



News Release

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PETERSBURG BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER HONORED WITH LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION AWARD

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Beth Groff has dedicated nearly 30 years to helping individuals with disabilities enter or return to the workforce, proving that if you love what you do, you never work a day in your life.

Groff, of Chester, works with local agencies and businesses to help people with disabilities receive job training and development in Petersburg, Richmond and the south central Virginia area. For her work, she was named recipient of this year's annual Employee Leadership Roy J. Ward Recognition Award.

Named after a leader in Virginia's disability community and former member of the State Rehabilitation Council, the award is presented by the council to employees of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services for outstanding service in the vocational rehabilitation field and disability community. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

As a business development manager and counselor manager for DARS in the Petersburg office, Groff has developed multiple networks for strengthening relationships with businesses and learning about their hiring needs. "Businesses want to come and speak at our network meetings because they know of our untapped candidate pool," she said. "Through these networks, we send them well screened and qualified candidates."

Many DARS consumers are hired in the Petersburg region because of efforts by Groff and her colleagues, but not without challenges. "In the area, there is a lack of resources for people with disabilities, including transportation, housing, mental health services and more," which she says make it difficult for consumers to find, obtain and maintain employment.

About 179,000 of the 4 million employed Virginians have a disability and many more continue to look for work and ways to develop job skills needed in today's workforce. With the unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities at 11.3 percent, more than double the national average, Groff continues building new relationships and partnerships to help more individuals with disabilities gain employment, including companies such as Amazon. Since the start of that partnership, more than 60 people have been hired, and Groff says more hires are expected for the company's fulfillment centers.

"Beth is very proactive in her work with our job candidates and businesses," said Dale Batten, DARS' deputy director for workforce development. "She has a positive demeanor and her joy is fulfilled when she can see the success of our candidates."

Groff says building relationships has been key in her achievements as both a business development manager and office manager. "Having the opportunity to provide individuals with the tools they need to move forward in their careers is what keeps me energized," she said. "How exciting to come to work every day to be a part of assisting people with their own personal growth and success. It doesn't get much better than that."

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or follow DARS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vadars or Twitter at @vadars.