



#4 | APRIL 2025

WELCOME TO OUR

Quarterly Newsletter

A NOTE FROM NITA

Chief Executive Officer
Nita Hobbs

The last quarter at WVARF has been one of growth, collaboration, and investment in our mission. We hit several key milestones, including the hiring of our new CFO/AD and attending the SUPRA Conference, where we explored new product and service lines, training opportunities for our members, and ways to maximize reinvestment in CRPs.

Speaking of reinvestment, congratulations to WVADE, MCOI, Gateway Industries, and Job Squad Inc. for receiving our mini-grants! These CRPs put their funding to great use in areas like marketing, equipment upgrades, and warehousing expansion. WVARF is proud to support these efforts and further our shared goal of employing individuals with disabilities.

With financial and funding uncertainties affecting many nonprofits, we continue to strengthen statewide connections beyond our CRP network. Be sure to check out the article below about the upcoming Jobs & Hope School Transition Fair!

This Legislative Session, I've spent significant time at the Capitol advocating for the state use program. Our State Use Day helped kick off Disability Awareness Week with a strong presence from our statewide network. However, there is still more work to be done in educating legislators about the program's impact.

Looking ahead, we're excited about the spring launch of new merchandise for WV State Parks and the first meeting of the Uniquely Made WV Advisory Board on March 31. We're eager to collaborate with Focus Marketing to showcase and sell goods crafted by WV CRP clients and artisans on a digital platform.

Thank you for your continued support of WVARF and our mission!

Nita Hobbs

SUPRA 2025

The 27th Annual SUPRA Conference took place at the Riverside Hotel in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in January. Representing WVARF, Nita Hobbs, Andrea Higginbotham, Dathum Cummings, and Sabrina Jones attended the three-day event, which offered valuable networking opportunities for SUPRA members from State Use Organizations. Participants engaged in roundtable discussions tailored to CEOs, operations teams, and other relevant topics of interest or concern.

The conference featured rotating roundtables with potential vendors offering products and services for the State Use Program. WVARF is currently evaluating the inclusion of drug test kits, which were presented as a potential addition to our Statewide Contract. A new products and services handout was distributed, detailing recent additions by other states, along with their projected sales and initial capital investments. CRP leaders will find this document a useful resource and can access it in the WVARF Share Drive folder.

WVARF was honored to contribute to the conference's new services segment with a presentation on E-Commerce Site Management, delivered by Contract Administrator Andrea Higginbotham. Additionally, the SUPRA 2024 Annual Survey & Employment Data booklet was provided. The data collected in this booklet is particularly valuable for researching new items or expanding existing offerings within WVARF's portfolio, especially for specialized agencies. This information also plays a key role in assessing potential revenue growth and opportunities for our CRPs.

State Use Day at the Capitol: Educating Legislators on the Importance of Inclusive Employment in West Virginia

State Use Day at the Capitol provided a valuable opportunity to educate legislators about the importance of creating a stronger, more inclusive workforce for individuals with disabilities in West Virginia. This event was a collaborative effort to raise awareness and foster understanding among elected officials about the critical role that Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and the State Use Program play in supporting people with disabilities.

The West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (WVARF) led the day's discussions, highlighting the significant challenges that West Virginia faces in providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Despite having one of the highest rates of disability in the nation, the state struggles with some of the lowest employment rates for this population. This day at the Capitol was a chance to inform lawmakers about these statistics and explain the crucial need for policy changes that will create more opportunities for people with disabilities to enter and thrive in the workforce.

Key to the conversation was the State Use Program, a unique initiative that pairs state agencies with nonprofit organizations to create meaningful employment for individuals who may otherwise face significant barriers to work. The program not only enhances the purchasing power of state agencies but also provides vital jobs that contribute to both the state's economy and the personal growth of individuals with disabilities. This mutually beneficial program is an example of how state resources can be leveraged to create a more inclusive workforce.

In addition to discussing the value of the State Use Program, the day also focused on the advocacy for House Bill 2107. This important piece of legislation aims to correct a harmful code change that has jeopardized the stability and opportunities of some of West Virginia's most vulnerable citizens. Lawmakers were urged to take action to protect and support people with disabilities, ensuring they have the opportunity to lead independent and fulfilling lives through meaningful employment.

State Use Day was a significant step in educating West Virginia's legislators about the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and the important role they play in building a stronger, more resilient workforce. By fostering dialogue and understanding, the event helped build a foundation for future collaboration aimed at improving employment services and opportunities for all West Virginians. With continued education and support from policymakers, we can ensure that every West Virginian, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to work with dignity and contribute to their community.

Workable Merges with Job Squad!

We are thrilled to announce that Workable has officially merged with Job Squad, bringing together two dedicated teams with a shared mission. This merger marks an exciting new chapter in their journey, and we can't wait to see where this new endeavor will go.

The same great services that have been offered will still be available. The commitment to helping disabled individuals find gainful employment remains an important part of what they do. By combining their expertise and resources, they will be able to expand their reach

We look forward to working with Job Squad INC as we continue to break down barriers and create pathways to employment for individuals with disabilities.

Together, we are poised to make an even greater impact, and we're excited for the opportunities that lie ahead.

Meet Morgan: Bringing Expertise and Passion to WVARF's Mission

We are excited to introduce Morgan, a dedicated professional with a diverse background and a passion for empowering individuals through nonprofit work. As an Air Force veteran, Morgan has always been committed to helping people from all walks of life achieve their fullest potential.

With five years of experience in both public and private sector accounting, Morgan brings a wealth of knowledge in business growth and development to the West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (WVARF). His work as a consultant for nonprofit organizations has seen him collaborate with various boards of directors, helping them set and achieve both short- and long-term goals while fostering effective leadership.

Morgan's expertise also extends to his role at the WV State Auditor's Office and as a business manager for a medium-sized real estate development firm, equipping him with a unique set of skills that will help guide WVARF's financial strategy. His efforts will support the ongoing mission to break down barriers for West Virginians and ensure the organization remains financially sustainable.

Outside of work, Morgan enjoys spending time with his family and pets, and he has a deep interest in perfecting his culinary skills in the kitchen. We are thrilled to have Morgan as part of our team and look forward to the positive impact he will continue to make on the lives of those we serve.



Contractual Developments

This Is Big News- Don't Be Left Behind

WVARF has already begun reaching out to customers to renew their janitorial agreements for FY26. Due to several factors, including a lack of Governor's Committee meetings, and our efforts at the Capitol with the WV Legislature to get our language changed back, we held off on asking for an additional price increase. WVARF sent out a spreadsheet of current contracts to the agencies to verify contact information, and they have all responded with changes. None of these changes were the cancellation of any service agreement. That may change as they actually receive the service agreements, however, last year when we did this, it was on this sheet that they indicated the changes and cancellations. WVARF remains optimistic that despite the challenges, we will have business as usual throughout the state!



State Use Commodities Spotlight

Highlighting new Commodities from Different State Use Programs

WVARF was introduced to Premier Biotech, a leading provider of rapid drug testing diagnostic devices, at our annual SUPRA Conference in Florida earlier this year. Commodity Manager, Dathum Cummings, has been spearheading this new initiative. The CRPs would receive orders for one of several different products and then would package the kits and ship them out to our customers. This has the potential to reach far beyond just state use customers. WVARF plans to reach out to several private industries that utilize testing as well.

Premier Biotech's product line includes customization of up to 8 different drugs tested. They offer tests that have same-day, onsite, results, which opens up the ease of use for the customers. You can learn more about Premier Biotech by checking out their website [here](#).

Jobs & Hope School Transition Fair:

Empowering Students for a Bright Future

We are excited to announce the upcoming Jobs & Hope School Transition Fair, taking place on May 21, 2025, at Blackwater Falls State Park. This new initiative, led by Jobs & Hope and facilitated by the West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (WVARF), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and WV State Parks, aims to provide high school students with essential resources and support as they transition into adulthood.

As students move from high school to the next phase of life, it's crucial they are aware of the community programs, transportation options, employment support, and job opportunities available to them. The transition from school to work or

further education can be challenging, especially for those with disabilities or other barriers. This fair will connect students with local services and organizations that can provide the guidance and opportunities they need to succeed in their communities.

A Special Thanks to Blackwater Falls State Park

We would like to extend our gratitude to Blackwater Falls State Park for graciously hosting this important event. The park's excellent and accessible facilities make it the perfect venue for this fair, and we are thrilled to shine a spotlight on their beautiful setting as well as their commitment to accessibility for all.

Who Will Be There?

A variety of vendors and organizations will be attending the fair to provide students with information about local services, employment opportunities, and other resources. Some of the confirmed participants include:

- **Jobs & Hope:** Jobs & Hope will be at the fair to provide information about their programs that support West Virginians as they transition into meaningful employment, highlighting services, resources, and career development opportunities.
- **Potomac Valley Transit Authority (PVTa):** PVTa will be attending to highlight their expanded service area, which now includes Tucker County, and to provide information about public transit options for students and their families.
- **Eastern WV Community and Technical College (CTC):** Representatives from Eastern WV CTC will be on hand to talk about admissions and educational opportunities for students seeking to further their education after high school.
- **West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (WVARF):** WVARF will be attending to discuss the State Use Program, highlighting local and statewide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The State Use Program connects individuals with meaningful jobs through state agency partnerships with nonprofit organizations, promoting both personal growth and economic contribution.
- **More to Come:** See information below about vendor registration!

A Call to Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)

Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who service the area are encouraged to have a booth at the fair to share information about their programs and services. This is a fantastic opportunity to connect with local students and families and offer support as they navigate the transition to adulthood.

If you are a CRP and are interested in participating, please contact Erin Gaertner at erin.gaertner@wvesc.org for more details and to reserve your space.

Join Us for a Day of Learning and Opportunity

We are excited about this opportunity to connect students with the resources they need to build a successful future. Whether they are exploring job prospects, considering further education, or learning about transportation options, the Jobs & Hope School Transition Fair will provide valuable tools for students as they take the next step toward adulthood.

We look forward to seeing you there and to working together to empower the next generation of West Virginians!

Coming Up!

**Goodwill Industries of the Summit
Annual Dinner**

Thursday, April 3rd

QUARTERLY REPORT DEADLINE

Tuesday, April 15th

**Jobs and Hope School Transition
Fair**

Wednesday, May 21st



GATEWAY INDUSTRIES INC. PRESENTS
The 29th Annual
DERBY DAY
Run For The Roses
May 3, 2025 4:00-8:00 PM
Cecil H. Underwood building at the WV State Fairgrounds

HUGE SILENT AUCTION
MOST SPECTACULAR HAT CONTEST
TWO HALF & HALF DRAWINGS
LIVE FLOWER AUCTION, DOOR PRIZES, GRAND PRIZE

LIVE MUSIC * COCKTAILS * BUFFET DINNER
WATCH THE RACE ON BIG SCREEN TVS
PICK YOUR FAVORITE HORSE

Ticket Price: \$65 in advance - \$75 at the door

Music Provided By
**RICHARD HEFNER & The BLACK
MOUNTAIN
BLUEGRASS
BOYS**

**Gateway
Industries**
304-645-3165

A black and white photograph of a jockey in a checkered silks riding a dark horse. The jockey is leaning forward in a racing posture. The horse is galloping.

Do You have News You want to Share?

Do you have news that you feel is exciting and that you would like to share? Send it to us so it can be featured in our next newsletter.



**"WITH THE NEW DAY COMES NEW STRENGTH AND NEW THOUGHTS."
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**



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