

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor
Robert McDonnell
Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 23, 2010

Contact: Aileen Colorado, Communications Officer
Phone: 804/662-7532
Email: aileen.colorado@drs.virginia.gov
Web: www.vadrs.org

Governor McDonnell Announces \$400,000 in Economic Development Grant Funding
*~Funds expected to create 70 new jobs for Virginians with Disabilities in localities
with unemployment rates above 10 percent~*

Richmond, Virginia (July 23, 2010)—Governor Bob McDonnell announced today that \$400,000 in grant funding was awarded to six Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) with local projects designed to increase employment for Virginians with disabilities in areas with employment rates above 10 percent. The grants, made possible by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), will create more than 70 new jobs and fund a variety of local businesses including an upscale consignment shop, a commercial cleaning business, and a landscaping mobile work crew.

“Virginians with disabilities continue to struggle in this tight labor market and I’m encouraged that these grants will allow our Commonwealth to tackle unemployment by creating opportunities for this under-utilized, yet skilled population of workers,” said Governor McDonnell. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, as of last February, 48 Virginia counties and cities had unemployment rates above 10 percent.

“This funding will not only create jobs that are based in the community, but will offer solid wages and career opportunities to more than 70 of our clients,” added DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. “I am confident that these grants will also offer some economic stimulus to these communities that have been hit so hard by the current economy.”

Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) work in partnership with the Department of Rehabilitative Services to provide employment and vocational training to individuals with disabilities. Additionally, ESOs supply competitive services and products to public and private industry. The statewide program has been responsible for increased revenue for numerous employment providers and for expanded job opportunities for thousands of individuals with disabilities.

Commissioner Rothrock approved the following six ESO proposals:

MARC Workshop – Martinsville, Virginia – Grant: \$75,000

To fund staff and equipment to develop a landscaping mobile work crew employing up to 10 persons with disabilities from Patrick County (unemployment rate of 13.8%). MARC Workshop
--

will be the first provider of this service in Patrick County.
STEPS, Inc. – Farmville, Virginia – Grant: \$64,232
To fund staff and equipment to open a high-end retail consignment shop in Farmville with up to 10 persons with disabilities and transitioning students from Appomattox County (unemployment rate of 10.7%), Charlotte County (unemployment rate of 10.4%), Buckingham County (unemployment rate of 10.3%) and Price Edward County (unemployment rate of 10.0%).
STEPS, Inc. – Farmville, Virginia – Grant: \$75,000
To fund staff and equipment to support development of a light-duty commercial cleaning business employing an expected six persons with disabilities from the counties of Brunswick (unemployment rate of 13.3%), Lunenburg (unemployment rate of 11.4%), Charlotte (unemployment rate of 10.4%) and Mecklenburg (unemployment rate of 13.6%).
Rockbridge Area Community Services Board – Lexington, Virginia – Grant: \$39,500
To fund a staff position and equipment to create a mobile cleaning crew with five individuals with disabilities from Lexington County (unemployment rate of 11.8%) and Buena Vista City (unemployment rate of 10.7%).
Goodwill Industries – Richmond, Virginia – Grant: \$75,000
To fund staff and equipment to develop a Supported Employment program in Williamsburg City (unemployment rate of 18.3%). Goodwill proposes to place 24 individuals into jobs over 18 months. Five will be placed in the Williamsburg store and 19 will be placed in the community. Twenty-four additional individuals will receive assessment services.
Career Support Systems – Richmond, VA – Grant: \$71,247
To fund staff, equipment, and transitional transportation services to replicate, in Emporia City (unemployment rate of 14.6%), the successful I-Work Project currently established in Petersburg, Virginia. During the 18-month award period, it is expected that up to 24 people will find successful employment.

Background:

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) is the state agency that provides and advocates for the highest quality of services to help persons with disabilities maximize their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. Through its 4 regional and 36 field offices, DRS provides a comprehensive array of services that include vocational counseling, career exploration, training, assistive technology, and other specialty programs that meet individual needs, interests, and abilities. For more information, visit www.vadrs.org.