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>> OPERATOR: The conference has now started. This conference is now being recorded.

>> Good afternoon and welcome to the RespectAbility webinar for June 29th, 2016. My name is Philip Pauli. I am the policy and practices director for RespectAbility. And I am absolutely delighted to share with you today this webinar and we're going to be talking about the great state of Iowa and specifically about the wonderful work being done by the folks who run the VR system in Iowa. We're joined today by David Mitchell who is the administrator for IVRS. As well as some of his colleagues who will be talking in great detail about the great work they have been doing and how they have really been pushing the needle to get more people with disabilities empowered and into the workplace.

Iowa is a state with a lot of interesting work being done. As well as some interesting challenges in terms of reaching people with disabilities in rural areas. And they are just doing some really innovative work. And we're delighted to share the first of two webinars we're doing with Iowa.

First before I turn the floor over to David and April, I want to give a big shoutout to our sponsor for these webinars, JP Morgan Chase has been very generous in supporting our webinar efforts to share and showcase best practices to talk about model systems that are really changing opportunities for people with disabilities.

So thank you to JP Morgan Chase. And now I'm going to turn it over to Team Iowa. Take it away

>> DAVID MITCHELL: Thank you very much, Philip and Jennifer and the team at RespectAbility. We are very excited to join everybody today on a Wednesday mid week to talk a little bit about transition and the impact on our youth and youth with disabilities.

I think we were certainly enlightened a couple of years ago when I had a chance to meet with Jennifer and the team at RespectAbility and we talked about labor market participation rates and services for people with disabilities. And I think the work that's occurring over the last couple of years has really done Yeoman's work to increase the

awareness of the importance of employment and the talents of individuals with disabilities and how that can be a real business value and economic development engine.

We in Iowa do not consider ourselves the experts by any means on the things we're going to talk about today. But we do talk about it and are excited and enthusiastic about a number of the strategies that we're trying to implement to make a difference. So we're happy to share that.

Specifically we're going to talk a little bit about what we're doing in the area of transition. And more specific than that is even what we're doing in our rural areas.

Iowa has been recognized as having one of the top presences in vocational rehabilitation for our involvement with students with disabilities.

And it certainly has not been an overnight effort. We have been working on this for years. Recognizing that the earlier impact we have with our youth and our families, the broader difference we'll be able to make in the long run. And I think with the current implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, there's a real focus on opportunities to really make a difference.

In Iowa we have 13 area offices About 28 service units. That are smaller operations. And our operating budget is about \$28 million. We have about a caseload of about 12,000 individuals that we work with across the state.

For those state VR agencies that are familiar with pre-employment transition services, our pre-employment transition service 15% benchmark is about \$3.8 million. And that's a term that's being implemented through our work with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. We I think as a general discussion point we really recognize that we cannot do this alone. If we're going to really dial up and make a difference in employment outcomes for people with disabilities, we have to partner more effectively across all state systems. We have recently in Iowa made efforts with what we call our unified state plan and we have worked really closely with our partners at the workforce Development Centers, Department of Education, adult education literacy and human services. It's really developed through those communications a couple of neat exchanges and examples of cooperation. And for example with our Iowa Medicaid department, we have an agreement with Iowa Medicaid that VR is the funder of first resort for individuals that are 23 and under that have disabilities and for individuals that are 24 and under that are needing employment services Medicaid is the first pair of resort. So we have been able to have those conversations to recognize that all of our state systems have limited capacity and we need to be able to work together to leverage time and resources to really make a difference for the citizens of Iowa.

We have recently worked with our Department of Education partners to come up with a sharing of funding for those individuals in our secondary services needing employment services so VR pays for job development and job services. That's again another example of state systems coming together under our state plan to say, how can we work better with limited resources to be effective.

I think another overall change that we have had in Iowa is we have been an Employment First state for the last five years and we have received technical assistance through the Office of Disability and Employment Policy which has helped us to be able to collaborate better with our community rehabilitation providers and some of our state systems. We have been able to really focus on competitive community integrated employment opportunities, recognizing that's all of our common focus if we're going to change the dial here.

We have also looked at technical assistance and how we can be better at delivering specific service delivery such as discovery, customized employment, carving out jobs, business negotiation. All of these things are ongoing services that by no means have we thought we are done and we are experts on. Currently we have a number of programs across the state that globally impact transition. And we call it -- we have a program called the Transition Alliance Program, a Making the Grade program. A project search program. You'll hear more about those as we go on with today's program.

With the project search, we have over 12 programs in the state of Iowa that's really exponentially grown over the last two and a half years. Out of the 12, I think 9 of the 12 specifically focus on services for youth and high school programs.

We still have quite a bit of work to do to look at how we impact work-based learning. How do we involve and better integrate our partners at the workforce centers and America job centers, how we take advantage of the growing apprenticeship programs. Specifically those things with our work-based learning and our apprenticeship programs, it's an ongoing discussion we're having about impacting our students with disabilities that are 21 and under that are in our secondary programs. But we have a number of ideas that we're pushing out that we're implementing currently that we're very excited about

This is really a great time to be having this discussion.

We just had a two-day meeting here in Iowa that was put on by our workforce partners, Department of Education, adult education, and voc rehab. And we called it One Door Many Paths. And the whole concept is there's no wrong door. Any job candidate that walks into a job center, a VR office, a school, there's a lot of pathways to get that person tied into a career pathway that will help them be economically self-sufficient. And the whole concept of the last two days here in Iowa was getting all of these partners in one room and talking about strategies and concepts and evidence-based practices that would help us move this forward.

We had over 500 individuals present for those two days. And April Stotz was one of our presenters, specifically talking about transition.

So it was really neat to be able to see a heavy transition emphasis in this conference.

This morning I just came back from a Governor's -- an Iowa Governor's response certified STEM conference and this was the first STEM conference statewide that we've had in Iowa and it was called: Greatness Stems from Iowa.

So we are looking at using sciences and technology and engineering and math to find

ways for all students, including students with disabilities to get better integrated into Career Pathways. It was very exciting because just this morning I heard school superintendents, business partners, talk about we need to better connect with business partnerships for schools. And that we have a future ready Iowa plan, which is really part of our foundation for our unified state plan. Which really focuses on creating work-based opportunities for youth. And helping that feed into pathways that will lead to independence.

So I think it's a great time. I think we're kind of on the front edge of really what tomorrow will look like and we have a chance to define that through the strategies we share together. So we're very happy to kind of get into the weeds a little bit and I'm going to introduce really the two stars of our program is April Stotz. Mary is one of our resource managers here with the state voc rehab office. She has some statewide responsibilities for coordinating some of our transition contracts and she'll share a little bit more about that. And April is one of our vocational rehabilitation counselors. She's actually a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor that serves one of our rural geographic areas up in Northwest Iowa. So I think with that, I'm going to turn it over to April and let her share a little bit about her approach and how she works within the geographic population that she's assigned to. So April, I'll turn it over to you

>> APRIL STOTZ: Great, thanks, David. Yes, I'm just going to kind of paint a picture for you here of the area that I cover. I do cover a very rural area in Northwest Iowa.

When I look outside my window I see a lot more crops and livestock than what I see of people and houses. The three counties I cover include Lyon County and that has a population of 11,745, Osceola County which has a population of 6,154 and O'Brien County and that population has the highest with almost 14,000. At least that's according to our last census information.

So all of these -- although these counties are less populated, they are still not real small in size. So we're really spread out with that population.

Because of that, we actually have seven schools in the three counties to meet the needs of all of the small towns. And even though there's seven schools, we still have students that are on the bus for over an hour to get to school in the morning.

The average class size of the graduating class would be about 25 students. Just to give a better picture the town I live in is 336 people. We own joke in our town that that includes the pets. But in all honesty most of the people in town would probably be able to name all 336 people that live in town because when you live in a small town everybody knows everything that's going on and everyone knows everyone.

In the three counties that I cover, we do have one larger town, Sheldon, Iowa and the population is just over 5,000. I think last time I looked at the census it was 5,188.

So that gives you kind of a picture of the size of the area I'm talking about.

So living in rural areas, we do have a few disadvantages. Of course there's no way I

could order a pizza in my town and actually have it delivered. And I have to plan ahead because getting a gallon of milk or laundry detergent is going to take a little bit of a drive and everyone knows everyone's skeletons in their close sets. But all jokes aside we do have some disadvantages to employment.

There are less employers to pick from when applying for work. And transportation has been a huge barrier for us. Because a lot of people have to drive out of town to get to where the jobs are.

And the ability to hop on a bus in rural Iowa is not really there. So it's been a struggle another struggle we really run into a lot is if you're working with someone that has a background, either criminal record or just their name around town, it's really hard to find employment because everybody knows who they are. But even with that being said my perspective is there's a lot more advantages is to living and providing services in a rural area.

Building connections and partnering is in my opinion one of the most important ways to provide any services in rural Iowa.

Not only for my job but even just life in general we all get together and help individuals out in terms of crisis or need so individuals I'm working with, individuals with disabilities, are no different as well as the support systems.

It's all about the connections and networking. To be successful in my area what I've really found is being visible in the community has been one of the best things to help me work with individuals and work with their transition and employment needs.

If you have ever been in a small town and walked into a diner or gas station you might notice we all turn and stare I just say call us naturally curious but you make yourself visible over time and you become part of that community and people get to know you and want to work with you and help you and it opens the door to be able to partner more with each other. But not only going out into the community but also using those that you know is really important.

You utilize the individuals you might know from friends, family, community events and it's a good way to network. An example of this is if I'm working with a job candidate and their father might work for let's say Business A and the father has really worked with us and seen the different services we provide and has become very passionate about our services as well as we are, so then I use that individual's father to make a connection into a business that I might be trying to have someone else get placed in so if I have another individual who really wants to work for that dad's business I might call them up and say hey you know what I've got someone who might be a really good fit for the place you work at but I don't know anybody there. Is there any way you can help me make a connection. So that individual might let me name drop them or better yet might set up a time where I can meet with their HR department and that's been the best way that I can really get into businesses and work with individuals is by using those connections.

I've also found that my co-workers, my friends, family members, everybody in this

area seems like almost everybody you can find a connection with it's really just a matter for me of trying to know who knows who when I'm not going out trying to make cold calls, I like to call them warm calls so at least I have a name I can use when I'm going out and talking.

The other thing I like to do is go to events in the community. Again that's just building those relationships and working with them once I've got them developed. And that could be anything from a Career Fair or some kind of festivity or carnival it's just amazing how getting your face out there and talking with people helps me out when I'm working on trying to develop business partnerships and partnerships around the community.

The last part on this slide it says business presentations. That's one that I really started working on this year. As David mentioned earlier, by no means am I an expert I'm trying new things just as all of you are I'm sure. But this one I was really proud of. We worked with our local team, which included one of the schools that I cover and local businesses in the area. I was going out and talking to businesses at their career fairs and different presentations and I was hearing the same type of message. We have a very low unemployment rate in this area. And so they were really having a hard time finding individuals that met their need. And they found students were going off to college and sometimes getting more training than was actually necessary at times buzz they were training themselves further than what they were hiring entry level for.

They also found that students weren't necessarily prepared for the workforce expectations. Some might be answering the phone during interviews or talking on the phone or texting on the job and they really wanted a chance to figure out a way to talk with those students so they understood the expectations once they graduate and the high schools were trying to figure out how to work with businesses and help these students with transition and get employment after high school or know what's available in the community after high school. And in these smaller communities we really want to see the community thrive. And we want to try to keep people local. Because that's what helps our community thrive. So it was really a matter of taking and noticing that everybody's needs were very similar. Then we just decided that somehow we needed to get this out to the students. So together we came up with a plan. And we had businesses come in and talk at the school directly to the students. So the first business that came in, they just came in and they started talking about what their needs were. What types of jobs that they had available, what kind of training it would require and what their expectations were for the interviewing process and after they got the job and it was amazing to watch these kids because they had no idea what was really out there in the community. A lot of them had never heard of the business or just thought there was one type of job in that business.

And the kids really gravitated towards that. And when eventually the instructor took them out and toured the facility after the business had presented a couple of weeks later he took them out and they got to tour, they got to see the jobs, some of them have already

filled out applications for their apprentice shim program. And it just really opened their eyes. And it didn't come directly from us or the school staff or the parents on what those expectations were. They heard it right from the business. So it was a really great thing to see. So each student I have worked with has come to me with different goals and interests and different skills.

They kind of come to me at different times of their transition process. So I haven't really been able to just say, okay, we're going to start here and go through these steps. Does it work because we're so individualized as people.

So not everyone takes the same path. Nor are they going to end up in the same goal. So above you're going to notice some of the things that throughout Iowa have been being done. We've got job shadows where individuals are going out into the community and getting to watch other people that actually have that job. Get to see what they do during the day we've had people go out on different tours of businesses just to see what the inside of the business looks like and what is that environment. Is it a loud environment. Is it dusty. Is it bright. Just to make sure that it's a good fit and something they are really interested in. Then while they are doing the tour they are also seeing the different types of jobs within that business.

Some of our students have done informational interviews. Talking with someone in the position that they think they are interested in to get more information about that position and what they did in order to get into the position. Ask the questions that they really want to know that they are not going to be able to go online and just find out.

Volunteer work. Volunteer work has been great up in my area where it's very rural. We have a lot of individuals that volunteer. It gives them the opportunity to talk with other people in their community and reach out and show their strengths. And just develop those connections. It's not always about what you know. Sometimes it is about who you know. So just getting those connections, especially if they want to stay in this area. Plus it looks really good on their resume. Part-time work. We really try to make sure that all of those students we're working with have a part-time job before they graduate so they've got that work experience.

It's really hard anymore to find a job without something on your resume.

We have on-the-job training opportunities and that's where individuals are able to go out and learn on the job. They have an opportunity to learn new skills. Where we're able to work with the employer and be side by side to help them through that training process.

And then internships have also been great especially those who are transitioning either from high school into college or college into employment to give them that experience. A lot of times the internships do end up with the individual getting a full-time job afterwards in that company. But if not, they have gained a lot of experience from the internships.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: April, this is Dave, too, I just wanted to add to that. I just

love this concept of progressive employment and that there's something for everybody with the right supports. And I think it really is a philosophical change that we have created within our system over the last several years to kind of emphasize that belief and the services that go with that. So it really is as April said it's about what we are doing as a service provider to create value for our job candidate and for our business and how do we help them go from Step A to Step B to Step C on a progressive employment journey and on that continuum, a person may go back and forth multiple times. But it really is from the VR side of the thing, what are we doing to help that person progress in their employment journey? How do we help them connect, get on a pathway that's going to help them be excited and be passionate about the work they do. And there's a number of examples within that toolbox that helps us do that. But I think it's been a real emphasis from the VR side of things to create that vision of progressive employment.

>> APRIL STOTZ: Thank you. Yeah, and I think another thing that ties in with that is that the businesses love it because then individuals are coming in that have worked through this process. And they kind of know what to expect. So it makes for an easier transition for that business once they hire individuals.

So as David had mentioned when he kind of started, we do have those pre-employment transition services. There are five areas of pre-employment transition services we provide to the students. These can be provided for students that are enrolled in our services or individuals on an IEP or 504 in the school or may even qualify for that IEP or 504.

So if you'll look at the slide. First off we're talking about the job exploration.

This is really exploring different interests of the job candidate that we're working with. Talking about the skills that they have. And also exploring the jobs that are around their community or if they are interested in moving away other jobs around the areas that they are interested in going to.

When we do this, it depends on the individual. There's a lot of different ways to go about this. It might include doing an interest in aptitude assessment. We may start that what we did on the last slide with progressive employment and go into job shadows and tours to get that information. It might be the informational interview. Sometimes we go online and do online research. It just -- it depends. It's very individualized to the student and where their interests are.

We also provide counselling on opportunities. And this is more of a discussion of further training options for the individual. And there are so many different options for training. And just trying to get the students to understand that what options they have after high school. So we talk about college or technical school. We have some fifth year options and programs where an individual might be able to stay on their IEP and continue their training at some kind of college or school.

There's also on-the-job training or apprenticeships so really talking about the different options and how it would look for their career path and what their goals are and what

might work best so they are educating themselves into what they actually need for their long-term goal. And we look at those. And we also may do college visits and online research to figure out what would it take for me to do this and what skills do I need to have if I want to go in this direction. What do I need to be working on while I'm in high school so I am prepared once I graduate. As you can kind of see this takes a long process which is why we're trying to work and connect with students earlier because if they start that their senior year, they are not going to be able to go back to their freshman year and start planning out what classes they should have taken.

We also have work-based learning experiences as one of our pre-employment transition services. And that's really getting students out. Trying the jobs. That's a big part of the transition especially for those students who are really hands-on learners and they need to be able to actually do the job to see if it's something they are really interested in.

We really work hard to go out and have them work prior to graduation. As we talked about earlier, that could be volunteer work. It might be work experience through the high school where the high school is working with the student and employer.

And getting the supports they need at that job.

We -- obviously we do have some that are direct-hire placement and are working part-time before they graduate.

We also talk about workplace readiness training. And what do employers expect. And I just looked up and noticed I think we're on the wrong slide. One second, let me get to the right slide here.

Sorry about that. But the workplace readiness training. And that is what do employers expect of them. Remember earlier we talked about how some of the students were on cell phones during the interview. Or at work.

They don't know how to work necessarily with co-workers and what that rapport should look like.

So it's really kind of helping them figure out what the employers' expectations are. What the hygiene should be like. Your communication styles. How to work with co-workers or supervisors. And the quality of work.

Another way we have done this is by having employers come in and talk about what they look for in an employee. Like I had mentioned earlier with the presentations. And sometimes the students do take that a little bit better coming directly from the employer.

And then the self advocacy training discussion, and review of an IEP talk about the accommodations they have received and how that assisted them to be successful in high school. And what they might need after high school

We have a few schools that we work together this year and we developed a new form where the student is actually going through their IEP with either myself or the school staff. And learning about what their accommodations are. Where they are struggling. And what their strengths are. And they are going through this form. And they are filling out

this is what I need in order to be successful.

So that they understand what is in their IEP.

And then they are taking that to their teachers. And letting their teachers know and having their teachers sign off on that. So they can start to feel comfortable with that conversation in what they consider to be more of a safe environment.

With teachers that they know well.

After high school, they are going to be doing that in college. They are going to have to ask for those accommodations. So trying to get them used to that in high school is what we were really hoping for by developing that form.

And that --

>> DAVID MITCHELL: Yeah, those are great examples, too, of individualized services that April is providing directly with her assigned schools. Across the state in our area offices, VR has kind of a team approach where we have rehabilitation assistance and associates and counselors that team together. So the broader that team is, the more we can leverage and prioritize work capacity for the students that we're serving.

April and her service unit and geographic area is really doing all of that herself. So she will also, though, leverage those services with the school staff, community rehabilitation providers, to be able to leverage time and effort to be able to make sure each student gets what they need but it looks a little bit different depending on the geographic area and these are services of PET services that are very individualized. Across the state we have some more global areas, too, we're working on.

For example, we have a virtual reality computer system that we're hoping will enhance soft skill development. We're piloting that in two school districts.

We have a contract with a local community college where we're renting a construction simulator truck that will go out across the state to our major 13 area offices to allow students hands-on experience in operating heavy equipment to see -- for the students interested in that, it will provide a whole different career pathway.

As another effort to kind of do outreach to youth, we have really moved towards more social media and mobile technology. So more and more of our staff are having iPhones and tablets and PCs that will -- we're moving to be able to be accessible out in the field, even in rural geographic area up in Northwest Iowa. And that causes some problems because of technology and connections and Internet connections. But that really is a priority that we're moving across systems. So I wanted to provide a couple of examples, also, of how we're doing PETs on a more global basis beyond just the individualized service delivery.

>> APRIL STOTZ: Thank you, David.

All right. I wanted to make sure I was on the right slide this time.

So I think Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is a pretty hot topic at this time. There are a lot of benefits from the Opportunity Act. In the rural area I think we have really seen this. There's a huge demand to be able to partner and work together because

we can't be everywhere at once. And we really need to be supportive of each other in order to reach our goals.

With this Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act we are engaging more with the partners. As legislation is assisting us with making those connections. And they are pushing us to get out and work together in the best interest of the individuals that we're serving.

We're also focusing our conversation more on integrated community placement. And really starting to see a shift in the way people are thinking and looking at employment for individuals with disabilities.

We're no longer seeing a pipeline of individuals going straight in from the IEP and individuals that have more significant -- aren't necessarily going straight into the workshop setting.

They are now really trying out integrated community employment. And that's where the topic continues to go to and the discussions and we're meeting with the individuals and parents and families and staff at the schools.

It is a big mindshift. And it's new. So we're really working on trying to figure out how we're going to fully implement it. And the conversations are still taking place. But the conversations are taking place Which is really nice to see.

And in Iowa we have fully invested into the Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act when we talk about Employment First. Iowa has been an Employment First state. And we know that everyone can work. As an agency I think we're making sure we give individuals an opportunity to explore their interests and skills and see how it fits into employment.

We're working with employers to seek out the types of employment opportunities that they have and assist them with filling those opportunities. Really trying to customize how things might look. And figure out even if let's say Individual A is really good at assembly but there's a component of that assembly that the individual just doesn't have those skills, maybe customizing that position so the individuals doing the part that they are, if someone else is able to pick up that part that's not necessarily their strength. And really bringing those conversations to businesses. And helping them figure out that there's other ways to meet their needs. And I think the businesses have really appreciated that conversation and enjoyed learning about different ways they might be able to do things.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: Hey, April, I'm going to have Mary jump in here real quick and talk a little bit about a statewide approach to Section 511 and what we're trying to do.

>> MARY JACKSON: Sure this is a great for VR to be partnering with the community rehabilitation program and utilizing different services such as discovery and work readiness assessments, work adjustment training and supported employment services so we've been working very hard with our partners and doing trainings and getting communication across to school districts about these various opportunities that are available and how we can partner to provide these services individualized to each of

these students.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: It's an ongoing effort that we're currently working through. So April, back to you

>> APRIL STOTZ: I'm not sure if this would help. I think I have an example of possibly one of those that we did where we really worked with the school and the community rehab provider, voc rehab and the Department of Education. And his family.

We had a young man who is still in high school. He'll be graduating at the end of next year. And he really wanted to work. It was kind of in everybody's mindset he might end up going to the workshop but we worked and did an assessment. It was an on-the-job training where he was able to look at the local employer actually the Pizza Ranch. I worked with Pizza Ranch and we have done some past placements there so I gave them a call and they were more than willing to give him an opportunity to come in and try out that job.

We worked with the community rehab provider who provided some job coaching and when we got back into school, his para from the high school actually took over that job coaching and he continued to do that job as a work experience.

Now, the employer is looking at hiring him part time. And he might actually have a job available and ready to go right after graduation because he's very interested in staying there and loves the job. So it's all about partnering because we couldn't have done it with just one of us we had to bring all of us together to the table to make that work and it was very excited to see that come to life.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: Just to complement that story, just this morning I came from the STEM conference. And the panel session I was at had four school superintendents talking about what they are doing to impact transition for students. April is in Northwest Iowa these four superintendents were in northeast Iowa. And the largest School District or largest city one was from was 7500 people. And the other two were 3600. And the smallest one had just a couple hundred people in the population of the School District. But they are working together on a regional format to talk about how do we as school districts in rural Iowa, how do we continue to partner together to move away from our school color school mascot to really what's best for our kids, what's best for our students.

And they talked about the value of connecting with business. And bringing business into the equation. And they had a businessperson was actually on the panel and it was a young lady who just got -- has a degree from college. That started at the local Ready Mix company in this town of 7500 people. And she shared she came back and started at the Ready Mix company, concrete plant, as an accounts payable clerk she then advanced to an account manager then to an HR assistant and now she's the HR -- human resource manager and benefits manager so she moved within that progressive employment within three years and she talked about that the opportunities in rural Iowa there. And it's just a matter of how do we connect with the kids in our schools to be able to demonstrate to them that there's opportunities and really cool opportunities that are available today that

look different 30 years ago when Mom and Dad are thinking about what the Ready Mix company looks like.

That Ready Mix company in Charles City, Iowa actually has 750 employees in 6 states. And she talked about you get into the door and expose students and kids to these opportunities and create value at an early age, it provides a connection and a reason to start on a career pathway or come back to that area so I think it's another great example of the value of partnering with business and certainly the four school superintendents who were sharing the message were very engaged and it was very exciting to see what they are doing at the education level and how the VR component fits into that. And that's a great example for this next slide that April is going to talk about.

>> APRIL STOTZ: Yes, our office -- Sioux City office and the office I'm in in Sheldon has come up with three different STEM camps we're going to be doing this summer. This is a new initiative. But the camps are going to be hosted by voc rehab and we're going to be bringing in employers from our communities to talk about employment options that they have. And we're going to have students there. We are calling it the STEM camp so science, technology, engineering and math in the workplace.

So as you can look at this slide, you can see there's different days and different places. Employers that will be going to. And the different types of jobs in those businesses.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: April, let me jump in here, too. Because I think that's a great example of the local effort that's occurring in her area of tying in with local businesses. And the whole idea is not to funnel students into typical service oriented jobs. But to expose them to the value of work and how to start building work skills that will lead down to a pathway so as we partner together with the workforce partners and community rehab providers and our teachers, we're going to see some changes in curriculum development that really impact what do -- that's being impacted by what businesses are telling us and I think that's a key concept and we're seeing that happening already.

I'm going to take the liberty of jumping ahead a little bit because as you can tell we can talk about these things for great length and we're excited to talk about it but I want to make sure Mary talks about a couple of programs we're involved with. So I'm going to jump ahead to Making the Grade and have Mary talk a little bit about Making the Grade and our Transition Alliance Program.

>> MARY JACKSON: Sure, studies have shown students with paid employment in high school have greater likelihood of future employment success so Making the Grade is designed for students in high school the opportunity to obtain part time employment during high school during the summer that fits in nicely with WIOA and pre-employment transition services the program facilitates understanding of the work habits and behaviors that the student needs to know to be employed. And then this also can produce a reference or skill sets to draw upon after high school for their career in the future. This is a newer contract so we don't have a whole lot of data on this right now but we're very

excited with how this is progressing and currently we're partnering with our community rehabilitation providers for 11 different contracts covering multiple school districts scoots state.

Our other program is the Transition Alliance Program also known as TAP. This is a partnership between school districts and VR. It's a third party contract with a 50/50 shared financial cost that VR is able to use for Federal match. The program is designed to assist students with disabilities to transition from school to work. TAP really focuses on providing new and enhanced services that are not provided by the school districts so when we're looking at a new TAP we do a Gap Analysis where we're taking a look at what does the School District currently have to offer and where are the gaps so this program can fill in those gaps for the students to transition into the employment environment.

This past year we actually were able to incorporate in our potentially eligible so those are students that are on an IEP or a 504 plan that April had talked about earlier that might not necessarily have an open file with us but could benefit by participating in pre-employment transition services and those group activities that are set up by TAP the potentially eligible I just mentioned would be able to participate in those so TAP is able to work with more students now in the districts where we have those contracts. Individuals can start participating TAP as early as their freshman year in high school and just to give you an idea of the success of the program for Federal Fiscal Year '15 data we had a total of 1,377 participants in the program. And we had a rehabilitation rate or success rate of 76%

>> DAVID MITCHELL: April, I would like to go back to you now and I was just thinking of this morning's conversation about the STEM panel I was at. The lady from the Ready Mix company talked about as a business concern in rural Iowa that they don't have the workforce and they are hungry for people and they want to find ways to partner to keep students in the area that help meet their business need and I know from listening to you in your last presentation that you were doing some things in your school with a business day. Could you talk a little bit about how you brought businesses into your school and how businesses have responded to your requests?

>> APRIL STOTZ: Yes, so the businesses -- we talked a little bit about it. But the businesses were going to come in and do presentations at the high school. One of the reasons we did that is we found students weren't aware of the all of the opportunities that are out there in their communities so they thought they had to leave and go to college and move elsewhere in order to get jobs. So when we contacted businesses to see if they wanted to come in and talk with the students directly, not a single business turned me down. Every single one of them was jumping at the opportunity and I actually had called several because of course you leave messages the first time around and I didn't think I would get as much of a reaction. So I had businesses almost fighting over who got to go in first. So they were really excited about the opportunity to come in and talk about their jobs that they had available and I think that's really going to help the students realize that

there are jobs that are right around the corner that they could get into that are really good paying jobs and they can make a career out of it.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: April, I know early on in your introductions you had mentioned that one of the barriers that you encounter sometimes is transportation in rural Iowa.

I know as -- I represent the VR office on the statewide transportation committee so in Iowa we actually have a statewide committee that's addressing transportation needs across the state and one of the things Iowa has done through the Department of Transportation is put some money into what we call mobility managers. We have about six mobility managers that are spread out across the state and the mobile manager acts as a resource to kind of help coordinate and address how do we meet transportation needs of public transportation -- if public transportation isn't in my area.

So we have some ability to contract with regional authorities. We found some ways to partner with business to be kind of innovative in that.

Have you -- are you encountering anything that works for you up in Northwest Iowa?

>> APRIL STOTZ: Yes, we do have some businesses that we'll work with their staff to provide rides for individuals. For example, I have one young man who is unable to get to and from work and he happens to work at a pizza place. And the delivery driver picks him up on the first time he goes out. And brings him in. Again we use those small town connections where everybody seems to know somebody and we find individuals who are willing to drive for a small fee. Most of the time it's very individualized so that's where we're running into it the most is we have to work through it ahead of time and know what the plan of action is going to be.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: I think one of the key things that you've said that really impacts transition especially transition in rural areas is the relationships and the connections.

I think from a VR standpoint we encourage all of our staff to establish those connections and sometimes people see it as a disadvantage to be in that smaller rural geographic area but as April has pointed out, it's an opportunity where everybody knows your name. And April has been excellent at creating those relationships in a positive basis to really create those opportunities that's helped move employment forward in her area.

April there was a question a little earlier I saw on the Web site that talked about job placement and use of community providers, could you talk a little bit -- I know you do both where you're active with businesses that you also use some community providers. Could you talk a little bit about your approach with that?

>> APRIL STOTZ: Yeah, we have two really great community rehab providers in our area. When I'm working with an individual that might need a little bit extra support and I'm aware of that ahead of time, a lot of times we will go ahead and use that community rehab provider that will be able to be there for a longer period of time and really support

that person. They have got the relationships built with businesses, as well. And it's really about partnering with them. I'm not afraid to give them names of different employers I've worked with and they are doing the same thing for us and we are working together to place individuals in something that matches their interests and skills. But we do utilize them quite a bit. And very thankful to have them.

>> DAVID MITCHELL: Philip, I think we're getting close to our hour time limit I'm going to turn it over to you so you can maybe go through our last couple of slides and say any closing remarks that you would like to make.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Absolutely. One of the things that anybody who has been following RespectAbility knows for a while is we love talking about businesses that are really doing innovative work or partnering with VR to really expand job opportunities for people with disabilities.

And so on Slide 16 here, you can find out some more information that really shines a spotlight on some really interesting small businesses, entrepreneurial efforts and partnerships that VR has done around employing people with disabilities in all parts of Iowa for example the first one you'll see is Em's Coffee Shop in Independence, Iowa. If you pay attention to disability issues, you probably have heard Senator Tom Harkin talking about Em and her story about how she became an entrepreneur and created a coffee shop which is center point for her town we also talk about Johnston Creek Farms and jobs in agriculture for people with disabilities. We also have a story about the In the Country Garden and Gifts, Kwik Trip, which is a chain that has multiple stores in multiple states that's done some really great work in a lot of different places and also Winnebago Industries if you go to our Web site you'll find a few more profiles of other businesses in Iowa that have been doing some great work I seriously encourage all of you to learn more about what's going on there.

We have one or two minutes left.

Are there any questions on the phone, operator?

>> OPERATOR: Not at this time. Participants can press 7 pound on their telephone keypad to indicate they would like to ask a question on the phone That's 7 pound. Thank you.

>> PHILIP PAULI: So as I said, I seriously encourage anyone and everyone who has been on the webinar today to take a look at some of these success stories and figure out what information you can take home and really learn about how to replicate best practices wherever you are.

Our next webinar in our summer series is also about Iowa Part 2 of this series we'll be talking about some of the business partnerships that David Mitchell and his wonderful team have been launching in particular we're going to be talking about rehoming aging workers at the Unity Point health system this is one of the really unique projects that sets Iowa apart from a lot of other states and looking forward to talking about that. The webinar then will be on July 1 1th 2016 at 1:30 p.m. so some time same channel please

RSVP often our Web site and shortly -- later in July we have another webinar coming up July 27th with Thorkil Sonne founder of Specialisterne, who has been doing a lot of work on jobs and sciences technology in people in autism spectrum in August we'll be doing webinar from wonderful people of Nevada and talking about their business partnerships and some of the challenges they have overcome so we have a lot more topics and learning opportunities coming up.

Lastly, as ever, here is our contact information. If there's anything we can do to help you in your work at the state or Federal level, please don't hesitate to contact us.

All right, operator, any last questions?

>> OPERATOR: No questions at this time.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right. Well, last I just want to extend a huge thank you to David and April and Mary for their wonderful presentation today. I learned a lot. I thought I had a good sense of what they are doing and Iowa is just blowing our socks off. Lastly, thank you to JP Morgan Chase for your financial support for our Webinar Series and everyone who is on the webinar today, we look forward to sharing and learning together again. Have a great day.

>> OPERATOR: Recording has now stopped.

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