

**Jackie Gast, Director**

Much has happened since our last meeting on October 24, 2005. But first, coming up are two meetings: A **First Line Counselors Networking** meeting is planned for **May 24 at 8:30 A.M.** This is for supported or custom supported employment counselors to share information and techniques on job candidate placement. An **ESBLN Employer-only** meeting is scheduled for **May 31, 9 A.M.** Both meetings are being held at the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce. Read on for updates on our past activities...

**Public Awareness**

Each month, an employment related article is submitted to *The Business Journal* on the lower shore, *The Chesapeake Ledger* on the upper

Shore, the *Cecil Business Ledger* in Cecil County and the *Queen Anne's Chamber of Commerce newsletter*. Topics include abilities and advantages of hiring people with disabilities, available tax credits/deductions for accommodations, transitioning from school to work, employment successes, "handicapped" being an unsuitable term for people, and transportation challenges. We also have developed a rack card and a table top display board.

**School to Work**

High School High Tech is a program for diploma track students with disabilities being administered by LSE in Salisbury. Currently seven students are enrolled and are involved in workforce readiness programs with hopes to be interns this summer. The ESBLN has hired these students to produce a Wicomico Accessibility Guide which will list whether restaurants and hotels are accessible to people with disabilities. The project is to be completed before summer so if you want an intern, they will already have some practical experience!!

**Continuing Education for Business**

By hosting an Eastern Shore Society for Human Resource Management meeting, the ESBLN presented, *Non-Traditional Sources of Skilled Workers* to about 50 business people in September. This event was tied into the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce's Business Expo at the Fountains Wedding and Conference Center. A second program, *How Being Accessible Can Improve Your Bottom Line* was offered by Queen Anne's County Chamber of Commerce and the ESBLN. Twice we tried to hold this event with very little response. It was canceled. The third event, *Americans with Disabilities Act for Employers and ADA Tax Incentives* was held at Salisbury University hosted by the ESBLN and the Center of Professional Development. Participants were able to gain continuing education contact hours for Human Resource Management recertification.

**Job Fair**

A great experience was had for those who participated in the Worcester County Development Center First Annual Community Job Fair for people with disabilities held at the Worcester County Library, Ocean Pines Branch on March 30, 2006. Katie Clogg, WCDC Supported Employment Coordinator, and coordinator of the job fair was relentless in her mission to make the event a success. Her hard work paid off. Over seven different agencies including WCDC, LSE, Dove Pointe, and Wicomico County Public Schools provided about 30 job candidates. Five employers including Peninsula Regional Medical Center, Lankford-Sysco, Best Temps, and the University of MD, Eastern Shore were present. Atlantic General Hospital and Worcester County Human Resources provided applications. The ESBLN and Salisbury Chamber assisted in providing advisement, employer contacts, and publicity for the event. Employer comments were that the event was "very well organized with a friendly staff and friendly environment." Already, we know of at least one outside interview resulting from the event. A follow-up questionnaire is planned.

**ESBLN as a Referral Source**

One of the ESBLN's goals is to be a recognized referral source for business. Our newly designed web site has a wealth of information and links. In case you do not have time to browse and search, just use the "Assistance Request" feature on the home page, [www.esbln.org](http://www.esbln.org), and let us do the research for you. Additionally, we recently helped the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce with getting a sign language interpreter, assisted K&L Microwave with poverty statistics (unfortunately, many people with disabilities fall within this range), and helped individuals make connections with business employment resources.

**ESBLN Award**

We are planning to give an award in October, Disability Employment Awareness Month. Award criteria is that a business must employ or have recently employed a person with a disability, must be an advocate for employment of people with disabilities and be a member of the ESBLN/Chamber of Commerce. More information and nomination information will be on our web site soon.

**Networking as a goal**

We network with the local chapter of the Eastern Shore Society of Human Resource Management; Business Affairs Committee, Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce; Talbot County disAbility Coalition; Delmarva Advocates on Delmarva; Grayshore/BEACON at Salisbury University; as well as several Chambers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.