

# Get Connected With:

## DRS Corporate Connections, The University of Tennessee-Center for Literacy, Education and Employment



**Established:** 1987

**Amount of Employees:** Eight

**Top Services/About your company:** DRS Corporate Connections is composed of seven regional account representatives across the state to establish and maintain relationships with Tennessee employers to increase employment opportunities for individuals with all types of disabilities.

**Phone Number:** (731) 423-5620



### **Chamber Connection: What's new with your organization?**

**DRS:** October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, so we are involved with events to raise awareness and foster understanding. This year's national theme is "A Strong Workforce is an Inclusive Workforce: What Can You Do?" Activities include luncheons to honor model employers and employees, and disability mentoring day. City of Jackson Mayor Gist and Madison County Mayor Harris signed a joint proclamation declaring October Disability Employment Awareness Month in Jackson and Madison County. Margaret Dougan and Melissa Whitaker, Transition School to Work Instructors at Liberty High School, and their Work Based Learning Students, accepted a copy of the proclamation, along with Linda Randolph, DHS-DRS, David Montoya, Jackson Career Center, and Lisa Kinkade, DRS Corporate Connections, at the Jackson City Council Meeting on Tuesday, October 2.



**ABOVE:** Linda Randolph, Regional Supervisor, Tennessee Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Lisa Kinkade, Account Representative, DRS Corporate Connections, following the reading of the Proclamation of Disability Employment Awareness Month in Jackson and Madison County.

### **Chamber Connection: What challenges does your organization face?**

**DRS:** As all of us strive to do more and more with less, it is particularly challenging for resources and agencies that operate through grant funding. We must be good stewards of the funds we have and try to provide cost effective outreach and marketing activities with a very limited budget. While the grant funding is never guaranteed, the resources we offer are needed because 1 in 5 individuals has or will develop some type of disability in their lifetime. Having said that, the employment rate for individuals without disabilities in August 2012 was 69.4 percent, while it was 20.9 percent for individuals with disabilities that wanted to be working. The gap is still large and only through education and training can we bridge the gap.

### **Chamber Connection: What's helped your organization become successful in our community?**

**DRS:** Our partnership with the Jackson Chamber has certainly been instrumental in allowing us to meet and build relationships with businesses of all types and sizes. We want to be a resource to assist in building a strong, qualified workforce to keep the west Tennessee area competitive, so our relationship with the chamber has been a key to linking us with key players in economic growth and development.

### **Chamber Connection: What does your organization do that most people don't know about?**

**DRS:** We operate a small, but healthy side of our business where we help local businesses with their social media and email marketing. We do not market it, but when we get requests for proposals, it is usually from businesses that enjoy working with us, and vice versa.

### **Chamber Connection: What are some recent successes your organization has experienced?**

**DRS:** Anytime we are able to meet the needs of an employer by helping link them with an individual who will be an asset to their company for a long time. It is also great to be able to help an employer learn about tax incentives they may not have been aware of, or to help them with a reasonable accommodation that they were not aware of.

### **Chamber Connection: What are some of the future goals of your organization?**

**DRS:** DRS Corporate Connections wants to continue to build relationships that lead to successful employment outcomes for our job seekers. Employment is the main goal.

### **Chamber Connection: Are there any things we didn't ask that you would like to share?**

**DRS:** DRS Corporate Connections is also available to provide training on disability etiquette, and other topics related to disability and employment issues. We would love to be of assistance to any of the employers in West Tennessee.

*To learn more about DRS Corporate Connections, visit its website by [clicking here](#).*

