

# **2012 Annual Report**

## **A NEW VISION**

**2012 Kentucky Office for the Blind  
State Rehabilitation Council**

**Department of Workforce Investment  
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet**

# Message from the SRC Chair



Each year the Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) and its State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) work together in a collaborative manner to submit an annual report of accomplishments made to improve the quality of life and increase vocational opportunities for the blind and visually impaired across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This annual report is made available to the public on the OFB website ([www.blind.ky.gov](http://www.blind.ky.gov)).

The SRC consists of 23 members chosen from throughout the state and appointed by the Governor to represent business, industry and labor as well as the consumers of client services. Other members have been chosen who are actively involved in one of Kentucky's three consumer groups including the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the Kentucky Council of the Blind (KCB), and the Bluegrass Council of the Blind (BGCB). Each member serves no more than two consecutive three year terms.

The work of the SRC, which meets quarterly at the Charles W. McDowell Center in Louisville, is conducted through its six standing committees as well as an Executive Committee. These committees are: Executive, Bylaws and Nominating, Government and Public Relations, Consumer Services, Planning, and Business and Employment Opportunity. The Executive Committee is composed of the chair, vice-chair and the immediate past chair and may meet between the quarterly sessions should the need arise. During the past year, a staff person was assigned to assist each committee in fulfilling its duties.

One of the most exciting accomplishments of the SRC, in partnership with the OFB, took place in September. Twelve Council members participated in the 2012 Assistive Technology EXPO and Conference, "A New Vision" held at the Galt House in Louisville. Members Kim Zeigler and Becky Cabe served as moderators, with Kenny Jones serving as a presenter. On behalf of the SRC, Vice-Chair Michael Freholm accepted the Governor's Proclamation making September Assistive Technology Awareness Month in Kentucky.

In 2011, a comprehensive resource directory, developed by the SRC in partnership with OFB, was made available on the OFB website. The directory continues to make a wide cross section of the public aware of the many diverse services provided by OFB and its experienced staff. Visually impaired students, related service providers, eye care specialists, itinerant teachers of the visually impaired, disabled veterans, directors of family resource centers, public librarians, and community businesses are able to readily locate information through the website's many links. Visually impaired students are able to explain to classmates and teachers what it means to have a peripheral field loss by showing them the vision simulation program available on the website. Others can visit the website of the National Eye Institute (NEI) in order to learn if genes have been found for a particular retinal disorder that runs in the family. If so, DNA is analyzed free of charge through NEI's "eyeGENE" project. Directors of public libraries can learn about resources making the library more accessible to the blind and visually impaired.

Sincerely,  
Bess Douthitt,  
SRC Chair



# State Rehabilitation Council



## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide opportunities for employment and independence to individuals with visual disabilities.

## Budget

Unfortunately the loss of state funds over the past five years has resulted in the agency being unable to match federal funds. As a result, the continued failure to meet the federal match has had an overall negative state fiscal impact. The council was kept apprised of the budget and the effects of this throughout the year. The Legislative Committee worked on advocacy efforts on behalf of the agency to educate the legislature on the impact of losing federal funding due to

## Bylaws and Committee Structure Changes

Beginning in November 2011, the Bylaws Committee members reported that they were reviewing the committee structure of the council. The committee discussed restructuring to increase the effectiveness of each committee. Extensive research was done in looking at the makeup and responsibilities of committees in other states. A motion to accept the changes to the bylaws was tabled at the February 2012 meeting until further clarification and discussion could occur. The motion carried at the May 2012 quarterly meeting and the changes to the bylaws were accepted. The committee structure was changed to the following:

**Executive Committee** - Takes action on behalf of the council between regular meetings.

**Government and Public Relations** - Discusses and reports on matters related to partnership and consumer organizations' outreach, agency marketing, surveys and the annual report.

**Planning Committee** - Advises the office in the development, review and analysis of all planning activities and processes.

**Business and Employment Opportunity** - Reports on current and potential employment opportunities available for blind individuals.

**Bylaws and Nominating** - Receives all proposed amendments to bylaws, reviews and distributes them with or without committee recommendation.

**Consumer Services** - Assists in the review, analysis and development of policy and procedures as it relates to direct consumer services.



## 2013 State Plan Goals and Priorities

At the November 18, 2011 State Rehabilitation Council quarterly meeting Dr. Amy Flowers of Analytic Insight presented the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The Special Project Committee reviewed information from the assessment, the strategic planning process, the satisfaction survey results and the agency performance on standards and indicators. The committee worked with OFB staff and formulated six goals and priorities to recommend to the full council for approval in the state plan.

The goals are as follows:

1. OFB will exceed or meet the federal Standards and Indicators annually.
2. To increase opportunities for independent living and improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for Kentuckians with visual disabilities in order for them to prepare for, obtain, maintain, or regain competitive employment.
3. Use resources effectively and efficiently in order to maximize funds in serving individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired in the Commonwealth.
4. KBE will provide full-time employment and career opportunities for Kentuckians who are legally blind, while providing quality vending and food services for government and business.
5. To develop, design and implement a professional development leadership program for the agency rehabilitation staff for effective succession planning.
6. Enhance and build Office for the Blind internal and external collaborative relationships and Partnerships to advance opportunities for individuals to progress toward independence and employment.

### State Rehabilitation Council Members

Susan Ament	Don Gerard	Rhonda Logsdon
Joey Couch	Gerry Gordon-Brown	Rebecca Murrell
Bill Deatherage	Cathy Jackson	Jim Shaw
Bess Douthitt	Kenny Jones	Gerry Rader Slusher
Sharon Fields	David Lawson	Ann Smits
Michael Freholm		George Stokes
Kelly Foust		Paul Wiese
		Kim Ziegler



# Message from the Executive Director

As I look back on the past year, I am proud to say that the Office for the Blind (OFB) has completed another successful year meeting all Federal Standards and Indicators and assisting 368 Kentuckians in reaching their vocational goals. Independent Living and Older Blind programs served 898 individuals across all the counties in the Commonwealth except one. I want to commend the OFB staff for achieving these goals in a time when the job market is highly competitive, resources are scarce and the economy is struggling. This shows the cohesiveness and commitment of OFB professional staff.

The State Rehabilitation Council and our advocacy partners played a crucial role in the work of the agency this past year. I want to thank each member for their dedication and efforts on behalf of the OFB.

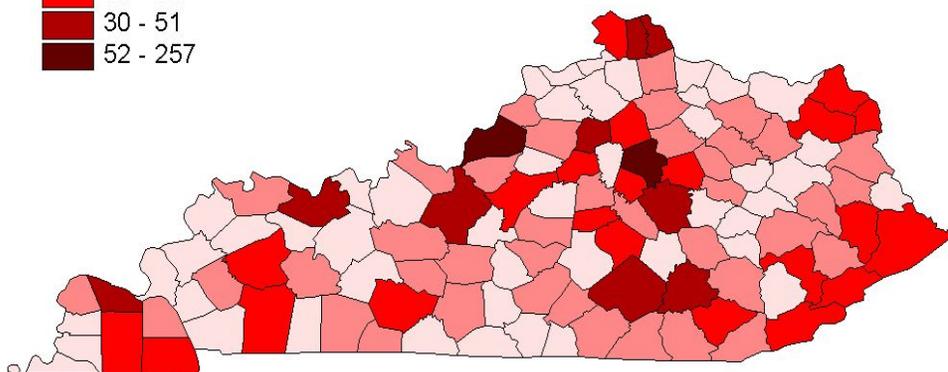
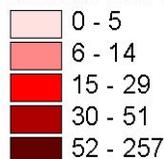
As we embark upon another year, we anticipate the challenges and adventures we will face as an agency. We recognize it will require new and innovative approaches as well as increased collaboration and partnerships. In light of this, it seemed appropriate to utilize the same theme for this annual report as the Assistive Technology EXPO and Conference hosted by OFB in 2012, "A New Vision".

In FY 2013, the agency along with the State Rehabilitation Council will be focusing our efforts on leveraging existing services and lowering costs in order to maximize our consumer services. This will require "A New Vision" for the OFB in opening windows of opportunities consisting of new and emerging practices as we assist consumers in developing the skills and abilities needed to achieve their goals. The reason we began is still what guides us. As we grow and evolve we continue our focus on the individual and ensure that each person has the opportunity to live, work and be a part of our community.

Allison Flanagan  
Executive Director

## Kentucky Office for the Blind Clients Served By County

Number Served By County



# 2012 OFB Program Statistics

## Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

- 1,681 individuals served
- 368 successfully employed
- 821 worked toward employment
- 49 served that were deaf/blind
- 261 served in assistive technology
- 49 received bioptic driving services
- 114 in orientation and mobility
- 10 attended INSIGHT a postsecondary transition program
- 106 received accessible textbook services

## Independent Living and Older Blind Programs

- 898 consumers were served
- 731 in the Older Blind Program (55 years and older)
- 167 in the Independent Living Program (under the age of 55 years)
- 99 percent of counties in Kentucky were served

## Charles W. McDowell Center

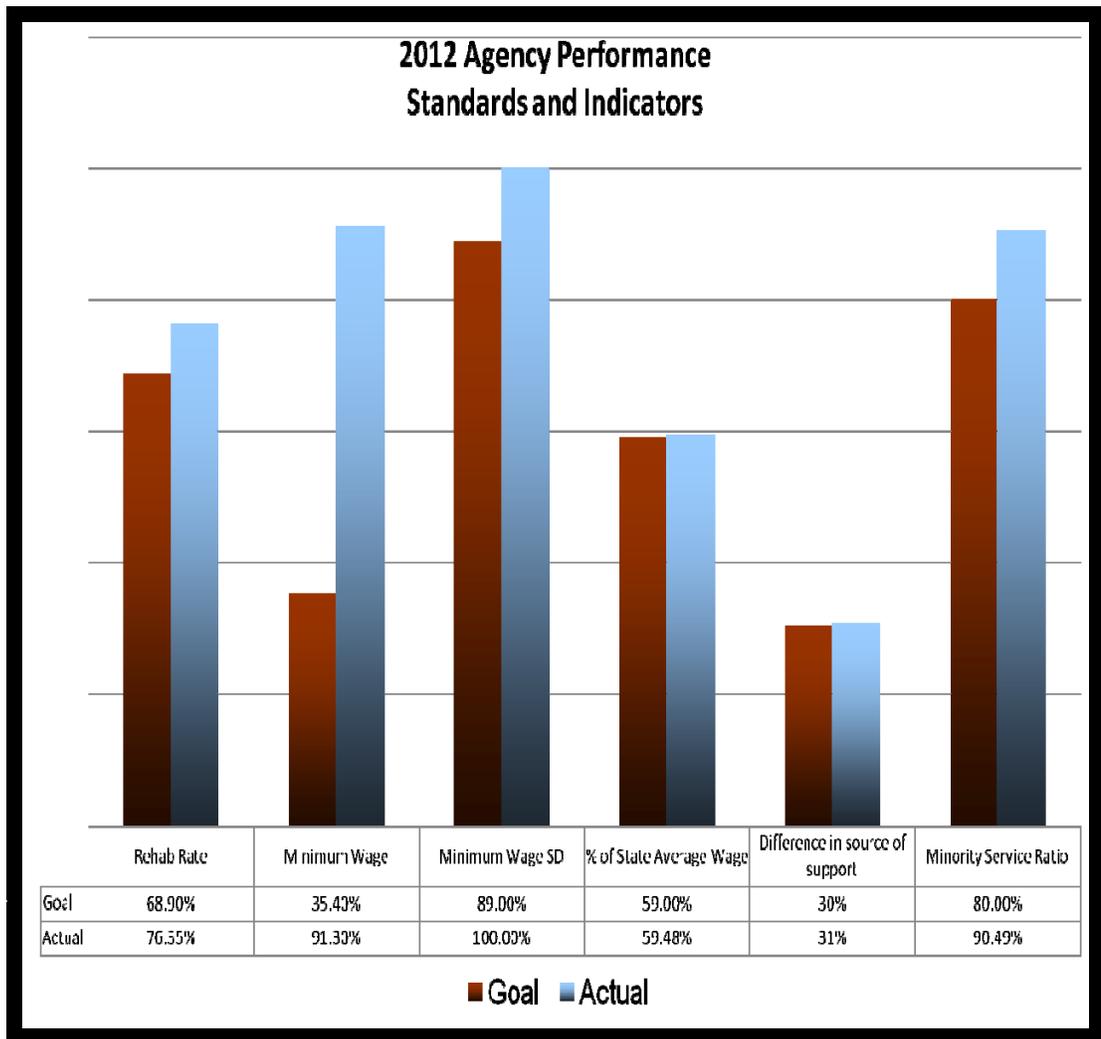
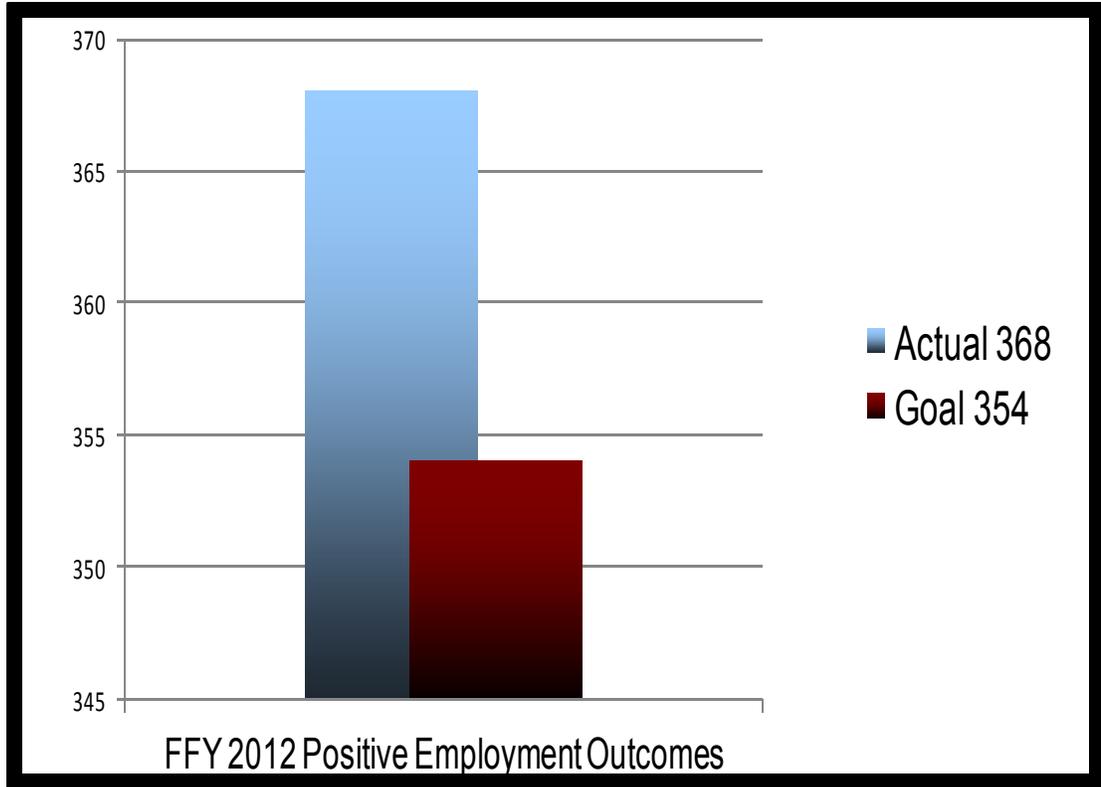
- 88 individuals were served
- 19 graduated from the program
- 27 in adult education, four obtained their GED
- 86 in assistive technology services
- 34 received Braille instruction
- 24 in orientation and mobility
- 66 in computer keyboarding
- 44 in home management

## Kentucky Business Enterprises

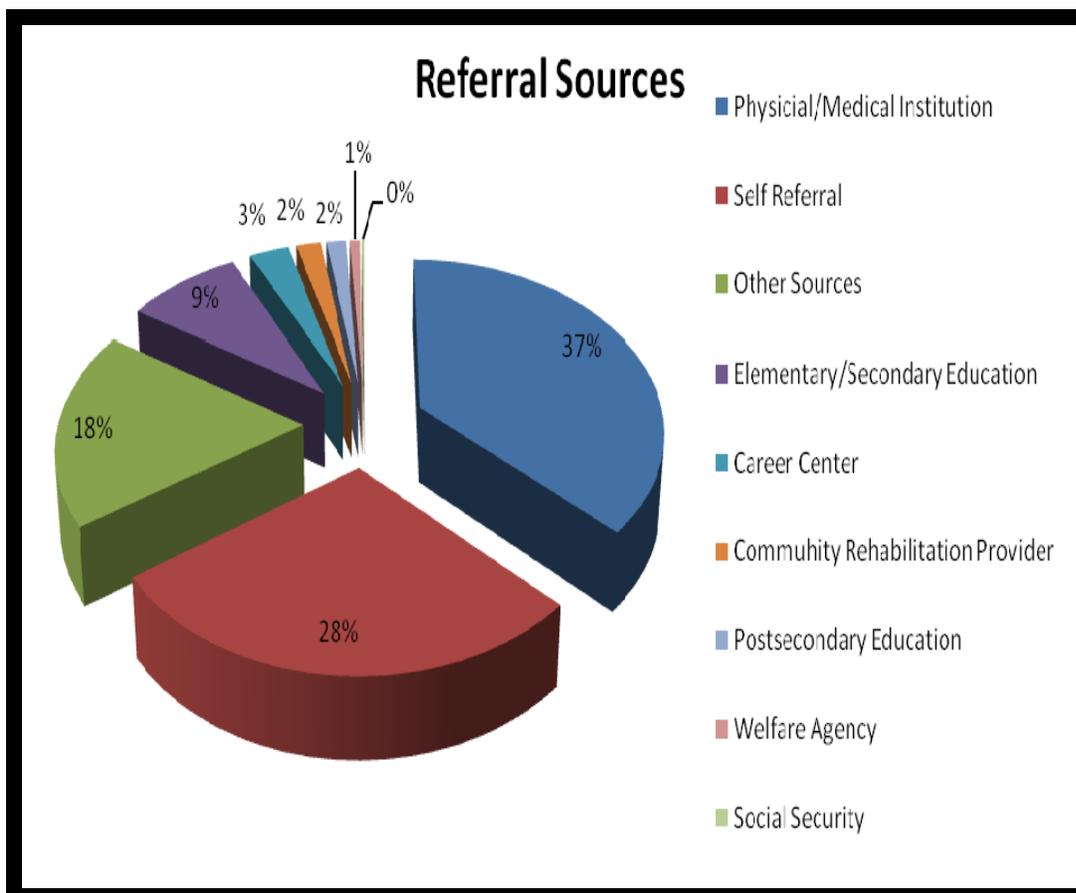
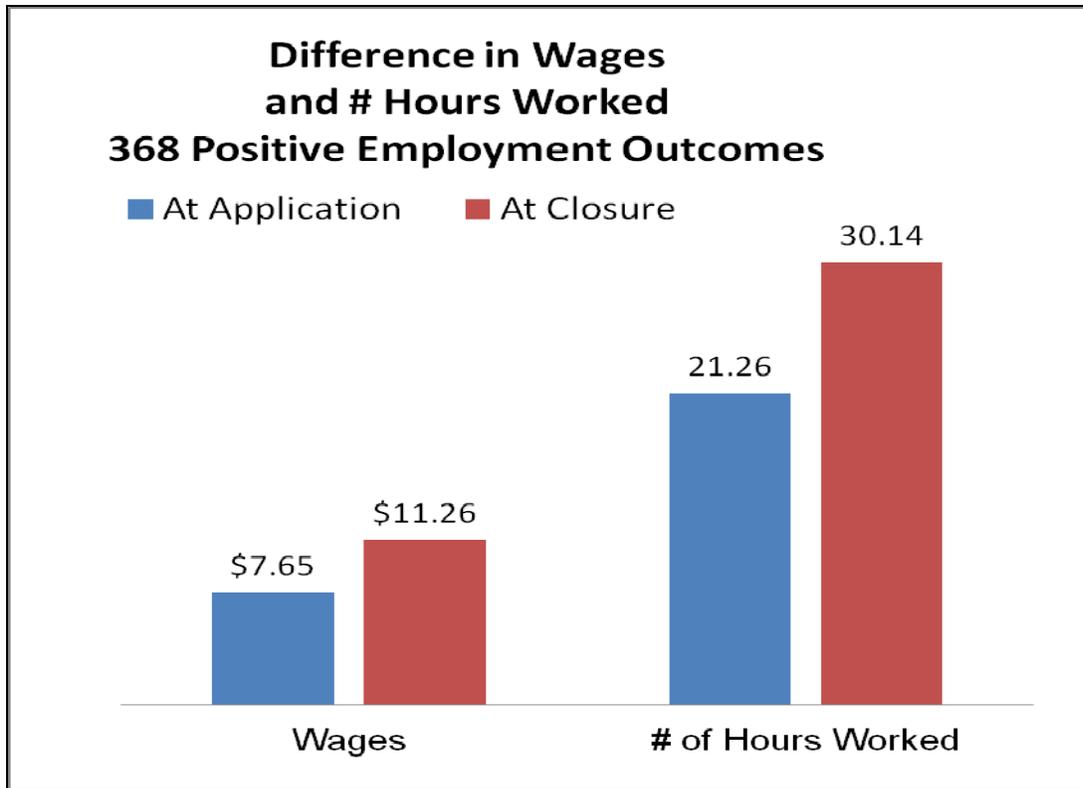
- 55 vendors were served
- 225 locations in buildings across the Commonwealth of Kentucky
- Four new licensees
- Six week vendor training course completed
- 11 members elected to 2013/2014 vendor committee
- 2012 General Assembly in Louisville with 22 vendors and 56 attendees present.



# Vocational Rehabilitation



# Program Statistics

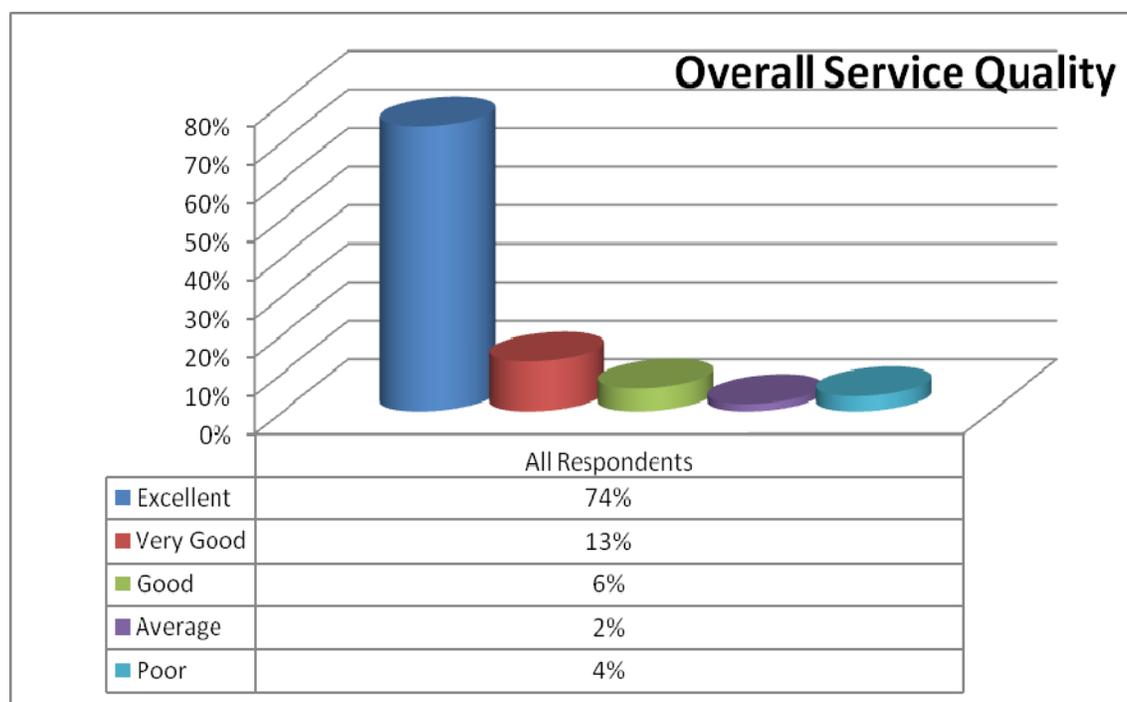
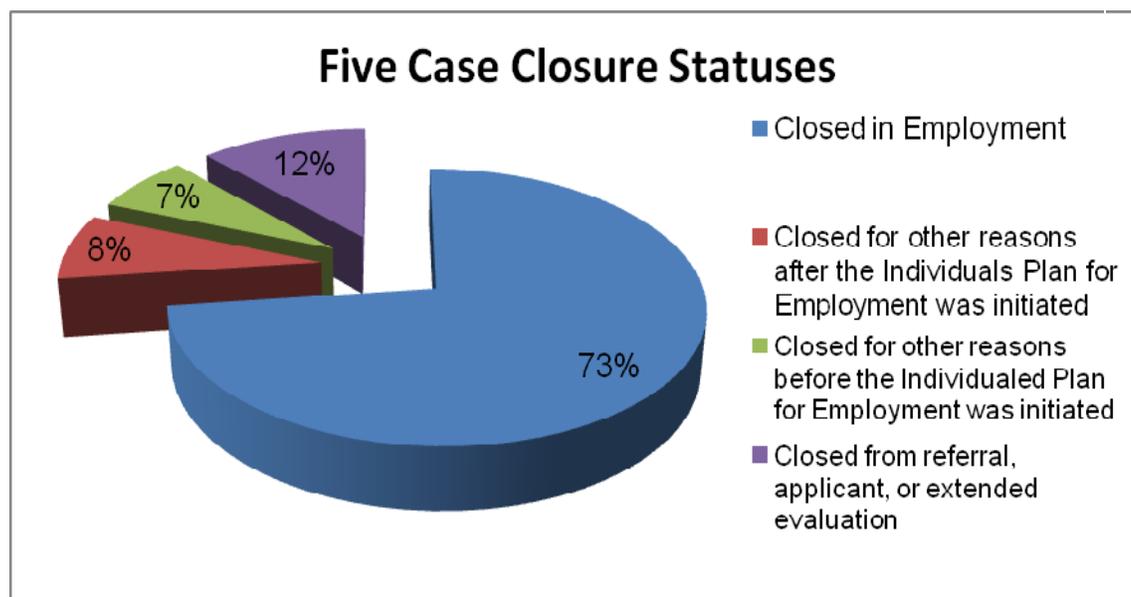


*There were a total of 531 new applicants in FY 2012 for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. The breakdown by referral source is given in the chart above.*



# Satisfaction Survey Results

The Kentucky Office for the Blind seeks annually to determine the satisfaction level of all individuals served whose cases are closed both successfully and unsuccessfully. A total of 358 individuals were contacted with 234 completing the survey in 2012. Overall, the results of the study indicated that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences. Just over ninety four percent (94.7%) of all participating consumers rated that services they received as a 1 or 2 on a five point scale where 1 = "excellent" and 5 = "poor". Consumers surveyed represented the five case closure statuses in the chart below.



Overall service quality as indicated by all respondents in the chart above.



# Consumer Stories

If one were to look up the words ambition and drive in the dictionary a picture of Matthew Robinson would accompany the written definition. Robinson moved from London to Louisville in the spring of 2011. Upon arriving he began diligently working toward his goal of finding employment. In a span of three months he was successful in his pursuit. Robinson found part-time work at the Census Bureau and full-time employment at Charter Communications.

In less than one year Robinson was promoted twice at Charter Communications. All indications are that he is in line to continue to move up the corporate ladder. Robinson's supervisors at Charter have high praise for him citing his wonderful attitude, dedication and great work skills.

Robinson sees every challenge as an opportunity to learn new skills and improve upon the ones he already possesses. His success can be attributed to his great attitude, hard work, dedication and ambition that will continue to take him down the road of prosperity.

*Matt Robinson*



*Travis Bilbrey*

Travis Bilbrey became a consumer of Office for the Blind (OFB) in 2007. Bilbrey, a diabetic since childhood, developed diabetic retinopathy. He had a clear understanding that his eye condition was progressive and began to make preparations for his future. When Bilbrey came to OFB for services, he was working as an assistant manager at a gas station. As a result of his eye condition, he began having difficulty with his essential job duties even though he was receiving some needed job accommodations. Bilbrey began to realize that he was facing a career change and a new vocation.

Bilbrey participated in a vocational evaluation that assisted him in identifying a new vocation in the area of human resources. He decided to major in this area at Western Kentucky University. OFB provided Bilbrey low-vision services, recorded books and career exploration through the Charles W. McDowell Center. Upon graduation from college, OFB staff provided Bilbrey resume development assistance, job leads and job placement services.

As a result of the services he received from OFB, Bilbrey began working at the Houchens Corporate Office as a payroll specialist in human resources. In this position, Bilbrey's earnings have increased and he is receiving health insurance, additional benefits and stock options from the company. Bilbrey is very happy with his new career and increased independence.



# Assistive Technology EXPO and Conference “A NEW VISION”



*Michael Freholm and*



*Presenter: Anindya Bhattachary*

OFB hosted the “2012 AT Odyssey A New Vision”, September 18 and 19 at the Galt House in Louisville. The conference focused on assistive technology specific to the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The opening session “Insights into the World of Assistive Technology for Visual Disabilities” featuring Luis Perez from the University of South Florida was filled to capacity. There were 248 individuals who attended the two-day conference that was open to the public and free of charge. The conference was federally funded by the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration.

“This was a wonderful opportunity for people to experience the many assistive technology devices that are available to help people who are blind, visually impaired or deaf and blind become independent or retain their independence at home, work and in the community,” said Allison Flanagan, OFB Director. Twenty different breakout sessions on a variety of topics were offered.

Some of the presenters were Anindya (Bapin) Bhattachary, technology development and training specialist at the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), Beth Loy, a principal consultant with the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), and



Jennifer Genderman OTD, OTR/L an occupation therapist at the University of Louisville's low-vision clinic at the Kentucky Lions Eye Center. The sessions covered several topics relating to transition, independent living, recreation, funding and resources.

The closing session featured Michael Hingson, the New York Times best-selling author of THUNDER DOG: The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog & the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero. Hingson reminded attendees to consider the thoughts and feelings of others, respect others and not to limit the dreams of others as well as ourselves.



Presenter: Luis Perez

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear sent a special video presentation in his absence that addressed the advances and continuing need for current up-to-date technology. Governor Beshear issued a proclamation making September Assistive Technology Awareness Month. Department of Workforce Investment Commissioner of the Workforce Development Department, Beth Brinly presented the proclamation to Michael Freeholm, the Office for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council co-chair. Staff, consumers and their families and other professionals in the field were able to take away from this event increased knowledge about the field of Assis-



Assistive Technology Awareness Month Proclamation



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## Kentucky Office for the Blind

