

# Ashvin Sahni

*Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education*

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Ashvin embodies the DESE vision and mission. He works endlessly to transform the lives of individuals with disabilities. Ashvin has taken on additional clients and conducts intake meetings for new clients. His efforts resulted in schools in the Joplin area continuing to receive services, and students successfully transitioning from high school to work-based learning opportunities or employment. Ash maintains a positive demeanor and continues to instill hope in our clients and his fellow team members.



## Kris Chamley

*Sr. Adult Services Specialist, Department of  
Health and Senior Services*

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Kris responded to a hotline report regarding a suicidal man. Before the home visit, Kris gathered information from the man's son and in-home aide and coordinated with the local police chief to meet her at the man's home. Upon arrival, they found the client threatening self-harm. Kris and the police chief worked together to ensure the man could not harm himself. With judicial help, Kris arranged for the client to be placed in a Behavioral Health Unit for necessary mental health intervention preventing a tragic ending.



# Heather Platt

*Counselor IV, Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education*

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Heather is an exceptional counselor who goes above and beyond for claimants, regularly taking on extra cases weekly to reduce wait times. She handles specialized Expedited Reinstatement claims, provides training to new hires, and mentors new counselors. As a vocational specialist, she assists with medical/vocational issues while maintaining an impressive average processing time that is significantly lower than the Missouri and national averages.



# Anna Persell

*Park Superintendent, Department of Natural Resources*

Anna demonstrates exceptional dedication at Crowder State Park, managing the facility alongside two full-time team members. Northern Region Director Dustin Webb praises her commitment to stewardship and public service. Anna excels in organizing special events, including interpretive hikes, Toddler Tuesdays, and various themed programs. Her recent efforts in hosting a managed hunt for Veterans were particularly noteworthy, receiving commendation from Missouri State Parks Director David Kelly for her attention to detail. Anna's unwavering dedication makes her a valuable asset to the team.



# Mike Blevins

*Maintenance, Department of Natural Resources*

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On February 16, a staff member reported a man who appeared out of place in a lab building undergoing renovations. Mike found the man shivering and wearing a hospital bracelet. After talking with him and offering to help, Mike drove the man to another location where he could warm up and later bought him gloves and a hat from a gas station. The man expressed gratitude, feeling that he was looked after that day.



# Kaitlyn Rice

*Social Services Specialist, Department of Social Services*

Kaitlyn demonstrated exceptional dedication by assisting two parents in crisis. When a concerned family member reported one parent missing and possibly overdosed, Kaitlyn promptly used her detective skills to locate and support them for over an hour, even providing food. This act of kindness left a lasting impression. For another parent facing a significant crisis, Kaitlyn prioritized their safety by helping them secure an ex parte order while ensuring her children were safe. Her commitment and teamwork make her an invaluable advocate for those she serves.



# Makenna Westhusing

*Sr. Social Services Specialist, Department of Social Services*

Makenna displayed outstanding dedication and professionalism in a challenging abuse case involving two boys in CD custody. She collaborated with a Texas prosecutor and law enforcement, organizing key meetings and providing support during the boys' trial testimony. Makenna ensured their safety by staying up with them when arrangements fell through. As an expert and fact witness, her efforts contributed to a rewarding verdict, with the defendant sentenced to life in prison, highlighting the impact of commitment in achieving justice.



# Jane Deubler-White

*Counselor III, Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education*

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A client praised Jane for her exceptional support during his transition back to work after a spinal cord injury. She dedicated time to identify his needs and quickly arranged services, enabling him to move from part-time to full-time work. Her client-centered and thorough approach exemplifies the Mission, Vision, and Operating Principles of Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, which focus on empowering people with disabilities, providing quality service, and prioritizing individuals.





September 2024

# Jeremy Rackers

*Financial Assistance Center Project Manager,  
Department of Natural Resources*

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Jeremy excels in his role at the Financial Assistance Center's drinking water section. He led the Lead Service Line Inventory project for Missouri, handling over 100 applications and coordinating funding. Following another manager's departure, Jeremy took on those duties, managing them with patience and positivity. Jeremy oversaw other SRF projects and guided the team in the absence of a supervisor, becoming the go-to person for questions.





October 2024

# Billy Hackett

*Environmental Program Specialist,  
Department of Natural Resources*

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Billy coordinates Water Quality Certification (WQC) to protect Missouri's streams and wetlands. He completed the Ozark Beach Hydroelectric Project's certification in July 2023 and subsequently worked on the WQC Roy Blunt Reservoir. Billy focuses on process improvement, collaborates on standard procedures, and maintains strong agency relationships, like with the Missouri Department of Transportation. His mentoring and teamwork demonstrate his strong work ethic in managing challenging projects.



# Taylor Dunks

*Correctional Sergeant, Department of Corrections*

After her shift, Taylor encountered a police chase involving armed suspects who shot at officers. Using her training, she assisted first responders by staying with one suspect, preserving the crime scene, and aiding the investigation. Her courageous and quick actions contributed to community safety.





December 2024

# Laura Primm

*Administrative Assistant, Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education*

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Vocational Rehabilitation offers a summer work program for high school students with disabilities entering their junior or senior year. With a vacant counselor position at the St. Louis Downtown office, Laura coordinated with community providers, students, teachers, and VR's Transition Director to secure job opportunities and complete necessary paperwork quickly. Her efforts led to thirteen students obtaining summer jobs, improving their employment experience.

