Final Project Report

Employment for All Citizens of The Arc of Southside

Grantee: VCU RRTC

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**A. Primary Goal of the Grant**

The primary goal of the grant was to convert the sheltered workshop administered by The Arc of Southside to an integrated employment program. Providing community employment services give individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to choose to work; giving them more independence and control over all aspects of their lives. A major component of the project was an emphasis on informed choice by the individuals and families served. The impact of the training and education provided in this area is far reaching and will guide individuals on their employment path for years to come.

**B. Program Performance**

**Objective 1: Increase the knowledge and enhance the capacity of the Board and Administration to facilitate the conversion of the The Hatcher Employment program.**

Accomplishments Objective 1: VCU RRTC provided training on individual choice, employment best practices, and integrated employment outcomes for individuals with IDD. This allowed for a productive discussion regarding the Board and the administrations role in facilitating the conversion of the sheltered workshop. Throughout the project, Board members assisted with employer education with community businesses and in providing employer contacts for job development. Administration continued to work with the Board to provide ongoing training and information regarding integrated employment. This commitment led to increased network of employers in the local community that are well informed and supportive of hiring individuals with IDD.

Performance Measures Objective 1:

* Increased knowledge of Board members regarding employment best practices, conversion, and integrated employment outcomes for individuals with IDD.
* Increased network of employers in the community who are aware of The Arc of Southside's services and the benefits of hiring individuals with IDD.
* Increased involvement by the Board members in conversion activities.
* Increased employer contacts in the community for job development activities.

Demographics Objective 1:

20 Arc of Southside Board members received training and participated in development activities.

Male – 8

Female – 12

White-20

Under age 40 – 9

Over age 40 – 11

Consumer Participation Objective 1:

Individuals in the supported employment program have had several opportunities to interact and share with the board during this project. Each year The Arc of Southside holds two joint meetings of the board of directors and membership which includes people receiving services and their families. During this project four such membership events were held where individuals and families were able to meet and talk with board members and share their stories individually. In addition to these more informal connections and discussions, two of the membership events highlighted Supported Employment. At these meetings, consumers who have obtained jobs in the community with the assistance of the project presented their experiences with the Board.

Barriers Objective 1:

Educating the board about Supported Employment didn’t present significant barriers; but engaging them in the process in a meaningful way was at times difficult and will continue to be a focus as The Arc moves forward with the transition to community based services. During the project the board was very focused on the major task of relocating the entire agency and all of its’ programs to the community. Carving out intentional time for them to focus on employer development will continue to be a priority. This barrier will improve as The Arc completes relocation efforts. As the other programs settle into their new model (community housing and a smaller school that is downsizing until closing), more time will be dedicated to developing ways for the board to engage with the community to raise awareness of Supported Employment as a viable solution to the business communities hiring needs.

Effective Strategies Objective 1:

The most effective strategy was having board members use their personal connections to connect us to potential community employers. The Arc will continue to seek Board member’s help in making contact with local businesses. During the project several board members were able to coordinate meetings between businesses and the employment team.

**Objective 2: Develop and maintain skilled staff that can support integrated employment outcomes for people with significant developmental disabilities**

Accomplishments Objective 2: To ensure that the entire agency focused efforts on providing Employment First for individuals supported across programs (employment, residential and education), all job description in the agency were revised to include an element of supporting and guiding individuals to choose integrated employment. Examples include teachers in the classroom having a philosophy of Employment First when teaching students of all ages, drivers in any program understanding Employment First so they can provide support during informal conversations to and from various programs that encourage adults to consider their options for integrated employment. All job descriptions for staff at The Arc of Southside now reflect the philosophy of Employment First for all individuals with IDD.

Along with new job descriptions, all employees have individualized staff development plans based on training needs for the purpose of building the skills needed to support individuals with IDD in integrated community jobs. These plans correspond with personal goals for increasing knowledge and skills relating to supporting community employment. A total of 19 staff members at The Arc of Southside completed the Supported Employment Web-based Series offered by VCU RRTC and earned ACRE’s National Certificate in Employment Services.

Performance Measures Objective 2:

* Staff/employment specialists meet their individualized goals for knowledge and skill development related to assisting individuals with IDD in achieving jobs of choice.
* Increased number of staff competent in supporting individuals with IDD in achieving integrated employment outcomes.
* A minimum of ten Employment specialists will complete the Supported Employment Web-based Series earning ACRE's National Certificate in Employment Services. A total of 16 staff completed the training during the project, for a total of 19 individuals at The Arc of Southside that are trained and certified.

Demographics Objective 2a and 2b: 63 staff members have revised job descriptions and individualized staff development plans.

Male-19

Female-44

White-34

Black-29

Under age 40 – 22

Over age 40 – 41

Demographics Objective 2c: 16 staff completed the Supported Employment Web based series and earned ACRE National Certification.

Male = 4

Female = 12

White = 14

Black = 2

Under Age 40 = 4

Over age 40 = 12

Consumer Participation Objective 2:

One of the keys to success in transitioning The Arc of Southside’s programs to the community is changing the views and perspectives that staff hold about the potential of the people they were serving. Staff must learn the philosophies of integration by seeing what people truly can do. They care deeply about the success and well-being of those they serve, and only “held them back” because they couldn’t see all the options available to do otherwise. One staff said to me that they (staff) were as “sheltered as the consumers”. As the process has moved forward, discussions between staff and those supported have changed, the lens through which the discussions take place as those supported are asked the right questions during planning meetings and ongoing informal conversations. In years past people supported were always asked about their interest in work, but the way, in which they were asked guided them to remain in the sheltered environment where they were happy, had friends and were comfortable. Now when questions are simply “what do you like to do in your free time”, “who do you like to spend time with”, “where do you hang out when not at work”…all of these questions open up possibilities of what each person may enjoy that can often translate into potential options for employment that better suit the persons interests and thus impact their performance on the job. Through this project, staff knowledge has grown; their insight has increases by having real discussions with consumers. The Arc will continue to facilitate these discussions in planning meetings as well as informal conversations and activities.

Employees at The Arc have also started to view individuals differently as those in Supported Employment have been asked to speak at events such as the membership meetings. This elevation of status as someone whose life and experience has such value to others redefines the person sharing their story in the minds of others.

Barriers Objective 2:

The biggest barrier to developing a skilled workforce will always be time. Time to train, time to engage in meaningful conversations about what is being learned each day, time to mentor, coach and guide, time to exchange ideas about what is working and what is not working.

Effective Strategies Objective 2:

Time and people are our most valuable resources and there can never be enough, but with the relocation over and with much of the administrative tasks of setting up a good Supported Employment program complete, we will increase the time we spent on these vital tasks, as well as finding new ways to communicate and to share opportunities through the use of technology. Along with the relocation to the community, making our services more accessible, new technology resources have also been added. The Arc now provides tablets that give staff in the field more opportunity to engage in communication with each other, and with employers, including supervisors and managers to share information in real time.

**Objective 3: Assist a minimum of 30 individuals with significant developmental disabilities to transition from the workshop into community integrated employment and maintain employment for at least six consecutive months during project funding.**

Accomplishments Objective 3: The Arc of Southside has developed a Business Advisory Council to guide the supported employment program and provide connections with employers. They are available to provide ongoing feedback with marketing materials that have been developed to educate and engage employers regarding employment services. During the course of the project The Arc has joined and participated in numerous local business networks. This participation provides opportunities for the employment team to make connections and positions the program as an effective labor resource for the community.

During the project 30 individuals participated in Discovery activities and have comprehensive individual profiles to guide their career journey. A total of 14 individuals have obtained jobs of their choice in the community.

Performance Measures Objective 3:

* A target was set for 30 individuals with IDD to obtain jobs of their choice. By project end 14 individuals met this objective.
* Increased number of businesses that employ adults with IDD in the Danville community. Twelve employers have hired individuals during the project period.
* Increased number of customized jobs achieved by individuals with IDD. Ten customized jobs were developed.
* Increased wages, hours, and benefits achieved by the individuals with IDD.

Wages and hours have increased significantly for the individuals now working in the community. The chart below illustrates previous hourly earnings in the workshop compared with current hourly wages in integrated employment.

| **Wage in Sheltered Workshop** | **Integrated Employment Wage** |
| --- | --- |
| **$ 1.52** | **$ 7.50** |
| **$ 3.21** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$ 1.23** | **$ 7.50** |
| **$ 1.90** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$ 2.38** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$ 1.61** | **$ 7.50** |
| **$ 2.88** | **$ 7.75** |
| **$ 2.87** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$ 4.88** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$1.45** | **$7.25** |
| **$1.96** | **$7.25** |
| **$ 3.74** | **$ 7.25** |
| **$ 3.66** | **$ 8.00** |
| **$ 6.52** | **$ 8.00** |

* Increased employer satisfaction for businesses that hire individuals supported by The Arc of Southside. Employer satisfaction surveys are completed on a semiannual basis to ensure satisfaction of services and areas in need of improvement.
* Increased individual and family satisfaction with the services provided. Customer satisfaction surveys are distributed to individuals and families on an annual basis to measure satisfaction with services.

Demographics Objective 3a: Develop and maintain business network of employers as BAC

Male-5

Female-5

White-7

Black-3

Under age of 40 – 1

Over age of 40 – 9

Demographics Objective 3d. Complete Discovery profiles -30

Male- 17

Female-13

White-15

Black-15

Under age 40 – 21

Over age 40 – 9

Demographics Objective 3e. Develop jobs for 30 people – 14

Male-12

Female-2

White-8

Black-6

Under age 40 – 11

Over age 40 – 3

Consumer Participation Objective 3:

This objective is where consumers play the biggest part as they work individually with their job coaches to share and discover their interests and skills. As each person went through the discovery process they developed a plan for employment and began searching for employment together. This includes resume/background summary development, job applications, work samples, interviews and on the job training for those who obtained employment.

As individuals participated in Discovery, there were consistent themes that emerged. Many individuals stated that they simply enjoyed “getting out”. They had grown so accustomed to only attending the Hatcher Center that they were missing out on simple activities of life that people with disabilities often miss. This happens for a variety of reason including that the focus of families and professionals is to make sure they are receiving services and attending programs, often forgetting the importance of leisure activities. This might include going for an afternoon coffee, a walk in the park, a visit to a museum, out to lunch, or a chat about life. All of these simple activities are the ones that make up lives and people with disabilities often miss these chances. During discovery staff spent time with each person in a variety of settings both familiar and new. This led to the discovery of interests and skills that easily translate to employment options. It was amazing how individuals requested repeatedly “when can we go out again”, “when can we talk about me getting a job again”.

Barriers Objective 3:

Limited jobs have been a significant barrier, forcing us to compete with the large number of people looking for entry level positions in our area of high unemployment. The people we support often have little to no job history which makes it very difficult to compete in a job market where so many people are searching for employment. Danville is the 6th poorest city in Virginia which has an impact on businesses and their hiring practices. It is a slow process to develop relationships with employers and help them understand and buy into new ideas regarding how to meet hiring needs. All communities face this and in rural areas it is even more prevalent.

Attitudes of families and case managers about Supported Employment often serve as barriers. We continue working individually with families and case managers to encourage them to try Supported Employment. Seeing others succeed often changes the minds of a reluctant family. New trainings and directives from the state to case managers have reduced previous concerns/barriers.

Effective Strategies Objective 3:

Meeting with employers individually and building long term relationships will lead to more opportunities for those we serve. It is a task that takes time, energy and consistency. The time spent during this project has and will continue to pay dividends as employers come to trust and rely on Supported Employment as a viable source for quality employees that come with a strong support system. This was evidenced by employers who had hired through the project coming back to us when they had a short term need to fill staffing gaps.

**Objective 4: Create, implement, and sustain a plan for acquiring and sustaining financial resources needed to maintain the conversion effort for The Arc of Southside.**

Accomplishments Objective 4: The Arc of Southside has reviewed and developed a resource catalog of all state level, community level and individual level funding strategies for employment services. This allows for diversified funding to support community integrated employment. Each person in supported employment has an individualized funding plan leveraging resources from all available funding streams. A cost analysis was completed to assist The Arc of Southside in finalizing funding and budgeting priorities for the employment program. The Board and administration at The Arc have a firm commitment to support community integrated employment and to not back fill the sheltered workshop during the transition.

Performance Measures Objective 4:

* Cumulative Dollars leveraged for competitive employment services during project.

Each year of the project The Arc of Southside has increased the dollars spent on competitive employment services.

FY 2013-2014 = $103,000

FY 2014-2015 = $140,000

FY 2015-2016 = $157,748 Budgeted

* Catalog of policies and funding agreements that secure employment services where money follows the people entering competitive employment.
* Cost and Benefit of competitive employment outcomes compared to facility-based services previously received by individuals participating in project.

It costs The Arc of Southside $8503.00 per person annually to serve an individual in the sheltered workshop and $4925.00 per person annually in competitive employment.

Demographics Objective 4: N/A

Consumer Participation Objective 4: N/A

Barriers Objective 4:

Given the commitment of The Arc of Southside’s Board and leadership team, there were no significant barriers to planning and implementing the conversion of the workshop to integrated employment services. The organization completed a comprehensive strategic plan outlining the transition of services that included financial objectives and goals.

Effective Strategies Objective 4:

The most important factor that led to success in sustaining necessary financial resources was the buy in from all stakeholders regarding the strategic plan and the commitment to community integrated employment for all individuals.

**Objective 5: Empower individuals with disabilities and their family members to choose integrated employment outcomes based on each person’s individualized dreams, interests, goals and objectives.**

Accomplishments Objective 5:

A four session Supported Employment Educational Series was developed by The Arc of Virginia in collaboration with The Arc of Southside. This series provided information on informed choice, supported employment, the discovery phase, policy impacting employment in Virginia, exploration of potential work interests in a group setting, and a presentation by a panel of individuals who have transitioned to supported employment. The Arc of Virginia developed outreach materials and The Arc of Southside disseminated materials to family members and caregivers of participants in the Hatcher program.

During the project, 30 individuals participated in the Discovery process. All results were reviewed with each person and their family members to facilitate informed choice. The project has provided six self-advocates the opportunity to be trained in advocacy and supported to share their employment success stories both locally and at the state level.

The Arc of Southside’s job club meets monthly providing participants the opportunity to discuss employment, learn from other’s experiences and consider next steps regarding job search activities.

Performance Measures Objective 5:

* Number of individuals and families trained in informed choice and employment. All 106 individuals receiving services at the Arc of Southside received training. Thirty five families participated in the Supported Employment Educational Series.
* Number of self-advocates developed through project. Six
* Number of job club meetings, community meetings and regional forums on informed choice and employment conducted. Job Club meetings are held monthly, there are currently 26 active members. Self-advocates participated in 12 meetings/forums in the community on informed choice and employment.
* Increased individual and family satisfaction with the services provided. Individuals and families have expressed satisfaction and excitement regarding services and employment options. Customer satisfaction surveys are distributed to individuals and families on an annual basis to measure satisfaction with services.

Demographics Objective 5a Education on informed choice and employment:

All 106 individuals in the program were provided information, education and resources on Supported Employment to encourage and empower them to choose integrated employment.

Male-62

Female-44

White-74

Black-32

Under age 40-42

Over age 40-64

Demographics Objective 5c Network of self-advocates:

Male-5

Female-1

White-4

Black-2

Under age 40-5

Over age 40-1

Consumer Participation Objective 5:

During the Education Series presented by The Arc of Virginia, individuals in our Supported Employment program who were working presented their experiences to the group, sharing what the discovery process was like for them and how they then worked with a job coach to obtain employment. During these presentations each person also shared a goal or motivator they had for wanting to work in the community. Some goals included earning money for specific items, getting a driver’s license and saving up to move into an apartment.

Barriers Objective 5:

The barriers that exist to empowering people to choose Supported Employment usually revolve around fear. Fear of losing benefits, fear of the unknown, and fear about safety.

Effective Strategies Objective 5:

To move past the fears we provided as much information as possible on the things that worry and scare people. This included partnering with Full Circle benefits counselors, who met with and conducted a benefits analysis on all 106 participants. These sessions were individualized telling each person how much they could earn before benefits would be effected as well as working with the tools and strategies for each person should they ever earn more than their allowable amount.

Fears around safety and the unknown have to be met one person at a time. Employment specialists review the environment in which they are trying to obtain employment and make plans about any specific concerns. Efforts are also made to help individuals stay connected to friends that are still at the Hatcher Center. This helps alleviate some of the fears of the unknown. Job Club and events at The Arc are a way for everyone to stay connected and will continue to be developed as we move forward.

**C. Stories of People with Disabilities**

Story one:

TP began working in the Hatcher Center sheltered workshop in August of 1997 right after high school. He has had no other employment experience. He has a great work ethic and a positive attitude. When new jobs come into the workshop, he always volunteers to learn the new tasks. TP is very friendly and enjoys the social events at the workshop. TP likes to spend the money he earns, but has been discouraged by the limited income he makes in the workshop. He averages only $2.00 per hour.

When The Arc of Southside began the conversion of the workshop and information was being shared about working in the community, TP was ready to begin. He was one of the first individuals to enter the Supported Employment program. During the Discovery process, it was learned that TP did not have any type of ID card or a copy of his birth certificate. This was identified as a significant barrier to employment. His employment specialist worked with him to acquire his birth certificate and a state issued ID so that he could work in the community.

TP was referred to the local DARS office and soon after orientation he was approved for supported employment services. TP chose The Arc of Southside to work with him. After three months in job development TP was called for an interview for a landscaping position. TP’s preference is to work outside. The position requires him to do various landscaping tasks such as mowing, weed eating and other general maintenance. He was offered the position and began working June 4th, 2014. He is initially working two days a week with the understanding that his hours may increase as he learns all the job requirements. He is receiving supports on the job from his employment specialist. He is earning $7.25 an hour and is very excited to be earning more money. His goal is to increase his hours to a minimum of three days per week.

Story two:

FR is a quiet and reserved young man, especially when it comes to meeting new people. He lives at home with his extended family, including several nieces and nephews. FR was diagnosed with ID as a young man and often felt isolated and set apart from his peers as he grew up. FR has many goals. He wants to be independent and to have his own place to live. He wants a job he enjoys and to earn enough money to get his own computer, buy video games, join the YMCA, and to ultimately get his driver’s license and to purchase a car.

In the past, FR took several classes to be a cook and to work in a restaurant (his ideal job) but had no assistance in pursuing employment. He did some volunteer work and was named Volunteer of the year at the program he attended. While he enjoyed volunteering, it wasn’t the same as a job earning a paycheck. FR sought assistance from an employment agency. The recommendation at that time was to attend a vocational skills training center. FR chose not to participate because he did not want to leave his home and family.

FR then entered the Hatcher Center and began working in the sheltered workshop. When The Arc of Southside received the grand from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities he entered the Supported Employment program. FR was very excited about seeking competitive employment in the community. FR completed the Discovery process that confirmed his desire to work in a restaurant. After several months of visiting area restaurants and filling out applications, FR received a call from Wendy’s Restaurant. The restaurant is two blocks from his home so he can walk to work. FR is working with his job coach and doing well. He is making new friends and has certainly impressed his new boss with his work ethic and his desire to be a good employee.

Story three:

T.T. has worked at Hatcher center for many years in various departments. He is a charming young man who makes friends easily and is a hard worker. Not every story is as fun to tell, in his case the story begins sad but ends with success. T.T. has shared with staff that he is the only income earner in the household where he lives with various family members. The wages he earned at Hatcher along with his SSI was not enough for him to support those family members or to support himself. Knowing his circumstance, he was among the first people we began seeking a job for through Supported Employment. The home situation is not a healthy one, it is one where he is taken advantage of and very mistreated including physical altercations over money.

T.T. and his job coach have searched for work for a several months hitting many dead ends. A few weeks ago their hard work paid off when he was offered a position at a conference center in the catering department. This job suits him so well because he is fast and efficient but he is also friendly and outgoing for interacting with the public at these events.

On October 10th, T.T. will move into an apartment with one of his best friends from Hatcher. T.T. is in his mid 20’s and is thrilled to get his first apartment. While the issues with his family are a concern to him, he wants to be on his own and out of what he calls an abusive situation. While this situation was addressed and reported in the past, the only thing that really changes things for people is empowerment over their own life, and income and independence do just that. His life has truly changed because of this grant and tomorrow he will attend an event with his peers where he wants to share his story about work.

Story four:

SB was used to hearing what he couldn’t do. He was separated from his family at an early age. He was called immature and childish as a young adult. He had limited reading and math skills. Although he did have some early work experiences in the community, no one ever followed up on these opportunities and so SB was placed in a sheltered workshop in 1991. In the workshop, he averaged 30 hours per week at an average rate of .87 cents per hour doing work he really didn’t excel at. He always wanted to do more and if new work came into the workshop, SB was always one of the first ones to want to try the new job.

When The Arc of Southside started the Supported Employment Program through the VBPD Grant, SB was not interested in the new program. He said he was happy in the workshop and didn’t want to leave. This attitude changed once a couple of his friends made the decision to seek competitive employment and found jobs. He approached one of our job coaches asking if they could help him find a job. It took several months but SB found a job working at Food Lion four days a week, averaging about 20 hours per week. His pay is $7.50 an hour. He loves his new job and his employer is extremely impressed with their new employee. They have gotten multiple compliments from his fellow employees and from the customers that he comes in contact with. SB is saving some of his money for some large purchases he wants to make, including a scooter so he can travel in the community more easily. He loves eating out in area restaurants now that he can afford to do so. His goal now is to increase his hours and to earn more money!

Story five:

MC was in a difficult situation. He was about to lose his home. He was in debt of close to $12,000 on monthly maintenance fees he owed on the condo in which he lived. He purchased the condo from money he inherited after the death of his parents. The money quickly disappeared as he was taken advantage of by people he considered his friends. He was placed in the sheltered workshop over 5 years ago earning less than $75.00 a week. He had his driver’s license and a vehicle but he was unable to keep his vehicle in drivable shape. We found out most of this during the Discovery process. We worked with MC and the Social Security Department and applied for SSI. He now receives SSI and received enough back pay to clear his back payments on the condo.

Even though he began receiving SSI payments, it was not enough to sustain the type of life MC wanted. MC began working with our job coaches to secure a job in the community in which he could earn more money. We found out MC had skills many of us didn’t know – he had a culinary degree but didn’t enjoy a fast paced cooking environment. He had also worked at a warehouse distribution center and really enjoyed that job. Our job coaches worked with MC to determine the type of job he was interested in. He sampled several different types of jobs but soon an opportunity came up at the local Red Lobster restaurant. MC did several interviews including one working interview. He impressed the supervisors at each interview and was soon offered the job. He began by working 3 to 4 days a week and up to 5 hours a day. His has multiple duties including cleaning and rolling silverware, cleaning the eating area and working with different pieces of equipment in the restaurant. He has fit in extremely well with his coworkers and made several new friends. He is now able to afford to pay his bills, get his truck back on the road and even save a little money each month. His entire life has changed in an positive way.

Story six:

TP is a young man that has always had a dream to work in the community. He grew up in Philadelphia, and was sent to Virginia to live with his grandmother as a young man. TP ended up being placed in a sheltered workshop right out of high school. Once an opportunity came up to get assistance in getting a job in the community, TP was ready! He worked with his job coaches and went for an interview at a local restaurant that had a position open that he wanted. He interviewed and within a week was offered the position. In preparation to get ready for his new job, he went and bought new shoes and clothes (which he proudly showed to everyone). TP has also begun to dream about what his life will be like now that he is earning more money. He wants to continue saving and building for his future. He wants to get married and have a family of his own. A short term goal is to continue building up his collection of DVD movies because one of his favorite things to do is watch movies. TP is looking forward to meeting and making new friends at work and just being one of the guys his new employer can count on.

Story seven:

WF has been going through an incredible chain of positive events in his life. He lived in a group home and worked in a sheltered workshop even though he hated doing both. He disliked riding in the sheltered workshop vans with their logo on it because he felt other people assumed something was wrong or broken with him. He didn’t like working in the sheltered workshop because he didn’t like the work they had to do and how little money he made.

Several months ago, WF had the opportunity to move to an apartment with a roommate of his own choosing. He was so excited to finally be in an apartment he could call his home. The next important step was to work in the community. WF was working with Job Coaches and had been to several businesses he had filled out applications for. He had been doing this for 7 months with no success and he was getting discouraged. He did not give up though and kept working to find a job. He went to an interview at Wendy’s Restaurant, a few blocks from his apartment, and found out a couple of days later he had secured the job! He started our working 3 days a week and is now up to 5 days a week. He is enjoying his new job and responsibilities. WF loves to put in the hard work that is expected of him and enjoys the sense of satisfaction of a job well done.

Story eight:

D.C. was hired in April at Allgood Cabinets in Danville. In his position he prepares, sands and finishes wooden cabinets. His responsibilities also include cleaning the equipment used for these functions and tasks each day so each piece of equipment is ready for the next days work. These responsibilities provide him with 5 hours of work per day, 3 days a week. Depending on the week, he is called in to work up to 2 additional days to assist the owner in installation at various job sites. D.C. enjoys the installation and on site work very much and hopes to continue gaining skills in the area of cabinet installation. He loves the schedule and independence of his job position.

Story nine:

Like many of us, SK struggled for years to find his place in the world and to discover what he liked to do. After working with a job coach he is so excited to share that he has found a job where he enjoys his work, feels a sense of accomplishment and earns the money he has wanted to.

He is a young man who just finished High School in May 2015 at age 22 at White Oak School operated by The Arc. S.K. also lived in the group home operated by The Arc, and attended Hatcher workshop for job training, all of which meant that he lived a very isolated life. As you know The Arc is transitioning all of our programs from segregated programs to community supports, and S.K. is the living embodiment of this shift.

Previously The Arc programs all resided on one campus consisting of a large sheltered workshop (Hatcher), a large group home (licensed for 15 people!) and a private day school (White Oak School) and S.K. was the in every one of those programs so his days consisted of a side walk to school, a side walk to “work” and side walk back home.

S.K. graduated May 22nd 2015, started his job at Dellano’s May 18th 2015 and has signed a lease to move into his new apartment this summer. As excited as I am about this transition for The Arc, it’s stories like S.K.’s that makes it real and reminds me why we are making significant changes in how we provide supports!

Story ten:

This is a story that illustrates well how the time spent developing relationships over the past two years is definitely paying off. A business that employs an individual through our program called us to request help in meeting their employment needs when one of their staff members was going out for medical leave. The restaurant needed a temporary employee for a few months during this person’s leave for surgery.

S.H. showed immediate interest in the job they had available. Even though she had no previous experience in dishwashing or working in a kitchen environment she was anxious to learn new skills. S.H. worked very diligently and was extremely happy with what she was doing. Her Job Coach only had to help periodically for the first week or so. Her employer gave her many well deserved compliments on her work ethic and positive attitude. They have been so impressed with her overall performance during this short term assignment, they have committed to transferring her to a permanent position in one of their other restaurants (they have 3 locations), once the person out on medical leave returns. SH is earning more money than she ever has, feels better about herself and radiates self-confidence now.

Story eleven:

K.D. was working at the Hatcher Center production site for several years. Getting to the program has always been a significant barrier for her. She lives in Danville and did not receive funding for the transportation that would take her to the Hatcher Center. This meant private paying for transportation, which can become very expensive when going from in town (Danville) to where Hatcher was located in the county. Even with this barrier, K.D. always enjoyed working at the workshop and loved staying active even more. When the Supported Employment program was first offered at the Arc of Southside, K.D. was happy to start looking for a job that would fit her life better and certainly to pay more money! She looked for work for several months and had not found a position. When the Arc opened the new office building the decision was made not to contract with a cleaning company, but instead to post the position. K.D. applied for the job and interviewed with 3 other candidates for the position. In her interview, she opened was able to express what she likes about cleaning. She described the values that appealed to her about being proud of her surroundings, stating that was why she worked so hard to keep her room clean at home. She did an excellent job on the interview because she is very shy and often has a hard time expressing her thoughts verbally. K.D. was offered the job and now works much closer to home doing work she says she enjoys because it is quiet and that is work she is proud of. She says she is saving a lot of money on transportation and is earning more per hour for work she loves.

Story twelve:

T.T. was hired this quarter at Allgood Cabinets in Danville. Allgood hired someone from our program last quarter and they contacted The Arc this quarter when they had a second position open up doing similar work. In his position T.T. prepares, sands and finishes wooden cabinets. T.T has incredible speed that has quickly impressed his bosses. Because of this he has already been sent on installation jobs with the crew. On the installation jobs he sometimes travels to different areas out of town, which he says he likes because he gets to see more of Virginia. He says the best part is when he goes with the crew on these job sites because he feels like he really gets to know them more outside of the shop. Stopping for lunch and “hanging out with the guys” makes work fun he says.

Story thirteen:

A.D. got his job from one of the connections made at the Workforce Roundtable. C&E was losing a long term employee who had washed dishes in their kitchen for many years. When they heard about the program they were very excited to find the potential of another long term employee for their kitchen in the family restaurant.

A.D. had looked for work for several months and often struggled with the interview portion of job development. This was due to his shyness and lack of confidence. Since starting his new job, he has become more confident and has started opening up and talking more about himself. He shared with his job coach many months ago that he wanted to one day learn to drive but felt he wasn’t “ready”. Now that he has been working he has started to feel much more confident in himself and as a result has studied with his job coach for the driver’s test and was able to get his learners permit. He hasn’t gotten his license yet, but with his new confidence he is taking the on the road course to prepare.

**D. Assessment of Systemic Impact of Grant -- Describe the overall systems level impact this grant has had on benefiting people with developmental disabilities in Virginia and their families.**

This grant allowed The Arc of Southside to develop and foster many new relationships to promote integrated employment outcomes in Virginia. These key partners will positively impact the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities not only in the local community but also for individuals across the state. Strong partnerships were developed with local funding and referral sources as well as with state level officials to help facilitate change.

Statewide systems impact was achieved through discussions with the state central office for the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation (DARS). Being an employment services organization with DARS is vital to having a successful Supported Employment program. They are the first referral agency for anyone in Virginia seeking Supported Employment Services. We began by seeking to form a strong partnership locally with the DARS office and were met with some barriers in their understanding and implementation of certain employment practices. Much of this was due to the newness of Supported Employment in the local area. In this community, sheltered employment has continued to be used as a successful outcome for referrals even if an individual had never tried integrated employment. The counselors locally were very unfamiliar with the practices of Supported Employment. This led us to have necessary discussions with the state Leadership who were very supportive and anxious to have a supported employment vendor in the area. Because of this the state facilitated several meetings between The Arc of Southside and the local DARS staff to plan, develop and implement steps for their office to help The Arc achieve the goal of conversion to community employment services. DARS made changes to the referral and intake processes so that real change could take place. Significant changes included opening cases in a timelier manner and communicating more efficiently. These discussions provided the state officials with areas to focus training and development efforts for field offices.

The Arc of Southside partnered with Full Circle to provide benefits counseling and analysis for all individuals served. Administration also worked closely with the Community Services Board to provide education to their staff and case managers about integrated employment. These training programs were provided in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. All these discussions and collaborations have resulted in a positive ongoing relationship with local DARS and CSB staff to work together towards helping families and individuals to seek and obtain employment in the community.

This project provided the opportunity to work with local companies to form a Business Advisory Council that has sponsored events that highlight and educate employers about Supported Employment. The Arc of Southside will continue to work with the BAC to develop materials, new marketing campaigns, and to continue to provide venues to meet and interact one on one with companies to build relationships.

e. **Sustainability Plan** -- Describe how the program will continue and what resources have been secured for the program following the end of grant funding.

During this project The Arc of Southside received a 3 year CARF accreditation for Supported Employment. National accreditation allows the program to market high quality services to businesses and families, leading to higher rates of community integrated employment.

CARF accreditation also ensures ongoing funding for services. The Arc of Southside is an approved vendor with DARS and has also been approved for to bill Medicaid Waiver for Supported Employment services. Another important part of the sustainability plan was becoming an agency in the approved network for the Ticket to Work program. Once individuals are working in supported employment, long term supports are provided on the job for any issues that arise. To ensure funding for these services, The Arc of Southside worked with DARS state staff to organize and balance the funds received through the EES (extended employment services) and LTES (long term employment services) funding programs. These funds were previously used to support people in the sheltered workshop and can now transfer with each person to the community. The intent is to secure funding from all of the sources that will support community integrated employment, giving us the needed resources to support a larger number of individuals.

It is important to mention the commitment of The Arc of Southside’s board to the overall financial health of the organization. As the agency planned to relocate from the large segregated campus, it was priority not to incur any debt for the organization. A total of $962,000 was secured through local fund raising. The Arc was successful in purchasing and renovating four properties debt free for programs in the community. This achievement will allow the agency to invest resources into services and people, not in buildings.

With this sound financial foundation, and an ongoing committed focus of The Arc Board and Leadership team, the impact of the Employment for All Citizens of The Arc of Southside grant will continue. Individuals who choose The Arc for services will have the opportunity to reach their personal and employment goals and participate as they choose in the community.

**F. Future Actions -- What assistance is needed so that the results of the project can be shared in order to have the greatest impact possible?  What agency or entity should be involved in this dissemination?  As a result of the grant, are there recommendations for future action by the Board or other agencies to better meet the needs of persons with developmental disabilities in Virginia?  Is there a need for policy reform, advocacy or other actions necessary to improve access to and delivery of services for unserved/underserved and minority populations?**

In an effort to disseminate information and to share lessons learned about the project, Tonya Fowler, Executive Director of The Arc of Southside, presented at The Arc of US annual Convention in October of 2015.  She shared the story of The Arc’s transformation on a panel with 5 other chapters across the country that had implemented Organizational Transformation projects.  Sharing the success of this project with the community and other providers will be an ongoing priority. Over the next year The Arc plans to submit one presentation proposal to a state organization and one proposal to a national level organization.

A great deal is taking place already with waiver redesign in Virginia. VCU RRTC and The Arc of Southside are both active players in ensuring meaningful change occurs on all fronts for people utilizing services in Virginia. We participate on multiple committees and work groups addressing systems change. We have worked on advocacy topics not only related to employment but also for housing and inclusive education.

It will be important as Virginia continues to make changes and transition away from traditional sheltered employment, that all settings for services are reviewed to ensure they meet the directive to be inclusive and integrated. All providers need to be held accountable for bringing services to people in existing community settings and that programs that create fabricated environments for people are discouraged through policy and funding.