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## **DWD Secretary Gassman: On-The-Job Training Initiative Shows How Recovery Act Is Helping Put Wisconsin Back to Work**

### ***Program Places Hundreds of Vocational Rehabilitation Clients in Jobs Across State***

HOLMEN – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said today the On-the-Job Training Initiative announced one year ago with \$2 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding is providing hundreds of Wisconsinites with new employment opportunities.

“This successful Recovery Act-funded initiative is opening doors for people with disabilities who are job ready,” Secretary Gassman said. “At the same time, it is helping employers across the state cover the cost of hiring and training new workers, providing a win-win for everyone involved.”

The state’s On-the-Job Training (OJT) Initiative, administered by the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), pays 50 percent of the wages and benefits for up to 90 days when employers hire people with disabilities. Since ARRA funding became available last year, 534 individuals have been placed in private sector jobs. Another 69 have been hired by the state as interns.

Secretary Gassman said the initiative provides DVR customers with valuable employment experience, and lets employers train the DVR customers for half the usual training cost per worker. The employer also becomes eligible for federal tax benefits in hiring an individual with a disability.

The OJT Initiative is one more way in which DVR is connecting people with disabilities to jobs across Wisconsin. Since October 2009, DVR has placed over 2,100 individuals in jobs. Their combined annual earnings are estimated to be more than \$37 million.

During a visit to MBA-Architects in Holmen, near La Crosse, Secretary Gassman met with two of 59 OJT participants in the Coulee Region: Wiltrud Auman, a drafter and project coordinator at MBA-Architects, and Brad Myhre, an IT specialist at Workforce Connections Inc. in La Crosse.

The OJT Initiative is designed to be simple for employers to use. When they hire a DVR participant, they complete a one-page agreement with DVR to secure half the cost of wages plus benefits. For more information on the initiative, visit: [http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/publications/dvr/pdf/dvr\\_16655\\_p.pdf](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/publications/dvr/pdf/dvr_16655_p.pdf)