



*Burlington Area Office students visited the Players Workshop Little Theatre as part of their summer programming.*

# Legislative Update

## Vocational Rehabilitation in 2022

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) achieved 1,972 successful closures over the last program year, a number that is back to pre-pandemic levels and the second highest since the passage of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). That means more Iowans with disabilities are employed and contributing to their communities.

Over the last year, our programs served almost 20,000 Iowans (including over 10,000 high school students transitioning to the workforce).

Our summer programming provides another level of job exploration for those students.

Our Self-Employment Program allows opportunities to bring new businesses to Iowa — from large cities to rural areas.

We have many new recent graduates of educational programs across the state. Meet them and learn their career goals in this issue.

We have offices and professional staff across the state. Our counselors all have Master’s Degrees.

As an SRC member recently pointed out, any of us can acquire a disability at any time through accidents or health issues, — sometimes it will affect us for the rest of our working careers.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is on the forefront to serve Iowans with disabilities to achieve and maintain successful employment.

## Summer Programs Teach Transitioning Students Job Skills

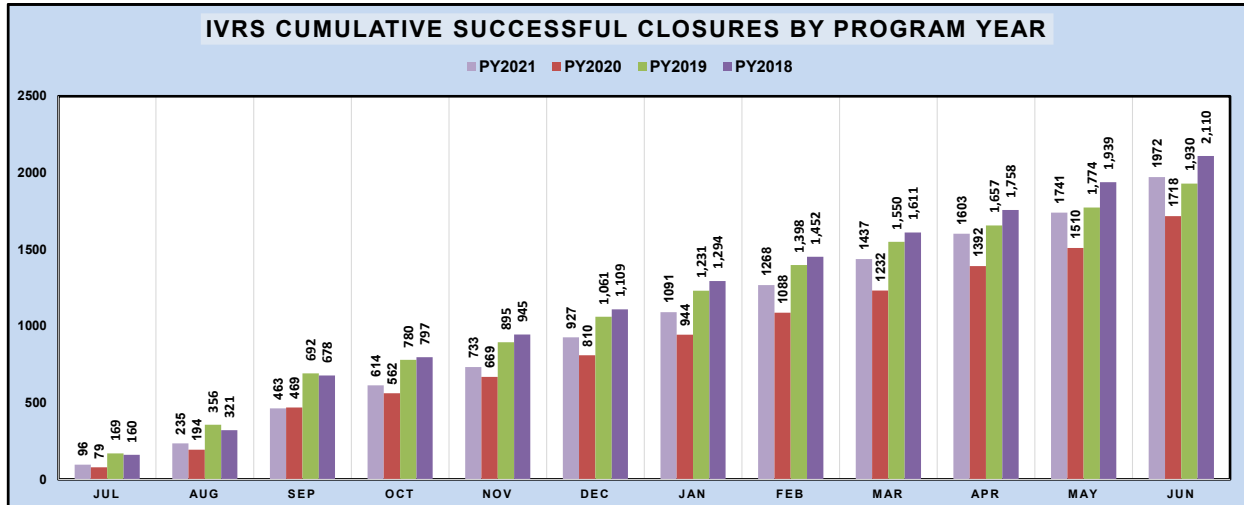
Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) collaborates with school districts and other community partners across the state for summer Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) programming. Summer programming is designed to support students with self-advocacy, preparing for a career and life after high school.

Learn more on [page 4](#)

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## There were 1,972 successful IVRS closures in program year 2021



## Partners serving Rural Iowa



Easter Seals Iowa Rural Solutions in partnership with IVRS visited the farm of Mitch Ramsey on June 29th.

Mitch is the third generation to farm the property but a construction accident that caused a spinal cord injury put his livelihood in jeopardy. Mitch had farmed all of his life and wanted to continue in spite of the setbacks to his health. Chuck Larson with Easter Seals Iowa Rural Solutions (second from left) and retired counselor Steve Neuharth arranged for equipment engineered by Iowa State University to allow him to continue farming operations. He is now growing organic soy beans with his son. Mitch (third from left) is on his remote-control bobcat skid loader that allows him to access the tractor and perform farm tasks. He demonstrated the equipment and talked about the help he received with IVRS Administrator Daniel Tallon (left) and State Representative Jon Dunwell (right) during the visit.



**“You not only saved my life, you extended it.”**  
*Mitch Ramsey*



## Iowa Self-Employment Program brings new businesses to Iowa

Our Self-Employment Program is one of the ways Iowans with disabilities achieve employment at IVRS.

These entrepreneurs are guided by our self-employment business specialists to achieve business success.

There were 59  
IVRS  
Self -Employment  
Closures in  
program year  
2021

### Unique Hobby Becomes Successful Iowa Business

Brandon Knopf was able to turn his unique hobby into an Iowa business after facing a life-changing disability.

Brandon came to the Iowa Self-Employment (ISE) Program at Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) in 2019 and began to explore the possibility of starting a business making ducks calls.

His IVRS counselor and ISE Specialist Dennis Bogenrief discussed the feasibility of this business idea and benefits planning, then developed a business plan and began the process of building his business with equipment, a website and the assistive technology he needed.

In 2019, with IVRS-ISE help, the original home-based business moved into a business incubator in Newton, Iowa, now known as Iowa Hunting Products, and has been doing well ever since.

In 2020 Iowa Hunting Products acquired a product called Man's Best Friend. It incorporates ashes, (he has a design patent), images, dog tags, etc. into a customized game call. While still dealing primarily in waterfowl calls, the business has also ventured into coon, deer, and turkey calls as well. Brandon says the additional products make his business less seasonal.



In October, 2021, Iowa Hunting Products acquired the Image Rod Technology, which puts images inside a game call. They provide blanks to other call makers in the industry and the ability to produce an injection molded image call. This was launched in fall of 2021 and has been a success.

There are additional products coming out this fall, an image poly deer call, goose call, and a few others to fill out the product line. They also make custom image fishing rod handles!! Be sure to check out the website at: <https://iowahuntingproducts.com/>.

To learn more about the Self-Employment Program visit our website at: <https://ivrs.iowa.gov/agency-services/self-employment-program>

[See this video to learn about Brandon first hand, in his own words: https://youtu.be/hDAzQme7jrQ](https://youtu.be/hDAzQme7jrQ)





## 2022 Summer Programming Held Across the State

IVRS partners with school districts through contracted programs, such as the Transition Alliance Program (TAP) and other contract programs within the district to provide a broad range of workshops, job tours and other activities for more than 10,000 students in grades 9 through 12. Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan are eligible to participate.

There are programs serving students across the state providing unique, local activities.

The Des Moines Area Office kicked off their summer program on June 6 and had more than 100 applications.

“We’re really excited about the fact that we have so many kids signed up,” said Des Moines Area Office Supervisor Kathy Davis.

For the last five years, IVRS has provided fun, educational programming for students over the summer months.

Clockwise from top left: Students visited the Des Moines Area Community College Nursing Lab for hands on practice with taking temperatures, listening to the heart beat and first aid.

In Dubuque students visited Envision Screen Printing and Embroidery and made t-shirts they could take home with a logo they designed

In Sioux City students toured Pizza Ranch to learn about food preparation and enjoyed a pizza they prepared.



## 2022 IVRS Graduates—Our Future



**Grant**  
**Graduated from West Delaware High School 2022**

Grant did not know he had significant hearing loss in both ears until early 2021. In November 2021, he received hearing aids for both ears. The ability to hear has changed his life at work and at school. Grant will be attending Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, in the Fall (August 2022). He will be majoring in Auto Mechanics.



**Kadin**  
**Graduated from Senior High School (Alternative learning Center in Dubuque, IA**

*"The biggest challenge I had in high school was feeling overwhelmed leading to lack of motivation. I recognized that by buckling down. It took me longer to graduate from high school, but I made it! I have been actively applying for jobs and have an interview at Anderson Window this week."*



**Aubree**  
**Graduated from Oskaloosa High school**

*"I chose to graduate and to find a job involving fashion. I want to have a job that I enjoy and to be able to make money so that I can go do fun things."*



**Chase**  
**Graduated from: Western Dubuque**

After graduation Chase plans to work at Hy-Vee *"and make money and be a good worker."*

**Hunter**  
**Graduating from Hempstead**  
Employment Goal - CDL Driver

Hunter has an upcoming interview with Adam's Architecture that would earn \$21/hour with a \$0.40/hour raise after 90 days and a \$1000 bonus annually for the 1st five years. While working full time, Hunter plans to work on obtaining his CDL license. He'd like to drive a truck once he is of age to do so.



# 2022 SRC Officers



IVRS Administrator Daniel Tallon presented outgoing State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair Scott Turczynski a Certificate of Appreciation at the SRC meeting on April 26. Scott has served on the SRC for six years (two terms) in various roles and we are grateful for his time and leadership.

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