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Volume 2, Issue 1

# VR NEWS

## Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Project

### *Special Interest Articles:*

- What do you people do all day?
- Medical advice for elders
- Client Success Story

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## *FIVE MORE YEARS! Spirit Lake Receives Continued and Expanded Funding*

Top news of the month has to be our call from Senator Byron Dorgan's office telling us that we had been approved for five more years of funding.

We will continue to provide services to tribal members with disabilities who are looking for work. As always, our services are available to members of any tribe, not just Spirit Lake Sioux.

During the next five years we will be expanding our services for youth, and we hope to begin working more closely with the schools.

As many of you know, it has been a constant problem for people to find jobs after they have received training. As part of our next five years, we will be

starting a business to buy and sell traditional arts and crafts.

We are also considering having a coffee shop area in the store, where people can relax, have a cup of coffee and home-made pastries, and then get up and buy more gifts!

If you are a vocational rehabilitation consumer and you would be interested in working in this store as a cashier, maintenance, bookkeeper or maintaining the website, please speak to your outreach worker.

If you are not currently a client but believe you or a family member may be eligible for services, please call J.R. Walter at (701) 766-4446 and he will be happy to schedule an appointment for you.

## WHAT DO YOU PEOPLE DO ALL DAY, ANYWAY? (Second in a continuing series on vocational rehabilitation on the Spirit Lake Reservation)

- ✓ *Vocation; the work in which a person is regularly employed.*
- ✓ *Rehabilitate: to restore or bring to a condition of health or useful and constructive activity.*

The purpose of vocational rehabilitation is to prepare people for work. The goal of any vocational rehabilitation program is to provide individualized services to persons with disabilities. VR is not a 'one size fits all program', it is a one size fits one. Whatever the mix of services that fits an individual, that is what we provide. For one person, it may be purchasing tools, helping with a business plan and paying a bookkeeper to help him start a business. Another may need completely different services, such as help filling out a job application and a purchase order so she can buy a uniform once she gets the job. A third person may need to get new glasses so she can see the cash register at work. A fourth tribal member may

need on-the-job training, and new tires on a vehicle used to get to training and work. These are common examples of the type of services we provide every day. People are often surprised we have such a professional program with so many services out here on the reservation.

Vocational rehabilitation programs also are leaders in promoting for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

In some communities, this may be called fighting for the rights of people with disabilities. That is not really the case here on the Spirit Lake Reservation. It is more a matter of education.

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"People are often surprised we have such a professional program with so many services out here on the reservation."



## *Vocational Rehabilitation -what we do (continued)*

For example, it sounds like a good idea to have a GED requirement for all jobs. However, a person with mental retardation, traumatic brain injury or other disorders may have great difficulty passing the GED no matter how hard he or she tries. This person might still be an extremely good employee. The Spirit Lake VR Project discussed this situation with the tribal council, which agreed to waive the GED requirement

VR removes the physical and attitudinal barriers that may keep people with disabilities from obtaining employment. Just because a person can't do one thing, that doesn't mean she can't do anything. Our counselors are very creative in finding what a person can do and matching that to a job, sometimes even to a job that doesn't exist but can be created. Employers don't usually think about changing a job to fit an individual's needs. A recent example was a woman who, due to back problems, can only stand for short periods. A job as a housekeeper in the hotel would have required her to spend much of the day on her feet, walking

from room to room, bending over to make beds and so on. The counselor pointed out to the hotel manager that there was a need for someone to fold all of the laundry. This job takes several hours a day and can be done sitting down. The manager concurred and this individual is now employed in the housekeeping department.

VR also publicizes the abilities and accomplishments of persons with disabilities to society at large.

There is an advantage on this reservation. Unlike some tribes, the Spirit Lake Sioux do not perceive it as a negative when a person with a disability is working. People with disabilities who come to the project want to get out and work. They much prefer getting out to sitting home and not doing anything. One reason for this newsletter is to make all of you in the community more aware of the accomplishments of persons with disabilities both on the Spirit Lake Reservation and in the world. We hope you find the information useful.

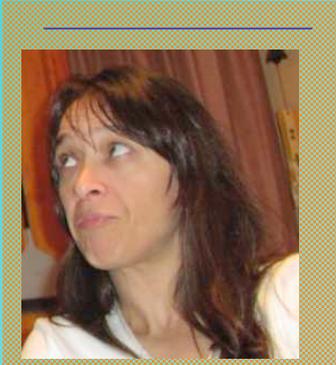
### REFERENCES

University of Tennessee, Vocational Rehabilitation.

<http://ods.utk.edu/VocRehab.html>

## American Indian Elders: Medical Considerations

Jacob Nava Flores, M.D. & AnnMaria De Mars, Ph.D.



The doctor is in.

"Somehow, we can't see a lot of Spirit Lake grandmothers doing sit-ups and jogging in place along with Jane Fonda."

Vocational rehabilitation is about helping people get and keep jobs. Medicine is about helping people get and keep healthy. Thus, the two would seem to go hand in hand. After all, you can't work very well when you're sick. There are several health needs that are particularly important to older American Indian adults, and, in this issue, we'd like to make you more aware of some less well-recognized of these needs.

**EXERCISE!** Did you know that physical inactivity has a higher correlation with coronary heart disease than smoking, obesity or high blood pressure? American Indians tend to get less exercise than non-Indians and this trend is worse the older one gets. Now, we know the Fort Totten Country Club with the two golf courses and tennis courts hasn't opened yet! Somehow, we can't see a lot of Spirit Lake grandmothers doing sit-ups and jogging in place along with Jane Fonda or Richard Simmons. If you do, good for you, but you probably are the exception. Here are a few practical suggestions.

Start slow. If you have not exercised for years, you are not going to get back in top shape in a week or two. If you don't normally walk more than to your car and inside the casino, start walking a half-mile each day.

Be consistent. Exercise a little every day. If you start with something like walking a half-mile, it won't take you more than fifteen minutes. Once you

get it into your regular routine, it becomes a habit. All of you smokers know how hard habits can be to break.

Try to make it pleasant. We recommend walking because it requires no special equipment, no cost and you can do it anywhere. We highly recommend walking with your children or grandchildren some of the time. It is good for you and your younger family members to have the opportunity to talk to one another or just be together. Walking alone sometimes can also give you the opportunity just to be alone with your thoughts.

Once you have gotten more accustomed to exercise, try to increase the amount gradually. You could start walking a mile each day, maybe join an exercise class through the Diabetes Fitness program or try swimming at the Spirit Lake Resort.

**TAKE YOUR MEDICINE!** There are lots of reasons people give for not taking their medicine, some of them more common in low-income and rural populations.

"But, doctor, I couldn't get to town and I was running out so I only took half what you ordered at a time."

"It was so expensive and I figured I didn't really need that much, so I took two pills a day instead of three. It lasts longer that way."

"I was feeling better so I quit taking it."  
**(Continued on Page 5)**

## American Indian Elders (continued)

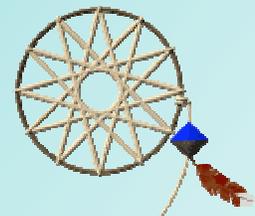
Let's deal with these excuses one at a time. (1) Because you could not get a ride to town does not mean you don't need your medicine. It is as simple as that. Schedule picking up your refills a few days in advance of when you need them.

(2) Most doctors stayed awake during their classes in medical school. That means that they probably gave you the recommended dose based on those years of education and experience that led to diagnosis and treatment. You probably assumed they knew something about what you needed, which is why you went to the doctor in the first place. Follow the doctor's advice, please. If you are a vocational rehabilitation client and really cannot afford your

medications, speak with your outreach worker. He or she has a lot of knowledge about resources in your area.

(3) It does seem unnecessary to take medication when you feel perfectly fine. However, many medications continue working after your symptoms have stopped. Those extra days help to insure that your illness does not return.

In the next issue, we will have more recommendations on how you can take charge of your own health. Until then, stay well.



## Art Thompson: Remembering a Role Model

Art Thompson, a member of the Ditidaht First Nation, passed away from cancer this month. Mr. Thompson's early life was a story too familiar. He was sent to Indian Residential School at age five, where he was beaten, sexually abused and lost both his native name and the opportunity to learn his culture. He dropped out of school at 14 and worked as a logger until he injured his back. In addition to his injury, Mr. Thompson had problems with drugs and alcohol, which he attributed to his early abuse and cultural alienation.

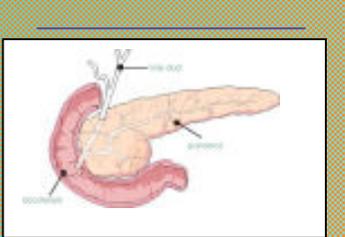
The end of this story is quite different from most. He overcame his drug and alcohol problems. He took up carving while recuperating from his

back injury. His art also including painting, prints and working with precious metals. By the time of his death, Mr. Thompson was internationally famous and able to command high prices for his work. In addition, he had brought to the art world the artistic style of the Nuuchah-nulth, not just maintaining his culture but gaining respect for his people and an appreciation of their contributions to art.

Art Thompson can serve as a role model for people served by vocational rehabilitation. Visitors to our reservation frequently comment on the abundance of artistic talent. Although we take for granted the artwork that appears everywhere, on signs, in people's homes, on quilts and in beadwork, these are gifts that are rare and valuable.

"...the artwork that appears everywhere, on signs, in people's homes, on quilts and in beadwork, these are gifts that are rare and valuable"

## Disability Awareness: Type 2 Diabetes



Above, for those of you who always wondered what it looked like, is a picture of your pancreas.

"Diabetes is a disease that impairs the body's ability to use food. The hormone insulin, which is made in the pancreas, helps the body to change food into energy. In people with diabetes, either the pancreas doesn't make insulin or the body cannot use insulin properly. Without insulin, sugar - the body's main energy source - builds up in the blood.

Approximately 90-95% (16 million) of people with diabetes have Type 2 diabetes. A

Although diabetes cannot be cured, it can be treated. With family support, daily care and treatment, you can lead a healthy, active and fun-filled life.

A good diabetes treatment plan includes:

- Eating healthy and on schedule.
- Checking blood sugar levels regularly.
- Adjusting insulin as blood sugar levels and activities warrant.
- Exercising regularly."

The above information is from the website:

[www.diabetes.org/main/type2/info/default.asp](http://www.diabetes.org/main/type2/info/default.asp)

You can get much more information from the Diabetes Fitness Program located in the white trailers right behind the Spirit Lake JOBS Program Building.

Or call 766-4334 (program)

766-1710 (fitness center)

## Internet Access - Yet another VR Service

If you are a VR consumer who does not have Internet access and would like to research disability or employment related information on the web, please drop by and see J.R. Walter, our new assistant counselor.

He can help you locate the information you are looking for, show you how to use the web browser so that you can look it up for yourself, or just print out the information you need.

If J.R. is not in, please speak to your outreach worker or to Tanya Jetty, Assistant to the Director, and they will be happy to help you out.



Need to find disability or work-related information on the web?  
Drop by and see J.R.

## SUCCESS STORY

### Clark: Good employee, Good Neighbor and Future Business Owner

Clark first heard about the VR program on the radio. He stopped by the project office and Tanya Jetty gave him a pamphlet describing the project and its services. Tanya called the Food Distribution program, arranged an interview and Clark was hired. That in itself is a success story, but it gets better.

Clark is an excellent mechanic. He says he learned by watching other people from the time he was little. When his employer's van needed service, Clark says, "I replaced the radiator and the fuel pump," in the same tone that someone might say that he put the dishes in the sink. Clark just shrugged modestly when it was pointed out to him that, the average employee when he has a problem with a vehicle owned by his employer doesn't think to go in the garage and replace the radiator.

After work, Clark fixes cars in his spare time, both his own and other people's. He charges less than the same service in nearby town, and people don't have to pay a fee of \$40 or more for towing their car into town for service. Being able to have their

cars fixed on the reservation has been a great service. Clark is happy that he can help people who need it, and they are grateful for the help.

Tanya and Clark are working together to develop a business plan that could enable Clark to go into business for himself as a mechanic full-time. The project purchased tools and has arranged for Clark to use a vacant garage for a service bay. Martina Kazena, the Spirit Lake VR Director, was so impressed with the reports she heard of Clark's work that she gave him his first commercial contract. She contracted with him to work on vehicles needing repair and service, both those owned by the project and those used by its consumers.

Clark has particularly appreciated the on the job training he has received from the project. His life-long interest has always been cars, and he is very interested in pursuing his career as a mechanic. With Clark's talent with cars and Tanya pushing the paperwork, it seems likely that Clark's Car Repair may be the next successful business on the Spirit Lake Reservation.



Clark looks sort of like the picture above (but not exactly.)

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*Helping people  
with disabilities  
find and keep  
jobs.*

## *Getting to know us : Germaine Thompson*

Germaine Thompson, an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Sioux tribe, lives in St. Michael. She was just promoted to Project Coordinator. In her new position she will be working with consumers to establish a business on the reservation selling traditional art and crafts in a gift shop, over the Internet and to other stores both in-state and around the country.

When she is not working on the project, she can often be found at sweats and pow-wows. Her interest in pow-wows comes not only from her traditional roots but also from being a grandmother. Her young grandson is now dancing at the pow-wows and she is ready for her granddaughter to start next year. Germaine's oldest daughter, Amaris, is twenty-two and

employed by Spirit Lake Even Start. Her youngest daughter is nine years old and in the third grade at Four Winds School. As if that isn't enough generations on the reservation, Germaine also spends her spare time taking care of her mother. So, no matter how old or young you are, you probably know someone in Germaine's family. Stop on in the project office and ask her your questions about vocational rehabilitation. She is always happy to talk to anyone who wants information. Her phone number is (701) 766-1301. Her email is [gthompson@stellarnet.com](mailto:gthompson@stellarnet.com).

## *We are accepting new clients...youth and adults*

If you are a student with a disability who has dropped out of school and could use some help finding a job, OR if you are still in school but will be needing a job when you graduate, please call Lori LaFloe 766-1306.

If you are an adult with a disability seeking employment, wanting to find a better job or interested in starting your own business, please call Germaine Thompson

(701) 766- 1301