

A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

# OPPORTUNITY

## Something for Everyone

Plus

- Component Parts
- Envision
- Base Supply Center Celebrations

# Specialized Services Optimize Opportunities

Our eyes have long been described as “windows” through which we view the world. Without sight, a toddler has little reason to explore interesting objects in the environment and may miss learning experiences. Children with visual impairments generally do not have the opportunity to learn by imitation. They must adjust to a world they have not seen because they do not possess a workable visual image in their memory.

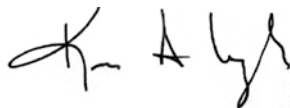
Students with vision loss may need modifications in the academic curriculum to focus on listening techniques, communication, daily living skills and orientation and mobility. Those with residual vision may need help to make the most of it by using special aids and devices. Technology in the form of computers and low-vision optical and video aids enable children who are blind or visually impaired to participate in regular class activities.

Persons who experience a visual disability later in life find they must integrate the condition into their family life and career. They learn to develop and use their other senses more often and depend on tactile and auditory methods to access information. Any new experience will be understood more easily if the person is told about it in detail. With rehabilitation, the person gains a sense of confidence and independence.

Whether in the classroom or in the workplace, making a site accessible

to a person with a physical disability requires a thoughtful approach. Special accommodations may be required. Sensory disabilities, such as blindness, may present additional challenges in obtaining and using many types of information, such as text, graphics, facial expressions and gestural cues. And not all visual impairments carry the same degree of blindness. Some individuals may be able to distinguish light and color. Others may be able to read large print.

In this issue of *Opportunity* we feature the broad range of educational, rehabilitation, social and other support services available in our associated agencies for people who are blind or visually impaired. Recipients of these specialized services run the gamut from infants to seniors, and the services differ from agency to agency across the country. But their common thread is the dedicated focus on the challenges presented with loss of vision, and they have an extraordinary impact on empowering people with blindness or low vision to participate fully in community life, to advance in their careers and to enhance their opportunities for economic and personal independence.



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

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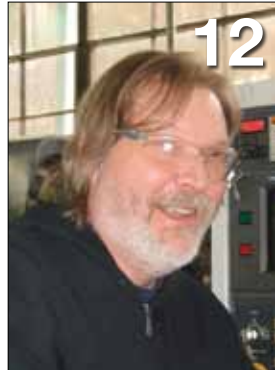
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# OPPORTUNITY



The Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, provides Early Intervention Services to children.



Rich Leaders, CNC machine operator, Wiscraft, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Col. Robert K. McCutchen, Jr., vice commander of the 944th Fighter Wing Unit at Luke Air Force Base, with Bernie Richardson, Focusworks store manager at the AbilityOne BSC anniversary celebration on August 31 in Arizona.

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▪ CMS Services Added to Procurement List  
▪ Navy Brass Visit Agencies in Alabama, Arkansas



**ON THE COVER:**

Tasha Lewis receives instruction in safe travel techniques from Kasey Hopper, orientation and mobility instructor, at ABVI-Goodwill, Rochester, New York.

# Sharon Giovinazzo juggles myriad responsibilities and brings passion and contagious enthusiasm to every task.

Whether she is coordinating the curriculum and training programs at Raleigh Lions Clinic for the Blind (RLCB), overseeing the organization's call center, or collaborating with her peers on public policy issues, Sharon Giovinazzo's goal every day is to expand training, employment and promotional opportunities for people who are blind. From counseling companies on accommodations and adaptive technology, to championing RLCB's health and wellness program, or supervising communications initiatives, Giovinazzo is always moving RLCB's mission forward for Raleigh's residents who are blind.

"The best thing about my job is being able to live RLCB's mission every day," said Giovinazzo, vice president of development and community relations, RLCB Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina. And Giovinazzo does just that. She has written curricula for RLCB's customer service training program in the organization's call center operations, and she has expanded promotional and placement opportunities for RLCB's clients.

Early in her career, Giovinazzo was a 91B10 medical specialist in the United States Army. She supervised the operations of a DEPMEDS training facility, which included a laboratory, radiology department, pharmacy facilities, patient wards, operating rooms and emergency medical treatment sections. She also served as an assistant editor for professional and academic materials for the Health Services Commands. Then multiple sclerosis took her sight in 2001.



Sharon Giovinazzo, vice president of development and community relations, RLCB Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina with Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC).

"NIB's BMT (Business Management Training) Program enabled me to build on my skills..."

Sharon Giovinazzo

Giovinazzo quickly realized that she had no marketable business skills. She was referred to the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, New York, for rehabilitation and began packaging gloves for the Transportation Security Administration. As her confidence increased, she returned to school, obtained a college degree and was promoted to sewing machine operator at CABVI. Then

came an opportunity to participate in NIB's Business Management Training (BMT) Program in conjunction with the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business Administration. "NIB's BMT Program enabled me to build on my skills and gave me the insight to analyze the big picture when faced with complex issues," she said. Shortly afterward, Giovinazzo was promoted at CABVI to public policy consumer relations associate.

In 2008, Giovinazzo and her husband, Joe, left Utica so that she could accept a position at NIB in Alexandria, Virginia, as legislative affairs specialist, where she worked with her peers to cultivate an understanding of the AbilityOne Program with members of Congress, federal executive branch agencies, military personnel and consumer organizations concerned with disability policy.

The following year, Giovinazzo relocated again to Raleigh to oversee RLCB's development and community relations programs. She also completed dual master's programs with degrees in social work and business administration, and graduated *summa cum laude* from the State University of New York's Empire State College.

In her quest to raise awareness of the high unemployment rate of people who are blind in the United States, Giovinazzo continues to collaborate closely with NIB to ensure that the AbilityOne Program receives support from members of Congress as a means of advancing career opportunities for Americans who are blind. ❖

## New AbilityOne.com Site Launched

The AbilityOne.com Website has a new look, easier search tools and more robust functionality to better serve government customers seeking to purchase quality SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products online. The new Oracle e-commerce platform went live in August.

Originally established as JWOD.com, AbilityOne.com opened for business in October 1999 with a mission of using the Internet as a convenient distribution channel for products manufactured by nonprofit agencies throughout the United States that employ people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities. AbilityOne.com also offers



*NIB customer care representatives pictured left to right (standing) are: Rehan Ahmad, Will Vaughn (supervisor), Ramon Rodriguez (assistant supervisor), Joe Werner (director, e-commerce and distribution programs) and Steve Bacon. Kneeling: Stephanie Perry.*

products that are not mandatory for federal employees but complement the AbilityOne product line.

The new AbilityOne.com platform enables NIB associated agencies to receive product orders, track shipments and issue invoices through Direct EDI (electronic data interchange), functions that will increase efficiency and enhance customer service. NIB e-commerce customer care representatives, all of whom are visually impaired, respond to AbilityOne.com customer inquiries. ❧

## NIB Maintains ISO 9001 Compliance

NIB was recently recertified as being compliant with ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2008 standards. Many top corporations worldwide have implemented ISO 9001, an international high-level quality system that helps organizations improve communications, processes and procedures to increase efficiencies in their operations. ISO enables a consensus to be reached on solutions that meet both the requirements of

business and the broader needs of society. The ISO 9001 designation is important to maintaining current business and acquiring new business.

Increasingly, NIB's government customers require their vendors to be ISO 9001 certified. There are 29 NIB associated agencies that are ISO 9001 certified, and an additional 16 associated agencies actively working toward ISO 9001 certification. ❧

## NIB Participates in Industry Events

NIB was represented across the nation with active participation at numerous industry events this summer. The events included:

- **National Federation of the Blind (NFB) National Convention.** NIB External Affairs Program Director Brian Hurley and Public Policy Specialist Deborah Allen staffed the NIB exhibit and distributed AbilityOne Program information. Hurley addressed the NFB student division and blind merchant division. NIB President and CEO Kevin A. Lynch and Executive Vice President Angela Hartley also represented NIB at the conference.
- **American Council of the Blind National Conference.** Hurley and Allen, with Rebecca Bridges, NIB services project specialist, staffed the NIB booth, along with Arizona Industries for the Blind employees. Allen and Hurley spoke about career choices and provided public policy updates.
- **Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired International Conference.** NIB sponsored the Employment Division and a breakfast event. Kathy Gallagher, NIB learning and development manager, and Matt Wieseler, director, strategic intelligence, participated in a career development panel.
- **United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) State Games.** NIB sponsors USABA annually and this year, Kyle Finnegan, NIB research coordinator, conducted research on employment and gave presentations to youth and wounded warriors about career opportunities at NIB associated agencies. ❧

# Something for Everyone

Last year, NIB associated agencies provided rehabilitation services to more than 151,000 Americans who are blind. With so many diverse offerings to meet the needs and interests of people of all ages, there is something for everyone.

Where else can you participate in a cooking class in the morning, then see a low-vision specialist in the afternoon? Network with a career expert one day and receive orientation and mobility training the next? These are just a few of the diverse services for people who are blind — from infants to seniors — offered by NIB associated agencies. Services are specialized to meet the unique needs of people who are blind or visually impaired, thus enabling them to compete successfully in a “seeing” society.

## First Steps

Toddlers learn to walk by watching their parents and siblings. Visual impairments may limit opportunities for children

to learn through observation of the people around them and change the way they obtain information. Before any training can take place in white cane travel, dog guides and electronic travel aids, children with visual impairments need encouragement to explore their surroundings. Orientation and mobility at an early age focuses on sensory awareness, spatial concepts and the relationships between the objects in the environment, searching skills and independent movement. These are critical skills because independent movement is tied to growth in other areas, such as learning and socialization. Infant, toddler and children’s programs offered by many NIB associated agencies provide

*The Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Rochester, New York, offers early intervention and pre-school training for children, from birth through their teenage years.*

*Continued on page 8*





opportunities for children and their families to interact and have fun while learning these new techniques.

At the Early Intervention and Pre-School Training Center of the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI), in Rochester, New York, children receive a foundation for building essential skills including visual stimulation, tracking and scanning, spatial concepts, auditory development, reaching, crawling and walking. ABVI staff work with infants and toddlers at home, daycare or pre-school or in other environments. Low-vision specialists determine what types of optical aids will maximize any residual vision, thus empowering a child to be successful in school, at home, or in the community. Children and

their families learn as they enjoy participating in year-round recreational and socially-based programs.

### Services to Support Students

As children reach their teen years, they need to acquire skills related to life during and after high school. Pre-vocational services at ABVI help teens explore their interests, develop appropriate social skills, experience work, prepare for college and refine their career goals. At Alphapointe Association for the Blind in Kansas City, Missouri, high-school-age youth have the opportunity to enroll in an eight-week Summer Transitional Employment Program (STEP), which serves as a foundation for the school-to-work transition. Students gain interviewing experience and



*A student learns how to navigate a computer using ZoomText technology from the director of education and rehabilitation at Alphapointe Association for the Blind, Kansas City, Missouri. Instruction in the use of adaptive technology is a cornerstone of both the STEP and college preparation programs.*

are placed in competitive work situations. Alphapointe's orientation and mobility training staff familiarize the students with accessible transportation methods and provide orientation to the work site. The goal of the program is to increase a student's career awareness, build marketable vocational skills, learn about work-related behaviors and self-advocacy and support a healthy self-image.

Alphapointe's year-round college preparation program operates in partnership with the Metropolitan Community College and the University of Missouri-Kansas City, offering programs of a semester or a summer term to prepare teens for a college environment. Alphapointe also works with students to improve their study, note-taking

and organization skills; find accommodations; identify equipment needs and enhance self-advocacy skills. The agency also helps students to access the campus library, apply for financial aid and choose a course of study.

Bosma Enterprises in Indianapolis, Indiana, also runs a STEP program in conjunction with the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Blind and Visually Impaired Services of Vocational Rehabilitation. STEP offers students a well-balanced program of classroom learning, real world job experience and recreational activities. Students will learn job-ready skills to understand employer expectations, identify strengths and barriers, discover simple adaptations to make them successful in a job, identify

*Continued on page10*



*An Envision Rehabilitation Center occupational therapist gives instruction to a client in the use of a video magnifier.*



*During the school year, Indianapolis School for the Blind and Visually Impaired students can work one day a week at Bosma Enterprises, Indianapolis, Indiana. This employment opportunity gives students work experience and allows them to develop new responsibilities and strengthen social skills – all while getting paid!*

career paths and job goals, complete job applications, write résumés, polish interviewing skills and develop a portfolio.

### **Living With Vision Loss**

Going blind as an adult can present challenges as one has to learn to live with a vision loss. Rehabilitation professionals at NIB associated agencies provide training in skills of daily living, accessing information on printed materials or computer screens, moving about a place of employment freely and safely and using public transportation to get to and from work.

Counselors work with individuals to identify career options that include training and placement in community employment settings or within the associated agency. Services include résumé writing, interviewing skills and job leads. Placement staff work with employers to make recommendations for workplace adaptations or jobsite modifications to maximize residual vision. Orientation and mobility instructors teach employees to travel independently, both in the office and off-site, to ensure efficiency and success on the job.

Many NIB associated agencies operate low vision laboratories in partnership with primary care eye specialists in their community. An ophthalmologist who specializes



*A specialist from the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind works with a senior client in her home to assess her needs and to provide instruction on the use of adaptive devices.*

in low vision prescribes low vision aids, taking into consideration the visual needs of the client. Specialists provide instruction in the use of the aids to help people make the most of their remaining vision. Filter lenses may be prescribed to control glare. Telescopes may be used for distance tasks, such as watching television, reading street signs and recognizing faces. For reading, hand-held magnifiers, special lamps, large print materials and video magnifiers are identified as possible solutions.

For those individuals who are deaf and blind, NIB associated agencies tailor services to meet the needs of individuals with dual sensory limitations. The Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle provides employment to 40 employees who are deaf and blind. Services range from computer training, independent living skills, orientation and mobility, continuing education programs, housing assistance, sign language services and leadership and internship opportunities.

### **Services for Seniors**

Because we are living longer than ever before, the largest emerging population of people who are blind or visually impaired are older Americans. Vision loss among seniors is expected to more than double by the year 2030. In many cases, low vision develops later in life from age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy



*A computer training instructor demonstrates using Microsoft Outlook to a student in the Technology Training Center at The Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle, Washington.*

and glaucoma. The risk of falls among seniors increases with vision loss, introducing other complicating challenges that affect a senior's health. Programs for seniors at NIB associated agencies help them remain independent in their homes, learn new ways to travel, and make the most of their residual vision. Assistive technology software enables older Americans to accomplish daily activities such as looking up phone numbers; managing personal finances; and identifying money, medications and clothing.

One of the newest facilities serving seniors is the Salisbury Center for Blind Seniors, which held a grand opening ceremony on July 14, 2010. Operated by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM), the new 2,300-square-foot center allows BISM to expand and improve current rehabilitation programs and services for blind and low vision seniors of the Eastern Shore. The center features an accessible training kitchen, classroom, computer lab, multi-purpose room and meeting space and offers life skills instruction in Braille, independent living, adapted computer technology and cane travel.

More than 500 seniors are assessed each year by the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind. Specialists visit seniors in their home for a room-by-room evaluation of their needs and

connect each senior to the services that will best enable them to remain independent and to maintain their privacy. As a result, specialists develop long-term relationships with senior clients so that as their vision changes, new solutions can be developed quickly to compensate for further loss of vision. Liquid level indicators, large-print timers and clocks, sectioned dinner plates, closed circuit televisions, check writing guides and large-print calendars are just a few of the adaptations that are introduced into senior clients' homes.

The Lighthouse of Houston runs an adult program that provides structured day activities for persons who are blind and also have a medical condition, a combination that qualifies them for multi-care services. Seniors participate in an array of therapeutic activities, education and other support services, with transportation to the program provided by the Lighthouse.

Whether it is a need for a support group, social opportunities, orientation and mobility training, recreational programs, Braille literacy, computer training, or other services, each person who is blind has his or her own unique needs and expectations. And NIB associated agencies continue to expand their offerings to meet the needs of people who are blind, from infancy through their golden years. ■■

# By combining skills, capabilities and capacities, three NIB associated agencies offer one-stop shopping to aerospace, defense, industrial and commercial customers.

A tour of The Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle offers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of manufacturing in the 21st century at its finest. The facility is clean, with temperature and humidity-controlled areas. People and machines work side by side to turn out metal parts, mainly for the aerospace industry.

The Lighthouse has been machining aircraft parts for The Boeing Company for more than 50 years. Skilled technicians fabricate roughly 500,000 parts each year, in a manufacturing plant that typically runs two shifts. This longstanding partnership is beneficial to both Boeing and the Lighthouse. Boeing receives quality metal parts for its aircraft wings, lighting and cabin seating. The parts are complex, engineered and fabricated to precise standards and are tracked and inspected throughout the various stages of production. Although the quality assurance process is extensive, the Lighthouse boasts a 99.8 percent approval rating with Boeing, which has earned the Lighthouse more than \$8 million in business from Boeing each year and has created more than 50 jobs for people who are blind or deaf-blind.

### Cutting Edge Technology

In two other parts of the country, similar expertise exists. Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) in Phoenix, Arizona, and Wiscraft in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, offer extensive machining and fabrication services. Their capabilities range from metal fabrication and riveting



One of the aircraft parts fabricated by the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind for The Boeing Company.

“I call it offering ‘one-stop shopping’ by combining our skills, capabilities and capacities.”

Jim Kerlin, president, Wiscraft, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Metal fabrication equipment at The Lighthouse for the Blind, Seattle, Washington.



*Steel bars in raw material staging rack at Wiscraft, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

to computer numerically controlled (CNC) machining to injection molding to welding and assembly. Wiscraft has been assembling engine parts for Briggs & Stratton for almost 90 years. The organization machines parts for P&H, a large mining crane company based in Milwaukee as well as Capitol Stampings, which makes sprockets and pulleys for the industrial, automotive and lawn and garden markets. AIB has been making component parts since the 1960s. Their major customers are Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support in Philadelphia and DLA Land and Maritime in Columbus, along with various smaller military units. AIB's specialties include machine milling, turning, manufacturing machine fixtures and CAD/CAM.

Each of these agencies has more than 50 years of experience, is ISO 9001:2000 and AS9100 certified and



*Francesco Robles, CNC machine operator, Arizona Industries for the Blind, Phoenix, Arizona, turning a pole used in military litters.*

has incorporated lean manufacturing practices into their plant. Adaptive technology integrated into their manufacturing operations makes it possible for people who are blind to master the complex operations. Voice interactive CNC machines, talking digital gauges and micrometers and computers with JAWS digital screen reader software are used in various operations throughout the manufacturing and quality assurance process. Among the three partners, customers include The Boeing Company, Briggs & Stratton, Capitol Stampings, General Electric, Harley-Davidson, Honeywell, Rockwell Automation and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Executives at the Seattle Lighthouse, Arizona Industries and Wiscraft decided to form a partnership – SKILCRAFT Component Parts – as a

means of creating even more jobs in the AbilityOne Program. As a result, machining parts was added to the Procurement List as a new service for the DLA Land and Maritime Detachment in Philadelphia, earlier this year. These agencies are working with NIB's services team to expand the opportunity under a strategic contract instrument that will provide parts machining coverage to all supply chains in DLA. Further, the agencies and NIB are working to generate new parts machining business with the military services as well.

"The fundamental basis of our partnership is trust and that together we can offer the customer more. We therefore achieve more together than we would apart," said Wiscraft President Jim Kerlin. "I call it offering 'one stop shopping' by combining our skills, capabilities and capacities." ■■

# Envision: An organization on the move, providing choices, resources and advocacy for people with vision loss in Kansas and across the country.

Wichita, Kansas, is a city with entrepreneurial spirit and new ideas, a place where companies ranging from aircraft corporations Cessna, Beechcraft and LearJet, to Coleman, Pizza Hut, Koch Industries and many more have been founded.

Envision Inc., an NIB associated agency headquartered in Wichita, has the same entrepreneurial spirit, with a proud history of serving the community, overcoming obstacles and reinventing itself to achieve its mission of enhancing the personal independence of people who are blind or low vision through vision rehabilitation, employment, and education.

### The Early Years

Founded in 1931 as the Wichita Workshop and Training School for the Adult Blind, the organization began as many such agencies during the Depression era, with people who are blind making rugs and caning chairs, as well as producing brooms. The agency sold pillowcases during World War II in a government contract through the Wagner-O'Day Act, later known as the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, which established the AbilityOne Program.

The agency evolved and reinvented itself over the years, changing its name and location and producing new products to meet both government and commercial customer needs, including seat belts during the 1960s, janitorial/sanitation products in the 1970s and plastic bags in the 1980s.



*Pictured left to right: Mike Stephens, president of Envision Industries; Linda Merrill-Parman, CEO; and Kent Wilson, vice president of Envision Industries and chief financial officer, have dramatically increased employment and services for people who are blind or low vision.*



*Envision employee James Bradford packs plastic trash bags at the manufacturing facility in Wichita, Kansas.*

Local Lions Clubs helped to sell and distribute products and the organization reached out into the community with education and training programs for people who are blind. The business had its ups and downs. In 1981, the agency employed only 21 people and faced possible closure due to high building maintenance costs.

### Rapid Transformations

In 1986, Linda Merrill (now Merrill-Parman) joined the organization, then known as Wichita Industries and Services for the Blind, as president and CEO, with experience from Beacon Lighthouse in Wichita Falls, Texas, where she served as vice president of manufacturing. In Wichita, she saw the urgent need to invigorate the company. She created the blueprint for a modern-day agency, a “mission-driven business with a business-driven mission.”

Under Merrill-Parman's leadership, sales/revenue rose from \$2.9 million in 1986 to \$164 million today. The organization was renamed Envision in 1997, reflecting its expanded services. Today, Envision has three subsidiary corporations – Envision Industries, Envision Vision Rehabilitation and Envision Foundation.

Envision Industries is a leading supplier to the U.S. government, with a product line that includes plastic bags, grocery bags, seal closure bags, biodegradable bags, general purpose bags, compostable bags,

plastic sheeting, industrial wiping towels, gunslings and high-visibility belts. Customers include the General Services Administration, Veterans Administration, Department of Defense, Defense Commissary Agency and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

Envision Digital Print (EDP), a commercial printing division, provides mailing and digital printing services to a large base of customers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has twice recognized it as the AbilityOne Contractor of the Year for its business card production. EDP produces more than 1.8 million business cards for the federal government each month under a contract that has allowed the print division to increase its employment of people who are blind by 9 percent.

The Envision Low Vision Rehabilitation Center serves more than 1,500 individuals per year, from infants to seniors. The center offers counseling, training in the use of optical devices, rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility training, assistive technology and a host of other services. It was designated a Certified Outpatient Rehabilitation Facility by

the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the first in Kansas.

In 2006, with the success of the growing development program, Envision formed the Envision Foundation, whose mission is to fund low-vision rehabilitation services and programs as well as public and professional education. In 2009, Envision celebrated a successful \$3.4 million capital campaign to renovate a comprehensive low-vision rehabilitation center in downtown Wichita.

The Envision Foundation brings together low-vision professionals from across several disciplines to foster innovation and best practices for serving patients who are blind or low vision. Seminars and conferences offer continuing education credits for licensed and certified professionals.

Community outreach is important at Envision. Envision Foundation produces radio, television and newspaper advertising campaigns centered on healthy vision. A new 15,000-square-foot child development center includes a daycare facility, licensed preschool and expanded youth programs and

services for children who are blind or have low vision. Envision hosts special outreach events ranging from an accessible voting clinic to assistive technology camp for youths and a senior support club. Donations support community resources such as tactile sculptures of animals for the Sedgwick County Zoo's touchable art exhibit and the Wichita Sonics, the city's new beep baseball team.

### **A Leading Regional Resource**

Today, Envision is the largest employer of individuals who are blind or have low vision in a six-state region, with nearly 400 employees, approximately half of whom are blind. Envision operates base supply center retail stores (called Envision Xpress) on 15 military bases across the nation.

At Envision, things are always evolving. The leadership team fosters a high-energy environment where employees are energized by the work they do to achieve the mission. Envision has expanded over nearly 80 years to become a leading resource in the region for people who are blind or have low vision. ❖



*Envision Xpress Assistant Manager Sheila Schmutz uses assistive technology such as closed circuit televisions (CCTV) at the checkout stand.*



*Envision manufacturing employee Tim Kilgore moves packages of trash bags down the line.*

# Base Supply Center Program Marks 15th Anniversary

October marks the 15th anniversary of the first AbilityOne Base Supply Center (BSC), which was opened in 1995 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, by LC Industries. Today, there are 140 locations operated by NIB and NISH associated agencies on military bases and in federal buildings in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

To celebrate this historic milestone, NIB sponsored eight national cornerstone events in August, September and October at BSCs located on Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force bases throughout the country. The cornerstone events were held at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado; Fort Knox, Kentucky; Luke Air Force Base, Arizona; Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois; Fort Detrick, Maryland; Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Travis Air Force Base, California. Other BSC stores hosted dozens of local events.



*Pictured left to right: Colonel Judith D. Robinson, commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Detrick; Tim Selby, IB Express store manager; U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD-6th); and Tom Boyer, IB Express senior vice president of stores, at the Fort Detrick AbilityOne Base Supply Center celebration September 8 in Maryland.*



*Pictured left to right: John Herd, staff to U.S. Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO-5th); Jerry Fordham, Envision regional manager; Annie Oatman-Gardner, staff to Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO); Linda Merrill-Parman, CEO, Envision; Christopher "Casey" Howard, staff to Senator Mark Udall (D-CO); and Kevin A. Lynch, president and CEO, NIB, at the Peterson Air Force Base AbilityOne Base Supply Center celebration August 18 in Colorado.*

In addition to celebrating the 15th anniversary of the BSCs, the events increased awareness and publicized the success of the BSC Program. Dignitaries attending the events included representatives from state, local and federal congressional offices. Besides supporting military personnel on the bases with a convenient selection of products, the BSCs provide employment for people who are blind.

Approximately 280 employees who are blind staff the BSCs across the country. In addition to in-store employment, BSCs support the production and sales of SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products manufactured

by NIB's 89 associated agencies, which in turn creates a multiplier effect in employment growth.

"On behalf of the AbilityOne Program, I congratulate National Industries for the Blind for 15 years of Base Supply Center excellence," said Tina Ballard, executive director of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, the federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program. "We are pleased to provide quality employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities while meeting federal customers' needs through onsite retail operations." ■■



*Pictured at center left: Deputy Garrison Commander Emmitt Holly presents a plaque to Office Eagle store employees at the Ft. Knox AbilityOne Base Supply Center celebration August 26 in Kentucky.*



*Pictured left to right: Capt. John Malfitano, commanding officer, Naval Air Station Great Lakes; Michelle Mills, Servmart; John Baumgart, president, Associated Industries for the Blind, at the Naval Air Station Great Lakes AbilityOne Base Supply Center celebration September 1 in Illinois.*



Rep. Ed Towns (left) pictured with Kevin A. Lynch, NIB president and CEO.

## Congressman Ed Towns Receives “Spirit of Independence” Award

Representative Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-10th-NY), a long-time AbilityOne Champion, was honored by NIB with the “Spirit of Independence” Award, in recognition of his lifetime commitment to advance economic and personal independence for people who are blind. NIB President and CEO Kevin A. Lynch presented the award to Towns, who is chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, at a ceremony on Capitol Hill on July 30.

“From teaching travel with a white cane in my community to working with my colleagues on legislation to bring employment opportunities to the blind and disabled, I am deeply proud of my relationship with the blind and disabled communities,” Towns said.

The award from NIB was presented in conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ❧

## Jim Kesteloot Appointed to Committee for Purchase

President Obama recently appointed several individuals to the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, including James M. Kesteloot, former president and executive director of The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired.

Kesteloot’s career at Chicago Lighthouse spanned 40 years. He has

extensive experience with employment issues related to people who are blind or visually impaired including appointments by Illinois Governors James R. Thompson and Jim Edgar to the state Blind Services Planning Council, and an appointment by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley to his Task Force for the Employment of People with Disabilities. ❧

## Time for Celebration: 20th Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act

The week of July 26, in Washington, D.C., and on Capitol Hill, was filled with special events to recognize the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To commemorate the anniversary, President Obama issued an Executive Order stating, “Executive departments and agencies must improve their efforts to employ workers with disabilities through increased recruitment, hiring, and retention of these individuals.”

NIB President and CEO Kevin A. Lynch, Chairman of the Board James A. Kutsch, Jr. and Vice President – Relationship Management Thomas Panek attended the White House event where President Obama signed the document.

The President also issued a proclamation stating, “. . . As we mark the 20th anniversary of this historic legislation, we renew our commitment to ensuring that everyone with disabilities can live free from

the weight of discrimination and pursue the American dream.”

NIB coordinated ADA anniversary events with the National Council on Disability, an independent federal agency with statutory authority to make policy and program recommendations to the President and Congress “to enhance the quality of life for all Americans with disabilities and their families.”

Several hundred people attended the festive ADA 20th Anniversary Gala on July 26 sponsored by the Committee on Disability Power & Pride, which focuses on changing public perceptions of disability by promoting leadership, fostering dialogue and unity, and empowering individuals to become active citizens. NIB provided logistics and planning support for the event and developed the Disability Power & Pride e-commerce website, which showcases products customized by NIB associated agency employees who are blind. ❧

# October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month



Collateral created by NIB for NDEAM.

To raise awareness during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October, NIB developed advertising, posters, banners and other promotional materials for 140 Base Supply Centers (BSCs) operated by NIB associated agencies across the country. The collateral packages were also sent to military commissaries and exchanges, product distributors and NIB associated agencies.

NIB is participating in AbilityOne Program customer events at Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support on October

13, DLA Aviation on October 19, and DLA Land and Maritime on November 18, which enable NIB associated agencies to showcase their products sold to U.S. military customers.

The U.S. Department of Defense annual AbilityOne Program recognition ceremony at the Pentagon is planned for November 4, featuring remarks by individuals who are blind or severely disabled who support defense contracts through the AbilityOne Program. The event also features award presentations to AbilityOne Program employees, executives and vendors. ❖❖

## NIB Reaches Out to Wounded Warriors

NIB developed its Wounded Warriors program to inform wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts about the opportunities for training, job placement and careers within NIB and its associated nonprofit agencies across the country, and to serve as a resource through their transition to civilian employment.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is disseminating information on the types of jobs available to wounded warriors through NIB's network of associated agencies. NIB staff, led by NIB Veterans Affairs Specialist Ned Rupp, have visited job fairs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Fort Belvoir and attended conferences such as the



*Jeff Mittman, NIB national account manager – Civilian Midwest, addresses attendees at the Blinded Veterans Association conference.*

2010 Army Wounded Warrior (AW2) Career Expo in San Antonio, and the 6th Annual National Veteran Small Business Conference in Las Vegas.

For the Blinded Veterans Association National Convention, NIB recruited sponsors for Operation Peer Support, which brings newly blinded veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to the convention. NIB also hosted an Operation Peer Support dinner.

To build awareness for SKILCRAFT® and the AbilityOne Program, NIB supported the 4th Annual GI Film Festival, held May 11-16 in Washington, D.C. The event featured 38 film screenings, including many short and documentary films. NIB ran local advertising, provided SKILCRAFT government pens in the VIP gift bags and exhibited during the event. ❖❖

## CMS Services Added to Procurement List



*Pictured left to right seated at table: Dale Williams, Army contracting officer; John Qua, NIB vice president of services. Pictured left to right (standing): Bob Chamberlin, president and CEO, NISH; Kevin A. Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; Scottie Knott, chief operating officer, NIB; Brigadier General Stephen Leisenring; Shay Assad, director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense; Tina Ballard, executive director, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled; Carol Lowman, deputy director, U.S. Army Contracting Command.*

NIB, as the Contract Management Support (CMS) Services prime contractor and CMS program manager for the AbilityOne Program, signed an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract with the Department of the Army for provision of CMS contract closeout support services for the Department of Defense (DoD). CMS closeout services were added to the AbilityOne Procurement List concurrently with the DoD-wide IDIQ contract. The IDIQ contract was signed by Army Contracting Officer Dale Williams and NIB Vice President of Services John Qua, on June 29, 2010, at a celebratory event attended by DoD, Army, NIB, NISH and Committee for Purchase leaders. The establishment of the IDIQ contract and the addition to the Procurement List are essential building blocks for wider DoD use and further pilot implementation of AbilityOne contract closeout services by DoD activities. ❖

## Navy Brass Visit Agencies in Alabama, Arkansas

As part of local Navy Week activities, NIB associated agencies in Alabama and Arkansas enjoyed visits from senior-level customers. Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB) in Talladega hosted Rear Admiral Townsend G. “Tim” Alexander, commander, Navy Region Southeast, on May 4 during Birmingham’s Navy Week. RADM Alexander, accompanied by sailors from the *USS Alabama*, spoke to students at an Alabama School for the Blind assembly and toured AIB’s manufacturing facilities. AIB employees make deck swabs, neckties, pillowcases, kit bags and other products used by the U.S. armed forces.

In Little Rock on May 26, Navy visitors at Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind included Rear Admiral Wendi B. Carpenter, commander of Navy Warfare Development Command, Norfolk, Virginia. The tour of the

facilities began with a trombone rendition of “Anchors Aweigh,” by Arkansas Lighthouse employee Earl McClure, a professional musician. The agency produces T-shirts and other products used by the U.S. Navy. ❖



*AIB employee Jon Willmon and RADM Tim Alexander display a certificate of appreciation from AIB. AIB Executive Director Billy Sparkman is pictured at left.*



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October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

