



News Release

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DARS HONORS ‘CHAMPIONS’ OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

Flying Squirrels VP will be keynote speaker at ceremony

(RICHMOND, Va.) — The Richmond Flying Squirrels’ vice president, Todd Parnell, will discuss his team’s positive experience of hiring people with disabilities as the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services honors employers who champion disability employment awareness.

DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock will present the agency’s Disability Employment Champions Awards to seven honorees whose outstanding business and employment practices encourage all Virginians to contribute their skills, ideas and talents to the Commonwealth’s workforce. The ceremony will be held Oct. 17 at the University of Richmond’s Jepson Alumni Center.

“Almost every week, I hear that another of our consumers has successfully joined Virginia’s workforce through one of our champions of disability employment,” Rothrock said. “Each October, we take the opportunity to thank these champions and encourage other employers to learn about the abilities of our consumers, the support and information we may be able to provide them, and the potential for our successful collaboration to realize a true ‘Commonwealth of Opportunity’ for all Virginians.”

Parnell, vice president and chief operating officer for the minor league baseball team, will be the keynote speaker for the annual awards ceremony. The Flying Squirrels hired nine DARS clients for the team’s 2012 season.

The statewide 2012 Disability Employment Champions award recipients are:

- [Busch Gardens](#), Williamsburg
- [CW Resources](#) at Fort Lee Commissary
- [Carilion Clinic](#), Roanoke

- [The Home Depot](#), Ashburn
- [T.J.Maxx](#), Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg and Staunton stores
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- Christopher Coleman, owner of [Performance Pet Care Inc.](#), Reston

In addition, Rothrock will present the agency's Colorado Award to William Francis Vineyard, a former client now employed as deputy code official and plans examiner for the City of Charlottesville. The Colorado award honors DARS clients who have maximized their employment opportunities, independence and full inclusion into society.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and this year's theme is "A Strong Workforce is an Inclusive Workforce: What Can YOU Do?" Learn more about this national campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues and the contributions of America's workers with disabilities at www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services provides and advocates for the highest quality of services to help older Virginians and those with disabilities maximize and secure their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. For more information, visit www.vadars.org.