



# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Oct. 10, 2013**

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## **DARS HONORS ‘CHAMPIONS’ OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT** *October is Disability Employment Awareness Month*

**(RICHMOND, Va.)**—The Commonwealth’s 2013 Disability Employment Champions include a Richmond member of a presidential committee for people with disabilities and a Newport News businesswoman who has hired fellow agency clients to work for her home care company.

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Commissioner Jim Rothrock will present the agency’s awards to five current or former clients and their employers at noon, Oct. 16, at the University of Richmond’s Jepson Alumni Center. Individuals will be recognized for persevering in pursuit of employment and greater independence; their employers will be honored for demonstrating outstanding business and employment practices that encourage all Virginians to contribute their skills, ideas and talents to the Commonwealth’s workforce. The event is part of a series of activities across the Commonwealth in recognition of October as Virginia’s Disability Employment Awareness Month.

“Success is oftentimes the result of solid partnerships,” said Rothrock. “This year’s champions demonstrate the success that can be realized when talented Virginians with disabilities, supported by skilled professionals, meet the employment needs of progressive employers who readily identify the abilities, not disabilities, presented to them. This event allows more employers across the Commonwealth to learn about partnering with our agency and the capable clients we serve.”

The awards ceremony is part of a series of activities across the Commonwealth in recognition of October as Virginia’s Disability Employment Awareness Month. The statewide 2013 Disability Employment Champions award employee/employer recipients are:

- Teena Carter, whose vocational training at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center enabled her to obtain a state license as a certified nursing assistant and gain employment at [Spring Arbor of Leesburg](#);

- Rex Cole, a U.S. Air Force veteran whose unpaid internship on an amphibious crane project for international crane manufacturer [Tadano Mantis Corp.](#) in Richlands led to a job as a supervisor of a maintenance area unit for Chrysler Group LLC in Michigan;
- Mark Schomaker, who pursued a degree in electrical engineering following a diving accident and now works as a controls engineer for [Delta Star](#), a Lynchburg manufacturer of mobile substations and transformers;
- Justin Spurlock, a former pharmacy technician who returned to school after a car accident and is an AutoCAD operator with [Roof Consulting Services](#) of Glen Allen; and
- Juanita Zguro, a licensed practical nurse with [All Ways There Home Care](#), whose employer, Valerie Jones, was herself a DARS client and started the home care business in Newport News.

In addition, Rothrock will present the agency's Colorado Award to Jack Brandt, a former DARS client who is a disability policy specialist at Virginia Commonwealth University's [Partnership for People with Disabilities](#). The Colorado award honors DARS clients who have maximized their employment opportunities, independence and full inclusion into society.



*Jack Brandt*

Brandt's public service as a governor's fellow under Gov. Timothy Kaine and as an intern with U.S. Sen. Michael Enzi of Wyoming laid the groundwork for an appointment to Virginia's Statewide Independent Living Council, for which he served as chairman from 2010 to 2012. He also serves on the Commonwealth's Community Integration Advisory Commission. In 2012, President Obama appointed him to the [Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities](#).

Brandt, 34, has a developmental disability. He received a bachelor's degree from James Madison University and completed his master's degree in rehabilitation counseling at VCU in August.

Read Gov. Bob McDonnell's proclamation recognizing October as Virginia Disability Employment Awareness Month at <http://1.usa.gov/GzvFTg>. Learn more about the national campaign to raise awareness about disability employment issues and the contributions of America's workers with disabilities at [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/).

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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](http://www.vadars.org).