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AVTEC Breaks Ground to Educate Rural Alaskans

A groundbreaking ceremony was held June 22 in Seward at the AVTEC First Lake Campus to celebrate the start of construction on a new Connected Education facility. This 5,000-square-foot facility is being constructed with a \$2 million grant AVTEC received from the U. S. Economic Development Administration. This Connected Education facility is designed to allow AVTEC to distance deliver technical and related academic training to rural Alaska. AVTEC has begun to expand its distance delivered course offerings and design new ways of teaching people in the most remote places in Alaska. For more information on AVTEC offerings, please visit <http://avtec.labor.state.ak.us/>



Pictured left to right: AVTEC Director Fred Esposito, DOLWD Assistant Commissioner Guy Bell, AVTEC Connected Education Department Head/Instructor Debra Burdick, DOT&PF Public Facilities Branch Project Manager Kim Mahoney and Blazy Construction Project Manager Randy Nelson.

Commissioner's Quote

"As seen recently in the *Anchorage Daily News* and on KTUU Channel 2, this department has partnered with industry and school districts across the state to stimulate the rebirth of vocational training and apprenticeship programs, which will help ensure that Alaska's youth possess the requisite resources, education, training, skills, certification and experience to satisfactorily perform the work necessary for jobs in our high growth industries – transportation, construction and mining, and on the upcoming natural gas pipeline."

-Commissioner Greg O'Claray, at the Juneau Valley Rotary meeting Aug. 2.

New Manager Joins Sitka Job Center

David Reid has joined our department as manager of the Sitka Job Center. Reid was born in New York, N.Y., and is a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. He spent 13 years working for the Police Department in Richmond, Calif., before switching careers to the Alcohol and Other Drug/Mental Health Field. Reid worked for three years as a mental health case manager before moving to Sitka in 2004. He was a case manager and supervisor in the Adult Mental Health Community Support Program at Sitka Counseling and Prevention Services. He has been married to his wife Cary for 9 years.

Reid has always worked in a social service capacity and feels that joining the Sitka Job Center team is a natural extension of that interest. Welcome David!



New Sitka Job Center Manager David Reid

DVR Helps Blind Alaskan Gain Independence and a Good Job

Dennis Hochstetler has a "can-do" attitude. As the former owner of Snarlin' Grizzly Pizza for many years in his hometown of Delta Junction, he wasn't discouraged when Fort Greely initially closed. He had begun making plans to work as a truck driver to support his wife and their six children when he suddenly lost his vision in 2000 to a disease called Optic Neuritis.

But legal blindness did not impair his sense of determination. He applied to the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for assistance. Because Hochstetler is a Vietnam Veteran, DVR worked with the Veterans Administration to coordinate a referral for orientation and mobility skills training to teach him how to use a white cane for traveling, independent living skills for everyday tasks in his home, and computer software designed to assist people with visual impairments.

After regaining his independence, Hochstetler returned to DVR eager to rejoin the work force. With the assistance of DVR and the WIA Job Training program, he developed a comprehensive employment plan which included enrolling in the University of Alaska Fairbanks Applied Business program. Hopeful that one day he and his family could return to Delta Junction, he moved to Fairbanks.

After completing his AA degree, Hochstetler opted to pursue a Bachelor's degree to improve his marketability. With a second degree in hand, Hochstetler was now anxious to return to his home in Delta Junction. The economy had improved and more positions had been added at Fort Greely.

A DVR job developer prospected for jobs that would value his skills and education and could accommodate the barriers imposed by his decreased vision. Hochstetler was offered a paralegal position, provided that the special software that he needs to use to access the computer would work with the hiring company's programs. During an assessment period, Hochstetler led a team of experts to tackle these technology issues. The team included computer programmers from the state and federal government, his vocational rehabilitation counselor, his supervisor and an assistive technology specialist.

As a result of Hochstetler's persistent determination and tremendous teamwork across the state, Hochstetler is working with military personnel obtaining information needed for wills and other legal documents. The job makes good use of his attention to detail, his excellent attitude and strong customer service skills. His college degree will allow for career advancement so his future is secure. Most importantly, Hochstetler and his family are back home where he is working successfully at a job he loves.

Way to go DOLWD team!

Fraud Investigators Team Now in Action

The Workers' Compensation Division Fraud Investigation section was authorized by SB130 in the 2005 Legislative Session and staffing has now been completed. The section has broad authority to investigate and seek criminal prosecution for fraud involving claims for workers' compensation benefits, denial of benefits and employer actions taken to illegally avoid paying workers' compensation liability insurance premiums. Following a training meeting in July, the staff is pictured here in new Anchorage offices at the 6th and K building.



Pictured left to right are Southcentral Region Lead Investigator Mark Lutz, Northern Region Investigator Sandy Stuller, Section Chief Paul Grossi, Southcentral Region Investigators Richard Ellis and Rich Degenhardt.