



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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TENNESSEE REHABILITATION CENTER GRADUATES OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

NEARLY 90 TENNESSEANS WITH DISABILITIES GAIN SKILLS TO GO TO WORK

SMYRNA, Tenn.— Dozens of young men and women with significant disabilities, including traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury and mental retardation, donned cap and gown and walked or rolled their wheelchairs across the stage at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center in Smyrna today. The 86 students come from all over Tennessee, representing 34 counties from Shelby to Sullivan. All of the students are determined to better their lives and enter or re-enter the workforce.

The new graduates took advantage of the diverse programs offered at TRC, including Traumatic Brain Injury Program, Physical Rehabilitation Program, Building Maintenance, Business Education Training, Food Service, Custodial Training and Warehouse Training.

The keynote speaker at today's graduation was Representative John Hood of the 48th State House District in Murfreesboro. Representative Hood is a long-time supporter of the TRC who champions causes that improve the lives of all Tennesseans. He is best known for his sponsorship of the 2004 legislation that strengthened the safety belt laws in Tennessee, which is supported by the well-known campaign "Click it or Ticket."

Several students were singled out for their determination and perseverance, including 32-year old Russell Daniels of Iron City in Lawrence County. Daniels received a severe spinal cord injury following a race car accident. He has learned new ways of doing everyday activities that most people take for granted and is pursuing a college degree. He hopes to return to the race car industry as a crew chief.

Debbie Killian, a 46-year old from Nashville, completed the Vision Impairment Services (VIS) program in just four months. After attending classes and training programs at the TRC, Killian was able to increase her math level from a third grade level to a post high school level. She hopes to soon manage a food service facility.

TRC's mission is to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services in a positive and productive learning environment. The services offered at TRC assist individuals in achieving their highest level of functioning so they can live and work as independently as possible.

The Tennessee Rehabilitation Center is a state-operated comprehensive rehabilitation facility. It is one of only eight 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 is part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

TRC serves more than 1,300 Tennesseans with disabilities each year. Since opening its doors in 1977, TRC has served more than 30,000 individuals with disabilities.

For more information about TRC, the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Tennessee Department of Human Services, visit www.state.tn.us/humanserv.

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