



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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TENNESSEE REHABILITATION CENTER GRADUATES READY FOR WORK *STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OVERCOME BARRIERS TO REACH SUCCESS*

SMYRNA, Tenn. – Dozens of young men and women with significant disabilities proudly walked or rolled their wheelchairs up the ramp to the stage and accepted their graduation certificates from the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna today. Sixty-nine graduates representing 34 counties overcame serious barriers to complete their vocational programs. They are now ready to enter the job market.

"These graduates have shown a dedication to improving their lives and their opportunities to succeed in the workplace," said Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner Lana Seivers, the keynote speaker at today's graduation. "Each of these students has benefitted greatly from the hard work and commitment the teachers at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center have shown to providing them with excellent career training."

DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge also commended the TRC students in the JOBS (Job Objectives and Behavioral Services) and Warehouse programs on their partnership with the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation. This fall, more than two dozen students sorted, re-packaged and shipped out 120,000 books to 2,400 child care centers that serve low income children

"This massive assembly-line project was a win-win for our TRC students and the children we serve across the state," said Commissioner Lodge. "The students gained valuable work experience, while the children in daycare across the state received a 50-book Imagination Library set."

Students who attend TRC have a wide variety of disabilities, from traumatic brain injuries to blindness or mental retardation. Many must undergo physical or occupational therapy or take part in the transitional living skills program to better assist them as they leave the TRC and move back home or re-locate to new communities and enter the work world. The students can participate in ten diverse training programs offered at TRC, including Business Education Training, Hospitality and Food Service Training, and Custodial and Warehouse Training. Students are referred to TRC by vocational rehabilitation counselors in their home counties.

The Tennessee Rehabilitation Center is a state-operated comprehensive rehabilitation facility. It is one of only nine such centers in the nation. Services are provided on campus, and the majority of clients live on site while receiving services. The length of programs offered at TRC varies, depending upon the individual client's interest, abilities and needs. TRC serves more than 1,300 Tennesseans with disabilities each year. Since opening its doors in 1977, TRC has served more than 28,000 individuals.

For more information about TRC, the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Tennessee Department of Human Services, visit <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/rehabilitation.htm>

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