

History of the Center

# Overview

After World War I, thousands of wounded Americans returned home searching for an opportunity to become useful, productive citizens. Congress responded by creating the Veterans’ Rehabilitation Service. This resulted in a demand for a similar service to civilians.

The 1920 [Virginia General Assembly](http://virginiageneralassembly.gov/) established a vocational rehabilitation program just a few months prior to the passage of the first [Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/pd-96-02.pdf). The new federal law was signed by President Woodrow Wilson and was designed to promote the vocational rehabilitation of persons disabled in industry or otherwise and their return to civil employment. It applied only to the physically handicapped; covered only guidance, training, provision of artificial appliances and job placement; and initially was in effect on a year-to-year basis. The same year, Virginia’s Governor, Westmoreland Davis, issued a proclamation accepting the provisions of the Federal Act and in 1922 the General Assembly enacted legislation providing for the acceptance of these provisions.

From 1920 to 1928, the program was administered by a special board composed of the Governor, Chairman of the Industrial Commission, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1928 rehabilitation was placed as a “division” of the [Virginia Department of Education](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/).

From 1928 through the early 1930s, Richard N. Anderson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Virginia State Board of Education; one secretary; three emergency caseworkers, and one part-time field assistant were the only rehabilitation staff in the entire state. In 1935 five rehabilitation workers became regular employees. In 1937, W. Kuhn Barnett was added to Mr. Anderson’s professional staff as a special assistant. Special Education and Adult Education were added to the program in 1938.

When war was declared in 1941, speedy production of military essentials became a necessity. As many able-bodied individuals were in the armed forces, a large number of workers had to be recruited from the ranks of those who were disabled. The rehabilitation service organized employment clinics for the disabled in some parts of the state, resulting in more growth in its services.

The [Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1943](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/264582) (Public Law 113) greatly extended services to the handicapped, especially in regard to physical restoration. Until that time federal matching funds could not be used for physical restoration. Such surgery as was procured for rehabilitation clients was provided without charge through Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments the generosity of the orthopedic surgeons of the Commonwealth. Hospital co-operated by accepting token fees paid from state funds or individual contributions. Some clients had to be trained around a disability that could have been removed or reduced by surgery.

Mr. Anderson attended many crippled children’s clinics conducted by the [State Department of Health](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/) with Dr. Roy M. Hoover, an orthopedic surgeon of Roanoke. Together they discussed the possibility of a place providing service after surgery where amputees and other orthopedically disabled individuals could live and obtain physical restoration and preparation for employment in accordance with the individuals’ capabilities. It became a dream of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Barnett, Dr. Hoover and others, notably Corbett Reedy, State Supervisor, to secure such a facility.

A piece of land near Dublin, Virginia, was declared surplus, and consideration was given to the feasibility of converting this property to use as a rehabilitation center.  The Dublin location proved an impractical one for conversion to medical facilities.

In response to the many injuries in World War II, new concepts and techniques for the rehabilitation of the severely disabled were developed. Dr. Henry H. Kessler, Dr. George Deaver and Dr. Howard A. Rusk established centers applying these new skills and knowledge and were successful in returning severely disabled service men to useful lives. In January 1946, Mr. Barnett attended classes offered at one of these centers, the Institute for the Crippled and Disabled in New York (now the [New York University School of Medicine](http://www.med.nyu.edu/)), to VA personnel who would be working with the rehabilitation of veterans and representatives of veterans’ agencies. These classes were directed by Colonel John Smith, a native of Virginia, and became a laboratory in which comprehensive rehabilitation could be perfected. It was Colonel Smith who first fully developed the idea of this broad approach combining effectively social, vocational, and medical services to achieve dramatic new results with a wide range of severely disabled persons. Investigation revealed that the healing process was greatly enhanced when a vocational goal had been set. He described this new rehabilitation as a composite science combining the skills of many professions into a concerted attack on all problems which the severely disabled must overcome to be fully rehabilitated.

State vocational rehabilitation programs were ineffective for those having severe multiple problems due to the lack of resources such as special centers and staff having special skills . These concepts dramatically pointed to the need for a comprehensive rehabilitation center.

While Mr. Barnett was studying and observing the work at the Institute, it was discovered that the Woodrow Wilson General Hospital, located in Fishersville, was to be declared surplus. The War Assets Administration agreed to transfer the property to the state. It was first offered to the Department of Health for a hospital for tuberculars with an adjoining section devoted to rehabilitation; this department decided the cost of reconditioning would be prohibitive. Governor Tuck, still interested in the property being acquired by the state, asked Mr. Barnett how it could be used for educational and rehabilitation purposes. He presented a formal proposal which suggested the following services to be provided: vocational counseling and guidance, therapy treatment under medical supervision, training opportunities, a sheltered workshop, training in the use of prosthetic appliances, and speech training and psychiatric treatment in cooperation with the University of Virginia Medical Department.

While Mr. Barnett was at the Governor’s office, a representative from the [Augusta County School Board](http://www.augusta.k12.va.us/) was also in Richmond to request the use of part of the Woodrow Wilson General Hospital for a public school. The two together developed and presented a plan for the building to be divided into three sections; one for the rehabilitation center, one for a vocational school and one for a secondary school. This plan was submitted to the War Assets Administration after which a delay ensued. Unable to understand the reason for this delay, Mr. Barnett traveled to Washington to discover that this office had “never heard of such a thing as a rehabilitation center.” He convinced the federal medical representative in an hour’s time that the idea was a worthy one.

The property was acquired and divided, and the first state-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation center in the nation became a reality. Woodrow Wilson’s name had been given the army hospital and later the rehabilitation center. Not only was he born in nearby Staunton; but, more significantly, he had signed into law for the first time in the country’s history a rehabilitation program of national scope.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) opened on November 1, 1947 and Mr. Barnett was appointed Director of the Center, and the first student was enrolled November 3, 1947.

In the years after 1947 it became generally recognized that rehabilitated individuals were paying back in taxes far more than was invested in service enabling them to become self-supporting; therefore, Congress continued to pass important additional legislation affecting the type provided by WWRC.

As a leader in the field of medical and vocational rehabilitation, WWRC is proud of its record and proud that its successes have served as a template for establishment of eight other comprehensive rehabilitation centers across America. Today, as through its history, the Center is dedicated to returning people with disabilities to an autonomous life in their communities. The professional staff of WWRC look forward to many more years of quality service in partnership with persons with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth, the United States, and to the International Community.

WWRC was honored for fifty years of service by the Virginia General Assembly in 1998 ([House Joint Resolution No. 15](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?981+ful+HJ15)). A commemorative plaque is proudly displayed both at WWRC and at the [Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services](https://www.vadars.org/) office in Richmond, Virginia.

# Meet Our Past and Present Directors

## Richard L. (Rick) Sizemore (2007 - Present)

Rick has been recognized for his role as a leadership coach in the Agency’s Skills for Leadership Program helping “developing leaders” improve their skills. Additionally, he is recognized for his efforts to develop the marketing program at WWRC, improving the facilities infrastructure, developing the WWRC Campus Police Department and for his efforts in the renewal process at WWRC, which included the involvement of staff in the articulation of the Center’s Mission and Shared Values. Most importantly Rick is focused on continuing to partner with the Field Rehabilitation Services Division of the Department of Rehabilitative Services to provide services for agency clients.

Before becoming Center Director, he worked as Deputy Director 2005-2006, 2003 Facilities Director for Capital and Physical Plant Services 2003-2005. He was promoted in 2000 to the Operations Manager responsible for admissions and assistance to the Director. Promoted to Night Administrator of WWRC in 1988 and for the following twelve years he was the leader for all evening operations including dorms, security, recreation, counseling, medical services. Rick began his career as a therapist for the Center in 1986.

Of Mr. Sizemore’s contributions to the Center, his integral involvement in the development of the Center’s four major specialty areas is of particular note. The Center’s specialty areas are Services to Youth in Transition, Neuro-rehabilitation Services, Assistive Technology Services, and Comprehensive Evaluation and Assessment Services. Mr. Sizemore is a member of the Executive Board of the National Consortium of State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers. He completed the Advanced Leadership Studies through the Institute for Educational Leadership’s Collaborative Leader’s Program. His undergraduate degree is from Radford University in Music Therapy, and was later Registered with the National Association of Music Therapy and Board Certified as an RMT-BC. Rick’s Associate Degree in Radio Television Broadcasting is from Wilkes Community College.

He lives in Swoope, Virginia with his wife Christa and four children, Katelyn, Hannah, Derick, and William. He is a member of Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church and he enjoys guitar, farming, and upholstery.

Rick is the 9th Director of WWRC.

## Richard S. Luck (2004 - 2007)

Dr. Luck is Associate Professor Emeritus in Rehabilitation Counseling, Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, Virginia Commonwealth University and Clinical Associate Professor in Rehabilitation Medicine, School of Medicine, Virginia Commonwealth University.  
  
Formerly, Dr. Luck was Associate Professor and Vice Chairman of the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, School of Allied Health Professions on the Medical College of Virginia campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1966 from the University of Richmond with majors in Psychology and Sociology. He completed the Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1968, and in 1975, he obtained the Doctor of Education degree from the University of Virginia in counseling and counselor education. Since completing his doctoral studies, he has done extensive post-doctoral work in clinical and rehabilitation psychology.  
  
Dr. Luck has contributed many articles and book chapters to the professional literature and has been instrumental in the professional counselor licensure movement from its inception both in Virginia and the Nation. He has served two four year terms on the Virginia Board of Counseling as appointed by Governors Balilles and Wilder where he served as Vice Chairman and Chairman. He has been active in the American Association of State Counseling Boards serving as President -Elect, President and Past President, and chairing several important committees such as supervision, testing, and research.  
  
He holds many professional certificates and licenses and has provided clinical counseling and psychology services to members of the community. He also served on a panel of Vocational Rehabilitation Experts for the Social Security Administration, Bureau of Hearings and Appeals.  
  
For many years, Dr. Luck served as Director of the Rehabilitation Services Administration Region III Regional Rehabilitation Counselor Education Program at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville, Virginia. Dr. Luck served as Acting Director of the PhD program in Public Administration and also as Director, Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Education Program while he continued to actively teach in the graduate program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Prior to coming to WWRC he served as the Chief of Rehabilitation Psychology and Director of the Neuropsychology Laboratory in the McGuire Research Institute and the Defense and Veteran’s Brain Injury Center at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center, Richmond, Virginia. His research interests are in the areas of rehabilitation psychology, psychiatric rehabilitation and substance abuse evaluation and rehabilitation.

## Judith K. Ashley (1992 - 2003)

Judith K. Ashley was director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center from October 1992 thru February 2003. Before becoming director of WWRC, she held the following positions at the Center: Rehabilitation Program Assistant Director/Chief of Staff (1989 - 1992); Program Supervisor, Vocational Evaluation Department (1985 - 1989); Counselor, Work Adjustment program (1982 - 1985).  
  
Prior to moving back to Virginia, she held the following positions at the Talking Leaves Job Corps Center in Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma in Tahlequah, Oklahoma: Director of Education & Training (1981); Vocational Training Supervisor (1979 - 1981); Counselor (1978 - 1979).  
  
She also held positions as a Court Services Worker and Child Welfare Worker with the Department of Social Services in Ft. Worth, Texas. She has also worked as a Juvenile Probation Officer and Probation Officer in Richmond, Virginia.  
  
She has also received the following honors and awards: Summa Cum Laude – Ranked Number 1 in College of Arts & Sciences; Phi Kappa Phi – National Honor Society; Alpha Lamda Delta Scholastic Honor Society for Freshman; and the State President – Virginia Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association.  
  
Mrs. Ashley received a B.A. Degree in Psychology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and has done graduate work at Texas Christian University and Northeastern Oklahoma State University. She has also completed specialized training at the Commonwealth of Virginia Management Institute and the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Management Development Institute.  
  
Mrs. Ashley is married to Dr. Joseph Ashley and currently resides in Richmond, Virginia.

## Paul A. Lavigne (1990 - 1992)

Paul A. Lavigne was the 6th Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and served from 1990 - 1992. Prior to joining the Center, he was a health systems specialist with the public mental health system in Washington, D.C. His responsibilities included management and service integration of a psychiatric hospital, a nursing home, a residential program, three community health centers and an emergency walk-in program.  
  
He has served as a management consultant with the Mental Health Systems Reorganization Office and the State Health Programs Division of Washington, DC. and several hospitals. He also served as administrator of long-term care with the Commission of Public Health in D.C. and as assistant director of the Rochester General-Hospital in Rochester, N.Y.  
  
After an initial staff meeting and tour of the Center, Lavigne said, "I was extraordinarily impressed with the reputation of the facility and struck by the warmth, caring and commitment of the staff.  
  
A resident of Stanley, VA., Lavigne has a B.S. Degree and a Master's Degree in Industrial Engineering from Cornell University and has completed graduate work toward a doctorate in business administration from George Washington University.

Paul and his wife, Mary currently reside in Staunton, VA.

## Kenneth L. Kuester (1980 - 1989)

Kenneth L. Kuester was the 5th Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center from 1980 - 1989. A native of Baltimore, Md., Kuester had 19 years of rehabilitation experience which began in Virginia in 1961 when he was a rehabilitation counselor for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Alexandria. In 1962, he joined the Maryland agency where he served in a similar capacity until 1966 when he was promoted to supervisor of field operations in charge of the statewide service delivery program. Mr. Kuesters primary responsibility was the recruitment of qualified professional staff for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, a division of Maryland’s Department of Education. He was also the liaison for the affirmative action and recruitment of persons with disabilities for the division of vocational rehabilitation.  
  
Prior to his rehabilitation career, Kuester taught school in Spotsylvania County and served in the U.S. Army.  
  
He received a B.S. Degree from Sheppard College, Shepherdstown, West Virginia and an M.S. Degree in special education from Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland. Kuester was a member of the Presbyterian Church and a life member of the National Rehabilitation Association.

## J. Ellies Moran (1974 - 1980)

Ellies Moran was the 4th Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center from 1974 - 1980. He was a native of Pulaski County and graduated from Dublin High School and received a B.S. Degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1960.  
  
Prior to joining the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, Ellies was the fiscal director of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation since 1972. He had been business manager of the Radva Plastics Corporation, Radford. He was appointed director of buildings and grounds for Radford College in 1964; was named the college's business manager in July 1966; and was promoted vice president for administration in August 1969. Ellies was city engineer for the city of Radford from August 1962 to December 1963.  
  
Ellies was a member of the National Rehabilitation Association; a member of the board of directors, Commonwealth Girl Scout Council; assistant scout master, Troop 471; and an elder in the Bon Air Presbyterian Church. He has been president, vice-president and board member of the Radford Chamber of Commerce; previous member of the board of directors, Radford Red Cross; previous member of the board of directors, Radford United Fund; and served on the board of directors of the Radford Child Care Center.  
  
Ellies was married to the former Miss Rebecca Farmer of Richlands, Virginia. The Morans have two children.

## Otho H. Smith (1966 - 1974)

Otho H. Smith was the 3rd Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center from 1966 - 1974. He was a native of Hanover County and is a graduate of Henry Clay High School. He was an U.S. Army Veteran of World War II.  
  
Before becoming director of the rehabilitation center, Mr. Smith was a teacher in Powhatan County and, executive officer and coordinator of the physical medicine and rehabilitation department at the Veteran's Administration Hospital at Salem for two years. He held the same position at the Hampton VA Medical Center in Hampton from 1953 until 1964.  
  
He was also chief of manual arts therapy and assistant executive officer of the physical medicine and rehabilitation division at McGuire Veterans Hospital in Richmond for seven years and was co-author of several technical publications.  
  
Mr. Smith received a B.S. Degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a Master's Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University.  
  
Mr. Smith married Irma Thompson of Fredericksburg and they had three children.

## Frank O. Birdsall (1948 - 1966)

Frank O. Birdsall was the second Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and served from 1948 – 1966. He was born on September 17, 1903 in Dinwiddle County, VA. He was married and had one son and two grandchildren. He attended Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church in Fishersville, VA. He received an A. B. Degree from the College of William & Mary in 1927.  
  
His employment history consisted of the following: Engineering and Survey Department, American Telephone & Telegraph Company (1927 - 1929); Instructor, Midway High School (1929 - 1933); Director of Instruction, Civilian Conservation Corps (1934); Principal, Drivers Elementary School (1935 - 1939); Principal, Seaboard High School, Seaborn, N.C. (1939 - 1941); Instructor, Auto-Motor School, Camp Lee, VA (194101944); District Supervisor, Vocational Rehabilitation, Virginia State Department of Education (1945 - 1948); ; Principal, Valley Vocational Technical School, Fishersville, VA (1948). He was also a member of the Board of Directors, Zuni Training School, Zuni, VA and the Presbyterian Home, Lynchburg, VA from 1967 - 1974. At the time of his death, he was engaged in farming at his home in Afton, VA.

## W. Kuhn Barnett (1947 - 1948)

Mr. Barnett accumulated a total of 30 years of dedicated service as a member of the staff of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education. He was named the first director of the Center on July 11, 1947, and served in this capacity until he returned to the Department of Education in 1948. Mr. Barnett received an A. B. Degree from Case University, and earned a Master's Degree at Columbia University. Except for a leave of absence as an officer in the Anti-Aircraft Arm of the U. S. Army Artillery during World War II, Mr. Barnett made Virginia his home.  
  
He began his service to Virginia as a teacher in the Radford Public Schools during the school term 1919 - 1920. He served as Superintendent of Schools in Radford from 1920 to 1937. He became a member of the Vocational Rehabilitation staff on September 1, 1937. Prior to his entry into the military service, he became interested in the development of a facility that would provide comprehensive services to disabled people. On his return to the department, Mr. Barnett, along with Mr. R. N. Anderson, was instrumental in obtaining a transfer of the Woodrow Wilson General Hospital to Virginia, with a portion of the facility to become a Center to serve the disabled. Today's greatly expanded program at the Center rests on the solid foundation laid down by Mr. Barnett.  
  
On May 25, 1971, Mrs. Barnett accepted a Golden Key to the Women's Dormitory, which was named, in memory of her late husband, W. Kuhn Barnett. Mrs. Barnett noted that this is a distinct privilege that you have given me the opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the honor, which you have bestowed upon my late husband, in naming the new dormitory for women in his honor. This Center occupied a very special place in his heart; in fact, its establishment with him was a dream come true. And in naming of this building in his memory, it is a beautiful tribute to his love and dedication for the wonderful work and his profound interest in the rehabilitation program in the state of Virginia.

# WWRC has been first in…

* 1st State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center in the nation (1947)
* 1st facility-developed work sample laboratory for Vocational Evaluation in the nation (1965)
* 1st Driver Evaluation and Training program in Virginia (1966)
* 1st formal Work Adjustment Program in Virginia (1971)
* 1st Specialized Deaf Services in a comprehensive rehabilitation setting in the nation (1971)
* 1st Computer Programming Training Project with IBM for persons with disabilities in the nation (1972)
* Among the first four original Spinal Cord Injury Systems in the nation (1972)
* 1st Virginia Wheelchair Games (1972)
* 1st Head Trauma Program in Virginia (1978)
* Hosted the National Wheelchair Games (1978)
* 1st Center for Independent Living in Virginia in partnership with Norfolk Endependence Center (1981)
* 1st National Learning Disabilities project in a comprehensive rehabilitation setting in the nation (1982)
* 1st Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center in the nation to be accredited by the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) (1983)
* 1st Computer-Assisted Drafting training in Virginia (1984)
* 1st Transition from School to Work grant in Virginia (1984)
* 1st comprehensive rehabilitation center in the nation to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (1984). Now accredited by Council on Occupational Education (COE), The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF), and The American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA)
* 1st Mobile Rehabilitation Engineering unit in the nation (1985)
* 1st Trade-Related Academic Curriculum in Virginia (1986)
* 1st Computer Accommodation Laboratory in Virginia (1987)
* 1st Eye-Gaze computer in the world (1988)
* 1st Seating Clinic in Virginia (1991)
* 1st articulation agreement between a Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center and Blue Ridge Community College for Computer Assisted Drafting (2000)
* Established the 1st Freehand Program in Virginia. The first client received surgery at the University of Virginia and follow-up therapy at the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. (Unfortunately the manufacturer has discontinued making the device that enabled quadriplegics to regain use of their hands) (2000)
* First, along with five other states, to participate in the Department of Labor Grant Train IT, which utilizes WWRC facilities and staff expertise to offer distance and on-site evaluations and web-based training in technology applications (2001)

# Building and Center Dedications

### Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center: Named for President Woodrow Wilson

The Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center is named for [President Woodrow Wilson](http://www.woodrowwilson.org/) who signed into law the first federal [Vocational Rehabilitation Act in 1920](http://www.hhs.gov/newfreedom/prelim/append.html), providing services for people injured in industry. President Wilson was born in nearby Staunton, Virginia.  
  
**Quick Facts:**

* **Term:** 28th President of the United States (1913 - 1921)
* **Nickname:** "Schoolmaster in Politics"
* **Born:** December 28, 1856 in Staunton, Virginia
* **Education:** College of New Jersey (now Princeton University; graduated 1879)
* **Profession:** Teacher, Public Official
* **Religious affiliation:** Presbyterian
* **Marriages:**
  + June 24, 1885, to Ellen Louise Axson (1860 - 1914)
  + December 18, 1915, to Edith Bolling Galt (1872 - 1961)
* **Children:**
  + Margaret Woodrow Wilson (1886 - 1944)
  + Jessie Woodrow Wilson (1887 - 1933)
  + Eleanor Randolph Wilson (1889 - 1967)
* **Political Affiliation:** Democrat
* **Died:** February 3, 1924 in Washington, D.C.
* **Buried:** National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.
* **Vice-President:** Thomas R. Marshall

**Cabinet Members:**

* **Secretary of State:**
  + William J. Bryan (1913 - 1915)
  + Robert Lansing (1915 - 1920)
  + Bainbridge Colby (1920 - 1921)
* **Secretary of the Treasury:**
  + William G. McAdoo (1913 - 1918)
  + Carter Glass (1918 - 1920)
  + David F. Houston (1920 - 1921)
* **Secretary of War:**
  + Lindley M. Garrison (1913 - 1916)
  + Newton D. Baker (1916 - 1921)
* **Attorney General:**
  + James C. McReynolds (1913 - 1914)
  + Thomas W. Gregory (1914 - 1919)
  + Alexander M. Palmer (1919 - 1921)
* **Postmaster General:** Albert S. Burleson.
* **Secretary of the Navy:** Josephus Daniels
* **Secretary of the Interior:**
  + Franklin K. Lane (1913 - 1920)
  + John B. Payne (1920 - 1921)
* **Secretary of Agriculture:**
  + David F. Houston (1913 - 1920)
  + Edwin T. Meredith (1920 - 1921)
* **Secretary of Commerce:**
  + William C. Redfield (1913 - 1919)
  + Joshua W. Alexander (1919 - 1921)
* **Secretary of Labor:** William B. Wilson

### Anderson Training Building: Named for Richard N. Anderson

Mr. Richard N. Anderson was the first Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Virginia Department of Education from its 1928 foundation until his retirement in 1962. Today "The Chief" as he was affectionately called, is remembered for his exemplary dedication to his work, and his exceptional career achievements.  
  
Through years of single-minded effort over turbulent periods of inflation, budget cuts, national depression, world war, and successive changes in governors, his Division grew in prominence. In 1947 the grounds, buildings, and contents of the Woodrow Wilson Army General Hospital were transferred from the federal government, and Mr. Anderson subsequently supervised the opening of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center that exists today.  
  
Together with other early pioneers such as W. Kuen Barnett and Frank O. Birdsall (the first WWRC Directors) and Dr. Roy M. Hoover (the first WWRC Medical Director), Mr. Anderson worked diligently to establish the Center as the first State operated comprehensive rehabilitation facility in the United States. His career goal, despite world and national recognition, was simply that Virginians with disabilities "…should not be denied the right to do for themselves" and were deserving of "…the investment, not the expenditure of public funds."  
  
Of his life work he said, "Rehabilitation is a feeling, moving, living spirit. It is more than a job. It is an opportunity -- a rare opportunity for constructive service. It is brimful of satisfactions seldom experienced in many other pursuits. It is a philosophy and a way of life for one who can capture the spirit."

### Carter-Ashley Men's Dormitory: Named for Constance Curry Carter and Judith K. Ashley

In May 1964, the men's dormitory was dedicated to Constance Curry Carter and named Carter's Men Dormitory. In 2003, the dormitory rededicated and renamed Carter-Ashley Men's Dormitory, to also honor the Center's 7th director, Judith K. Ashley.  
  
Mrs. Constance Curry Carter was a well-known Augusta County resident and active supporter of the state's rehabilitation program. She was married to Former State Senator Curry Carter of Staunton, VA. She served as a member of the Virginia Board of Vocational Rehabilitation since its formation in 1964 to take over the work of the State Education Department's division of vocational education.  
  
As a tribute to her support, the Center's 280-bed dormitory for men was named the Constance Carter Hall. During dedication ceremonies in May 1964, Mrs. Carter was credited with a "large part of the responsibility of making the rebuilding program possible." She was instrumental in obtaining the General Assembly's appropriation for capital outlay funds for the student dormitory after the original budget had eliminated it.  
  
In May 1962, she was named by former Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr. to a nine-member commission to study conditions at the Center. She subsequently was named chairman of this committee.  
  
Mrs. Carter also served as president of the Council of Organizations on a number of occasions and has been active in the organization since 1952 during the early days of its formation. When her health permitted, she visited the center almost daily to see students, and did numerous acts of kindness for many of them, for which she sought no reward or publicity.  
  
She lived to see many physical improvements in the plant at the Center. She took pride in these physical improvements but was fully conscious of the fact that the heart of the center was not the brick, steel, and the mortar of the buildings, but the staff and the students. Her zeal for and concern and devotion for the students will be long and fondly remembered.  
  
Otho H. Smith, Center Director said, "Mrs. Carter's contributions to the Center, through her association with the Council of Organization and the Virginia Board of Vocational Rehabilitation as well as her personal interest in the center and its students, have been of tremendous value.

### William A. Cashatt Chapel: Named for Reverend William A. Cashatt

The accomplishments of William A Cashatt (1928 - 1980) cannot be listed by education, employment or recognized honors. They are those that are done quietly, without fanfare, and without pay or special notice except by those benefiting. Bill was speaker or substitute minister for Tinkling Spring Church, the WWRC Chapel, St. John's and other Episcopal churches, as well as for various civic groups.

He counseled both disabled and non-disabled persons before and after his regular working hours as a teacher and during lunch. After being forced by health to retire, he continued counseling at home, refusing to accept pay. His very life as a severely disabled person with an invincible spirit was both counsel and inspiration to all whose lives he touched. He was loved by all and at the end of his 28-year bout with Multiple Sclerosis; his widow received over 200 messages from individuals noting how he had positively affected their lives through example or experience.

A graduate from Randolph-Macon Men's College, Virginia Theological Seminary and the University of Virginia, Bill, has been honored with a Citation of Merit from the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and a Certificate of Recognition from the Multiple Sclerosis Society  
  
Bill did his Chaplaincy Internship (../chaplaincy/default.htm) as well as taught in the Special Education Department (../menuroot/VR-educational-support-serv.htm) at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. He also served in the Chaplain's Department at Western State Hospital.

### Birdsall-Hoover Medical Building: Named for Frank O. Birdsall and Dr. Roy M. Hoover

In 1975, the Medical/Administration Building was dedicated to honor the Center's 2nd Director, Frank O. Birdsall, and WWRC co-founder, Dr. Roy M. Hoover. The building was then name the Birdsall-Hoover Medical Building.  
  
Dr. Roy M. Hoover of Tallahassee, Florida, former Roanoke orthopedic surgeon. Co-founder and former medical director of Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center.

* Medical Consultant 1947 - 1954
* Medical Director 1954 - 1964

Dr. Hoover was born on August 18, 1893 in Roanoke, VA. He received an A. B. Degree from Bridgewater College in 1915, and a M. D. Degree, University of Virginia, 1919. He also served an Internship at the University of Virginia and served his Residency at the New York Orthopedic Dispensary and Hospital. He also completed coursework in the following: Upper Extremity Prosthetics, Above-Knee Prosthetics, Below-Knee Prosthetics, Functional Bracing for the Upper Extremity, The Juvenile Amputee - University of California at Los Angeles and The Juvenile Amputee at Northwestern University.  
  
He was a member of the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery and the Virginia Orthopedic Surgeons. He was a previous chairman of the Rehabilitation Committee of the Medical Society of Virginia, Medical Advisory Committee, Virginia Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Committee on Prosthetic Orthotic Education, National Research Council and the National Academy of Science. He served as previous President of the American Board of Certification in Prosthetics and Orthotics. In addition, he was a lecturer in Orthopedics at the School of Medicine at the University of Virginia.  
  
His employment history consisted of the following: Private practice in Orthopedic Surgery, Roanoke, VA (1924 - 1959); Medical Director, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville, VA (1954 - 1964); Consultant, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (1947 - 1954); Project Director - Vocational rehabilitation Administration Grants: Prosthetic and Orthotic Training for Rehabilitation Counselors, Development and Clinical Testing of an Electrical Timer for Individuals with Body Anesthesia of Sitting Areas, A Medical-Industry Team Approach to Accelerate the Application and Production of Prosthetic and Orthotic Developments; Orthopedic Consultant, University (1964 - 1967); Consultant, Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (1965 - 1966); Consultant, Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, Downey, California.  
  
A widower for some 20 years, Dr. Hoover spent a great deal of time with his three daughters and their families and seven grandchildren. His hobbies included Woodcarving, Wood Sculpture and Furniture Making. At the time of his death, he was residing in Tallahassee, Florida.

### Independent Living Transitional Cottage: Named for Eleanor J. Pelar

The Occupational Therapy Department of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center dedicated the Independent Living Transitional Cottage to Eleanor (Ellie) J. Pelar on April 22, 1991. Ellie retired from the Center after 33 years, most recently as secretary to the Occupational Therapy Department.  
  
Ellie became a paraplegic at the age of 16 and after her initial therapy; she came to work at WWRC. She has inspired countless people at the center and in the community. As the O.T. Department’s secretary, she had daily opportunities to answer questions and provide encouragement to all students who passed by her door.  
  
While the cottage was named specifically for Ellie, the designation is also symbolic of the many past and present staff and students who have achieved community and personal independence despite the disabilities they encountered along the way. The cottage was furnished from funds given by the WWRC Council of Organizations and others in the community, and remodeled with the help of the WWRC Physical Plant Staff.

This cottage is used by Center clients and their families to learn and practice independent living skills, the ultimate goal being maximization of participation in family, support systems and the community, and a satisfying quality of life.

## Switzer Building: Named for Mary Elizabeth Switzer

The Mary E. Switzer Building for Clinical and Professional Services was named for Mary Elizabeth Switzer on May 30, 1973.  
  
Mary E. Switzer was instrumental in the establishment of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and others modeled after it throughout the country. It is most appropriate that the clinical and professional services building be dedicated in her memory. The year before she became Commissioner of Vocational Rehabilitation in 1950, only 12 rehabilitation counselors graduated from American universities and only three medical schools offered under-graduate training in rehabilitation. Under her leadership, in 1969 more than 5,000 rehabilitation counselors received degrees and most of the 98 schools of medicine and osteopathy routinely provided training in rehabilitation. In addition, the total number rehabilitated annually in the federal and state programs when she began her service was approximately 60,000. By 1970 it reached over 240,000. Besides these outstanding increases, we are indebted to her for a vigorous research program and for the international program helping disabled people around the world. The completion of her federal career in 1970 marked the end of 48 years of public service. This "Switzer era" was studded with unprecedented changes and far-reaching improvement in federally supported social programs. She was the first head of the Social and Rehabilitation Service. For more than 2 1/2 years she carried the largest administrative responsibility of any woman in the history of government. Upon her retirement, Secretary Finch presented her with the departmental flag, previously given only to departing secretaries. Following retirement, she continued her service to rehabilitation as Vice-President of the World Rehabilitation Fund until the time of her death.

Among her many awards were the President's Certificate of Merit, the highest wartime award for civilians; the HEW Distinguished Service Award; the Albert Lasker Award for international rehabilitation; the National Civil Service Award; the Hadassah Myrtle Award; the Dignity of Man Award from Kessler Institute; the Distinguished Service Medal from the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults; and the George Deaver Award from the Institute of Crippled and Disabled. She was past president of the National Rehabilitation Association and twice president of the American Hearing Society, the U. S. Representative to the 1st International Health Conference which developed the charter for the World Health Organization, and delegate to the first World Conference on Mental Health. She was the recipient of 17 honorary degrees.  
  
Tributes from leaders in rehabilitation described Mary Switzer as a lady of "indomitable spirit, humanitarianism, compassion, loyalty and dedication to fair play and equality of opportunity for all" and one who thought of the handicapped as "people first, disabled second." Her own philosophy was that the most valuable assistance in that which enables people to help themselves. Perhaps her most significant statement and the one which most aptly described her convictions was that, "Life is faith and love, but most of all hope."

## Watson Student Activities Building: Named for Brigadier General Harold E. Watson

The Harold E. Watson Student Activities Building was named for [Major General Harold E. Watson](https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/Article/105276/brigadier-general-harold-e-watson/) (1911 - 1994), U.S.A.F. on May 17, 1967.  
  
Dreams come true only through vision and hard work. This building exists largely because of the dedicated efforts of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Foundation. Through the inspired leadership of Major General Watson, the Foundation received $350,000 from many generous contributors. These funds, combined with State appropriated monies, were used to match Federal funds in paying construction costs. As a result of this combination of private, community, State and Federal resources, the Center now has this building.  
  
General Watson was responsible for the establishment of the [Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Foundation](http://www.wwrcf.org/) and has been President since its incorporation in 1960. He has worked devotedly to promote the Center and it is only fitting that this building bear his name and be a memorial to his efforts. The purpose of the Foundation is to assist in the rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disabled, including the support of the objectives of the Center. Another important purpose is to help improve public understanding of the field of rehabilitation, generally, and of the vocational rehabilitation program in Virginia.  
  
The Harold E. Watson Building is a major unit in the overall building program originally authorized by the 1962 Virginia General Assembly. This will provide an attractive and efficient plant in which disabled people may be helped in their efforts to become contributing members of society.  
  
Harold Ernest Watson was born in Farmington, Conn., Nov. 19, 1911. He graduated from high school there in 1929, and four years later received a degree in electrical engineering from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute at Troy, N.Y. That September he joined Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company as a research engineer.  
  
Appointed a flying cadet on Feb. 15, 1936, General Watson graduated from Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field, Texas, a year later. Assigned to the 96th Bomb Squadron at Langley Field, Va., the following year he attended the Air Corps Navigation School there. Moving to Wright-Patterson Field, Ohio, in November 1939, he performed research development and procurement work, and later was named chief of the Quality Control Division. In 1941 he received his master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the University of Michigan.  
  
Going overseas in September 1944, General Watson was director of maintenance for the First Tactical Air Force in the European Theater of Operations. Following the war he was a test pilot of captured enemy aircraft, and headed the special mission which went into Germany to fly out the planes. Returning to Wright-Patterson Field in August 1945, General Watson was chief of the Technical Analysis Division.  
  
One year later General Watson entered the Armed Forces Industrial College at Washington, D.C., and graduated in June 1947. He was then an industrial and economic adviser to the secretary of War, and five months later was appointed chief of the Strategic Targets Division at Air Force Headquarters. Returning to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, in October 1947, he was chief of the Air Technical Intelligence Center.  
  
Assigned to the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](http://www.nato.int/), in September 1951, General Watson was deputy assistant chief of staff for intelligence of the Allied Air Forces, Central Europe, at Fontainbleau, France. The following August he moved to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers in Europe, where for 14 months he directed two special groups on atomic planning. He was named assistant chief of staff for intelligence with the NATO Southern European Headquarters at Naples, Italy, in October 1953.  
  
The following September General Watson resumed command of the Air Technical Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.  
  
His decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal; Bronze Star; French Croix de Guerre with palm and brevet; Militaire de Pilote D'Avion; and Czechoslovakian Medal of Merit. He is a member of the American Institute of Aeronautical Engineering, and, from 1933 to 1942 was a member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineering. He is rated a command pilot.