



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 16, 2005

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TENNESSEE REHABILITATION CENTER GRADUATES TAKE STEPS TO MORE INDEPENDENT LIVES

STUDENTS FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE STATE ARE WORKING HARD TO GO TO WORK

SMYRNA, Tenn.— More than 80 students with significant disabilities donned cap and gown on Friday, December 16 and proudly walked across the stage at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna. The men and women, who represent 33 counties across Tennessee, are all filled with the same determination and drive to enter or re-enter the workforce and better their lives. Their studies and hard work in programs like Building Maintenance, Business Education Training, Food Service, Custodial Training and Warehouse Training have enabled them to do just that. With certificate in hand, these new graduates are now moving on to the next stage in their lives.

“The Department of Human Services is committed to working with individuals with disabilities and teaching them the skills they need to become successfully employed in their own communities,” said Assistant Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services Andrea Cooper. “The services offered at TRC truly do assist individuals in achieving their highest level of functioning so they can live and work as independently as possible.”

The lives and stories of the new graduates are as diverse as the communities from which they come. A 54-year old wife, mother and grandmother from Hixson recently completed the Vision Impairment Services program. Debra Gregory, who is blind, is not letting her disability get in the way of achieving her goal of operating and managing a food service and vending facility.

A 22-year old woman from Maryville who suffered leukemia as a child, a bone marrow transplant and a stroke, all by the age of 10, has overcome tremendous challenges. Barbara McCulloch successfully completed the Job Objective and Behavioral Services (JOBS) program at the TRC in ten weeks and will return to a job at a yogurt shop and deli in Blount County.

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 is part of the Division of Rehabilitation Services within the Tennessee Department of Human Services. TRC serves more than 1,000 Tennesseans with disabilities each year. Since opening its doors in 1977, TRC has served more than 25,000 individuals. For more information about the Division of Rehabilitation Services, please visit:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/rehabilitation.htm>

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