



# ***Move Forward To Work***

**State of Hawaii  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
and Services for the Blind Division**

**2007 Annual Report**



State of Hawaii  
Department of Human Services  
Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division (VR)

**MISSION**

**VR** exists to serve its participants. We work as a team so participants can achieve their hopes and aspirations for meaningful employment through timely and individualized vocational rehabilitation services.

**VISION**

Move Forward To Work

**VALUES**

RISE

**R “Respect for the Individual”**

being aware of differences  
treating everyone as we want to be treated  
respecting one another’s ideas and choices  
listening to what others have to say

**I “Integrity”**

taking pride in what we do  
being transparent and honest in our actions  
doing what we said we would do  
taking social responsibility

**S “Service with Compassion”**

going the extra mile  
providing timely services  
being dependable and reliable  
caring with commitment

**E “Empowerment”**

providing growth and development  
providing hope with aspirations  
providing informed choice  
thinking outside of the box for success



March 2008

# Table of Contents

	Page
Message from the Director	1
Message from the VR Administrator	2
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	3
2007 Achievements and Highlights	4
A Cost Effective Program	5
Characteristics of 560 Persons with Disabilities Rehabilitated in FY 2007	6
2007 Outstanding Employers and Rehabilitants	7
Hawaii Branch 2007 Employer of the Year	8
Hawaii Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year	9
Maui Branch 2007 Employer of the Year	10
Maui Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year	11
Oahu Branch-Deaf Services Section 2007 Employer of the Year	12
Oahu Branch-Deaf Services Section 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year	13
Kauai Branch 2007 Employer of the Year	14
Kauai Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year	15
Services for the Blind Branch (Ho'opono)	16
Disability Determination Branch	17
The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board	17
State Rehabilitation Council	18
The Hawaii VR Literacy Project	18
Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division	20



# Message from the Director



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Aloha! As Director of the State Department of Human Services, I want to thank our employees for their dedication and compassion in meeting the needs of Hawaii's people.

You will see from reading this 2007 Annual Report that our Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division (VRSBD) has completed another successful year of helping clients obtain high-quality jobs and lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

VRSBD brings out the best in our clients by providing them with individualized training and resources. This empowers people with disabilities to "go forward and work," as they acquire the necessary skills and confidence to become full and equal participants in their communities.

Along with helping clients realize their goals, VRSBD raises awareness among employers about the many ways persons with disabilities contribute in the workplace. This is especially true today, as rapid technological advances create career opportunities that would not have been available to our clients even a decade ago. Clearly, this exciting trend will accelerate in years to come.

At VRSBD, we expect more – not less – from persons with disabilities, and I am happy to say that they consistently rise to the challenge. This is wonderful news for our clients, their families and all the people of Hawaii.

— Lillian B. Koller, Human Services Director

# Message from the VR Administrator



## VR ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the Hawaii Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division! In this annual report, we would like to highlight outstanding employers and employees of FY 2007 and to share with you some of our accomplishments.

VR's goal is to provide persons with disabilities with the opportunity to realize their life-long dreams and to become full and equal participants in their community. We offer a range of services to enable and facilitate the achievement of an individual's chosen vocational and independent living goals. We hope to empower persons with disabilities with the necessary confidence, training and resources that will lead toward high quality employment and maximum independence for that individual.

One of the major barriers to the employment and independent living of people with disabilities are the low expectations held by employers, the general public and people with disabilities themselves regarding their abilities and capabilities. For this reason, we are strongly committed to increasing public awareness, promoting positive attitudes and raising the bar of expectations held toward people with disabilities.

*-Joe Cordova, VR Administrator*



# Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division (VRSBD) had a State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2007 budget of \$17,917,817. VRSBD is divided into three programs (a. Vocational Rehabilitation Program, b. Services for the Blind Branch [Ho'opono], and c. Disability Determination Branch) that have separate but related functions. The purpose of the VR Program is to assist persons with disabilities to secure and maintain employment. The underlying philosophy of VRSBD is that through employment, individuals with disabilities are empowered toward economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society.

VR Specialists (VRS) and participants develop "Individualized Plans for Employment" (IPEs) that detail services needed to meet the participant's needs. Services may include vocational assessments, diagnosis and treatment of impairments, vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, rehabilitation counseling and guidance, rehabilitation technology services, supported employment, vocational and other training, job placement and follow-up.

The economic benefits of the VR Program are significant. They include: increased earnings and purchasing power, increased taxes paid, and a decreased dependency on public assistance. As persons with disabilities achieve the employment outcomes of their choice, they become taxpaying citizens and more than "payback" the costs of their program.



**VR services increased the annual earning power of people with disabilities from an average of \$2,560 prior to receiving services...to an average of \$15,748 after rehabilitation.**

**339% return on the one time use of the tax revenue...Average Net Gain: \$15,496**

**Weekly earnings rose by an average of \$298 per person (from \$76 per week at application to \$374 per week at closure).**

# 2007 Achievements and Highlights

VR received  
**2,716 new referrals**

VR served a **total of 7,858 individuals**  
with disabilities  
throughout the State

560 VR participants  
achieved **employment outcomes**. Of these,

- 467 (83%) were individuals with **significant disabilities**
- 158 (28%) individuals received **public assistance**



## A Cost Effective Program...

The annual investment in vocational rehabilitation yields high returns. After receiving VR services, employed individuals with disabilities pay taxes.

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PAYS FOR ITSELF

Average cost per individual rehabilitated	\$ 4,481
Average annual earnings per individual following rehabilitation	\$ 15,496

### ANNUAL TAXES ON THE EARNINGS OF A REHABILITATED INDIVIDUAL

State Income Tax	\$ 1,102
Federal Income Tax	\$ 1,550
Social Security Tax	\$ 1,102
Average total taxes per year	\$ 3,704
Average contribution in taxes over an estimated 33 years of employment per rehabilitated individual (Based on median age of 32 of rehabilitated individuals retiring at age 65)	\$ 122,232

NOTE: When 560 individuals enter or re-enter the workforce annually, rehabilitation contributes significantly to the State's economy. Examples:

Average annual earnings of \$15,496 x 560 clients	\$8,677,760
Average total taxes paid of \$3,704 x 560 clients	\$2,074,240

**OVER AN ESTIMATED 33 REMAINING  
YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT,  
THE AVERAGE RETURN TO THE TAXPAYER  
EQUALS \$2,074,240 (\$122,232 X 560 CLIENTS)**



# Characteristics of the 560 Persons with Disabilities Rehabilitated in FY 2007

## Our Goal: Employment Outcomes

Referral Source		Gender	
Educational Institutions	113	Males	347
Public/Private Organizations	67	Females	213
Welfare & Health Organizations	51		
Individual/Self/Other	329		

Type of Employment		Years of Education	
Arts & Communication	9	No schooling	3
Business	122	Less than 9th grade	8
Health Services	17	9-12 grade	96
Natural Resources	2	Special education certificate	62
Ind & Eng Tech	218	High school grad or GED	205
Pub & Human Services	180	Post secondary, No degree	90
Self Employed	8	Associate/Voc/Tech	62
Business Enterprise	1	Bachelor's degree	20
Homemaker	3	Master's degree or higher	14

Age		Primary Disability	
Less than 20 years	127	Visual	11
20-34 years	124	Hearing	43
35-44 years	143	Learning Disability	61
45-55 years	129	Mental Retardation	43
56 years and over	37	Orthopedic and Neurological	70
		Alcohol/Drug	100
		Psychiatric Disability	74
		Other Mental	145
		Other	13

It is the policy of the Division that no person in Hawaii shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity or employment.

# 2007 Outstanding Employers and Rehabilitants

**kaui**



**h  
a  
w  
a  
i  
i**



**maui**



**oahu**

## Hawaii Branch **2007 Employer of the Year**

Nominated by Sandra Fitzgerald, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**R**ecognizing Leilani Palms and Foliage as an outstanding employer is long overdue. This company has been working with individuals with psychiatric disabilities through their participation in the Hale Oluea Clubhouse's Transitional Employment Program since 2002. The nursery has also hired two VR clients and has provided job opportunities to Clubhouse members who have successfully completed their TEP.

Robert Stearns, the nursery's owner, believes that individuals should be given an opportunity to pursue their dreams and hires employees regardless of their work history. Robert has demonstrated his sensitivity to some of the barriers experienced by individuals with psychiatric disabilities and has provided accommodations to meet their specific needs to make employment a successful experience. He has provided extended training opportunities and has allowed supported employment specialists to accompany their clients at the job site. Robert has also provided job-carving opportunities for individuals who are unable to perform the more physically rigorous tasks out in the fields.

VR truly appreciates the commitment of Robert Stearns (and his staff at Leilani Palms and Foliage) have given to individuals with disabilities. They truly embrace VR's mission: "Go Forward To Work!"



2007 Outstanding Employer: Robert Stearns (owner),  
Leilani Palms and Foliage



## Hawaii Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Ellen Okimoto, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**D**eanna DeLeon came to VR in March 2006 looking for a way to change her life. Deanna faced many challenges in her life. Her past history of abuse led her to the Big Island Drug Court Program. Through this program and with the support of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Deanna set a goal of becoming successfully employed.

The combination of her past work experience in the hotel industry and as an administrative assistant qualified her for a tour receptionist position with Wyndham Vacation Resorts in June 2006. Deanna's supervisor, Patsy Mecca, stated that Deanna brings positive energy and a bright smile to the team. Deanna has since been promoted to a Gifting Supervisor and continues to work in a job that she so loves.

Go Forward To Work!  
CONGRATULATIONS, Deanna  
for a job well done!



Left to right: Nani Mahi, Administration Manager, Deanna DeLeon, Outstanding Rehabilitant, and Michael Jonah, Vice-President of Sales

## Maui Branch 2007 Employer of the Year

Nominated by Lydia Sheets, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

The Maui Disposal Company Inc. is a commercial hauler of mixed solid waste and recyclable products for businesses, condominiums, gated-communities and contractors, as well as for the Federal, State, and County agencies. Maui Disposal operates the only material recovery facility on Maui. Cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum and mixed paper are brought to its facility for processing and then are shipped off-island to assorted buyers in other markets. Maui Disposal also operates nine redemption centers, a residential transfer in west Maui and recycling and redemption center on Molokai. The company operates 365 days a year and has over 100 employees.



The company has employed several persons with disabilities at different facilities within the company. Maui Disposal has incorporated the concepts of work supports and reasonable accommodations into the workplace and views these concepts as good business practices for ALL employees. Although some VR clients who were hired in entry-level jobs at Maui Disposal have left for higher



Maui Disposal Company, 2007 Outstanding Employer

level positions with other companies, Rick Miller, Vice President of Operations, believes these men and women should move on if it means making better lives for themselves.

## Maui Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Lydia Sheets, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**H**aving a disability never stopped Rogie Yasay Pagatpatan from working for long periods of time. Rogie requires assistance in completing applications and interviewing. Each time he needs to look for a new job, he has enlisted the help of his Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, Lydia Sheets in the Maui Branch Office. Rogie and Lydia have been a successful team for many years. Lydia knows Rogie so well that she has collaborated with employers to help Rogie find and keep jobs.

Most recently, Lydia helped Rogie obtain a position with the Maui Disposal Company, Inc. He was hired as a



Rogie Yasay Pagatpatan, 2007  
Outstanding Maui Rehabilitant



sorter at the company's material Recover Facility – a processing plant for recyclable products including plastic, glass, aluminum, and mixed paper. Rogie works with other processors and several supervisors. He has a job that requires teamwork, cooperation, conscientiousness, and tolerance of waste products, outdoor work, environmental factors, and working around moving machinery. Rogie has proven that he can handle the job. With the help of supervisors West Paul and Wendell Parker, Rogie has become a valued employee.

Rogie's persistence is admirable, and his commitment has impressed his supervisors. He was honored as the "Employee of the Month" in June 2007. Rogie's success is due in part to his supportive and patient supervisors, who look at his abilities rather than his limitations.



# 2007 Outstanding Employers and Rehabilitants

**kaui**



**h  
a  
w  
a  
i  
i**



**maui**



**oahu**

## Hawaii Branch **2007 Employer of the Year**

Nominated by Sandra Fitzgerald, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**R**ecognizing Leilani Palms and Foliage as an outstanding employer is long overdue. This company has been working with individuals with psychiatric disabilities through their participation in the Hale Oluea Clubhouse's Transitional Employment Program since 2002. The nursery has also hired two VR clients and has provided job opportunities to Clubhouse members who have successfully completed their TEP.

Robert Stearns, the nursery's owner, believes that individuals should be given an opportunity to pursue their dreams and hires employees regardless of their work history. Robert has demonstrated his sensitivity to some of the barriers experienced by individuals with psychiatric disabilities and has provided accommodations to meet their specific needs to make employment a successful experience. He has provided extended training opportunities and has allowed supported employment specialists to accompany their clients at the job site. Robert has also provided job-carving opportunities for individuals who are unable to perform the more physically rigorous tasks out in the fields.

VR truly appreciates the commitment of Robert Stearns (and his staff at Leilani Palms and Foliage) have given to individuals with disabilities. They truly embrace VR's mission: "Go Forward To Work!"



2007 Outstanding Employer: Robert Stearns (owner),  
Leilani Palms and Foliage

## Hawaii Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Ellen Okimoto, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**D**eanna DeLeon came to VR in March 2006 looking for a way to change her life. Deanna faced many challenges in her life. Her past history of abuse led her to the Big Island Drug Court Program. Through this program and with the support of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Deanna set a goal of becoming successfully employed.

The combination of her past work experience in the hotel industry and as an administrative assistant qualified her for a position as a tour receptionist with Wyndham Vacation Resorts in June 2006. Deanna's supervisor, Patsy Mecca, stated that Deanna brings positive energy and a bright smile to the team. Deanna has since been promoted to a Gifting Supervisor and continues to work in a job that she so loves.

Go Forward To Work!  
CONGRATULATIONS, Deanna  
for a job well done!



Left to right: Nani Mahi, Administration Manager, Deanna DeLeon, Outstanding Rehabilitant, and Michael Jonah, Vice-President of Sales



## Maui Branch 2007 Employer of the Year

Nominated by Lydia Sheets, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

The Maui Disposal Company Inc. is a commercial hauler of mixed solid waste and recyclable products for businesses, condominiums, gated-communities and contractors, as well as for the Federal, State, and County agencies. Maui Disposal operates the only material recovery facility on Maui. Cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum and mixed paper are brought to its facility for processing and then are shipped off-island to assorted buyers in other markets. Maui Disposal also operates nine redemption centers, a residential transfer in west Maui and recycling and redemption center on Molokai. The company operates 365 days a year and has over 100 employees.



The company has employed several persons with disabilities at different facilities within the company. Maui Disposal has incorporated the concepts of work supports and reasonable accommodations into the workplace and views these concepts as good business practices for ALL employees. Although some VR clients who were hired in entry-level jobs at Maui Disposal have left for higher



level positions with other companies, Rick Miller, Vice President of Operations, believes these men and women should move on if it means making better lives for themselves.

## Maui Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Lydia Sheets, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**H**aving a disability never stopped Rogie Yasay Pagatpatan from working for long periods of time. Rogie requires assistance in completing applications and interviewing. Each time he needs to look for a new job, he has enlisted the help of his Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, Lydia Sheets in the Maui Branch Office. Rogie and Lydia have been a successful team for many years. Lydia knows Rogie so well that she has collaborated with employers to help Rogie find and keep jobs.

Most recently, Lydia helped Rogie obtain a position with the Maui Disposal Company, Inc. He was hired as a



Rogie Yasay Pagatpatan, 2007  
Outstanding Maui Rehabilitant



sorter at the company's material Recover Facility – a processing plant for recyclable products including plastic, glass, aluminum, and mixed paper. Rogie works with other processors and several supervisors. He has a job that requires teamwork, cooperation, conscientiousness, and tolerance of waste products, outdoor work, environmental factors, and working around moving machinery. Rogie has proven that he can handle the job. With the help of supervisors West Paul and Wendell Parker, Rogie has become a valued employee.

Rogie's persistence is admirable, and his commitment has impressed his supervisors. He was honored as the "Employee of the Month" in June 2007. Rogie's success is due in part to his supportive and patient supervisors, who look at his abilities rather than his limitations.

## Oahu Branch-Deaf Services Section **2007 Employer of the Year**

Nominated by Wendy Park, Employment Service Specialist

**T**he Deaf Services Section wishes to recognize Red Lobster (Ala Moana) for its outstanding and supportive work environment. They went above and beyond the usual expectations for training a new deaf employee to ensure that he would feel comfortable and be successful on the job.

The company purchased sign language books and had luncheons for the staff to provide opportunities for them to learn basic signs. They also rearranged the head chef's (Nathan Spiller's) schedule to match the new employee's schedule so someone



Bernard Bisch & Edie Lindo, Denny's  
Waikiki



Chris Olivo, Denny's Kunia

could be there to support him. The staff and co-workers never hesitated to take the time to show the new employee how to do an assignment.

Special thanks goes to Ellen Lackey (proprietor), Nathan Spiller (head chef), and culinary managers (Tracey Sholes, Kevin Okazaki, and Joanna Tamashiro) for their hard work, support, and encouragement.



## Oahu Branch-Deaf Services Section 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Amanda Christian, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

**T**he Deaf Services Section is proud to nominate known to his friends and family as “Mona”, as this year’s outstanding rehabilitant of the year. Mona is a deaf person with significant developmental delays and minimal language skills. He is extremely shy; however he has a heart of gold and a terrific work ethic.

After graduating from the Hawaii Center for the Deaf and Blind, Mona received kitchen training from Lanakila Rehabilitation Center (LRC) from 2002 until 2006 where he learned food preparation and dishwashing skills. At that time, it was a common belief that Mona would need extended support services in order to maintain competitive employment. With the assistance of LRC, Mona was placed at Red Lobster in November 2006. He received on-the-job training from November 2006 until February 2007 with specialized job coaches.

Mona eventually became comfortable with his work environment and began to make friends with co-workers. He is now confident with his tasks and will help others with their work at any time he sees that they need help. Mona’s job duties initially were limited to cleaning the restrooms, bagging linguini and rice, and washing dishes. Mona later proved he was capable of much more and now helps staff with tasks such as mopping the bar area, food prep work, and helping in the storage room. He often arrives at work early and at times, has to be persuaded to leave work at the end of his shift. Upon leaving work, he makes sure to say “goodbye” to each one of his co-workers at least once, sometimes twice. Mona’s supervisors and co-workers report how cherished Mona is and how well he is doing.



2007 Outstanding Oahu Rehabilitant: Tauloa Pouso'o

Deaf Services Section is honored and humbled to be able to recognize Mona Pouso'o's hard work and outstanding achievements. He has been an inspiration to us all and will continue to stand out in our minds as the definition of a successfully rehabilitated individual.

## Kauai Branch 2007 Employer of the Year

Nominated by Christine Bare, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

What do you say when a student with a learning disability approaches you and asks you for a chance to job shadow and work in a veterinary clinic? Thank goodness, Craig Nishimoto, DVM and his wife and office manager, Annette, said “yes!” Once he determined a true interest, Dr. Nishimoto contacted VR to set up an on-the-job training situation. When another student expressed interest in learning the trade, Mrs. Nishimoto knew to call VR and ask if they would be able to provide on-the-job training funds for this endeavor.



2007 Outstanding Employers: Dr. Craig Nishimoto and Mrs. Annette Nishimoto

Subsequently, Dr. Nishimoto hired both students. These individuals are doing well in their jobs and are now able to operate the necessary machines for blood work and other lab tests.

Although the length of training is fairly long for this job, both Dr. and Mrs. Nishimoto patiently taught their students and allowed them to learn advanced techniques as they progress. This is what has been so special for my clients...that they are truly veterinary laboratory assistants, capable of working with the animals, customers, and lab machines. Both students love what they are doing, and opportunity to learn new things that keep their jobs interesting.

Whenever asked if they need more help, the Nishimoto's always say that they are willing to give a VR client a try. Thank you Dr. Nishimoto and Mrs. Nishimoto at Paradise Animal Clinic for being truly outstanding employers!

## Kauai Branch 2007 Rehabilitant of the Year

Nominated by Debra Matsumoto, Employment Service Specialist

“**E**veryone is telling me what I cannot do”, stated Serafin Palomares when we first met in 2001. This made him even more determined to prove “everyone” wrong, and together, we proceeded to do just that. After recovering from a stroke, Serafin’s goal was to return to his previous employment in the Food & Beverage field. We realized that due to his limitations, he would not be able to perform some of the duties required in a restaurant setting. He could be successful however, if the work environment was modified.

Serafin enrolled at Kauai Community College and worked toward a degree in culinary arts. School became a lengthy process, involving a lot of creative collaboration between the Instructors, college counselor, and VR. The biggest hurdle was finding an appropriate practicum site. It soon became clear that Serafin would do best working independently at his own pace, building a workstation, and creating a system that would meet his specific needs. When the Piikoi Building Vending Stand in the County Civic Center became available as a practicum site, Serafin leapt at the chance to give it a try...and Serafin has never left.

Upon earning an AS degree in 2005, he decided to make the leap to self-employment. Serafin has managed to create a popular, thriving Vending Stand in the heart of Lihue town. He is renowned for his specialty sandwiches and salads, and the sky’s the limit as far as how big he could build his business. Yet, Serafin prefers to keep things small and simple, because for him, it’s not about the money as much as it is having a joyful purpose for waking up each day. You can



see that he truly enjoys what he does by the bright smile he wears when he greets his customers...and that’s really what keeps the regulars coming back day after day. Congratulations to Serafin Palomares! Kauai’s Outstanding Rehabilitant of the Year!

2007 Outstanding Kauai Rehabilitant: Serafin Palomares



## Services for the Blind Branch (Ho'opono)

The State Fiscal Year 2007 was very productive and exciting for Ho'opono clientele and staff. The Adjustment Section served 56 people and taught 49 persons with severe disabilities to adjust to their blindness and to live more independently (15 individuals were from the neighbor islands). The Low Vision Clinic served 265 people assisting them to make maximum use of their residual vision for reading and distance viewing.

VRSD counselors placed 4 individuals with severe vision problems into a variety of jobs. The Vending Facility Program served 37 legally blind persons at business enterprise sites. Total gross sales for Hawaii were over \$23,000,000.

Home Rehabilitation Teachers provided services that assisted 305 individuals to live as independently as possible. A wide range of volunteers provided 367 hours of support services to the agency. The estimated value of their services totaled approximately \$3,580.

The Annual White Cane Safety Awareness Day walk was held on October 12, 2007 in the Capitol District with Lieutenant Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona and Director of Human Services Director Lillian Koller participating.

The fourth Camp Ho'opono, a weeklong retreat for youth held at Camp Erdman on the North Shore of Oahu, challenged 10 young people to use "blindness skills" in an outdoor setting. In addition, two wilderness adventure treks and service projects for youth took place in conjunction with the National Park Service in the "Crater" area of Haleakala National Park on Maui.



Ho'opono students learn both in and out of the classroom that "blindness is not a barrier to success". Here, students climb a rope ladder at Camp Erdman's Leadership Development High Ropes Course. [Photography by Stephen Teeter]

## **Disability Determination Branch (DDB)**

**T**his program determines the eligibility of disabled applicants for federal Social Security Disability benefits. Funding for this program is 100% federal funds. In FY 2007, the program processed 8,686 claims with a 94% accuracy rate. Hawaii's accuracy rate was the highest in the San Francisco region.

As many as 20,810 individuals received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and 22,251 individuals received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The SSDI benefits and SSI benefits made to residents of Hawaii totaled approximately \$446,284,709.

In FY 2007, Cynthia Kenmotsu, Vocational Specialist, received the Social Security's Associate Commissioner Citation for her outstanding work and Seis Arcy, Branch Administrator received the Social Security Service Award for the division!

---

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board (DHHAB)**

**T**he Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board (DHHAB) advises the State of Hawaii - Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division on service improvement to deaf and hard of hearing persons. The empowerment committee has developed a series of workshops to empower, enrich and educate deaf and hard of hearing community members.

DHHAB officers are Chairperson: Donald Newhouse from Kauai and Vice-Chair: Cheryl Mizusawa from Oahu. Members are: James Souza, West Hawaii, Emilia Daquiaoag, Regina Goo, Kay Naquin, Kristine Pagano, LisaAnn Tom, Norman Galapin and Mel Whang, Oahu.

# State Rehabilitation Council

**T**he Hawaii State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is committed to the goals and objectives of the VR Program. It is made up of as many as 21 members appointed by the Governor and approved by the State Senate. Members consist of individuals with disabilities, professionals in the field, concerned citizens, and at least one representative from the counties of Maui, Hawaii, Kauai, and Oahu.

The SRC carries out its purpose by performing the following duties and responsibilities:

- Review, analyze, and advise the VR agency regarding its performance of responsibilities that affect the ability of consumers to achieve employment outcomes;
- Develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities of the VR program;
- Assist VR in the preparation of the VR State Plan, amendments to the plan and needs assessment;
- Review and analyze the effectiveness of the VR Program and consumer satisfaction;
- Prepare and submit a VR annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration; and
- Coordinate its activities with the activities of other disability-related councils within the State.



Current members of the SRC Council are: Rene Berthiaume (Chair), Katie Keim (Vice-Chair), Jonathan Chun, Joe Cordova, Larry Geller, Gene Davis, Nancy G. Kinghorn, Pina Lemusu, Howard Lesser, Larry M. Littleton, Kristine K.H. Pagano, Julie Smith, and Donald Thomson.



# Hawaii VR Literacy Project

In 2003, with the assistance of the Pacific Basin Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (PBRRTC), VRSBD authored and was awarded a \$1.2 million research grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Today, this grant is known as the Hawaii VR Literacy Project.

The goals of the project are threefold:

- 1) To investigate the efficacy of a literacy intervention in a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) setting,
- 2) To assess the impact of adult literacy training on VR outcomes (e.g., employment and earnings), and
- 3) To facilitate the development of effective literacy services.

Unlike projects that come from service delivery models, the Hawaii



In 2007, the project sponsored a three-day training workshop on the Wilson Reading System. Here workshop participants pose with Barbara Wilson (Director of Wilson Language Training) and Ed Wilson (Editor of Wilson Language Training).

VR Literacy Project is a research project that is comparing the employment outcomes and literacy gains between a control group and an intervention group. Four other states (Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, and South Carolina) have also received federal funding and are participating in this study.

The project has seen positive gains in literacy skills for those in the intervention group and we look forward to the final year of the project when more time will be spent on data analysis.

# Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division

## **Oahu Branch**

600 Kapiolani Blvd.,  
#301  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
808-586-5167 (VTT)

## **Kauai Branch**

3060 Eiwa St., #304  
Lihue, HI 96766-1877  
808-274-3333 (V/TT)

## **Maui Branch**

54 So. High St., #309  
Wailuku, HI 96793  
808-984-8350 (V/TT)

## **Molokai Field Office**

P.O. Box 1068  
Kaunakakai, HI 96648  
808-553-3621 (V/TT)

## **Hawaii Branch**

75 Aupuni Street, #110  
Hilo, HI 96720  
808-974-6444 (V/TT)

## **Kona Field Office**

82-6130 Mamalahoa Hwy.  
Bldg. 2  
Captain Cook, HI 96704  
808-323-0025 (V/TT)

## **Deaf Services Section (Oahu)**

Ocean View Center  
707 Richards St., PH5  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
808-587-5660 (V/TT)

## **Services for the Blind Branch**

1901 Bachelot Street  
Honolulu, HI 96817  
808-586-5268 (V/TT)

