchases	76,323	0	%
304-Equipment	0	176,754	%
305-Computer Charges	593,581	5,077,689	12%
306-Real Estate Rentals	1,370,578	7,720,942	18%
307-Telecommunications	201,417	2,354,998	9%
309-Capital Outlay	202,819	0	%
312-Contractual Services	809,330	13,875,564	6%
314-Transfers	0	135,000	%
315-Grants and Benefits	686,650	3,370,049	20%
319-Other	577,594	664,478	87%
320-DAS CE/ME	1,639,881	21,060,000	8%
321-VR Case Services	2,521,030	31,787,377	8%
Total Expenditures	\$22,231,497	\$182,725,455	12%



Georgia Vocational
Rehabilitation Agency

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY2024 – 2027

INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) helps individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment by connecting them with services.

Every fiscal year state agencies must reflect on their past strategic plans and develop new goals and strategies the agency hopes to accomplish in the next four fiscal years. In order to accomplish this task, GVRA had their FY 2024 strategic planning meeting. During the meeting, leadership and key staff members at GVRA went over their vision, mission, and values, and considered strategic goals for the next four years.

Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION STATEMENT

We are building a client-focused agency that partners with the community to expand opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.

MISSION STATEMENT

Serve Georgians with disabilities to empower them to live independent lives.

VALUES



Collaborative

Empowering decisions through strong partnerships, active engagement, and teamwork.



Innovation

Seeking continuous growth and improvement through creative solutions, empowerment, and participation.



Compassion

Demonstrating humanity through listening and action.



Service

Providing a quality and meaningful experience to the individuals we serve and support.



Integrity

Showing a commitment to honesty and transparency in doing what is best for our clients, customers, teammates, and community.



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Statewide facilities/infrastructure
- Diverse staff
- Adaptable/flexible
- Dedicated staff
- Balanced talent
- New energy/ideas
- Target (better than ever)
- Strong fiscally
- One mission
- Technology
- Funding
- Customer care

WEAKNESSES

GVRA's current workforce, as of July 1, 2023, consists of 810 employees, compared to 1,170 employees on July 1, 2020, with a cumulative turnover rate of 30%. The average tenure of GVRA employees is 14 years. During this same period, GVRA conducted exit interviews with 156 separated employees. **gathered exit interviews for 156 separated employees,** and 68% responded that they would be willing to work for GVRA again.

The factors contributing to the loss of GVRA's workforce, include an agency-wide reorganization that eliminated noncritical positions; the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a significant number of GVRA employees electing early retirement; and a volatile workforce on the heels of the pandemic.

Although GVRA has increased the salaries of all employees an average of 30%, the agency continues to struggle to compete with private sector and federal employers in terms of competitive wages, especially in the counselor and adjudicator job series.

To address the retention concerns, the agency has established an enterprise training manager and individual training teams dedicated to delivering training initiatives to GVRA's two largest programs. GVRA has also identified multiple strategies for employee development.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leveraging technology
- Increase outreach
- Recruitment
- Increase client base
- Build retention
- Change management
- Partnerships
- Internal/external training
- Process mapping
- Positive communication/reputation building
- Streamline processes

THREATS

Elastic

- Employee retention
- Employee engagement
- Workforce development
- Information and technology
- Knowledge transfer

Inelastic

- Job market
- Physical location of offices related to recruiting
- Pandemic
- Rural counties projected to lose population
- Aging population



OPERATIONS AND ACTION PLANS

The group developed operations and action plans using a challenges and solutions exercise. Critical issues and action items are listed below. A more detailed version of this list appears in the Office of Planning and Budget planning document.



STAFFING

Staff retention and recruitment as well as training and morale are key challenges for GVRA.

✓ Broaden recruiting and outreach efforts.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Attend statewide career events – four per fiscal year beginning in January 2024.
- Host informational and educational sessions at colleges and universities – four per fiscal year beginning in October 2024.
- Expand internships to include two additional programs by June 30, 2024.

✓ Create employee engagement opportunities and awards.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Conduct quarterly surveys on agency initiatives beginning in January 2024.
- Launch an internal newsletter to engage and inform employees by September 2024.
- Launch a redesigned employee intranet site by December 31, 2025.

✓ Invest in employee growth and offer professional development opportunities.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Establish a minimum number of professional development opportunities for all positions and employees by July 1, 2024.
- Implement a mandatory training track for each position by July 1, 2024.
- Develop leadership and mentorship opportunities for emerging leaders by July 1, 2024.





CONTINUAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Process improvement is critical for GVRA moving forward.

✓ Enhance business processes.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Identify all manual processes to transition to automated processes by July 1, 2024.
- Map out 25% of business processes transitioning to automation by each fiscal year to be completed by July 1, 2026.

✓ Evaluate standard operating procedures (SOPs) and job aid resources.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Develop a standard timeline for periodic review and revision (as needed) of existing SOPs by July 1, 2024.
- Establish a policy review committee by December 31, 2023.



IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

GVRA needs to improve service delivery in order to maximize available resources for the public.

✓ Increase the number of individuals served.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Increase the number of annual claims in the Disability Adjudication Services Program by 10% annually until July 1, 2026.
- Increase the number of eligible students served to 40,000 by July 1, 2026.
- Increase the number of clients served from 28,100 in FY 2023 to 60,000 by July 1, 2026.

✓ Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Reduce the average number of days from referral to service delivery to 45 days by July 1, 2026.
- Reduce the number of days for disability determination to 120 days by July 1, 2026.
- Establish unique caseloads and units by disability by December 31, 2023.

✓ Increase the focus on customer services.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Develop and conduct agency-wide customer service training programs by July 1, 2024.
- Establish quarterly services-related training opportunities by GVRA programs and specialty by July 1, 2024.
- Develop quarterly informational and public outreach events on GVRA service offerings for prospective clients and stakeholders by July 1, 2024.





ENHANCE PARTNERSHIPS

Developing new partnerships with other agencies and advocacy groups is an important step GVRA needs to take to better serve its clients.

✓ Increase collaborative partnerships with providers.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Create a quarterly newsletter for distribution to 150 providers, with a target of a 50% open rate for the newsletter campaign by June 30, 2024
- Expand quarterly outreach to providers to include “feedback sessions” designed to enhance service delivery beginning in January 2024.

✓ Increase collaborative partnerships with state agencies.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Update the website to include links to additional resources provided by other state agencies by June 30, 2025.
- Identify and collaborate with other state agencies on quarterly outreach events by June 30, 2024.

✓ Increase collaborative partnerships with other stakeholders

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Identify and arrange annual outreach opportunities with the following organizations:
 - Georgia National Fair in Perry, Georgia by June 30, 2024
 - United Way of Coastal Empire – Savannah by June 30, 2024
 - Georgia Superintendent’s Conference annually for FY 2024–FY 2026
 - Georgia Procurement Conference annually April 2024, April 2025, April 2026
 - United Way of Central Savannah River Area in Augusta, Georgia by June 30, 2025
 - United Way of Southwest Georgia by June 30, 2025
 - Georgia Chamber of Commerce by June 30, 2025
 - Blind/deaf services and advocacy organizations





INFRASTRUCTURE

GVRA has lots of infrastructure that needs to be updated.

✓ Create a capital improvement master plan.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Complete the needs assessment of current facilities and capital assets by July 1, 2024.
- Develop a 10-year capital outlay for facility and equipment needs by July 1, 2025.
- Develop an enterprise review process for equipment, capital, and facilities by June 1, 2026.

✓ Enhance business applications and network infrastructure.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Complete the case management re-implementation process by July 1, 2024.
- Integrate all program IT systems into the enterprise environment by July 1, 2025.
- Establish a review process to automate repetitive business functions by July 1, 2024.
- Provide biannual technology training to staff by July 1, 2025.



GVRA Update

Chris Wells, Executive Director
Chris.Wells@gvs.ga.gov



Agency Spotlight



Jason Turner, a supervisor in Disability Adjudication Services (DAS), received the Social Security Administration's Associate Commissioner's Honor.

During FY 2022, Jason went above and beyond to assist his colleagues, including training eight new Adjudicators and conducting at least 45 one-hour group training sessions for the new Adjudicators and others. He also provided caseload management assistance to at least four of the more experienced Adjudicators assigned to him from other units. This was in addition to his everyday responsibilities. Jason's dedication to the agency's mission and his willingness to help others resulted in better customer service and increased weekly determinations. Congratulations, Jason, and thank you for your exemplary service!

Agency Spotlight



Thi (Sara) Pham is the July employee of the month as she deserves the recognition due to her exceptional contribution and outstanding performance in the Office of Fiscal Services. Sara consistently goes above and beyond in completing her tasks and responsibilities. She demonstrates an unparalleled work ethic that inspires others to elevate their own performance. Over the past few months, Sara has consistently met and often exceeded the performance of her role and performs other duties outside of her role. Sara meets expectations and consistently strives for excellence in every aspect of her role by providing exceptional customer service, ensuring every interaction is professional, helpful, and leaving a lasting positive impression.

Agency Spotlight



The FY2023 Employee of the Month Awardees were recognized with a delightful lunch at Rays in the City. This special occasion brought together GVRA team members from across the state, fostering connections with their managers and the Executive Director. Along with receiving Amazon gift cards, this event exemplifies GVRA's ongoing commitment to acknowledging and rewarding the dedication of its staff in placing Georgians to work or on a path toward independence.

Those attending the luncheon:

- EOM 09/22 - Linda Belt, Canton VR (Matthew Salmon, D1 Manager)
- EOM 10/22 - Susan Lloyd, DAS Stone Mountain
- EOM 11/22 - Karen McClure, Ellijay VR (Lisa Roy, Supervisor)
- EOM 12/22 - M'Leesha Smith, Waycross VR (David Butler, VR Transition Supervisor & Candace Mims, D8 Manager)
- EOM 03/23 - Crystal Clark, DAS Stone Mountain
- EOM 05/23 - Sandra Malbrough, D4 Office Assistant (Shari Kaplan, D4 Manager)
- EOM 06/23 - Amy Casey, General Counsel

Not in attendance: EOM 01/23 - Pamela Stewart, RWS, *Retired*
EOM 02/23 - Larry Price, Columbus VR, and
EOM 04/23 - Cynthia Pugh, D5 Counselor, *Retired*

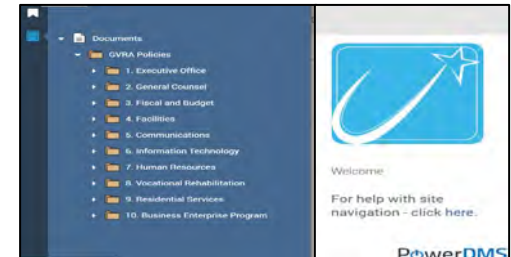
Agency News



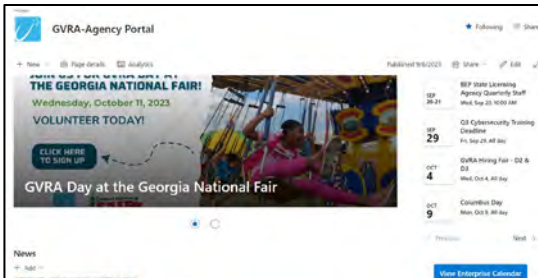
GVRA Awarded a \$10.5 Million Grant to improve economic self-sufficiency for children and youth with disabilities.



The Georgia Industries for the Blind in Bainbridge celebrated production milestones and accomplishments with an appreciation luncheon.



GVRA rolled-out the PowerDMS system, a new online platform for GVRA to store, edit, and maintain its policies, standard operating procedures, and associated forms and attachments.



GVRA launched its new internal agency page giving employees immediate access to news, upcoming events, and quick links to resources.



GVRA has chosen an architect for the RWS Georgia Hall and Quadrangle project. Hecht Burdeshaw Architects, Inc. will design the renovations.



BEP is now offering vending on RWS campus and will begin a Micro Mart at the Department of Public Safety facility.

Client Services Update

Jennifer Howell, Director of Client Services

Jennifer.Howell@gvs.ga.gov



GVRA



Client Services Highlights

- As of September 15, 2023
 - 1049 clients have been closed successfully for our FFY.
 - Currently serving 8,347 VR clients and 13,109 PTS cases
 - We are maintaining our exceeding status rates at 97% for Determination of Eligibility and 94.4% for Individualized Plan for Employment completions

Client Services Highlights

- We have 109 counselors on staff, including 6 interns and 3 part-time counselors.
- First hiring fair for GVRA Field Offices held in College Park on October 4th, 2023. Positions available are for Districts 2 and 3 and include supervisors and counselors.
- Continued partnership with Shepherd Center to improve the vocational, health, and financial outcomes of persons with the most severe TBIs. We have received and processed 12 referrals and expect to see some of those moving towards employment before the end of the year.

Roosevelt Warm Springs

Chip Medders

Dennis.Medders@gvs.ga.gov



What is Pre-ETS?

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) help prepare high school students in the following areas for future employment:

Job Exploration

- Strengths and Needs
- Interests and Inventories
- Career Research
- Preferences for Work
- Labor Market Research
- Informational Interviews
- Specific Career Presentation
- Supported and Customized Employment

Workplace Readiness

- Dress and Hygiene
- Social Media Etiquette
- Teamwork
- Positive Attitude
- Work Habits
- Job Search Skills
- Interviewing Skills
- Financial Literacy

Post Secondary Training

- Citizenship
- Planning for Military
- Admissions Testing
- Financial Aid
- IPSE
- What are my options after high school

Self-Advocacy

- Self-advocacy
- Self-awareness
- Your Voice in Decision Making
- Workplace Ethics
- Accommodations
- Helping others
- Self-esteem

Work Based Learning

- What is work based learning?
- Resources for setting up a WBL site

District 10

Strategic Plan for District 10:

- Create relationships with schools and districts
- Follow through, solid communication, and consistency
- Deliver Pre-Ets to each student on caseload once a month
- Establish relationships with HSHT and CTI
- Develop an organizing structure to monitor caseload and services



District 10

The newly created District 10 includes the following counties:

- Troup
- Meriwether
- Pike
- Upson
- Talbot
- Heard
- Harris

Currently, there are 4 liaisons delivering Pre-ETS to these 7 counties.

- There are a total of 1,117 students in District 10 that are SWD. We have a total of 511 on caseload, which is a percentage of 46% of all SWD served.
- We have received 189 referrals since building our relationships with the schools. ★

District 10

Month of September: Pre-Employment Transition Services
(Pre-ETS) Actually Delivered

# PTS Case September	# Sept In House Served	# Sept Provider Served	% of PTS that were served Pre-Ets TOTAL	% of PTS that were served In House
493	197	17	43%	40%



D10 acquired 157 new referrals in September

District 10

Team Developed Goals for D10:

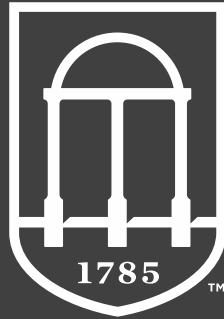
- 80% of SWD students in District 10 are on a caseload
- 80% of SWD students in each county are on a caseload

Current Data Compared to Last Year's Data – 10/04/23

County	% SWD Served Last Year	% SWD Currently Served	% Increase Percentage Points	EOY Goal
Meriwether	55%	64%	+9%	80%
Troup	26%	40%	+14%	80%
Pike	34%	44%	+10%	80%
Upson	56%	35%	-21% (62 cases had to be closed)	80%
Heard	13%	13%	+0%	60%
Harris	29%	58%	+29%	80%
Talbot	0%	0%	+0%	80%



**** Relationships and meetings have taken place in Talbot and should begin with caseloads soon.



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GEORGIA



AgrAbility

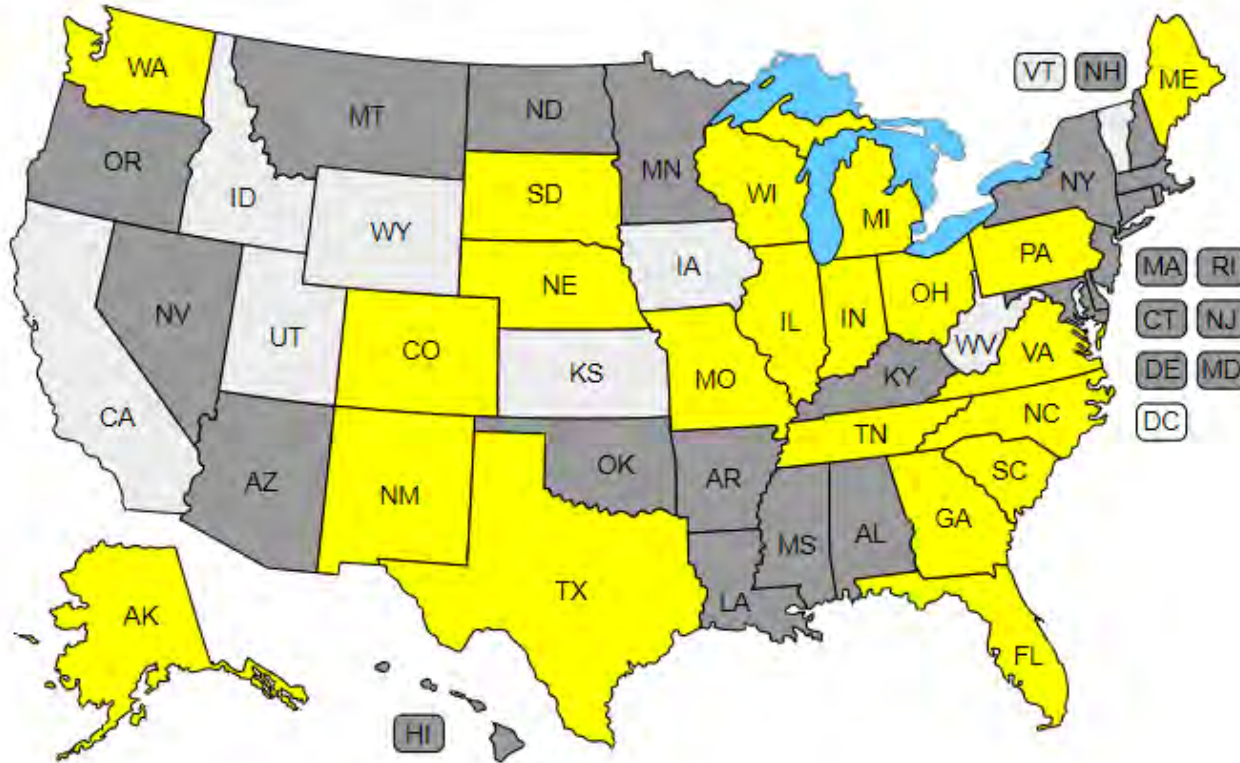
- AgrAbility was first introduced in the 1990 Farm Bill and in 1991 eight states were funded.
- Today, there are twenty-one AgrAbility projects across the nation.
- To become an AgrAbility client, a staff member must conduct a one-on-one site visit with the farmer.
- AgrAbility clients are those in production agriculture growing or raising a commodity



AgrAbility

- AgrAbility is housed at The University of Georgia under the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and the College of Family and Consumer Sciences.
- Since 2005, we have served farmers and ranchers with disabilities and chronic health conditions. Over 1,400 Georgia farm families have participated in project activities.
- We have had a significant increase in the number of military veterans seeking services.

AgrAbility (Competitive 4 year grant cycles)



21 actively
funded projects

AgrAbility Services

We provide at no cost to the client:

- Expertise in disability, agriculture and assistive technologies to recommend appropriate adaptations and production changes.
- Work with a variety of agencies and foundations to seek funding and services on behalf of the farmer
- Fabricate and install assistive technology equipment on farms (varies by state)
- Volunteer days

We do not have funds to give directly to clients



AgrAbility – Types of Adaptations



Donald Adams – Cattle Farmer



Donald Adams – Cattle Farmer



Donald Adams – Cattle Farmer



Iteago Felton – Hog Farmer



Iteago Felton – Hog Farmer



Al Anderson – Row Crop Farmer



Al Anderson – Row Crop Farmer



Al Anderson – Row Crop Farmer



Al Anderson – Row Crop Farmer



AgrAbility National Training Workshop

2024 AgrAbility National Training Workshop

March 25-28

Save the Date!

Join us in **Atlanta, GA** on March 25-28, 2024 for the AgrAbility National Training Workshop, the premier training event addressing issues of disability in agriculture. Professionals and consumers from all over the country will participate in four days of plenary sessions, breakouts, tours, networking, and special events. This year's conference headquarters is the **Grand Hyatt Atlanta/Buckhead** in Atlanta.



Cultivating Accessible Agriculture



Connect with us!

The screenshot shows the Farm Again website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About, Calendar, Workshops, Resources, Solutions, and Contact Us. The main header features the Farm Again logo and the phone number 1-877-524-6264. Below the header, there are several sections: 'Learn About Farm Again' with a 'How to Sign Up' link, 'Meet Farmers & Ranchers in Georgia' with a 'See Other Featured Stories' link, and 'Getting Started' with links for 'Farming with a Disability' and 'New Farmer Resources Page'. The 'Featured Resources' section includes 'Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Fund', 'Vocational Rehabilitation', and 'Benefit Navigator Program'. The 'News' section features a video of Commissioner Gary W. Biscoe and a 'New Website Launching Later' announcement. The 'About Farm Again' section includes a Facebook link and a photo of a man in a military uniform. A 'Sign up for our Mailing List' form is located at the bottom left.

farmagain.com



The screenshot shows the Facebook page for FarmAgain Georgia. The page header includes the name 'FarmAgain Georgia' and the location 'UGA College of Ag & Environmental Sciences and College of Family & Consumer Sciences'. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for Posts, About, Friends, Photos, Videos, and More. A 'Respond' button is visible. The main content area shows a 'FarmAgain sent you a friend request' notification with a 'Confirm Request' button. Below this, there is an 'Intro' section with links to 'Studied at University of Georgia' and 'farmagain.com'. The 'Posts' section features a post from 'FarmAgain Georgia' dated January 25, 2021, with the text 'Check out the free workshop below! Georgia Pecan Growers Association, Inc.' and a large yellow poster for a 'SMALL PECAN PRODUCERS WORKSHOP' on 'FEBRUARY 2ND, 2021' from '9AM-12PM' at 'EDDY & VIDTHAI'. A 'Photos' section with a 'See All Photos' link is also visible.

facebook.com/farmagain2

New Business/Old Business

- TBD

Special Recognition

- Chris Wells, GVRA Executive Director
- Tom Wilson, GVRS Board Chair



**A PROCLAMATION OF THE
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
RECOGNIZING AND COMMEMORATING THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973
AND THE EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEDICATION
OF MR. TOM MCCALL TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION SERVICES IN OUR STATE**

WHEREAS, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was enacted by the 93rd United States Congress as a United States federal law on September 26, 1973; and

WHEREAS, September 26, 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was to replace preexisting laws (collectively referred to as the Vocational Rehabilitation Act) to extend and revise the authorization of grants to States for vocational rehabilitation services, with special emphasis on services to those with the most severe disabilities, to expand special Federal responsibilities and research and training programs with respect to individuals with disabilities, to establish special responsibilities in the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare for coordination of all programs with respect to individuals with disabilities within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Rehabilitation Act created the Independent Living Services program, the Centers for Independent Living program, and the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), a state agency established by House Bill 1146, drafted by State Representative Tom Hall in 2012, has five budgeted programs and is overseen by a nine (9) member board and administratively attached to the Department of Human Services, serves to empower Georgians with disabilities to live independently, consistently works to provide eligible individuals with disabilities opportunities for employment and independence through partnerships with local businesses, service providers, school systems, and state agencies; and

WHEREAS, GVRA serves over 25,000 Georgians annually in obtaining, maintaining, or growing in their careers; and

WHEREAS, GVRA seeks to increase the number of Georgians it serves to over 50,000 students and 25,000 adults annually; and



WHEREAS, in recognition of 50 years of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, GVRA continues its services to reinforce the value people with disabilities add to our workplaces and communities and affirm they play an important role in Georgia being named the top state for business for an unprecedented nine years; now

THEREFORE, be it resolved that I, Tom Wilson, Chairman of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board, do hereby proclaim 2023 as a special time to celebrate vocational services as an integral part of the opportunities provided to individuals with disabilities in Georgia; and

IN RECOGNITION of the extraordinary contributions and dedication of Mr. Tom McCall to the advancement of vocational rehabilitation services in our state, and acknowledging the inspiration his son, Bud McCall provided, we further honor their legacy by renaming the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Scholarship as the "Bud McCall Postsecondary Vocational Rehabilitation Grant." This scholarship will continue to empower and support individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of education, training, and career development, ensuring that Mr. McCall's vision of providing inclusive and equal opportunities for Georgians with disabilities endures for generations to come.

LET THIS PROCLAMATION serve as a testament to our commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where all Georgians can achieve their full potential, regardless of disability, and where the legacy of Bud McCall's inspiration and love of others lives on.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Executive Department to be affixed this 11th day of October in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three.

Thomas W. (Tom) Wilson, Chair
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board

Faye Perdue, Vice Chair
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board

Sandy D. Adams, Secretary
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board

Public Comments/Adjournment

Wednesday, October 11th, 2023

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board



GVRA

