

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Spring 2004

Information for Preferred Workers who haven't yet used their return-to-work incentives

New efforts help workers and employers get information about the Preferred Worker Program

by Ursulla Bischoff

We are listening to your concerns and ideas and have taken the following steps to better educate employers and the general public about the Preferred Worker Program. The following are just a few actions we are taking to promote the program:

Job Match

On May 1, 2002, the Preferred Worker Program online Job Match Web site was created to help con-

nect Preferred Workers with interested employers. Over time, we realized that it would be easier for Preferred Workers if the data system automatically notified them of new job postings instead of having them review the system on a regular basis. We anticipate having a new improved Preferred Worker Program Job Match that notifies you of new postings by e-mail and supplies you with the direct link to the Job Match Web page.

Reminder postcards

We have found that some Preferred Workers are not using their benefits. In order to remind those of you who have not yet used your benefits, we are sending reminder postcards every six months until your Preferred Worker Identification Card expires.

Worksite modification calls

Whenever a Preferred Worker activates premium exemption, wage subsidy, and obtained employment purchase benefits, an RAU consultant will call the Preferred Worker to discuss worksite modification options.

Preferred Worker poster

The poster shown on this page was created for employers to post in their human resource offices. We want Preferred Workers to feel comfortable presenting their Preferred Worker Identification/Eligibility Cards to employers.

Employer contacts

We are contacting employers who have used the program as well as employers who have not used the program but who may have Preferred Workers on staff. We are calling or visiting employers to remind or inform them of the benefits of the Preferred Worker Program. In addition, we discuss the new online Job Match and give them a poster to display. Within the past three months, the Preferred Worker Program staff has contacted more than 100 employers.

E-mail address

On February 1, 2004, the Preferred Worker Program's new e-mail address became effective. Questions about the Preferred Worker Program may be e-mailed to oregon.PWP.@state.or.us.

We want to hear from you. If you have concerns or suggestions, please use our new e-mail address or call us, (800) 445-3948 or (503) 947-7585. ■



**SHOW
US
YOUR
CARD!**

**We hire
Preferred Workers
(800) 445-3948***
www.oregonwcd.org
*toll-free in Oregon, or (503) 947-7588

Meet Heather Grogan

Heather Grogan is a re-employment consultant with the Reemployment Assistance Unit (RAU) in Medford. She provides technical direction to Oregon's injured workers and their employers. She also facilitates the delivery of worksite modification and other benefits through the Reemployment Assistance Reserve. As a new re-employment consultant, Heather is involved in marketing the Preferred Worker Program in southern Oregon through external training. Before joining the Reemployment Assistance Unit, Heather

worked as a vocational consultant for six years in the Rehabilitation Review Unit of the Workers' Compensation Division. Heather has 17 years of experience as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and owned a private vocational rehabilitation company for 15 years. She has extensive knowledge and experience in analyzing job tasks and how they relate to a worker's physical restrictions.

Heather is excited about working for the Preferred Worker Program and she is a strong advocate of the

innovative ways the program helps injured workers return to gainful employment. Heather also enjoys helping employers understand the benefits of hiring a Preferred Worker.

Heather enjoys spending time with her two adult daughters. She spends her leisure time riding horses, cross-country skiing, hiking, camping, reading, and listening to opera.

Heather's e-mail address:
heather.f.grogan@state.or.us. ■

Job Search Tips

By Ursulla Bischoff

It can be easier!

We will be including a new section in each *Preferred Worker Adviser* called "Job Search Tips." These tips can help you if you are looking for a new job, searching for promotional opportunities, or thinking about changing jobs.

The more time you spend contacting prospective employers, the better your chances of finding a job. First, decide what type of job you are looking for. Take the time to call or send your resume to as many employers in your chosen field as possible. You may contact 50 employers and hear the same lines from 45 of them: "Sorry, the position was just filled." "We are a

small company and haven't hired in years." "We are not accepting applications." You may, however get five employers who happen to be looking for a new employee with your particular skills.

Employers — like most of us — are busy, and they may have job openings they haven't had time to advertise. When recruiting for vacancies, an employer has to draw up a job description, advertise for applicants, review applications and resumes, schedule interviews and conduct interviews, and notify successful and unsuccessful candidates. By taking the time to make the initial contact, you may be saving them time and the cost of advertising.

The Preferred Worker Program Online Job Match is another good example of when extending the effort to contact a prospective employer can lead you to a new job. You may call about a position that has already been filled; however, the employer may have a new opening that you qualify for.

You have unique benefits (Preferred Worker Program incentives) that can save employers thousands of dollars. This sets you apart from other employees.

Stay tuned for more job search tips in the summer issue of the *Preferred Worker Adviser!* ■

Administrator, *Workers' Compensation Division*

John Shilts

Reemployment assistance

Salem office (800) 445-3948

Medford office (800) 696-7161

Web site www.oregonwcd.org

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New ombudsman takes office to help injured workers



S. Travis Wall

There's a new ombudsman for injured workers.

S. Travis Wall was appointed in July to fill a key advocate position vacated by

Maria Carraher, who retired after almost seven years as ombudsman and 26 years of service with the state on workers' compensation issues. Wall has been busy acquainting himself with DCBS and injured-worker issues since last August.

Wall's duty is to serve Oregonians who need help resolving problems or complaints related to their workers' compensation claims. He will also serve as a resource to state officials and members of the legisla-

ture seeking claimants' perspectives on workers' compensation issues. Wall is an independent advocate, which means he reports to Cory Streisinger, director of DCBS, who chose him for the job after a national recruitment.

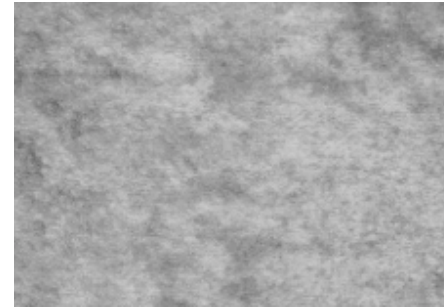
Wall has more than 25 years of experience as an advocate with and for people with disabilities. He came to DCBS from a job as director of the Utah Office of Public Guardian. He previously served as the executive director of Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center and was a principal consultant to the Assembly Health Committee of the California Legislature. The ombudsman has no ties to the Workers' Compensation Division.

"S. Travis Wall brings a wealth of experience to this position," Streisinger said. "He has the skills

to help us ensure that injured workers in Oregon are well-served by the workers' compensation system, and I look forward to working with him." In his new position, Wall will supervise a staff of seven.

The injured workers' ombudsman received 52,593 contacts in 2002 with questions, complaints, and requests for help from workers' compensation claimants.

Wall may be reached by phone, (503) 947-1871, or e-mail, s.travis.wall@state.or.us. ■



Success Story

by Dan Gammon

Thirty-eight year old Kris injured her arms while working as an assembler. She has permanent restrictions resulting from her injury that prevent her from repetitive fine manipulations and repetitive forward reaching.

After her claim was closed, Kris underwent training as a computer-aided design drafter and returned to work as a drafts-person for an architectural firm. After working for a few weeks at her new occupation, Kris found keyboarding increasingly difficult. Her work-station setup caused her to continually reach forward to type and take measurements from blueprints. She also found that certain keyboard commands required her to frequently extend her thumb and finger simultaneously.

A Preferred Worker Program representative evaluated her workstation, consulted with her attending physician, and assisted Kris with modifications to eliminate repetitive reaching and extension of her thumbs and fingers. The installation of an adjustable desktop drafting surface, a keyboard tray, and a chair with adjustable arm supports gave Kris support for her arms and reduced repetitive reaching. A programmable 10-key keypad was installed, and Kris programmed it to eliminate multiple-key operations.

Kris has increased her productivity on the job and feels less tired and uncomfortable when she goes home in the evening. ■

Have you lost your card?

If you can't find your Preferred Worker card, call and we'll send you a new one:

Salem office:

(800) 445-3948,
(from Oregon only)

(503) 947-7588, or
(503) 947-7993 (TTY)

Medford office:

(800) 696-7161
(Southern Oregon)

Automatic rebar-tying tool, wearable knee cushion

Worker disability

A 49-year-old tradesman employed as an iron worker developed severe bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome after years of exposure to repetitive and forceful hand use and a medial meniscus tear in his right knee from frequent crouching and kneeling. He underwent release surgery on both wrists and a meniscectomy on his right knee. He was restricted from frequent and repetitive hand use as well as from kneeling on the right knee.

Work setting

This ironworker hand tied rebar, which involves rapid and forceful manual wrapping of wire around thousands of concrete reinforcing bars each day. To place rebar in floors or road beds, he crouched low or kneeled to wrap the bars with wire ties that held them in place for the concrete pouring. There was no job-task rotation for weeks when the concrete forms were being constructed.

Job obstacles

Rebar tying requires continual grasping, pulling, pushing, wrist articulation, and reaching. The work also requires frequent kneeling for

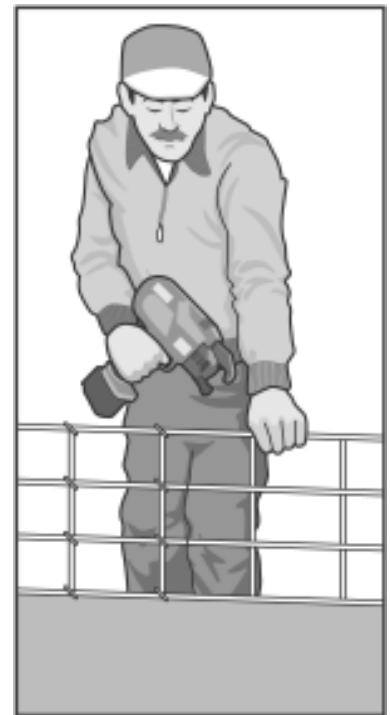
work done at ground level. The worker could no longer perform these tasks.

Modification

The Preferred Worker Program searched ergonomic Web sites and found an automatic rebar-tying tool that eliminated manual wire-tying tasks and special strap-on cushions that allow a worker to crouch without putting strain on knees. The automatic rebar-tying tool is lightweight and portable at eight pounds; it uses cordless battery power. There are two brands and each has models for waist-high work and an extended-handle model for floor-level tying without bending or kneeling. Knee Saver cushions minimize the force and pressure on knee joints when kneeling is necessary. The worker and employer found that this pair of modifications made the worker more productive in rebar tying than he had been before injury.

Cost

The wire-tying tool costs \$1,400-\$2,500, depending on size, and requires a slightly more expensive wire. The Knee Saver cushions are about \$25 a pair. ■



Rebar-tying tool



Knee cushion