

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 27, 2012

CONTACT: DWD: Communications Office, 608-266-2722

On the Web: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/news.htm>

On Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/WIWorkforce>

On Twitter: @WIWorkforce

## **DWD Executive Assistant Maxwell Congratulates First Class of Walgreens' On-the-Job Training Partnership with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

MILWAUKEE – On behalf of Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson, Executive Assistant Georgia Maxwell joined Walgreens today in congratulating the first graduating class of an on-the-job training initiative for people with disabilities. The class is comprised of 12 individuals who acquired job skills and experience and are now ready to work.

“When these individuals began their on-the-job training at Walgreens, they had little or no relevant work experience,” Executive Assistant Maxwell said. “Now they have the skills necessary to work as sales clerks, cashiers and customer service representatives. They have demonstrated they can do the job, and in doing so, they have inspired us by overcoming barriers to employment at the same time. We thank Walgreens, our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other partners to make this initiative a success in Wisconsin.”

The graduates participated in the drugstore chain's **Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative (REDI)**, which was piloted in 2010 in Texas. After training more than 200 people and seeing 66 percent of REDI graduates recommended for hire, the program grew to more than 150 stores throughout Texas, New York and Connecticut. Today, Wisconsin is one of 12 states involved in the first phase of the national REDI launch, and the program is expected to reach all states by the end of 2013.

In Milwaukee the community organizations of Adonai Employment Service, Inc. and Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin were recruited by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to work with Walgreens to develop training for the initiative. Training for the first class began in May in four Milwaukee-area Walgreens stores. Ten of the graduates have already been hired by Walgreens, and the other two graduates are working with DVR to transfer their on-the-job training experience into permanent employment.

As the state's premier program to provide employment services and counseling to people with disabilities who face substantial barriers to employment DVR in 2011 served 40,383 Wisconsin residents with disabilities and placed nearly 3,000 people in jobs. The REDI program is one way DVR investments are yielding successful outcomes for Wisconsinites. DVR's budget is 78.7% federal funded with a 21.3% state match required for each federal dollar allotted to Wisconsin. There are several indicators of the positive return on the state's investment:

- In the past 3 federal fiscal years, more than \$119 million in DVR purchase of employment plan services and products were invested in Wisconsin's economy, with an impact of over 1,500 jobs. Of these totals, nearly \$93 million were federal funds drawn down by state match with an economic impact of 1,240 jobs.
- Taxable earnings by DVR consumers who completed employment plans, when divided by the amount of federal and state funds invested in their DVR services, yielded a 211% return on investment in federal fiscal year 2012. When the state match is broken out, the ratio is \$8 in return for each \$1 in state revenue invested. One study suggested the return on investment for that \$1 grows to an \$18 yield in the third year.

For more information: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/>

- END -