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Michigan Rehabilitation Services Champions Honored by State Employers, Partners, Customers, Employees Recognized for Investing in Abilities

October 20, 2010. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) in the Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth (DELEG) has collaborated with the Michigan Rehabilitation Council to recognize employers, partners, customers and MRS employees who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to Michigan's public vocational rehabilitation programs.

"We commend these champions for opening up workplaces, developing innovative partnerships, and showing steadfast commitment to Michiganders with disabilities by seeing past restrictive attitudes," said DELEG Acting Director Andrew S. Levin. "By doing so, they are recognizing the skills and abilities of these individuals and seeing them as assets to their companies and communities."

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has proclaimed October 2010 as Investing in Abilities Month to encourage employers to hire qualified people with disabilities, focusing on their abilities and to increase the public's awareness of the contributions and skills of Michigan workers with disabilities.

This year MRS expanded its highly successful award program to recognize not only employers but also partner programs, customers, and employees. MRS offices around the state nominated champion candidates. The consistent theme from those nominated was demonstration of the "value" of hiring and retaining vocational rehabilitation customers. The Michigan Rehabilitation Council reports that every dollar spent on public rehabilitation services returns \$12.66 back to the Michigan economy.

The 2010 MRS Champion Award recipients are:

Employers who have consistently employed or championed individuals with disabilities based on their abilities:

Covenant HealthCare, Saginaw
Goodwill Industries Retail Store, Gaylord

Partners who have demonstrated a strong commitment to empower individuals with disabilities to take charge of their futures:

Jim Bachmeier, Vice President Finance and Administration, Grand Valley State University, Allendale
John A. Mans, Transition Coordinator, Menominee County ISD, Menominee

Customers (including Youth) who are motivated and committed to acquire employment:

Sylvester Harris, Detroit
Megan Jones, Warren

Employees who consistently meet or exceed all goals and expectations in providing outstanding service to customers, staff, and community partners:

Oakland Placement Team, Oakland
David Petrovich, Lansing

The MRS awards were presented to the champions by the MRS counselors who nominated them. Students in the Cabinetmaking/Millwork program at the Michigan Career and Technical Institute, a vocational and technical training school operated by Michigan Rehabilitation Services and located in Southwest Michigan, engraved the special awards. The award presentation and luncheon was held in the Mackinac Room of the Anderson House Office Building in Lansing.

"People with disabilities have proven to be an untapped resource for employers and are among the most productive employees who consistently rate above average in reliability, performance, and safety," said Levin. "It's just good business to put these very able workers to work to gain independence and contribute to Michigan's economy."

MRS assists more than 7,000 individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive employment and self-sufficiency annually. This is the 90th anniversary year of the vocational rehabilitation program in Michigan.

The Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth (DELEG) is investing in Michigan's future by preparing for the new energy economy, helping to create the jobs of today and tomorrow, ensuring that our children and adults have the skills these jobs demand, making Michigan a better place to do business, and training and placing those who need jobs now.

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