

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | December 1, 2021

Vocational rehabilitation employees recognized for helping North Dakotans with disabilities reach their employment goals

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) presented performance and recognition awards to 11 team members at its annual training conference this fall in West Fargo.

Division vocational rehabilitation professionals helped 445 North Dakotans with disabilities obtain competitive, integrated employment in their communities between Oct. 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2021.

The division presented **Tanya Ide** of its **Minot** office with the *Director's Award for Excellence*. Peers nominated Ide for the award for demonstrating dedication, productivity and dependability while managing office operations, training new staff and providing excellent customer services to both businesses and individuals with disabilities.

Jacqueline Harder, Megan Stone and Rebecca Martin from the **Fargo** office received the *Director's Award for Counselor Achievement*, which recognizes the top 10% of counselors who helped the most individuals become employed.

Grand Forks DVR office employee **Erik Anthony** and **Bismarck** DVR office employee **Elton Lassiter** received the *Director's Award for Counselor Achievement - Honorable Mention* for having the second highest number of clients to achieve employment.

DVR presented **Mercedes Drechsel** and her colleagues in the **Minot** office with the *Exemplary Service Award* for providing outstanding case service to clients through creative thinking, direct work with multiple agencies and consistent client follow-up.

The *DVR Team Participation Award* was presented to the **Minot** office for their involvement in community activities on behalf of the division.

The division named both **Minot** office employee **Cindi McGovern** and **Devils Lake** office employee **Samantha Reese** *Rookie of the Year*. This award honors a DVR team member who has less than two years of service, exceeds performance goals and displays a high level of community service and involvement.

The *Pillar Award* was presented to **Sheri Ann Whitmire** from the **Bismarck** office. This award recognizes support staff who contribute to the success of individuals with disabilities to become employed.

The division also presented career achievement awards, which are based on the number of people with disabilities placed into employment over the course of a vocational rehabilitation counselor's career. **Jennifer Reinke** of the **Fargo** office received the *Career Achievement Award – 100 Club*.

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Division staff provide assessments and counseling to help individuals with disabilities to identify strengths and goals, connect individuals to training, education, assistive technology and supportive services, and provide job placement assistance.

To receive DVR services, individuals must have a disability that is an impediment to employment, and they must want to work and be available to work. Many of the individuals served have a physical or cognitive disability.

DVR also connects North Dakota businesses to qualified prospective employees who can meet their workforce needs and can help businesses can retain employees affected by disabilities and find solutions to other disability-related issues.

Information about services is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html or by contacting the division at 1000 E. Divide Ave., Bismarck, N.D., 58501, 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, 711 (TTY) or dhsvr@nd.gov.

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