FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Staff Changes at Valley Educational Associates**

HATFIELD, MA (August 22, 2018) Mike Barrett, former West Hatfield Program Manager for 24 years, has accepted a new role as the Chicopee Program Manager of Valley Educational Associates. Barrett’s deputy, Amanda Nieves, having served the West Hatfield program site for 20 years, has been promoted to the role of West Hatfield Program Manager.

Mike Barrett expresses his enthusiasm for his new position, “I now look forward to my new position as the Program Manager at the Chicopee site of VEA. I have been working part-time at this site in this function, while looking for someone to fill the job. I have decided to take on this role myself, as I have developed some new relationships with the individuals and staff there. I hope to bring stability to that site with my experience in the position. I also look forward to the new challenges that the site will bring.”

Amanda Nieves echoes her sentiments at her new promotion, “Nothing will be better than helping our participants experience new things that they may have never been able to see or do without Valley Educational Associates. Whether it’s learning a new job, trying new foods, growing their skills, or even just seeing new places in the community, it’s the look on their faces when they have the opportunity to do something they really want, and perhaps have not had the chance to do before, always makes me smile.”

“I could not be more pleased to have these two outstanding staff leading our program sites. I feel that Amanda is uniquely qualified to successfully lead the West Hatfield program site. She has demonstrated commitment and compassion to the program participants. Amanda is able to adeptly tailor activities to different abilities and creates interesting program lessons. Mike has been an integral player for the past three decades at Valley Educational Associates. He has helped design much of the data collection, forms, and protocols we have in place today. I look forward to the positive impact these leaders will have on our organization,” reflects Kate DaSilva, Executive Director of Valley Educational Associates.

**About Valley Educational Associates, Inc.**: Incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit in 1982 to provide vocational training, employment services, and day services to adults with disabilities. Valley Educational Associates serves over 80 individuals in three program locations in Western Massachusetts. The programs are structured into community based day services, vocational, and supported employment settings. Valley Educational Associates has proudly has achieved nine consecutive *Certifications with Distinction* and participated in ten distinctive survey and certification reviews with the Office of Quality Enhancement (OQE) within the Office of Quality Management. Valley Educational Associates is a member of the Human Service Forum, Providers’ Council and Northampton Chamber of Commerce.

**Our Mission:** Valley Educational Associates’ specialized professionals strive to improve the quality of life for adults with developmental disabilities.

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