

Programs Help People Overcome Handicaps

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Vocational Rehabilitation? What is it? What purpose does it serve? And how can it be of use to me or my family? A few people know what Vocational means, but how many people know what Rehabilitation means?

To the many rural areas of our state, especially in the villages, there may be only a few select people who would know the meaning of Vocational Rehabilitation, and what it can do to help a person who, without the aid of their services, would otherwise be thought of as being kind of helpless for the rest of his or her life.

The Alaska State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is part of the State's way of

teaching, training, learning and developing skills, ability, and a good way of taking care of day to day problems, by showing and helping those persons who are having trouble finding jobs and adjusting to day to day living because of a disability.

In other words, the Alaska State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is part of the State's educational program designed to assist persons with physical, mental or emotional problems which would interfere with their ability to function in employment.

It seems like people never pay any attention to anything until something happens to them or someone very close to them. Then they are very

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Rehabilitation . . .

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concerned of what to do about it.

Last week while attending the organizational meeting of the Statewide advisory board for Vocational Rehabilitation, I found out that a young man from my village had shot himself in the hand and had to have it removed.

I'm not saying that he has lost his hand because now there are ways to help him by giving him an artificial hand and training him to use it to the best of his ability.

By saying that giving him an artificial hand and training him to use it to the best of his ability means that whatever happens to a person, no matter how much aid and services can be of help to that person, he or she determines their success in getting a good education, a good job and learning how to take care of day to day problems.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation can only provide services to the handicapped if the people who are disabled want their services. The request for a better way of living and better jobs must come from those people first, who are disabled.

We cannot catch the fish under the ice without first chipping a hole through the ice. We cannot learn or take steps in education by not knowing or understanding the many opportunities of education.

Presently the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has four offices in the state. There is an office at Anchorage, that takes in the south central and southwestern regions of the state, offices at Juneau and Ketchikan which take in the southeastern part of the state, and an office at Fairbanks that takes in the region north of the Alaska Range.

The office at Tacoma, Washington takes care of the clients that are sent south for services that cannot be taken care of within the state. The Tacoma office was used in the past for services before such training facilities and programs became available in Alaska.

Now, such training programs and facilities such as the Manpower Development Training Act, Alaska State Business College, Alaska Barber College, Community College, Community Action Agency training programs and many others have improved the educational training within the state.

The Alaska Orthopedics Supply Clinic in Anchorage has greatly improved the ability of providing services to Alaskans within the state.

The Alaska State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has increased to five times the staff it had back in the mid-fifties.

The training programs and facilities now in the state have improved in the past ten years to further advance the services of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

It does not have to be a loss of a hand or leg to finally realize the opportunities of a better job and a better way of life.

The Alaska State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, which defines its services as:

Part of the State's educational program designed to assist persons with physical, mental, or emotional problems which would interfere with their ability to function in employment, (taken from the Client's Handbook, Vocational Rehabilitation Program) is just one of the many agencies that are willing to give their time and aid to see you and yours in a good job and a good life. They will be there when you may need them.