

# FLORIDA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION (FRA)

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2016 NEWSLETTER

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## A PRODUCT OF THE FRA BOARD

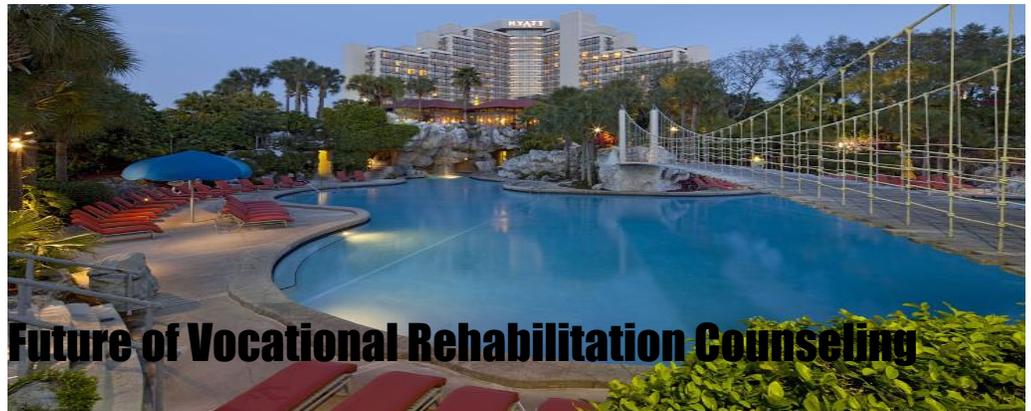
MOTTO: "STRIVING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

## Message from the Board:

Hello All Attendees,

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 2016 FRA training conference. We are extremely proud to provide you with the opportunity to support your profession and receive training at the same time. We have made tremendous progress over the year. Unfortunately, we lost our president Donna Farrell during the year. However, this is a wonderful time for the Board. We presently have a complete board with all seats filled. The new board members bring a vast amount of experience expertise and energy to the board.

**Below:** Scenic picture of the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Hotel in Orlando, Florida



**Future of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling**

The future of the profession is in a constant flux with policy and procedural Changes are occurring in nearly all facets of the profession. There are new programs implemented in both DBS and DVR designed to improve the offering of services. The level of communication within the divisions serves to enhance and trigger more cooperation. New portals have been added to each department websites. Less emphasis is being placed on qualifications. The alignment of workforce development programs is now a priority. The provision of services to 15 – 21 year olds is critical. A more in-depth look at the training and education of clients after high school is paramount.



**Pictured above:** Hyatt  
Regency Hotel Lobby



**Pictured below:** FRA Board  
Meeting: Introduction of  
student members

## FRA Board Meeting

The Annual FRA Board meeting was held on Wednesday, August 17, 2016 at 5:45PM. The meeting was called to order by Acting President Denise Giarrusso. The Board welcomed new members as follows: Chih-Chin Chon, Dorjan Krajan, student representative, Yvette Triana, Karen Schwartz and Tammy Jorgenson-Smith.

Previous minutes from a teleconference meeting were reviewed and approved. Treasury report indicated that the FRA remains solvent with more than 40,000 total in all accounts. Membership report indicated that there are 70 active members. There are 53 life members. No legislative report was provided. A motion was made and seconded to accept all reports. A vote was taken and the reports were approved.

Tampa Bay chapter has no president. John Ficca remains the treasurer. It was announced that three board members will be retiring within the next 5 years (Denise, Linda and Madeline). A succession plan was discussed. Further action is needed. Website upgrade is the next priority.

**Pictured below:** Alesa Mckinlay, DVR State Director (on right) and Robert Doyle, DBS State Director (on left) provided state and federal policy updates.



**To Your Right:** The State Directors of the Division of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and The Division of Blind Services enjoy a relationship conducive to the strengthening of collaborative efforts. They each enjoy statewide success.



## New FRA Board Members' BIO

**Tammy Jorgensen-Smith, Ph.D., CRC** joined the University of South Florida in 2007 as a Research Assistant Professor with the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC) which is a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. She is currently a tenured Associate Professor in USF's Department of Child and Family Studies-Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program. She is currently the principal investigator on a renewable federal grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

**Karen Schwartz, MA, CRC** graduated from the University of South Florida with a degree in Psychology and Criminology in 2003 and a MA in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling in 2011. She is a CRC and is currently working towards licensure as a LMHC. She worked for VR for four years and is currently a Care Coordinator at the Bannasch Institute for Advance Rehabilitation Medicine at Lakeland Regional Health.

**Chih-Chin Chon, Ph.D., CRC** is currently the director and associate professor of the Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program at the University of South Florida. She earned the MS degree in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in 1998 and her doctoral degree in Rehabilitation Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2014.

**Yvette Triana, MA, CRC** graduated from the University of South Florida with a degree in Psychology and Criminology and a MA in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. She is a CRC and is currently a Senior School to Work Counselor with the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Christopher Hallissey, MA, CRC** has received extensive training in employability and earning capacity assessment and has provided work evaluations for the Florida DVR. He primarily works out of Tampa, Florida and serves seven counties along the west coast of Florida.



FRA Board Meeting – Treasurer report



## Highlights of FRA Board Meeting

New and potential new members were introduced and provided a brief BIO.

Website domain was reviewed and discussed. New upgrades were proposed. Word Press website update may cost \$300 plus monitoring. Item was tabled until additional information is obtained.

Currently, there are 123 FRA members. There are 53 lifetime members and 70 active members.

Dorean Kraja, new member volunteered to

serve as the Legislative Chair.

John Fica, Treasurer for the Tampa Day Chapter provided a financial report on the chapter. A President is being sought.

A doodle will be distributed to determine when the next face to face meeting of the FRA Board will be held.

The establishment of a nomination committee was presented and discussed. This item will be further discussed at the

face to face meeting. Item was tabled.

Conference registration and cost was discussed by treasurer, Denise Giarrusso. A small profit will be made from the conference. The investment account is being maintained at \$16,000 plus. There are no outstanding debt.

**Note:** Pictured to the right are conference attendants



Updates on Special Education (SE), On The Job Training (OJT) and the WIOA **(presented by Jan Piece and Sheila Ward).**

The WIOA was passed in 2014 and requires the States to align workforce Development programs.

The purpose of the authorization were:

1. Early preparation for youth
2. Collaboration between VR, School Districts and State agencies
3. Increased service availability and access.

115% of VR funds are dedicated for pre-employment, and Transition services for youth. These services were geared for high school youths ages 15 – 21 who are enrolled in training or education after high school. Postsecondary were also Included but they must have a Student Transition Academic Record (STAR). To be a part of the STAR program 1. VR eligibility is not required. The applicant must have an IEP or a 504 plan. The applicant must be between the age of 15 – 21 and have a condition that interferes with normal development.



**Above:** Jan Piece and Sheila Ward

### Learning Academy

Dr. Karen Berkman, Dr. Terri Daly and Susan Richmond (pictured left) presented on The Learning Academy and its employment services at the University of South Florida. The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) focuses on individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

young adults with disabilities (33% versus 59%). The average number of hours worked by this population per week was 36% less. It was noted that referrals for this population increased 265% in Florida from 2002 – 2011. 28% of those referred during this period of time achieved successful employment.

of this population, the more their autism related symptoms will decrease and their interests expand. Attributes of this population are excellent visual learners, direct and honest, focused interest areas, attention to details, concrete understanding of rules, patterns or sequences, high level of concentration, loyal, non-judgmental, exceptional memory and recall of details.

The percentage of young adults with autism working was nearly half that of all

It was indicated that the greater the independence



**Left to Right:** Dr. Karen Berkman  
Susan Richmond and Dr. Terri Daly

### “Positive Psychology” Application to Rehabilitation Counseling **(presented by Dr. Tina Dillahunt-Aspillaga and Dr. Chih-Chin Chou)**

Aim is to focus on the positive aspects of life. Ignore negative aspects. The emphasis is on self help. **Major Constructs:** 1. Subjective well-being and happiness 2. Hope/Optomism 3. Character Strength and 4. Resilience.



**Above:** Dr. Tina Dillahunt-Aspillaga  
And Dr. Chih – Chin Chou presented “Positive Psychology”



FRA Board Members:

Tina Dillahunt-Aspillaga

Don Barnes

Chih Chin Chou

Richard Chapman - Student member

Madeline Davidson

Denise Giarrusso

William Hudson, Sr.

Christopher Hallissey

Dorjan Kraja

Harry McEwen

Andrea Melvin

Linda Rimmer

Tammy Jorgensen-Smith

Karen Schwartz

Lyvette Triana

Karla Wooten



Minnie, Mickey, Donald and friends

**Insight:** Everyone thinks, it is in our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life ant that of what we produce, make, or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2008).