



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

# connection

The Commonwealth's  
Developmental  
Disabilities Council

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## Consider Giving Assistive Technology during the Holidays

Have you thought about a useful gift for a person in your life who has a disability? There's lots of assistive technology available. According to Joann Ervin, VATS Coordinator with the Old Dominion University's Assistive Technology area, here are some ideas to consider:



The Livescribe Echo Smartpen is more than a pen... it's a voice recorder and a camera, too! Special dots embedded in the paper allow users of the Echo pen to doodle and take notes while in a meeting or lecture, then recall the audio at the exact moment they were writing. An invaluable tool for high school and college students, people with brain injury, ADHD, Asperger's, or others who need extra help (great for the doctor's office, too).



*A one-handed playing card holder (shown with Braille cards) allows everyone to participate in card games.*

Be sure to let whomever is teaching the class (or you're recording) know that you are using this neat pen to help recall the information. Surprisingly affordable at \$120-\$180, the pen and pads of paper are available online and at major retailers.



Similar to a smartpen, a new app is available called Show Me. Similar to an interactive whiteboard, the app (for iPad users) allows writing on the screen with a stylus (which appears as a whiteboard) while recording. The file can be uploaded and shared with others, even if they don't have an iPad. It's free at the Apple App Store online.



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Stephen Joseph, At Large  
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Korinda Rusinyak, Chair,  
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## Message from the Chair

Late last month, the disability community held the National Forum on Disability Issues in Columbus, Ohio, a historic nonpartisan event, focusing on the disability positions of the 2012 Presidential candidates. I was fortunate to be able to attend the forum and engage with hundreds of individuals, both with and without disabilities, as well as with many leaders in the disability community. The only individuals I could not engage with were the two candidates for president as neither of them was in attendance; rather they sent surrogates to speak on their behalf.



According to the latest census data, roughly 19 percent of the population or 57 million Americans have a disability. This includes 1 in 4 returning veterans. It includes nearly a third of seniors. On the surface—it would seem a huge mistake to bypass such a huge voting block just one month before the

election, but the unfortunate reality is candidates can, and do, discount this group because data also shows that only 35 percent of people with disabilities vote. When you compare this with an 80 percent voting rate for seniors or 70 percent for veterans, it becomes clear why these groups hold greater influence politically.

There is good news, however, in that this is a problem completely within our capacity to fix. In the simplest possible terms...on November 6th, get out and VOTE. Can't get to the polls? Vote absentee. Not registered? Get registered and vote in the next election.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt may have captured it best when he said, "Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting." Please don't deprive yourself of this critical right. Make your voice heard.....vote. ■

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—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt



### Find us on Facebook:

VBPD posts the latest news on its Facebook page. Like the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) and get the feed!

## Nearly \$400,000 awarded for 2013 Grants

by Lynne Talley, Grants Manager

The Board is pleased to announce three grant awards for federal fiscal year 2013. The total commitment for new projects to improve and expand community supports for individuals with developmental and other disabilities in the Commonwealth is \$371,600. Funding for the projects described below is provided by the federal Administration for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities under the national Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-402).



**Grantee:** Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL)

**Grant Title:** Opportunities Abound: Early Planning for Your Future

**Project Total:** \$ 63,000    Grant Funds Awarded: \$ 40,000    Match: \$23,000

**Grant Period:** October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2015

**Project Goal:** VAIL will partner with Resources for Independent Living in Richmond to work with school divisions in their respective regions to begin career exploration and transition planning for students with disabilities as early as elementary and middle schools and design Individualized Education Plan goals with the ultimate result of self-sufficiency, higher education and employment. Training will be provided to school personnel, parents and students and evaluations will be conducted. The 30 student participants will be followed for a five year period.

**Grantee:** Rappahannock Goodwill Industries

**Grant Title:** Direct Support Professional Training Program

**Project Total:** \$ 175,466    Grant Funds Awarded: \$ 131,600    Match: \$43,666

**Grant Period:** October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2015

**Project Goal:** Serving Fredericksburg and the Counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline and King George, this project will train and prepare individuals with developmental and other disabilities for community employment as Direct Support Professionals. In the 18 month grant period, it is expected that 45 individuals will be placed in employment.

**Grantee:** Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

**Grant Title:** Affordable Transportation Options in Rural and/or Underserved Areas

**Project Total:** \$273,888    Grant Funds Awarded: \$200,000    Match: \$ 73,888

**Grant Period:** October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2014

**Project Goal:** DARS will contract with three Area Agencies on Aging, Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSSEVA), Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. (MEOC), and Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging (RAAA), to expand transportation services for individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

Expanded service for people with developmental disabilities will allow more flexibility for transportation to education, employment, health care, and everyday activities such as shopping and recreation. ■

*Additional information on the Board's grant activities can be found at [www.vaboard.org/grants.htm](http://www.vaboard.org/grants.htm). To receive future RFP announcements, please contact the Board at [Info@VBPD.virginia.gov](mailto:Info@VBPD.virginia.gov) or (800) 846-4464. Questions about any of the Board's currently funded grants, including those described above, should be addressed to [Lynne.Talley@VBPD.virginia.gov](mailto:Lynne.Talley@VBPD.virginia.gov).*

## Moving Towards Full Independence

by Colleen Miller, Executive Director, VOPA



In Virginia, people with disabilities have called for an independent protection and advocacy system for decades. In 2002, then-Governor Warner responded, creating for the first time an independent state agency: the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA). Since then VOPA has been a strong, positive force for systemic change and individual rights. However, the Protection and Advocacy system has never been fully independent in Virginia. For example, VOPA's Governing Board is politically appointed. VOPA is susceptible to political threats for its work. VOPA's grants are allocated through the state's accounting systems. As a state agency, VOPA's administrative burdens have been unnecessarily

high as it struggles to comply with cumbersome state operational requirements.

All of that is soon to change. The Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy will convert from a state agency to a private non-profit in the fall of 2013. State law, passed last spring, requires VOPA to create a private non-profit capable of assuming the duties of the state's designated protection and advocacy system. VOPA must develop a transition plan so that the new nonprofit can be ready to go by January 1, 2014.

VOPA is part of a nationwide network of protection and advocacy systems. These systems were established beginning in

the mid-70s with the passage of the federal Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act. The purpose of the Protection and Advocacy systems is to address abuse and neglect of people with disabilities and to undertake advocacy and legal action to protect their legal rights. Although federal law allows the protection and advocacy system to be either a private nonprofit organization or a state agency, nearly every state's protection and advocacy system is a private, nonprofit organization.

This summer, VOPA created the disAbility Law Center of Virginia. The disAbility Law Center will now apply for 501c3 status from the federal Internal Revenue Service. Once that is approved, the new organization will get ready to assume the duties—and staff—of the outgoing state agency.

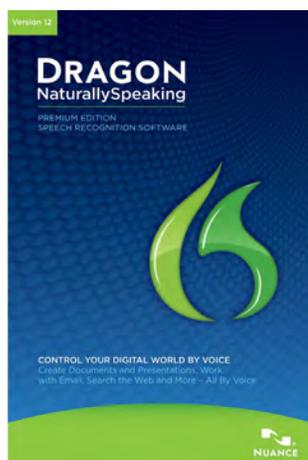
VOPA issued a study in August of 2012 to respond to any questions that legislators or the public may have about the need for this transition. That report is available at [www.vopa.virginia.gov](http://www.vopa.virginia.gov). The Governor will hold public hearings about the transition in the summer of 2013, so that anyone who is interested can share their opinion.

For more information, contact VOPA at 804-225-2042 or send an email to [general.vopa@vopa.virginia.gov](mailto:general.vopa@vopa.virginia.gov) ■

*Have you visited the Board's website recently? Check out [www.VaBoard.org](http://www.VaBoard.org) to see the Facebook feed, watch a video, or find information about Board grants, training, and more.*

## Consider Giving Assistive Technology during the Holidays

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Physical challenges, such as carpal tunnel to multiple sclerosis, can equate to frustration when using computers due to numerous keystrokes and mouse clicks. There are several softwares that allow users to dictate, and one of the more popular ones is Dragon Naturally Speaking (available as a free app but also as a complete software package). Bluetooth

headsets are available which will work with an iPad app or allow a person to be 20 feet or more away from their computer while dictating or listening to what has already been dictated.

Finger mice (and trackballs) are other items that work well for people with fine motor skill mobility challenges. Bluetooth or connected by USB, check these out if you know of a person with cerebral palsy, arthritis, or other disabilities that make use of a traditional computer mouse difficult. These devices are often inexpensive (less than \$10) and available online. ■



*Flexible Bluetooth keyboards are easy to carry and make typing easier while on the go. Some of these keyboards are washable, too!*

Have you ever used your fork to cut food instead of a knife? It's a lot harder if you don't have arm or hand strength, or if you're losing your fine motor control. A creative solution is the Knork®, which has edges that are sharper than a normal fork and require minimal pressure to slice—check it out at major retailers and online, too.



*Handle grip bowling balls (8, 10, or 12 lb.) are modified with a spring-loaded handle for people who cannot use a conventional three-fingered ball. The handle retracts automatically upon release.*

**Editor's Note: The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities does not recommend or endorse specific products; these recommendations are from the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS).**

## FFY 2014 Requests for Proposals (RFP)

In December 2012, the Board will release its Federal Fiscal Year 2014 RFPs for its Competitive Grant Program. RFPs are specifically designed to achieve the Board's goals and objectives of the 2012-16 State Plan. The program has a 2-step application process that includes the applicant submitting a letter of interest (due mid-January 2013) and, if selected by the grant review team, submitting a grant proposal (due end of March 2013). RFP booklets will be available at the Board's website at <http://www.vaboard.org>. ■



## Youth Leadership Forum “Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow!”

*by Kara White, Youth Leadership Forum Program Assistant*

Held July 22-27 on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University, this year's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the passage of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA). Exploring the history of the disability rights movement, delegates learned about the leaders whose advocacy made the ADA a reality. Working in four small group teams, student delegates researched Titles I through V of the ADA and developed video vignettes sharing the facts and impact the ADA has on the lives of those affected by it. The videos educated family members and guests when they premiered at the YLF graduation ceremony.

Student Delegates were engaged by speakers, involved in activities, and obtained information and resources that enlighten them, sharpened their leadership skills, and motivated them to develop goals and strategies to reach those goals. Delegates heard from nationally known motivational speakers including LeDerick Horne, whose poetry and personal story inspired all, and Nelson Lauver, a.k.a. “The American Storyteller”, who shared his experience as a teenager and adult with dyslexia. Break-out sessions included discussions on the rights and responsibilities of going to college, seeking employment, and personal branding in social media.

Continuing a long-standing YLF tradition, Delegates gave testimony on Capitol Day about issues important to them before a mock committee of community leaders and legislative aides. They had the honor of being addressed by Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Dr. Bill Hazel. Student Delegate Dontavious Culp was recognized by Dr. Hazel as a leader and was asked to join him on the committee panel. Committee members were impressed with the variety and depth of testimonies given by the students.

Each year the Youth Leadership Forum brings together a small group of students who are strangers to one another, introduces them to their disability culture in a way that many of them were not aware of before and inspires them to take a vested interest in their futures as leaders. Students left the YLF with a greater appreciation of their history, inspired by others stories and confident in their ability to **“Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow!”**



*Students Delegates arrive on the campus of VCU for four days of leadership training.*



*Student Delegate Annie Downing plays the role of the Clerk when students visit the Capitol and learn how a bill is passed.*

*Continues on page 7*



*YLF Staff, Ed Turner and Jermese Dudley and ASL Interpreters, Ivy Brothers and Mia Hanczaryk get the day started with a smile.*



*Student Delegate Justin Bradley and Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services Commissioner Jim Rothrock at the Networking Luncheon.*



*Assistive Technology & Resource Fair- Student Delegates, Anna Montaperto & Shayla Smith and Alumni Staff, Doniella Kissinger and Christian Metzler look and listen as Bonnie Scimone demonstrates how to access Virginia Navigator.*

## Youth Leadership Forum Capitol Day

*July 25, 2012 Testimony by  
Tabitha Copeland:*

Good morning, my name is **Tabitha Copeland**. I’m a rising senior at King’s Fork High School in Suffolk VA. My state delegate is S. Chris Jones and my state senator is L. Louise Lucas. I am here today to talk to you about driving schools in my area that don’t offer services for students who have disabilities.

I am a determined person and I want to be able to do everything for myself. I like to go places, but am stuck at home most of the time. I want to be able to hang out with my friends and visit family I have not seen in awhile. This is important to me because I have Cerebral Palsy. Cerebral Palsy affects the muscles in my legs, my motor skills, and coordination. I want to be able to do what anybody else can do. I am 18 years old and still have to depend on someone else like my aide for transportation.

If driving schools were trained to know how to teach someone with a disability how to drive in special adapted cars, I’d be hanging with my friends. I’ve called around to driving schools in my area and have been told that they don’t have modified cars. I want every driving school in Virginia to offer driving services for people with disabilities such as mine. I want this to become a law so that everyone has an opportunity to get their driver’s license. ■

*Editor’s note: As part of the annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), each student delegate presents mock testimony to a volunteer panel, simulating real-life advocacy at the state capitol. This student’s testimony was transcribed by Kara White, YLF Program Assistant, and has been edited only for length.*



*Secretary of Health & Human Resources, Dr. Bill Hazel, explains to the audience of Student Delegates why Dontavious Culp is a leader.*



## Fall begins new Partners in Policymaking class

by Rachel Loria, Partners in Policymaking Program Assistant

Each year, the Board trains new advocates through Partners in Policymaking. Welcome to this year's class of Partners:

*Mike Amoreno—Virginia Beach*

*Numan Aslam—Farifax*

*Lauren Beckner—Daleville*

*Sean Campbell—Powhatan*

*Scott Campbell—Falls Church*

*Richard Cuevas—Petersburg*

*Nicole Daniel—Richmond*

*Christine DeHaven—Norfolk*

*Stephanie George—Manassas*

*Stephen George—Salem*

*Sarah Gray—Richmond*

*Doris Henderson Causey—Glen Allen*

*Michael Keen—Waynesboro*

*Marisa Laios—Chantilly*

*Brittney Lee—Richmond*

*Creed Leffler—Charlottesville*

*Angel Leon—Lake Ridge*

*Christine Leshner—Fredericksburg*

*Kelly Morris—Hampton*

*Mamie Nunery—Richmond*

*Mary Lee Rice—Henrico*

*Summer Sage—Stanardsville*

*Renee Salas—Williamsburg*

*Kimberly Thompson—Troutville*

*Katherine Tiller—Richmond*

*Lia Tremblay—Colonial Heights*

*Angela West—Chesapeake*

*Kerry White—Nokesville*

*Shareen Young Chavez—Richmond*

*Diego Zuniga—Newport News*

In September, the first of eight PIP sessions, Partners began to get to know each other and learn about the history of the disability rights movement, including a film about New York's infamous Willowbrook Institution.

Partners also had the opportunity to hear from nationally known advocate Kathie Snow. Kathie educated Partners about the Parent Movement and the important role parents and family members have had in systems change and demanding equality throughout the years. She shared her perspective on the importance of person-first language and the need for us all to "presume competence." In the October session, Partners heard from Maureen Hollowell on Medicaid waivers and the workings of the General Assembly, and from Partners alumni, Bradford Hulcher and Betty Thompson presented on person centered planning and practices.



***Creed Leffler (Charlottesville), Angel Leon (Lake Ridge), and Numan Aslam (Chantilly) listen to Jerry Adams present about Disability History.***

As the Board celebrates the new class, it also celebrates and acknowledges the advocacy and success of several of our Partners Alumni who have been active in their communities. Here are just a few:

- ▶ Matthew Shapiro (2012) was selected for an internship at the White House where he is working on disability policy issues.
- ▶ Liz Salter (2012) has become a member of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities in Hampton.
- ▶ Robyn Iuliano (2011) started a program called Brighter Futures, which builds collaboration between schools, agencies, and professionals for people with disabilities. She was also appointed onto the worldwide STOMP (Specialized Training of Military Parents/Professionals) Board and serves as a family navigator with the Family to Family Network in Virginia. ■



## Mark Your Calendar!

The meetings of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities have been set for 2013. All meetings will be at the Wyndham Airport Hotel, 4700 South Laburnum Avenue, Richmond, VA 23231.

The Executive Committee (four committee chairs plus the Chair, Secretary, Vice Chair, and appointed At-Large Members) meets at 7:45 am; committees meet at 9:30 am; and the full Board meets at 11:45 am.

The last meeting in 2012 is Wednesday, December 5.



### 2013 Dates

Thursday, March 14, 2013

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

## Staff Information

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Nan Pemberton

*Director of Administration*

Teri Barker-Morgan

*Program Manager*

Kelly Bolden

*Senior Fiscal Coordinator*

Barbara Dodd

*Marketing and Strategic Planning Manager,*

*Council Connection Editor*

Erin Hickey

*Content Coordinator and Information Specialist*

Katherine Lawson

*Community Outreach and Program Manager*

Rachel Loria

*Partners in Policymaking Assistant*

Linda Redmond

*Research, Policy and Program Manager*

Sandra Smalls

*Executive Assistant*

Lynne Talley

*Grants Manager*

Kara White

*Youth Leadership Forum Assistant*

**Did you know** there's an online directory for individuals seeking to become Consumer-Directed Assistants? People with disabilities can connect with potential assistants. Check it out at [www.cdSupport.info](http://www.cdSupport.info) today!

The Board's 2011 Assessment of the Disability Services System is still available on CD and online. This valuable resource has information about education, Medicaid, community supports, employment, housing, and more...and it's searchable in electronic format so you can quickly find what you need.



*This publication was funded through federal monies provided under the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. VBPD publications are available in alternate formats upon request.*