

A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

OPPORTUNITY

A photograph of three people smiling in a warehouse or factory setting. In the background, there are large wooden bins filled with colorful items, possibly toys or components. The man on the left is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The man in the center is wearing a teal polo shirt and holding a black bag. The woman on the right is wearing a black top and holding a yellow and pink object. The overall atmosphere is positive and professional.

Small Changes with a Big Impact

Plus

- Partnering with Small Businesses
- Collaboration Between NIB Agencies
- 2010 Annual Training Conference

Rehabilitation Engineering Supports Quality Work Environments

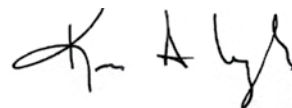
NIB associated agencies are known for more than the quality and performance of their products. They also have a reputation for outstanding service and are known for taking care of their employees. Today, more than ever before, management and employees are concerned about production, ergonomics, safety and the quality of the work environment. And finding a reasonable balance between production and rehabilitation is always a challenge, given our production-conscious and dollar-conscious society. That is why NIB hired two rehabilitation engineers — to assist our associated agencies in enhancing employee productivity and offering the best possible work environment.

NIB's rehabilitation engineers apply engineering principles to assess, design, test, evaluate and implement technological solutions to workplace problems encountered by people who are blind, and they collaborate with staff from associated agencies to develop, recommend and help implement simple practical tools and solutions to improve output and productivity, comfort, safety and overall independence. Projects vary from individual job accommodation with the use of customized jigs, fixtures and one-on-one training to comprehensive line layouts and process optimization. Their initial work

has focused on those employees who are blind with additional severe disabilities, and their recommendations have had dramatic results.

In addition, NIB's compensation and productivity enhancement grant offers a great resource for agencies to fund the recommendations of our rehabilitation engineers. The NIB Board of Directors approved funding for this grant to help NIB associated agencies improve compensation and productivity for all employees who are blind. Under the conditions of the grant, NIB pays up to 80 percent of the cost incurred by the NIB associated agencies, up to a maximum of \$40,000 per agency, to improve compensation and productivity.

In this issue of *Opportunity*, we feature some of the accomplishments of our rehabilitation engineers — just one of many services we are proud to provide to our associated agencies to create and improve employment opportunities for people who are blind and to enhance the quality of their work environments.



Kevin A. Lynch
President and Chief Executive Officer



OPPORTUNITY

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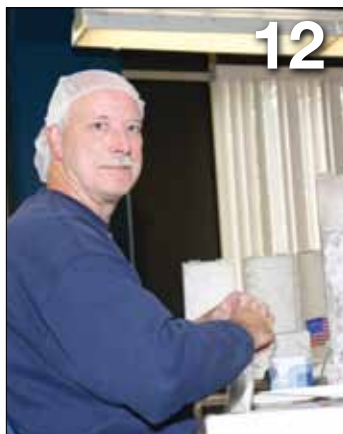
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Ronald Schroeder stocks the product bins for assemblers on the in-flight dining packet production line at the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Kenny Bowers, North Central Sight Services, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

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Romel Joseph, Haitian earthquake survivor, keynote speaker at 2010 NIB/NAEPB Annual Training Conference.

ON THE COVER:

NIB Rehabilitation Engineers Casmir Usiatynski (left) and Georgina Dottin (right) with Grant Zolniger (center), floor manager, highlighter department, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



Working to empower young people with vision loss to be the best they can be.

Brian Hurley is a firm believer in the power of information. “If you never heard of an opportunity, you will never aspire to pursue it,” says Hurley. “It is unfortunate so many young students who are blind are transitioning from school to employment with expectations way below their abilities.”

But Hurley was fortunate. “My parents were supportive of whatever I wanted to do,” he said. Although he was diagnosed with retinitis

to lead young people to resources to expand their minds and horizons, which will empower them to aim high in their career aspirations.”

That is why NIB stepped up efforts to change perceptions about the diverse career opportunities that are available in its associated agencies for people who are blind. Recruited by NIB in June of 2009, Hurley’s public relations, branding, marketing, research and development and e-commerce

organizations. The team’s goals are to develop strategic relationships that result in a win-win situation for all parties. These relationships include alliances with the United States Association of Blind Athletes, the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments and the Internal Revenue Service.

To accomplish these goals, Hurley spends about 40 percent of his time on the road attending, speaking and participating in national, regional and local conferences and job fairs sponsored by disability organizations. He shares updates about the AbilityOne Program and new career opportunities at NIB and its associated agencies.

“One of our exciting new career opportunities available in NIB associated agencies is the Contract Management Support program,” Hurley said. “We provide students information about these career opportunities, and connect them with information and resources, which ultimately can change their career paths and their lives.”

But Hurley’s life is not all work. For fun, Hurley enjoys tandem cycling along the Potomac River in Virginia and across the Golden Gate Bridge, when he lived in San Francisco. Hurley is also a member of the Bay Area Association of Disabled Sailors, an organization that seeks to make all aspects of sailing accessible. He has volunteered with the Foundation for Fighting Blindness, helping them to raise funds, and served on the board of directors of the Vista Center in California. ■■



Brian Hurley, external affairs program director, NIB.

pigmentosa at age 14, Hurley lost most of his sight in his early 30s.

“I already had a bachelor’s degree in finance and management and was pursuing a master’s degree in software and program management when I lost most of my reading vision. I had to learn cane travel and apply assistive technology on a fast track to get through the program,” Hurley said. “Educators and career counselors need

experience with Nokia, Carnegie Mellon University and The Sharper Image enabled him to hit the ground running. He has been spreading the word about NIB among students who are blind as well as disability organizations. As NIB’s external affairs program director, Hurley also is part of a team working to create awareness and alter perceptions about the capabilities of people who are blind among commercial, government, education and nonprofit

Business Leaders Program Awarded Grants, Launches New Curriculum

NIB's Business Leaders Program, which prepares individuals who are blind for careers in business through educational and employment opportunities, was awarded two grants in 2010.

The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation contributed \$50,000, which was allocated toward the professional development of participants in the Class of 2010 Business Management Training. The Allene Reuss Memorial Trust contributed \$25,000, which was allocated toward the development of the Business Leaders Program's fifth and newest track, "Effective Supervision: The Essentials."

The Effective Supervision training program is designed to develop participants' abilities to perform supervisory jobs with greater productivity and effectiveness and to prepare for ever-increasing levels of responsibility. Supervisors are an essential part of any organization. They oversee and direct employees on a day-to-day basis and motivate them to perform their best work.

Participants in the training are high-potential employees of NIB's associated agencies who are blind, are motivated to succeed and have demonstrated potential. The awards from these two private foundations affirm NIB's efforts to enhance business-related employment opportunities and independence of people who are blind. To donate to NIB's Business Leaders Program, contact Program Director Karen Pal at kp@nib.org. ❖

Department of Defense Supports CMS Services

Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition executives received a memorandum from Shay Assad, director, defense procurement and acquisition policy, in September 2010, reminding them of the mandatory use of the AbilityOne Program for Contract Management Support (CMS) contract closeout services.

Assad noted the AbilityOne contract closeout services fulfill "a critical need for the Department by reducing the contract closeout administrative workload" while allowing the contracting workforce to focus on mission-critical support to the warfighter.

This positive support from DoD was further demonstrated through a Navy task order in September for contract closeout services provided by NIB and the AbilityOne Program. Rear Admiral Mark Heinrich, commander, Fleet and Industrial Supply Centers (COMFISCS), approved the task order, which assists the Navy in reducing a backlog of contracts requiring closeout actions and facilitates the return of unused obligated contract funds to the government. The project created four new career-oriented positions for people who are blind from the Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle.



Chris Cantu, contract closeout specialist working at Fort Sam Houston for the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind.

In May 2010, contract closeout services were added to the mandatory AbilityOne Procurement List. During the following month, NIB was awarded an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract with the Department of the Army for provision of contract closeout support services for all of the DoD. ❖

2011 NIB/NAEPB Opportunity Forum: June 22-25 in Denver

Save the date — June 22-25 — for the 2011 NIB/NAEPB Opportunity Forum in Denver, Colorado! In 2010, this conference, focused on business and networking, drew high attendance from exhibitors and agency personnel. For 2011, NIB has expanded to more than 60,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space, all on one level, at the Sheraton Downtown Denver. ❖



Small Changes with a Big Impact



Quality, productivity and manufacturing efficiency are goals of both competitive and nonprofit industries. But there is a distinct difference between the two sectors. In competitive industry, the pressure is on to make as much product as possible with the lowest number of employees. In nonprofit industry, the goal is to create as many jobs as possible in the manufacture of a product or the provision of a service. Rehabilitation engineers are key players in determining what adaptations are needed for a person to succeed on the job and to be as productive and efficient as possible.

Continued on page 8

A gravity feed dispensing system in the highlighter department at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB) in North Carolina eliminated excessive reaching and material handling. Prior to the improvements recommended by NIB's rehabilitation engineers, employees were restocking these stations two to three times daily. Now restocking occurs once or twice a week. Pictured here seated, left to right, are WSIFB employees Henry Wood, Craig Plummer and Herley Walker. Standing are NIB Rehabilitation Engineers Casmir Usiatynski and Georgina Dottin.



Georgina Dottin discusses new work station layout with Herley Walker at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Continued from page 7

Many rehabilitation engineers are involved in direct service delivery. They work with individual employees to determine what changes may have to be made to a workplace in order to succeed on the job. They recommend, modify and design equipment to help increase an employee's function, output, comfort, safety and independence. They also consider efficient plant layout and strategic placement of all components to eliminate excessive motion. To be effective, the rehabilitation engineers must stay abreast of new technologies and assistive devices.

To assist associated agencies in improving the productivity and output of its employees, particularly those with severe disabilities in addition to blindness, NIB started a rehabilitation engineering program a year ago under the direction of Dan Abatemarco, director of compliance and regulatory affairs. The initial focus of two rehabilitation engineers — Casmir Usiatynski and Georgina Dottin — has been on improving the productivity of blind employees with developmental disabilities.

Key to increasing productivity of employees with multiple disabilities is a focus on teamwork and cross-functional communication development within an organization. Each employee's workstation should be designed to maximize his or her abilities, followed up by one-on-one training. In

“He involved the people and came up with a great solution.”

David Hampton,
senior director,
human resources,
Winston-Salem Industries
for the Blind



Photos above and below: NIB rehabilitation engineers worked with staff at the Cloverbrook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio, to test new jigs in their industrial folders area which, when finished, will lead to equipment recommendations, new area layout, increased productivity, and increased space for additional blind labor.



some cases, the job is restructured and additional support services are recommended. The employee benefits from increased production output and higher wages, in addition to enhanced job comfort. The agency gains from increased profitability through better material flow, process optimization, staff training, a fresh appearance to the workplace, improved ergonomics and safety, and measurements to gauge success.

The results of the rehabilitation engineering program have been impressive. In some cases, employee output increased as much as 15 to 40 percent through workstation modifications and method changes recommended by Usiatynski and Dottin and implemented by staff at the associated agencies.

Adaptations Enhance Efficiency

At the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Utica, New York, Usiatynski designed and built a customized jig for the agency's rubber band counting and bagging operation that increased productivity by more than 35 percent. The jig also provided significant training and work opportunities for employees who were once unable to carry out the tasks on this contract. Now they perform 100 percent of these tasks independently.

Usiatynski also recommended process improvements for the sponge-cutting operation at Mississippi Industries



A jig improved production output by 40 percent for Phyllis Salerno at the Elizabeth Pierce Olmsted, MD Center for the Visually Impaired, Buffalo, New York. Before improvements were made, a cuff for a shirt sleeve was inverted by hand.

for the Blind (MIB) in Jackson, Mississippi, resulting in a 44 percent increase in production output. Also jobs previously done by sighted operators were converted to jobs that could be and are now done by people who are blind. Roy Granger, deputy director of operations at MIB, said that Usiatynski “improved two line operations within our sponge department. His ideas were excellent.”

At ABVI-Goodwill Industries, Rochester, New York, Usiatynski designed and built a custom jig for packaging 3M memo pads. And at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB) in North Carolina, Usiatynski devised and fabricated an enhanced system to improve the plant’s highlighter marker process efficiencies, resulting in greater productivity, decreased material handling and improved workplace presentation.

“He involved the people and came up with a great solution,” said David Hampton, senior director, human resources, WSIFB. “This is a great service that NIB offers.”

Although projected efficiency gains were estimated at 40 to 50 percent, the actual increase after WSIFB implemented the recommendations was 200 percent. This has proven that even agencies with appropriate engineering staff in place can benefit from rehabilitation engineering services because these services spotlight a specific area that may be overlooked in the busy day-to-day production routine.

Working with the staff at the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas, Dottin designed and implemented an in-process quality control Go/No-Go gauge at the marker



After the jig was in place, the cuff was placed on it and inverted by placing a rod through the jig.

injection molding operation. The gauge enabled employees to quickly and easily check the critical characteristics of the product, implement proactive corrective actions and thus reduce the number of defective products going into the assembly process.

Lyn Cossey, senior director of operations, stated, "I'm confident that instituting the recommendations will increase production, improve efficiency, streamline workflow, enhance lean manufacturing to reduce work in process, increase operator morale and enhance operators' ability to perform their jobs."

At Wiscraft in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dottin assessed their Briggs and Stratton shroud line and recommended several process improvements. She also assisted in designing and building an assembly jig that improved employee production output by more than 125 percent. Jim Kerlin, CEO of Wiscraft, said to Dottin, "Not only did you measurably improve the process efficiency, but you also set a new standard for process engineering. Thanks again and come back soon."

Teaming Up for the Best Results

Usiatynski and Dottin function as a team. A graduate of the Rochester Institute of Technology, Usiatynski has more than 15 years' experience helping people with severe disabilities succeed at work through the use of assistive technology and training. He has developed practical and cost-efficient solutions and excels at providing worksite inclusion for individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities. He is a member of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. Dottin's industrial engineering degree, coupled with her experience at large corporations, brings expertise in

lean manufacturing, process flow and plant layout into their evaluations and recommendations. She is a certified manufacturing engineer, certified quality improvement associate and an ISO/TS 16949 internal lead auditor.

NIB Grants Fund Quality Work Environments

Funding to support the recommendations of NIB's rehabilitation engineers is available through NIB's Compensation and Productivity Improvement Grant Program. The grants help NIB associated agencies develop, implement and measure the success of specific projects to improve compensation and productivity of employees who are blind. NIB pays up to 80 percent of the cost of equipment, jigs, fixtures and other adaptive equipment, workplace ergonomic equipment and devices that directly improve employee productivity. In addition, NIB funds 80 percent of the cost of developing a course related to productivity improvements, hiring

a consultant to develop projects to improve productivity or hiring a trainer to train employees who are blind on new procedures, equipment, jigs, fixtures, other adaptive equipment or workplace ergonomic equipment/devices developed or purchased specifically to improve productivity. To date, 18 associated agencies have received more than \$590,000 in funding through this program.

A Valued Service

Feedback has shown that NIB's Rehabilitation Engineering Program is viewed as a valuable service, which provides a unique expertise and resource to the associated agencies. The program is moving forward with follow-up visits to encourage continuous improvement; collaborative work with associated agencies; and the development of training modules to highlight best practices, accommodations, ergonomic positioning and staff supports. ❖❖



At ABVI-Goodwill Industries, Rochester, New York, NIB rehabilitation engineers designed and built a jig for packaging 3M memo pads to enable David Sayre to perform the standard packaging procedures.

Collaboration is essential to compete in the global arena. Organizations build mutual trust, collaborate on mutually beneficial projects and partner with those who can make it happen.

In the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area, there are two well-established and very successful NIB associated agencies with similar missions, but with significant differences in the services they offer to people who are blind.

The Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) is headquartered in the downtown area, while the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is located 12 miles away in the suburbs.

Clovernook was founded in 1903 in farm country as a residential home for women who were blind. Early in its history, the organization started manufacturing and Braille printing. Today, Clovernook provides training and support for independent living, orientation and

mobility instruction, vocational training, job placement, employment, counseling, recreation and youth services out of offices in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Memphis, Tennessee.

CABVI was founded in 1910 to offer employment opportunities for men who are homeless and blind. It added rehabilitation to its services soon after it was incorporated. CABVI provides a full line of vision rehabilitation services for people of all ages, counseling, employment and information services to more than 4,000 persons annually.

Task Force Explores Opportunities

About a year ago, CABVI and Clovernook formed a Joint Planning Task Force (JPTF) to strategically explore how both agencies operate and to



Lisa Clark packs finished tapes from the tape converter at the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Ohio.



Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Norma Collins, utility worker who assembles file folders, Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Jennifer Holladay, one-on-one coordinator, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Ohio, manages a program matching clients with volunteers to meet clients' personal needs, such as shopping or reading mail.



Timur Tilman, press operator, Braille production department, Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio.

leverage their collective resources to promote improved efficiencies and create more cost-effective means of service delivery, while offering improved and greater levels of service to the community. Board and executive leadership from CABVI and Clovernook serve on the high-level task force, which meets regularly to identify which of their programs, when implemented collaboratively, will better serve people who are blind or visually impaired in their community.

Prior to the formation of the JPTF, the two agencies conducted a community needs assessment to find out what kind of sustainable programs and services were desirable to meet the needs of members of the community who are blind or visually impaired. Because the last assessment was conducted by

CABVI in 1986, the two organizations felt that creating a new profile of their clients would provide a more accurate picture if the organizations would pool data. The entire process took 18 months, and the results are helping Clovernook and CABVI to evaluate what each organization does best and to find ways to do it better. For example, the agencies are evaluating the possibility of working together on low vision services provided to the community.

CABVI and Clovernook are also jointly exploring new business development and collaborating with other disability and social service organizations in the area because they are finding that the collaboration is being well received by local donors, creates opportunities for positive stories in the media and makes the best use of

valuable resources. A good example of this is their teamwork on Contract Management Support (CMS) services, an opportunity available through the AbilityOne Program. According to Robin Usalis, president and CEO of Clovernook, "We have teamed together on the CMS opportunity where CABVI would provide training and Clovernook would handle placement of clients into CMS positions."

John Mitchell, executive director of CABVI, added, "Clovernook and CABVI are looking beyond our partnership to team up with local universities for project development and with other vision rehabilitation organizations in the state for grant monies. There are collaborating opportunities out there to grow the pie together, with benefits to both CABVI and Clovernook." ■■

A winning partnership capitalizes on the strength and skills of each partner. Small business owners have found that NIB associated agencies have opened new doors for them.



Janet Traxler, pen department, Industries for the Blind, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Smart small business owners reach beyond their own niche markets. They look for ways to participate in larger business opportunities by partnering with other companies. These alliances can lead to a number of benefits, such as expanding an organization's skill base so as not to be too dependent on one type of work, reducing marketing costs, finding work for each other and enhancing the development of new products and services. Many times, partnering affords small business owners much broader market reach and penetration into new customer markets, than they can achieve on their own. They can control operating costs by sharing projects and expenses. They share advertising and marketing costs and access an entirely new pool of customers. And they can scale up their businesses more quickly and more easily than they could on their own. The

business scenario typically requires a mutually beneficial value proposition, and many business relationships between small businesses and NIB associated agencies prove this point.

Two-Way Street

One long-lasting relationship has existed between Rotary Pen, a small manufacturer of pen parts located in New Jersey, and eight NIB associated agencies. The affiliation dates back to 1970 when Rotary Pen helped NIB and its associated agencies to design a black retractable ball point pen for the federal government. Today, more than 200 people who are blind produce over 55 million assorted writing instruments annually. The success of producing the black retractable pen, the first office product provided through the AbilityOne Program, served as the entry for NIB associated agencies into manufacturing a full line of office products that are provided to the federal government today. It also led to successful partnerships with other small business partners.

In a cooperative business relationship with Rocky Mountain Ram, a woman-owned small disadvantaged business operating out of Colorado, North Central Sight Services (NCSS) in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, started manufacturing a comprehensive line of computer flash drives. Added to the Procurement List in November of 2007, sales reached \$4 million the following year, creating eight jobs for people who are blind. Rocky Mountain Ram has worked closely with NCSS at trade

shows and provided advice on designs, technology and trends. In return, NCSS enabled Rocky Mountain Ram to significantly increase their sales with the federal government and to introduce encrypted products to this market.

ABM Federal is a service-disabled, veteran-owned AbilityOne distributor that specializes in IT hardware and consumable supplies. Becoming an AbilityOne distributor has enabled ABM Federal to expand from being just a toner business to offering AbilityOne office supplies as well as janitorial and sanitation products. According to Carol Harting, contract administration manager for ABM Federal, "Becoming an AbilityOne distributor has had a positive impact on our business... opening new doors with additional products and selling opportunities and new ways to service our customers."



Helen Jones, pen department, Industries of the Blind, Greensboro, North Carolina.

After nearly 30 years of service in the Army, retired Colonel Joe Adamczyk has a new mission — making employment of service-disabled veterans, veterans and people who are blind the mission of SDV Command Source. This small and disadvantaged, veteran-owned, small business partners with Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB) in North Carolina in optical eyewear manufacturing and services for the Veterans Administration and cut-and-sew dress uniform T-shirts for the United States Coast Guard. Adamczyk says that partnering with WSIFB allows his business to leverage experience and resources. Highly satisfied with this alliance, Adamczyk is seeking business relationships with other NIB associated agencies.

About three years ago, Bosma Enterprises in Indianapolis, Indiana, established a relationship with Cotton Medical Group (CMG). Owned by Eric Daily, a retired service-disabled Marine, CMG focuses on developing small and disadvantaged, veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) partnerships for Bosma.

CMG and Bosma provide federal customers with LED lighting, hearing aids and health and safety products. CMG carries the inventory and Bosma does the final assembly of the products, as well as warehousing, distribution and other services.

The relationship of small business with NIB associated agencies extends to supply stores operated on military bases. One such partnership exists between Glendale Products for Business and the three Focusworks stores operated by Arizona Industries for the Blind. Over the last decade, Glendale has been instrumental in assisting Focusworks stores to provide

military customers with essential products, such as sump pumps when the fighter wings at Luke Air Force Base were flooded, as well as specialized military helmets and materials used in weapon protection. In addition, Glendale has supplied Focusworks stores with the unique requirements of the Army National Guard to support their “going green” initiative.

Survey Shows Strong Partnerships

Results of a national survey of NIB associated agencies underscored the power of collaboration and partnership. Conducted in 2008, the survey showed that NIB associated agencies collaborated consistently with small businesses, creating an environment that is highly complementary, rather than competitive. A key finding was that NIB associated agencies purchased almost 42 percent of all raw materials and components from small businesses, nearly double the 23 percent small business procurement goal established by Congress for the federal government as a whole. Other results indicate that 67 percent of work subcontracted by NIB associated agencies was awarded to small businesses, and almost 67 percent of NIB associated agencies had served as a vendor or supplier to small businesses. In addition, more than 64 percent of the survey respondents stated that small businesses had served as partners in developing new projects, and 55 percent claim that small businesses had assisted them as sources of adaptive technology or equipment.

Whatever the business relationship, NIB associated agencies are teaming up more and more with small businesses with complementary capabilities to achieve their mission, expand their business and provide customers with

best value solutions. The benefits are enormous to both organizations. It's a two-way street — a road that has led to many successful, long-lasting business relationships. ■■



Carolyn Cook, production employee, performs kitting work brought to Bosma Enterprises, Indianapolis, Indiana, through the efforts of Cotton Medical Group.



John Thomas (foreground) and Don Long, optical lab, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



Nathan Shafer, North Central Sight Services, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

2010 NIB/NAEPB Annual Training Conference: Instruction, Inspiration and Recognition



The 2010 NIB/NAEPB Annual Training Conference, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 6-8, attracted nearly 500 attendees who came to learn, network and get invigorated for the new fiscal year. The conference theme, "AbilityOne: People Make It Happen," was played out through inspiring and informative presentations from government and industry leaders, keynote speakers and NIB associated agency employees of the year.

Two of NIB's 89 associated agencies, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI), led by Executive Director John Mitchell, and Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, led by President and CEO Robin Usalis, are based in Cincinnati and hosted conference attendees with tours of their facilities.

Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory gave welcoming remarks and read a special proclamation in honor of "AbilityOne: People Make It Happen Week"

in Cincinnati. He also recognized CABVI for its 100th anniversary.

Conference attendees were inspired by remarks from entrepreneur Scott Burrows, who wowed the audience with his personal life triumphs after a car accident 26 years ago left him diagnosed as a quadriplegic. Burrows challenged the audience to let go of fear; embrace failure as a learning experience; and maintain their vision, mind-set and grit!

Keynote speaker Romel Joseph, blind Haitian violinist and earthquake survivor, told a tale of renewal and triumph after personal tragedy. He is the founder and executive director of the Walenstein Musical Organization, which brings music education to students in South Florida, as well as The New Victorian School in Port-au-Prince.

Author and motivational speaker Larry Johnson spoke to employees of the year and others about concepts from

his recent book, noting that success and happiness are a matter of attitude and a matter of choice. He said they rest on our ability to learn to rebound from adversity and follow our dreams.

Also during the conference, Kevin A. Lynch, NIB president and CEO, spoke about the growth in new jobs achieved during fiscal year 2010, and Andy Houghton, chairperson, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, emphasized employment opportunities as the top priority for the Committee and stressed the importance of collaboration among agencies working in the AbilityOne Program. Houghton and others from the Committee participated in a roundtable luncheon panel discussion.

Patrick Queen, senior administrative contracting officer, General Services Administration (GSA), briefed attendees about how GSA and the AbilityOne Program can work together to better serve the



Rep. Steve Driehaus (D-1st-OH), pictured at center, received the NIB Spirit of Independence award in recognition of his commitment to advancing economic and personal independence for people who are blind. The award was presented by NIB President and CEO Kevin A. Lynch and Robin Usalis, president and CEO, Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



Irwin Award winner Brenda Gumbs, vice president, human resources, Perfetti Van Melle, is applauded by her husband, Lenny, as she receives a crystal eagle in recognition of her many years of service on the NIB Board.



Pictured left to right: James A. Kutsch, Jr., chairman, NIB Board of Directors; Salmon Award winner Joyce Talbert, Bosma Enterprises; Kevin A. Lynch, NIB president and CEO.



Employee of the Year panelists, pictured left to right: Christina Tran, The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired; Ernest “Duane” Deel, Lions Volunteer Blind Industries; moderator Brian Hurley, NIB external affairs program director; John James, Louisiana Association for the Blind; and Michael Guajardo, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind.

federal government community. Other conference sessions focused on topics such as how agencies can weather the change and achieve the growth needed to enhance employment opportunities for people who are blind, how to grow fundraising operations, how agencies can prepare for Quality Work Environment implementation, and how Internal Revenue Service initiatives educate taxpayers with disabilities.

The conference provided an opportunity for attendees to celebrate and recognize the 65 Employee of the Year nominees from NIB associated agencies. Joyce Talbert, production team member, Bosma Enterprises, won the 2010 Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award. The Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award went to Kenneth Fountain, base supply center store manager, U.S. Department of Treasury, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind. In addition, Brenda Gumbs, vice president, human resources, Perfetti Van Melle, won the 2010 R.B. Irwin Award, which recognizes a volunteer or a professional who has made a significant impact on creating and improving employment for people who are blind. The award winners were recognized at a banquet.

A panel of four Employee of the Year nominees gave voice to the

conference theme, speaking from the heart about what it meant to overcome obstacles related to blindness and to achieve their dreams.

“I see blindness as merely an inconvenience, not a handicap,” said John James, tech support/customer service representative, Louisiana Association for the Blind. He said the general public does not realize how people who are blind can do anything they set out to do.

Ernest “Duane” Deel, sewing machine operator, Lions Volunteer Blind Industries, noted that it was important to set short-term and long-term goals and to keep them out in front of you to stay motivated.

Michael Guajardo, technology trainer, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, encouraged the audience to “be an advocate and educate people” and to let employers know that you are capable of doing the job – there is always a solution through developing technology.

Christina Tran, service manager, Recipient Identification Number Program, The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired, urged people to think outside the box about career choices, job options or social opportunities. “Go out

and seek information, ask other people, do your research, talk with professionals about career options. Remember not to limit yourself,” said Tran.

A pre-conference communications seminar October 5-6, focused on “AbilityOne: Telling Our Story” and provided practical, hands-on information for 62 participants who learned how to construct a strategic communications plan as well as the value of a crisis communications plan. Attendees examined practical applications through best practices case studies and reviewed steps to developing successful social media strategies. ■■



Pictured left to right: James A. Kutsch, Jr., chairman, NIB Board of Directors; Samuelson Award winner Kenneth Fountain, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind; Kevin A. Lynch, NIB president and CEO.

Call Center Jobs Created at Travis Air Force Base

The Air Force Air Mobility Command (AMC) selected Travis Air Force Base in California as the site for their Telephone Operator Consolidated Call Center (TOCCC). Upon completion of the consolidation in March 2011, this call center will serve nine air bases across the country and will enable AMC to provide consistent service at a lower cost.

AMC Headquarters and Travis have worked closely with NIB and its associated agency, NewView Oklahoma, to hire additional employees who are blind to receive calls and route them to the proper destination using JAWS (Job Access With Speech) and Zoom Text software. In the first 10 months of operation, the call center has created more than 20 job opportunities for people who are blind as operators, supervisors and a program manager.

U.S. Rep. Dan Lungren (R-3rd-CA), who has taken a keen interest in how



Rep. Dan Lungren is pictured at right greeting call center employees at Travis Air Force Base.

people who are blind support the airmen and women at the base, toured the new call center last August.

“The new call center at Travis AFB is extremely impressive,” Lungren said. “This would be a great pilot program to show many other businesses and organizations across the country that people who are blind can do the job.”

Lundgren also visited the Base Supply Center (BSC) at Travis AFB supported by South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, where approximately 40 percent of the items stocked are SKILCRAFT® or other products produced through the AbilityOne Program.

Both facilities are staffed by people who are blind. ❧

Decorated Veteran Honored for Helping People Who Are Blind Find Employment

Army Master Sergeant (MSG) Jeffrey Mittman received national recognition for his commitment to creating employment opportunities for people who are blind. On October 27, 2010, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled presented MSG Mittman with the 2010 Osborne A. “Oz” Day AbilityOne Awareness Award.

The prestigious “Oz Day” award is presented to a federal or military employee who demonstrates exceptional service in promoting the AbilityOne Program’s employment

opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled.

MSG Mittman, who was blinded and suffered devastating injuries in Iraq from an improvised explosive device (IED) in 2005, is detailed to NIB through the Warrior in Transition Program as NIB’s national account manager for the Midwest Region. This program allows him to prepare to transition into a civilian career upon retirement from the Army.

The award is named in honor of Osborne A. “Oz” Day, who served



Chairperson of the Committee for Purchase Andrew Houghton (left) with Jeff Mittman and Tess Day, widow of the late Oz Day.

as a private citizen member of the Committee from 2005 to 2008. Day provided critical leadership in communicating the AbilityOne message to federal customers and the general public. His service was the culmination of a lifelong career of advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. ❧

Georgia Industries for the Blind Delivers Package Reclamation Services

After the successful addition of package reclamation to the Procurement List, Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) launched the new service on July 1, 2010 at the Defense Distribution Center in Warner Robins, Georgia.



Stanley Parham, an employee at Georgia Industries for the Blind, provides package reclamation service at Robins Air Force Base.

GIB is supporting the growing demand for this program first introduced by Utah Industries for the Blind in 1987 at the Defense Logistics Agency's depot at Hill Air Force Base.

Package reclamation, a box repair service, has evolved due to the high cost of quality packaging products. It is more cost-effective to repair and re-use specialized fiberboard boxes, such

as the fast-pack boxes produced through the AbilityOne Program by Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth in Texas, than to discard and replace them.

The GIB package reclamation team receives and sorts the boxes, disposes of the damaged and irreparable ones and sanitizes the others through label removal and surface restoration by spray-painting or relabeling. The team's five new employees, four of whom are visually impaired, have been commended for their ability to enhance efficiencies in production and reduce shipping times. ❖

In Memoriam: Joseph Roeder: 1946-2010

The NIB team was saddened last October at the passing of their colleague, Joseph Roeder, who had served as senior access technology specialist at NIB since 1997. Roeder had 40 years of experience in the fields of design engineering, electronic information systems, training and business management, including experience as a mechanical and nuclear engineer at Bechtel Power Corporation. He was instrumental in the development of Section 508 of the Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards, which requires all federal government agencies to provide accessible data and information for employees with disabilities. NIB is creating a scholarship fund for individuals who are blind interested in pursuing education in access technology. ❖



Joseph Roeder, senior access technology specialist, NIB.

NDEAM Celebrated with Presidential Proclamation, Defense Customer Events

President Barack Obama focused attention on National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October with a proclamation that stated his commitment to expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of keeping America competitive in the current global economy by maintaining a highly educated workforce that has access to technology.

In the proclamation, President Obama highlighted the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 and his belief that signing the bill into law will improve opportunities for people with disabilities to learn and work in our technological society. He signed the bill on October 8, 2010.

NIB participated in several AbilityOne Program customer events at Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) facilities last fall, where NIB associated agencies showcased the products they sell to U.S. military customers. NDEAM events were held at DLA Troop Support in Philadelphia on October 13; DLA Aviation in Richmond, Virginia, on October 19; and DLA Land and Maritime in Columbus, Ohio, on November 18. NIB was also represented at an NDEAM event on November 30 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. ❖



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This is an excellent opportunity for NIB associated agency representatives, employees and industry leaders to hear first-hand from policymakers on issues affecting people who are blind and to make their voices part of the legislative process through visits with members of Congress on Capitol Hill.