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PRESS RELEASE

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Nevada Recognizes March 22 As National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day *Goodwill Honors DETR Employee Ofelia Gentscheff as Counselor of the Year*

The State of Nevada and the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) join disability organizations nationwide in recognizing March 22 as National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day.

“The counselors in Nevada’s Division of Rehabilitation are staunch advocates for our citizens who persevere over their disabilities to become successful members of the workforce,” said Governor Brian Sandoval. “I am proud of the work these talented team members do in ensuring all citizens of Nevada have equal opportunity in pursuing their educational and career goals. I salute them for their dedication and contribution to our state.”

Annually, Congress designates March 22 as National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day by the request of the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA).

DETR’s Rehabilitation Division is a state and federally funded program whose mission is to bring Nevadans together to promote barrier-free communities in which individuals with disabilities have access to opportunities for quality work and self-sufficiency.

Counselors work with individuals with disabilities to assess their skills and help them pursue goals in education and employment. Many clients are high school students with disabilities who are transitioning from school to work.

“Our counselors are very well-trained and become quite invested in helping people discover that they have talents and abilities that make them valuable members of the workforce,” said Maureen Cole, administrator for the Rehabilitation Division. “As Nevada continues to struggle with record high unemployment, people with disabilities are even harder to place in employment. Our goal is to make employers aware that these individuals bring tremendous skills and work ethic to the table, as they are often more driven to succeed because of their disabilities.”

In a ceremony on Tuesday, March 14, Goodwill Industries honored Rehabilitation Counselor Ofelia Gentscheff as State of Nevada Counselor of the Year for her dedication and advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. Gentscheff has worked as a counselor with the Rehabilitation Division for three years.

“I enjoy working with people with disAbilities and am passionate about it,” Gentscheff said. “I find it rewarding to be able to assist people with their goal to work and succeed in maintaining their respective jobs and/or move up. It is more challenging to find employment for them given the current economy but we keep going. They are so motivated to work and really want to be given a chance to show their abilities rather than their disabilities.”

The Rehabilitation Division has 46 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors stationed statewide in each of the Job Connect offices plus the two rehabilitation district offices in Las Vegas and Reno. Last year, the Rehabilitation Division opened 3,785 new client cases, and closed 1,743 cases with 947 of those cases closing because of an employment outcome, Cole said.

The average wage for those obtaining employment through the VR Program was \$11.28 per hour. Services provided include job training and placement, tools and work clothes, assistive technology, guidance and counseling, glasses, hearing aids and prostheses, and other services designed to meet individual needs in becoming employed, more self-sufficient and independent.

The Division also serves older individuals who are blind or visually impaired with non-employment related activities such as using assistive technology, training in mobility, housekeeping, self-care, budgeting, using public transportation, and other life skills that assist these individuals to live independently and avoid institutions.

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DETR is comprised of the Employment Security Division, Equal Rights Commission, Rehabilitation Division, the Information Development and Processing Division and the Research and Analysis Bureau. DETR works in partnership with the Nevada JobConnect System to provide training and job placement services to job seekers and to assist employers in hiring practices.