

# OPPORTUNITY

Volume 9 | Issue 1 | Winter 2016

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## Beyond the Basics

Rehabilitation services at NIB associated agencies provide more than basic skills

**Special Insert**

### National Reach

Foldout map shows nationwide network of NIB associated nonprofit agencies

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### Walking the Walk

Congressman Sanford Bishop's support is evident in word and deed

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### Focused. Proven. Ready.

NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo recognizes performance excellence

Meet Jonathan Ladapo, an associate professor at North Carolina Central University and graduate of the rehabilitation program at RLCB in Raleigh.

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# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As the leading employment resource for people who are blind, NIB is best known for the work our associated agencies do to provide high quality SKILCRAFT® products and services to our customers. But our agencies do more than provide employment – they often provide a lifeline.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rank blindness and vision loss among the top ten disabilities affecting adults in the United States and estimate the number of adults with vision impairment will double in the next 30 years, due in part to age-related eye diseases like glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

Historically, losing one's eyesight has been daunting: it can lead to economic hardship and even job loss. Although technology is now giving people who are blind or visually impaired more opportunities to shape their own destiny, adjusting to life with low or no vision still takes diligence and hard work.

In addition to providing employment opportunities, our associated agencies have a long history of providing rehabilitative services to help people who are blind or visually impaired take on that hard work. In fact, many of our agencies evolved from

programs established in the early 1900s to provide services and life skills to people who are blind.

In this issue of *Opportunity* you'll read about how NIB associated agencies are not only employing people who are blind or visually impaired, but how rehabilitation professionals at our agencies are helping to save the established careers of people experiencing vision loss due to accidents or degenerative diseases.

Throughout the U.S., our agencies provide a spectrum of services, from psycho-social support to help people accept their changing vision, to orientation and mobility courses that teach safe travel in small towns or large cities, to the latest in assistive technology, all designed to help people who are blind or experiencing vision loss lead full, productive and independent lives.

At NIB our vision is a world where blindness is not a barrier to employment. Every day, our associated agencies are making that vision a reality.



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

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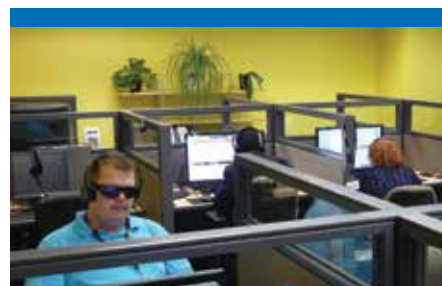
NIB associated agencies leverage national awareness events to educate influencers and members of their local communities.



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Attendees at the 2015 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo recognize performance excellence and share proven strategies for mission success.



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Lighthouse Central Florida helps people who are blind navigate the working world and provides quality products and services.



# WALKING THE WALK

**Congressman Sanford D. Bishop's support is evident in word and deed.**

BY RICK WEBSTER

Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., currently in his twelfth term serving the people of Georgia's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, has proven a great friend and supporter of both Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) and the AbilityOne® Program. The Congressman, whose district covers 29 counties in central and southwest Georgia, demonstrates his commitment in both word and deed.

Rep. Bishop takes pride in being a fiscally responsible Democrat and strong supporter of our nation's military; there are several major military installations in his district, including some with AbilityOne Base Supply Centers. He is also a champion for retaining the commissary benefit for active duty military, retirees and reservists. Bishop's support recognizes not only the important assistance the commissary benefit provides to military families, but also how it supports employment for several hundred people who are blind working in military resale at more than a dozen NIB associated nonprofit agencies.

As a leader who prefers to work in a bipartisan manner to reduce the federal budget deficit and get Americans back to work, Rep. Bishop fully appreciates the AbilityOne Program as a cost-effective program that leverages federal spending on goods and services to help provide quality employment opportunities for people who are blind or have a significant disability. Over the years, he has provided leadership and become directly involved on a range of issues benefiting people who are blind, both

at Georgia Industries for the Blind and throughout the country.

Among the actions Rep. Bishop has taken are serving as co-lead on a bipartisan letter raising concerns with a federal agency, authoring language



▲ Rep. Sanford Bishop has been a consistent supporter of efforts to expand employment opportunities for people who are blind.

**The strong support of Rep. Bishop is critical to helping NIB advance its mission to grow employment opportunities for people who are blind.**

— Kevin Lynch  
NIB President and CEO

in legislation supporting the AbilityOne Program and speaking out publicly at the markup of a spending bill to voice concerns about language that could harm the program.

Just as importantly, Rep. Bishop is supportive of GIB in its work with individual federal customers to ensure Georgians in the Second District who are blind have opportunities for meaningful work and financial independence.

Rep. Bishop's dedication is reflected by the members of his hard-working staff, both in Washington and in Georgia, who are extraordinarily supportive and responsive, not only taking calls and meeting with representatives of GIB and NIB, but offering ideas and solutions to promote the interests of people who are blind.

Last August, NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch met with Rep. Bishop at Georgia Industries for the Blind during the NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum. After touring the facilities with the Congressman and GIB's leadership, Lynch presented Bishop with a special tactile U.S. flag in recognition of his consistent and exceptional support for expanding employment opportunities for people who are blind.

A resident of Albany, Georgia, Rep. Bishop graduated from Morehouse College in 1968 and from Emory University Law School in 1971. Before entering Congress, he served in both the Georgia House of Representatives and Georgia Senate for a total of fifteen years. ▣


*Rick Webster is vice president, public policy at National Industries for the Blind.*

# AWARENESS EVENTS EMPHASIZE ABILITIES

**NIB associated agencies leverage national awareness events to educate influencers and members of their local communities.**

BY MARIA EGAN

NIB associated agencies and AbilityOne Base Supply Centers celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October with special events and informative posts on social media. This year's theme, *My Disability is One Part of Who I Am*, encouraged employers to look beyond the surface and recognize the capabilities and contributions that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.

In addition to recognizing NDEAM, NIB associated agencies held or participated in events throughout the U.S. to educate the world about vision loss and acknowledge the abilities of people who are blind on White Cane Safety Day, October 15. Among agency activities, a team of employees from Outlook Nebraska chose to celebrate the day by giving back to the community, preparing 250 sack lunches for the hungry and homeless at the Open Door Mission in Omaha. NewView Oklahoma joined with the Heartland Council of the Blind to host a walk for members of the public through Oklahoma City's Bricktown area, allowing participants to experience first-hand how people who are blind or visually impaired travel on sidewalks, cross streets with audible signals, and independently and confidently go wherever they need to go. 

*Maria Egan is a communications specialist at National Industries for the Blind.*



# GROWTH POTENTIAL

**As government and the private sector focus on safeguarding networks and data against hackers, an NIB pilot program is preparing people who are blind for upwardly mobile careers in a high-demand industry.**

BY BRYAN LALLY

Brandon Miller was 10 years old when he first became interested in how computers work. After high school, he completed Microsoft's Certified Systems Engineering course and in 2006 started a consulting company, producing braille materials for school districts. But when the state eliminated the department that was his primary client, Miller dissolved his company.

After trying his hand at telemarketing, Miller contacted NIB associated nonprofit agency NewView Oklahoma, which hired him as a switchboard operator at Travis Air Force Base, where he provides communication connections for bases across the country. After five years in the position, Miller is now preparing for a new challenge – working in cybersecurity.

Miller is one of 20 people who are blind enrolled in an NIB pilot program providing training for careers in cybersecurity. The program prepares participants to take and pass the Computer Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) exams for A+ certification.

## A Growing Threat

In today's connected world, the Internet touches almost every aspect of daily life, whether we realize it or not. Sensitive information stored in computer systems is a tempting target for hackers, who take advantage of security vulnerabilities to steal personal data or other confidential information.

**"America's economic prosperity, national security, and our individual liberties depend on our commitment to securing cyberspace and maintaining an open, interoperable, secure and reliable Internet."**

— President Barack Obama  
Feb. 13, 2015

Assaults can range from hacks of retailers that compromise the personal information of hundreds of thousands of customers, to the massive attack on the federal government's Office of Personnel Management, which exposed the personal information of up to 21.5 million current and former federal employees and government contractors.

But hackers threaten to harm more than individuals. According to the Department of Defense (DOD), state and non-state actors daily threaten disruptive and destructive attacks against the U.S. and conduct cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property to undercut our country's technological and military advantage. In testimony before Congress, Eric Rosenbach, Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense, explained "External actors probe and scan DOD networks for vulnerabilities millions of times each day, and over one hundred foreign intelligence agencies continually attempt to infiltrate DOD networks."

## A Growth Industry

Given the increasing threats, the field of cybersecurity offers good long-term job prospects. According to a report by Peninsula Press, cybersecurity job postings have increased 74 percent in the last five years, and more than 209,000 cybersecurity jobs are unfilled.

"Thanks to advances in assistive technology, cybersecurity is a promising new field for people who are blind," explains NIB services specialist Keith Fahey, program manager for the pilot. "It offers opportunities in high-demand positions with upward career mobility."

DOD already spends well over \$1 billion annually on cybersecurity. Director of Services Development Paul Diamonti said NIB has identified 25 potential opportunities to employ program graduates.

Miller, who has first-hand experience with security breaches – hackers have twice gained access to his personal





▲ Brandon Miller, a switchboard operator at Travis Air Force Base in California, is looking forward to a new career in cybersecurity when he completes the NIB training program.

information – is looking forward to being part of the solution. “Breaches happen on a continual basis” he said. “We can’t allow it to go on. If there’s something we can do to stop it, I’m happy to work on it.”

### Basic Training

The cybersecurity training program concentrates on meeting the first of three levels of baseline certification, the A+ certification, which requires mastery of skills typically associated with computer technicians – hands-on work with hardware and software in support of an organization’s IT infrastructure. Those meeting Level 1 criteria have the potential, with further training and experience, to work as database administrators, support specialists and systems administrators.

The training program curriculum – which provides instruction on operating systems and computing environments, including software, hardware and mobile computing – was designed for online presentation. NIB Employment

Support Services Program Director Billy Parker explains online presentation not only removes geographic location as an obstacle to training, but also allows participants to continue in their current jobs while preparing for a new career in cybersecurity.

In addition to being legally blind, program participants must have an undergraduate degree or comparable experience, and pass an aptitude assessment to demonstrate mastery of the assistive technologies needed to perform the work; preference is given to those proficient in the Microsoft Office Suite. So far, many participants have had experience working as application developers or help desk technicians.

Participants enter the program on a staggered basis, with 18 candidates enrolled and active at the end of 2015. Of those, seven have taken and passed the first A+ exam and two have passed both exams and received A+ certification.

### A Bright Horizon

Miller, who recently passed the first of two exams needed for his A+ certification, said the experience has been very positive “Because it’s on-demand, I can log in any time and access the materials, or talk to mentors who’ve already passed the A+ exam.” As a DOD contractor, Miller has the advantage of already having a security clearance, which should speed up the job placement process. But he sees career opportunities beyond DOD in his future, possibly with a company like Google or Mozilla.

Miller is not alone in that vision. As more people complete the training, NIB hopes to grow the program to include agencies beyond DOD, preparing graduates for competitive employment in a variety of government agencies and industries such as finance, healthcare and consulting. ▣

*Bryan Lally is a freelance writer based in Portland, Oregon.*

# BEYOND THE BASICS

**Rehabilitation programs at NIB associated agencies provide more than basic skills; they give people living with vision loss the confidence to “walk into a room and own it.”**

BY SHARON HARRIGAN



Bruce Howell was 53 years old when he entered The Carroll Center for the Blind's 12-week residential rehabilitation program in Newton, Massachusetts. Diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa as a child, he persevered to graduate from college and have a full career as a senior officer in the banking industry even as his eyesight deteriorated. By age 37, though, he was legally blind.

Like many people, Howell patched together work-arounds to handle his vision loss, such as using magnifiers to enlarge computer images and relying on family members for transportation. But by 2007, Howell says, his wife had reached the end of her rope. She found The Carroll Center and the couple attended a general presentation there not long after. “I knew instantly that this was the place for me,” recalls Howell. “They helped me learn the skills I desperately needed. But more importantly, they got me the counseling I wasn’t able to admit I needed to accept my vision loss.”

The Carroll Center's Independent Living program helps people who have lost their vision adjust to blindness through classes like safe travel (orientation and mobility), adaptive home management and self-care, health and information management, assistive technology and, most important, counseling and adjustment to blindness. All students start with a two-week evaluation to assess current skills in daily living, travel and utilization of any remaining vision. Students who intend to return to work are also assessed for vocational readiness.

The residential setting of the program, says Dina Rosenbaum, chief program officer at the Carroll Center, has an added benefit. “We find that the experience of living with your peers builds life-long friendships,” she says. “New folks come into the program every two weeks, and we see how students who have been in the program longer become mentors, taking the new students under their wings and really supporting them emotionally.” Students participating in the center's programs pay nothing; rehabilitation costs are covered by the state and through fundraising. About 20,000 clients, some of whom have returned for multiple training experiences, have used the services since The Carroll Center's opening in 1954.

Howell is among those who returned for additional training. He stayed on for a two-week JAWS training program immediately after completing the 12-week residential program and returned two years later for a six-week program designed to help people who are blind or visually impaired re-enter the workforce

▶ When Jonathan Ladapo, an assistant professor in the biological and biomedical sciences department at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), lost his vision to glaucoma, rehabilitation specialists at RLCB in Raleigh helped him learn to navigate the classroom. Ladapo is now a tenured associate professor at NCCU.



## Improving Mobility

One of Howell's biggest goals for the 12-week residential program was to improve his mobility. "I wanted to be able to get from Newton to Logan Airport using public transportation," he said. By the end of the 12 weeks, he did just that, an experience he considers one of his most significant accomplishments.

Howell likens his rehabilitation experience to a jigsaw puzzle – at first, each new skill seemed unrelated to the others, but then the pieces started fitting together. He recalls making a bird house in the program's woodshop class. "I learned how to use my hands and visualize what I wanted to achieve, what kind of birds I wanted to attract," says Howell. Later, he took those visualization skills to the subway station, where he visualized the turnstile and the raised edge of the platform, all while blindfolded.

When he returned for the six-week workforce re-entry program, Howell learned Outlook, the Microsoft Office suite and how to explore the Internet. The program concludes with participation in an on- or off-campus internship. Opting for the latter, Howell talked his way into a one-day-a-week internship that eventually became a full-time job as an employment services coordinator in downtown Boston, where he led 33 job developers helping people with disabilities find jobs in the area. During his three years with the organization, Howell commuted from Needham, Massachusetts, on a daily basis. In 2012, he returned to The Carroll Center and now works full-time as its web accessibility manager.

## Saving Jobs

The Carroll Center is just one of many NIB associated agencies whose rehabilitation services change the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired – and in many cases, help them save their jobs or find new ones. "Rehabilitation training opens a whole new world," says Janet Griffey, president and CEO of RLCB in Raleigh, North Carolina. "We recently worked with a 98-year-old woman with low vision. She wanted to learn how to send emails to her great-grandkids, so she could stay in contact with them. Now they send her pictures and keep her up-to-date with their lives."

RLCB provides mostly customized, one-on-one rehabilitation training, but does offer occasional small seminars on new accessibility tools – 12 students recently attended a seminar on the new iPhone. Griffey estimates the agency's rehabilitation specialists serve 45-50 students who are blind or visually impaired each quarter, providing services that are making a difference.

"We worked with Craig Brown, a judge in Raleigh who quit his job because of his vision loss," recalls Griffey. "Then he found us. We worked with him for two years, helping him adjust to living without vision. Today he works as an attorney for Legal Aid in Raleigh."

*Continued on page 10*



▲ Bruce Howell (left) advises student Brian Switzer at The Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Massachusetts. Once a client at the Carroll Center, Howell is now the agency's web accessibility manager.



▲ Judge Craig Brown stepped down from the bench after losing his vision, but with the help of RLCB's rehabilitation center learned to live and operate independently. He now specializes in landlord-tenant and employment law issues as a staff attorney at Legal Aid of North Carolina in Raleigh and serves on the advisory board of the Duke University Eye Center.

## BEYOND THE BASICS

Continued from page 9



▲ Kim Graham, access technology program director at the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, provides instruction on using Zoomtext software to Warren Knight (foreground) and David Goldstein, students in the agency's Computer Access Technology program.

"We have worked with individuals from all walks of life – from attorneys to bankers – helping them learn the adaptive technologies they need to help them keep their jobs," says Griffey. "It's the best feeling in the world."

RLCB also worked with Nigerian-born Jonathan Adedaja Ladapo, a college professor diagnosed with bilateral open-angle glaucoma shortly after earning his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1990. Despite several surgeries intended to correct – or at least slow – progression of the disease, Ladapo lost his vision entirely in 2011. After losing his vision, he struggled with his duties as an assistant professor at North Carolina Central University in Durham. Although he had the same knowledge as when he was sighted, he was at a loss for how to transition into a world without sight. He knew little about adaptive technology and was at risk of losing his job.

Ladapo contacted RLCB and started working with rehabilitation specialists in 2012. He learned to use JAWS, and received extensive training on keyboarding and emailing, and in using the Microsoft Office suite, including Word and PowerPoint. The training not only helped Ladapo keep his job, he was promoted to associate professor and received tenure.

"Jonathan is a shining example, to his community and in his classroom, that blindness does not need to be a disability," says Griffey. "RLCB's mission is to empower people who are blind and visually impaired through employment opportunities and services to achieve social and economic



▲ Michelle Fouche (left) and Cherie McKnight (center) practice reading braille with instructor Anica Zlotescu (right) as part of the Comprehensive Orientation, Rehabilitation and Empowerment (CORE) program at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland.

equality. Our vision is to eliminate blindness as a disability. Jonathan exemplifies both our mission and our vision."

### Fine Tuning

Staff at the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) – an affiliate of Keystone Blind Association in Chester, Pennsylvania – are contacted nearly weekly to help save a job in jeopardy, says Rosemary Keefe, communications coordinator at CBVI.

"We've recently worked with a mortgage broker, a college professor, a crisis specialist and an electrical engineer," says Kim Graham, CBVI's access technology program director. "With the appropriate assistive technologies and some new skills, all were able to remain in their jobs."

Graham notes that in some cases, CBVI works with people who are blind or visually impaired to fine-tune existing skills. Patricia Kelly, who has been visually impaired for most of her life, enjoyed her work at Handi-Crafters, a social services organization in Thorndale, Pennsylvania. But not long ago, she found her job changed when Handi-Crafters cut some clerical staff and introduced a new database. Recognizing the need to become more technically proficient to keep her job, Kelly turned to CBVI. The team taught her to use Adobe Acrobat and a braille embosser to convert text to braille, and helped update her JAWS skills. Within weeks, she no longer struggled to keep up with her peers.

CBVI's extensive, personalized rehabilitation services include home visits, quality-of-life instruction, and home



management and communication skills. Clients who want to enter or remain in the workforce receive extensive training in appropriate access technologies, including screen readers and magnifiers, and relevant position-specific computer skills. In addition to computer classes held at the center, rehabilitation specialists go into schools and workplaces to support clients. The agency has worked with greater Philadelphia area employers ranging from Comcast and FedEx to Lockheed Martin and Villanova University.

Asked about the duration of rehabilitation services, Keefe explained “it takes as long as it takes. We work with people until they feel confident in the skills they have learned.” Rehabilitation services are paid for through state-funded programs for the blind and supported by the sale of SKILCRAFT® products and services, as well as state and federal grants and fundraising.

### Building Confidence

Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) in Washington, D.C., offers comprehensive rehabilitation services designed not only to help people who are blind or visually impaired learn the skills needed to meet their personal and professional goals, but also to help build confidence. “Twenty one percent of Americans age 65 and older are visually impaired or blind,” explains Jocelyn Hunter, director of communications at CLB. “Many feel isolated and lack independence and mobility. Our services help them get that back.”

Like other NIB associated agencies offering rehabilitation services, CLB’s orientation and mobility training, independent living skills and braille training are provided at no cost. “We do a full intake for each client that helps us determine what kind of services to provide,” says Brandon Cox, CLB’s senior director of rehabilitation services. Caseworkers make sure clients have enough food and stability to start the program and assess residual vision to help them utilize magnifiers, CCTVs and other optical aides. Only then are clients ready to begin learning independent living skills. Other rehabilitation programs offered through CLB include navigating the Washington, D.C., subway and a six-week Foundations of Assistive Technology program.

The agency recently launched Job Squad, an eight-week program focusing on job readiness, where participants learn resume writing, networking, interviewing and job search skills. Cox hopes to have 30-40 people complete the program annually.

CLB has strong relationships with a number of employers in the area, including Andrews Air Force Base, the

U.S. Department of Education, the FBI, Discovery Communications, and Marriott. “We partner with employers who recognize the value of employing qualified individuals living with blindness or visual impairment,” Cox says.

For Andy McIver, director of rehabilitation at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM), building confidence is at the core of all of the agency’s rehabilitation services. In its 10-month residential program, developing mobility skills is a top priority. “Students live in a residence in downtown Baltimore and take public transportation to get to BISM headquarters every day,” says McIver. At first students travel with a certified mobility counselor, but within two or three weeks, most have mastered the commute.

Students in the program also hold jobs, which helps build confidence. McIver recalls one student, Dannell Johnson, who was a commercial baker before losing his vision. After finishing the BISM program, he landed a sanitation job with a company that pre-cooks ready-to-heat meals for various kitchens and cafes. “We worked closely with Dannell at his new workplace,” says McIver. “We stayed with him for a week to make sure he was prepped for success. And he was.”

But Johnson yearned to get back in the kitchen. And thanks to the BISM program, he had the confidence to call his employer at the commercial bakery and get his old job back.

“We want to get our students to the point that when they wake up in the morning, the first thing they think about is what to wear, not ‘I’m blind,’” says McIver. “We want – and I think I speak for everyone in this line of work – to get students to a place where they have the confidence to walk into a room and own it.” □

*Sharon Horrigan is a freelance writer based in Asheville, North Carolina.*



▲ Student Mike Borelli learns how to safely cook using nonvisual skills in an independent living class at the BISM Baltimore Rehabilitation CORE kitchen. All students in rehabilitation classes wear sleep shades to create a level playing field and to ensure those with degenerative diseases receive training that will last for their lifetime.





# NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF ASSOCIATED NONPROFIT AGENCIES

HEADQUARTERS AND SATELLITE LOCATIONS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2016



97 ASSOCIATED NONPROFIT AGENCIES IN 38 STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- ALABAMA**  
Alabama Industries for the Blind Talladega and Birmingham, AL
- ARIZONA**  
Arizona Industries for the Blind Phoenix, AZ  
Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired Tucson, AZ
- ARKANSAS**  
The Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind Little Rock, AR
- CALIFORNIA**  
Earle Baum Center of the Blind Inc. Santa Rosa, CA  
Junior Blind of America Los Angeles, CA  
Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired San Francisco, San Leandro, San Rafael, Berkeley, Eureka and Napa, CA  
Lions Center for the Blind Oakland, CA  
Valley Center for the Blind Fresno, CA
- DELAWARE**  
Delaware Industries for the Blind New Castle, DE
- DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind Washington, DC; Riverdale and Silver Spring, MD
- FLORIDA**  
Center for the Visually Impaired Inc. Daytona Beach, FL  
Florida Center for the Blind Inc. Ocala, FL  
Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches Inc. West Palm Beach, FL  
Lighthouse Works! Orlando, FL  
Lighthouse for Visually Impaired and Blind Port Richey, FL  
Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind Tampa, FL
- GEORGIA**  
Center for the Visually Impaired Atlanta, GA  
Georgia Industries for the Blind Bainbridge, Albany and Griffin, GA  
Vision Rehabilitation Services of Georgia Inc. Smyrna, GA
- HAWAII**  
Ho'opono Workshop for the Blind Honolulu, HI
- ILLINOIS**  
The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired Chicago, IL
- INDIANA**  
Bosma Enterprises Indianapolis, IN
- KANSAS**  
Envision Inc. Wichita, KS
- LOUISIANA**  
Blind Labor Training Center Inc. Bastrop, LA  
Louisiana Association for the Blind Shreveport, LA  
The Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans Inc. Baton Rouge and New Orleans, LA; Gulfport, MS
- MAINE**  
Lighthouse Industries of Maine Inc. Portland, ME
- MARYLAND**  
Blind Industries and Services of Maryland Baltimore, Cumberland and Salisbury, MD; Raleigh, NC  
Métier Services Inc. Rockville, MD
- MASSACHUSETTS**  
New England Employment Services for the Blind Dorchester, MA  
The Carroll Center for the Blind Inc. Newton, MA
- MICHIGAN**  
MidWest Enterprises for the Blind Inc. Kalamazoo, MI  
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Grand Rapids, MI
- MISSISSIPPI**  
Mississippi Industries for the Blind Jackson and Meridian, MS
- MISSOURI**  
Alphapointe Kansas City, MO and Brooklyn, NY  
The Lighthouse for the Blind Berkeley and St. Louis, MO
- NEBRASKA**  
Outlook Nebraska Inc. Omaha, NE
- NEVADA**  
Blind Center of Nevada Inc. Las Vegas, NV
- NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
Great North Woods Association for the Blind Colebrook, NH
- NEW JERSEY**  
Bestwork Industries for the Blind Inc. Cherry Hill, NJ  
Cambridge Industries for the Visually Impaired Somerset, NJ  
Everas Community Services Somerset, NJ
- NEW MEXICO**  
New Mexico Commission for the Blind Albuquerque, NM
- NEW YORK**  
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Goodwill Industries of Greater Rochester Inc. Rochester, NY  
Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Inc. Binghamton, NY  
Aurora of Central New York Syracuse, NY  
Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Utica, NY  
Elizabeth Pierce Olmsted, M.D. Center for the Visually Impaired Buffalo, NY  
Lighthouse International New York, NY  
Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany Albany, NY  
Southern Tier Association for the Visually Impaired Elmira, NY  
Visionary Media New York, NY  
VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired New York, NY
- NORTH CAROLINA**  
Industries of the Blind Inc. Greensboro, NC  
LC Industries Inc. Durham, NC; Daytona, FL; Louisville, KY; Hazlehurst, Jackson and Tupelo, MS  
Lions Industries for the Blind Inc. Kinston, NC  
Lions Services Inc. Charlotte, NC  
RLCB Inc. Raleigh, NC  
Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind Inc. Winston-Salem and Asheville, NC
- OHIO**  
Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Cincinnati, OH  
Cleveland Sight Center Cleveland, OH  
Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Cincinnati, OH and Memphis, TN
- OKLAHOMA**  
NewView Oklahoma Inc. Oklahoma City, OK
- OREGON**  
Blind Enterprises of Oregon Portland, OR
- PENNSYLVANIA**  
Associated Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired Philadelphia, PA  
Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh Homestead and Pittsburgh, PA  
Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Chester, PA  
Chester County Branch Inc. Pennsylvania Association for the Blind Coatesville, PA  
ForSight Vision York, PA  
Keystone Vocational Services Inc. Hermitage, Meadville, New Castle, PA and Sharon, PA  
North Central Sight Services Inc. Williamsport, PA  
VisionCorps Lancaster and Lebanon, PA  
Washington-Greene County Branch Pennsylvania Association for the Blind Washington, PA  
Westmoreland County Blind Association Greensburg, PA
- RHODE ISLAND**  
IN-SIGHT Warwick, RI
- SOUTH CAROLINA**  
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Charleston Charleston, SC
- TENNESSEE**  
Ed Lindsey Industries for the Blind Inc. Nashville, TN  
Lions Volunteer Blind Industries Inc. Johnson City and Morristown, TN
- TEXAS**  
Beacon Lighthouse Inc. Wichita Falls, TX  
Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. Dallas, TX  
El Paso Lighthouse for the Blind El Paso, TX  
East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind Tyler, TX  
Houston Industries for the Blind Houston, TX  
Tarrant County Association for the Blind Fort Worth, TX  
San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind San Antonio, TX  
South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind Corpus Christi and Victoria, TX  
The Lighthouse of Houston Houston, TX  
Travis Association for the Blind Austin and Taylor, TX  
West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind San Angelo, TX
- UTAH**  
Utah Industries for the Blind Salt Lake City, UT
- VIRGINIA**  
Virginia Industries for the Blind Charlottesville and Richmond, VA
- WASHINGTON**  
The Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. Seattle and Spokane, WA
- WEST VIRGINIA**  
The Seeing Hand Association Inc. Wheeling, WV
- WISCONSIN**  
Associated Industries for the Blind Inc. Milwaukee, WI  
Industries for the Blind Inc. West Allis and Janesville, WI; North Charleston, SC  
Wiscraft Inc. Milwaukee, WI



# FOCUSED. PROVEN. READY.

BY JENNIFER CLICK



▲ Carolyn O'Bryant, one of five employee of the year nominees who shared their stories of opportunity and growth with conference attendees.



▲ Visitors flocked to the NIB Marketplace to check out the latest SKILCRAFT® products, test drive the AbilityOne catalog online and speak with representatives of NIB's business development team.



▲ NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch presented the R.B. Irwin Award to Major General Hawthorne "Peet" Proctor, a former member of NIB's Board of Directors whose impact on the blindness community spans many years.



▲ Hundreds of conference attendees visited the Expo and NIB Marketplace featuring nearly 100 exhibitors.

With more than 800 registrants and nearly 100 vendors attending, the 2015 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo, held in Arlington, Virginia, was a huge success. The theme, "Focused. Proven. Ready." reflected the way NIB associated nonprofit agencies focus on mission success and leverage proven expertise to provide timely and efficient solutions for customers.

## General Session Provides an Exciting Start

Day one got off to an exciting start with the grand entrance of 76 employee of the year nominees. After opening remarks by NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch and NAEPB President Dennis Steiner, attendees enjoyed a video introduction to all 77 employee of the year nominees. Building on that sensational start to their day, employee of the year nominees and their guests headed into Washington, D.C., to visit some historic landmarks. After a tour of the U.S. Capitol and lunch in the Capitol Visitor Center, the group visited the President Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, a monument accessible to people of all abilities.

## Engaging Speakers at Thursday's General Session

Day two's agenda was packed with engaging speakers in the morning and informative breakout sessions in the afternoon, all designed to help NIB associated agencies advance their mission to provide employment and opportunity for people who are blind.

Major General Casey D. Blake, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Contracting in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, shared his insights on contracting within the U.S. Air Force.

Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Director Lt. General Andrew E. Busch, talked about the important role of NIB in his agency's strategic plan. Explaining that DLA is required to be "good stewards of taxpayer dollars," Busch, who visits NIB associated agencies whenever possible, said he's seen first-hand the process excellence behind high quality products for our nation's warfighters.

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch capped the session with his Executive Update, highlighting a strong year for NIB and outlining plans for the future. Lynch's presentation included remarks by five employees of the year who shared their stories of opportunity and growth with conference attendees.

## Breakout Sessions Focus on Mission

Breakout sessions at this year's conference focused on providing NIB associated agencies with the tools they need for mission success. From crafting business development and capture plans to managing and selling to dealers and wholesalers, NIB experts provided associated agency representatives with information and insights to build their businesses and provide more employment opportunities for people who are blind. Employees of the year enjoyed a

special interactive session on using off-the-shelf technology with smart phones, Mac and Android operating systems to help them make cost-effective investments in portable accessibility.

### Recognizing Agency Achievements

Throughout the conference, outstanding accomplishments by NIB associated agencies were recognized. This year, four agencies received Achievement Awards, which recognize those agencies doing the most during the preceding fiscal year to increase employment for people who are blind while providing excellence in contract performance and compliance.

Wiscraft, located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, saw an increase of nearly 7,000 hours thanks to increases in commercial business, predominantly in its call center partnerships with Harley-Davidson, Fresh Revenues and the State of Wisconsin Unclaimed Property. South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind increased employment by more than 24,000 hours, primarily as a result of successfully converting jobs that can be performed by people who are blind. The agency also created eight jobs with a new manufacturing project in the state-use program.

The highest increase in employment hours for people who are blind – more than 24,300 – was reported by the Travis Association for the Blind. Under

the agency's organizational clothing and individual equipment contract with the Army Regional Logistics Support Command, Travis employees receive, refurbish, stock and ship uniforms and related accessories, helping the Army save taxpayer dollars by recycling gear used in training and war zones. Alphapointe received a special Agency Achievement Award for its efforts in preserving employment opportunities for people who are blind at New York City Industries for the Blind in Brooklyn. Alphapointe not only took over the agency, preserving NIB's employment presence in the nation's largest city, but also increased employment by more than 17,000 hours.

The Quality Work Environment (QWE) initiative Outstanding Achievement Award went to Outlook Nebraska. BOSMA Enterprises, Georgia Industries for the Blind and Outlook Nebraska were all recognized for outstanding reciprocal purchasing practices, while the Base Supply Center (BSC) Excellence Awards went to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base BSC, operated by Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired; the Fort Bragg BSC, operated by L.C. Industries; and the Fort Knox BSC operated by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland. ▣

*Jennifer Click is communications project manager at National Industries for the Blind and editor of Opportunity magazine.*



Jennifer Perez, a closeout specialist at Alphapointe, received the Contract Management Support training program Outstanding Participant Award for her positive attitude and motivation, problem solving and teamwork, high-quality work and overall dedication to the job.



Randy George, a member of VisionCorps' Contract Management Services team headquartered in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, received the Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award.



Luis Narimatsu, public relations coordinator at Georgia Industries for the Blind, received the Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award.



Elizabeth Tarr, 2015 Peter J. Salmon employee of the year nominee from the Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment in Binghamton, New York, provided a beautiful a capella rendition of the National Anthem.





# TOOLS TO EMBRACE THE FUTURE

**Lighthouse Central Florida helps people who are blind develop the skills they need to navigate the working world and delivers quality products and services to demanding customers.**

BY ANDY BROWNSTEIN

Lee Nasehi, president and CEO of NIB associated agency Lighthouse Central Florida, began her three-decade journey with the organization as a mom. Her son Joe, now 34, was born premature at just 25 weeks, weighing 1 pound, 14 ounces. Blind from birth, Joe had cognitive impairments that developed into cerebral palsy. When Nasehi moved to Florida, the family began early intervention services with the organization that became Lighthouse – an act, she said, that “saved our lives, quite frankly.”

“They gave us the tools to embrace the future, not fear it,” she said. “That’s what we do to this day.”

Nasehi’s journey mirrors that of the agency itself. Begun in 1976 on the campus of Valencia Community College, the organization was originally known as CITE – the Center for Independence, Training and Education.

As it gears up to celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Orlando-based organization embraces not only early intervention services for children from birth to age six and a transitions program for students ages 14 and over, but is about to launch a program for school-age children as part of a state initiative. Lighthouse Central Florida has already identified the first 12 students who will enter its program.

The Lighthouse estimates more than 100,000 Central Floridians from Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties have passed through its doors. They come seeking education, employment or rehabilitation services.

## Fostering Employment

Lighthouse has long provided employment assistance, but, Nasehi admits, “We didn’t have a lot of success in getting people hired.” That changed in 2011 with the opening of Lighthouse

Works!, a subsidiary devoted to employing people who are blind. Lighthouse Works! performs an estimated \$8 million in federal and state contracts annually, with net proceeds of \$530,000. The facility includes an assembly line devoted primarily to labelling and packaging medical kits for the armed forces and the state of Florida, and a state-of-the-art call center that provides customer service outsourcing for assorted businesses and government entities.

The call center at Lighthouse Works! provided a lifeline for L.C. Benson.

Benson had always dreamed of a career in the National Football League. As a semi-pro cornerback he was well on his way, scouted by the Chicago Bears and the Detroit Lions. But in 1989, those dreams were shattered. Pituitary tumors that pressed against his optic nerve – the likely result of football-related

concussions – caused his sight to begin fading. By 2009, he had no vision in his left eye and limited sight in his right.

“I didn’t think my life would ever be the same again,” he said. “I became depressed, hopeless. I didn’t know where to go for services.”

His employment outlook was dire. Benson would ace job interviews, only to lose out on skills assessments due to a lack of assistive technology to accommodate his limited vision.

He came to Lighthouse in 2012 to fine-tune his reading, writing and typing skills, but got much more. That same day, Benson was offered a job at the new Lighthouse Works! call center. Within the year, he was recognized as the Top Customer Service Agent by the central Florida branch of the National Customer Service Association – a first for a visually impaired agent. He recently completed NIB’s Business Management Training program, presented at George Mason University in Virginia.

“I have no idea where I’d be without Lighthouse Central Florida, except at home or maybe not even here,” Benson said. “It gave me back my dignity and self-worth.”

### Innovating Efficiency

Opened in 2011, the call center employs 17 people, 16 of whom are blind or visually impaired. The staff provided various services for 15 organizations in just the past year, including directing calls for a university hospital, quality assurance for Seminole County, and acting as mystery shoppers for Department of Defense lodgings at posts as far flung as Japan and Bahrain. The team is evenly split between people who are visually impaired – who use zoom magnification technology to magnify their computer screens – and people who are blind, who use JAWS screen reading technology. Sharon McDonald, a Jamaican immigrant who lost her sight at age 9, serves as a trainer and staff supervisor.

Fred Brown, the center’s manager, said Lighthouse’s IT team has worked

“absolute magic” in developing assistive software. For example, the medical scheduling software typically employs color coding to differentiate the length of appointments and type of services to be provided (pediatric, gynecology, internist, etc.) For employees who are blind, the IT team developed software that can perform pixel comparison for each color, and a search engine that allows agents to search by color. The result: handling time has been reduced by 2 minutes per appointment.



▲ Tamara Knight provides services to a variety of organizations in the Lighthouse Works! call center.



▲ In October, Lee Nasehi, (center) president and CEO of Lighthouse Central Florida/ Lighthouse Works! cut the ribbon opening the Lighthouse Works! Business Center.

“Agents roll their mouse across the screen, and it tells them what’s on the screen,” said Brown. “They hear the customer in their headset at the same time they hear the screen being read to them. The customer can’t hear it. It’s amazing. When we do demos, we actually have to slow it for observers so they can understand what’s going on. That’s how quick it is.”

The center also demonstrates Lighthouse’s continuum of services from birth through employment.

Several center employees participated in the organization’s transitions program for youth ages 14-22, which focuses on career education.

Natasha Basheer, who includes mystery shopping for the Department of Defense lodgings among her call center duties, joined the Transitions program when she was 16. She learned a lot in Student Life Prep, a program provided in partnership with the University of Florida that has students live in a dorm on campus for two weeks while working at a job.

“It helped with living independently,” she said. “I learned how to cook, balance a checkbook, go grocery shopping and ride on a city bus. It was great.”

### Supplying the Troops

In 2013, Lighthouse Works! launched a separate business line devoted to packing, labeling and shipping. The line employs 13 people who are blind, performing primarily custom kit packaging for agencies including the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). For DLA, employees help label and package 11 of 15 items in the Combat Life Saving Kit U.S. soldiers take onto the battlefield.

Ohad Gal, who manages the supply chain, said the line is greatly aided by what he calls “jigs” – custom tools produced by NIB for employees who are blind. Prior to adopting the jig, employees affixed labels on 50 decompression needles in an hour, with a 20 percent defect rate, he explained. Using the jig, production increased to 150 needles an hour, and the defect rate dropped to only 2-5 percent.

For its efforts, DLA named Lighthouse Works! Vendor of the Year in 2014.

“It’s nice to see,” said Gal. “The employees all understand the big picture. The job is helping them, and they’re helping the troops. The job is a lifesaver for so many people, and they get to know that they’re helping to save other’s lives in the process.” ■

*Andy Brownstein is a freelance writer based in the Washington, D.C., area.*

# READY TO LAUNCH

These new products produced by NIB associated agencies are now available to federal government customers through the AbilityOne® Program.

## OFFICE SUPPLIES

**1. SKILCRAFT®/Zebra Retractable Gel Pen:** Jot down notes or compose a masterpiece with SKILCRAFT®/Zebra retractable, non-refillable gel pens produced by Industries of the Blind in Greensboro, North Carolina. Designed with a latex-free, non-slip comfort grip, this pen's ultra-smooth, quick-drying, water-based gel provides a flowing, crisp writing experience. Available in blue or black ink with fine, medium or bold tip.

**2. SKILCRAFT® Multi-Function Pen:** Produced by Alphapointe, this medium point multi-function pen is specially designed to fit military uniforms. Featuring non-reflective, flat black paint on a brass-plated steel barrel, it includes black and red ink, a 0.5mm pencil with eraser and a screw-top, touch-screen stylus. Provides a 2,000 foot write-out per ink color and 10,000 swipes with the stylus. FOD and TAA compliant.

**3. SKILCRAFT® Permanent Impression Pen:** Produced by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind in North Carolina, this pen provides a smooth and consistent writing experience. The waterproof, nontoxic ink is smudge- and smear-resistant, and won't bleed through paper. Available in fine or medium point with blue, black or red ink.

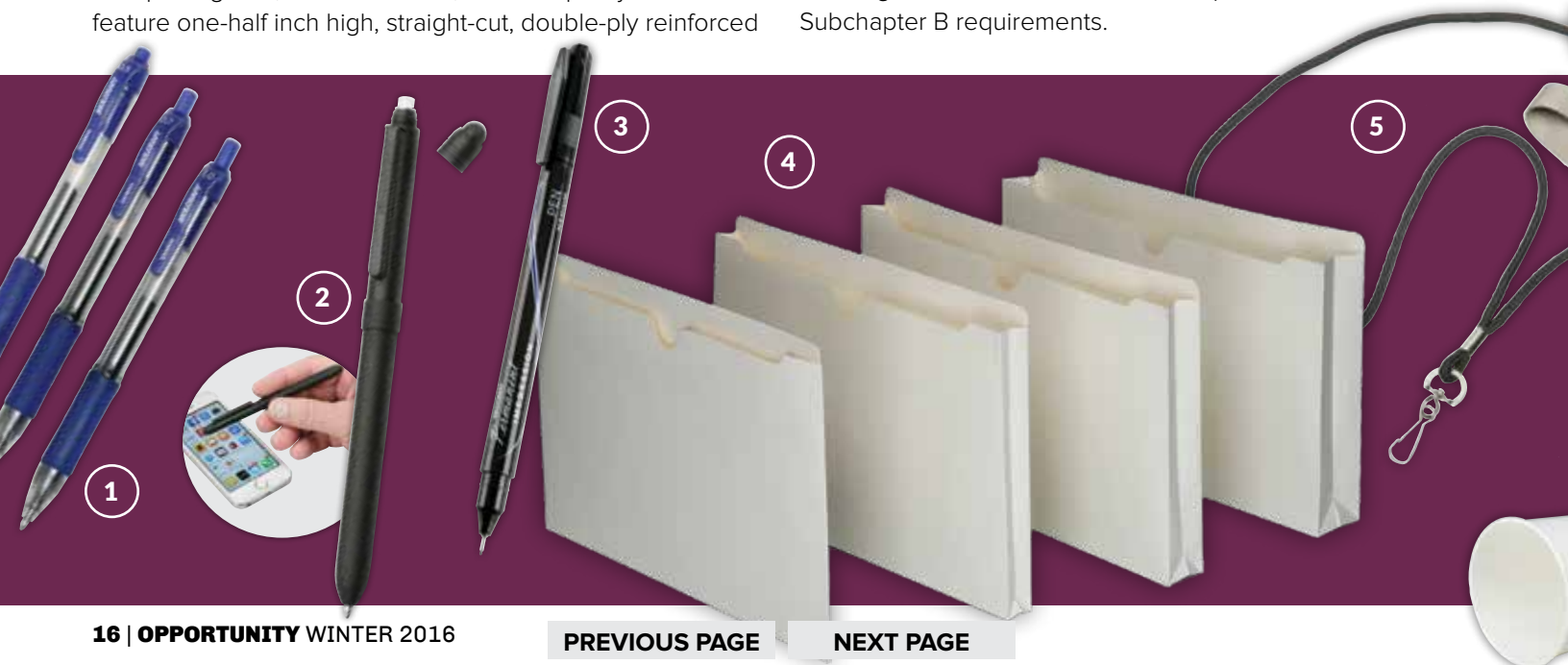
**4. SKILCRAFT® Manila File Jackets:** Ideal for organizing and transporting files, these acid-free, archival quality folders feature one-half inch high, straight-cut, double-ply reinforced

tabs for added durability and easy indexing. The closed jacket sides help keep papers and loose items secure, while the thumb-cut notch allows easy access. Constructed of 11 pt manila stock with 100 percent recycled materials, including 30 percent post-consumer recycled materials, these folders fit vertical and lateral filing systems. Choose flat, 1 inch, 1½ inch, or 2 inch expansion files in letter or legal size. Produced by the Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment in Binghamton, New York.

**5. SKILCRAFT® Neck Lanyards with J-Hook Attachment:** The perfect way for personnel to display identification without attaching to clothing, SKILCRAFT® lanyards with J-hook attachments measure 36 inches in length. Available in black or tan cord or strap styles, all lanyards have a slide adjuster, side release buckle for easy detachment, and a comfortable safety breakaway. Produced by West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind in San Angelo, Texas.

## FOOD SERVICE

**6. SKILCRAFT® Disposable Paper Cups:** These 21- and 32-ounce disposable paper cups produced by Lighthouse Louisiana have a moisture-resistant lining that acts as a moisture barrier to prevent leaks and weakening of the paper. The white rolled rim provides rigidity and ensures a leak-resistant lid fit, while the tapered base makes for easy stacking. Made in the U.S.A., these cups meet FDA Title 21, Subchapter B requirements.





## 7. SKILCRAFT® Squat-Style Hot Food Disposable Paper

**Cups:** Produced by Lighthouse Louisiana, these 12-ounce paper cups feature a squat profile and wide mouth perfect for serving pasta, soups and other hot liquids. The single polyethylene lining acts as a moisture barrier to prevent leaking, while the smooth rolled rim provides rigidity and ensures a leak-resistant lid fit. Made in the U.S.A. of biodegradable and compostable paper, these cups meet FDA Title 21, Subchapter B requirements.

**8. SKILCRAFT® Field Convenience Pack:** Support a small team or group of personnel in the field for several days with these food service disposable products packed in a non-reflective cardboard box with plastic handle for easy carrying. Biobased and recycled-content disposable products in the kit include 7-inch round plates; five-compartment trays; hot/cold beverage cups with lids; flatware sets packaged with salt, pepper, sugar and napkin; and heavy-duty, high-density trash bags. Produced by LC Industries of Durham, North Carolina.

## MAINTENANCE, REPAIR AND OPERATIONS

### 9. SKILCRAFT® Pro-Grade Combination Wrenches

Made of forged and heat-treated steel for extra strength and durability, these combination wrenches feature a continuous arc design that distributes applied stress over the entire radius of the open end. The 12-point box end features a 7.5 degree offset broaching that allows users to flip the end for a more advantageous grip in tight spaces. Available in a variety of sizes, these U.S.A. made, Berry Amendment compliant wrenches meet or exceed SAE Aerospace Standard 954 for 12-point fasteners, and carry a limited lifetime warranty. Produced by Industries for the Blind, Milwaukee.

### 10. Keyed-Alike Solid Body Padlock Sets

Protect valuables with these American Lock® keyed-alike steel solid body padlocks manufactured in partnership with Master Lock, the industry leader. Featuring a case-hardened steel shackle and BumpStop® technology designed to thwart theft, these brass colored locks have a zinc chromate finish and meet Commercial Item Description (CID) A-A-59486 and A-A-59487 standards. Produced by LC Industries of Durham, North Carolina, these TAA and Berry Amendment compliant locks are available in sets of 4, 5, 6, 10 or 12.

### 11. Bucket and Caddy Cleaning Kit

Clean a variety of rooms with the tools in this versatile 5 Piece Bucket and Storage Caddy Set, featuring a 4-gallon bucket, utility scrubber, all-purpose scrubber, carrying caddy for cleaning supplies and absorbent shammy towel that can be cut to size without fraying. Components nest inside the bucket for easy storage when not in use. Produced by Industries for the Blind, Milwaukee.

### 12. GOJO-SKILCRAFT® EcoPreferred Pumice Hand Cleaner

Wash away the most stubborn industrial dirt, grease and soils with this heavy-duty hand cleaner featuring pumice particles for thorough scrubbing. This USDA BioPreferred and EcoLogo-certified lime-scented hand cleaner featuring 85 percent biobased content is available in 64 ounce or 1 gallon pump bottles. Produced by Travis Association for the Blind in Austin, Texas.

**These and thousands of other products are available for purchase at [AbilityOne.com](http://AbilityOne.com), [GSAAdvantage.com](http://GSAAdvantage.com), your local Base Supply Center or through AbilityOne authorized distributors. For more information about how to purchase SKILCRAFT and other products produced by people who are blind, visit [www.nib.org/products](http://www.nib.org/products).**



### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING CLASS OF 2015

Nineteen employees who are blind from 16 NIB associated agencies graduated from NIB's Business Management Training (BMT) program in September. Participants, selected through a competitive application process, attended five intensive 3½ day graduate-level educational sessions taught by faculty from George Mason University's (GMU) School of Business.

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch presented each graduate with a certificate for completing the 15-month program; graduates also earned a Certificate in Management from GMU. The 2015 class joins 79 graduates of the program, 76 percent of whom report earning at least one job promotion since completing BMT. Among members of the 2015 class, nearly one-third have already earned a job promotion. ▣



▲ NIB Business Management Training program graduates, pictured left to right. Front row: Tony Creapeau, LC Benson, Brent Burkholder, Gary Wagner, Jennifer Perez, Tony Stephens, Brian Prewitt, John Ellzey. Second row: Quan Leysath, JJ Scott, Steve Hopkins, Megan Dodd, Deborah Ambro-Crandell, Jason Jude, Mike Scheschy, Jonathan Sherbert. Third row: Mike Blake, Sylvia Stinson Perez, Allen Adamson.

### NATIONAL CONTRACT MANAGEMENT PUBLICATION INTERVIEWS KEVIN LYNCH

The December 2015 issue of Contract Management, the magazine of the National Contract Management Association, featured an interview with NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch. In the article, Lynch discusses the role NIB plays in ensuring employment opportunities for people who are blind and offering quality products and services to federal government customers; he also shares his views on leadership and professional development.

The National Contract Management Association is the world's leading resource for professionals in the field of contract management. More than 20,000 members in government and the private sector receive Contract Management magazine each month. ▣



### NEW RESOURCES TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

New training materials and guidelines for improving employment outcomes for persons who are blind or visually impaired are now available from the

National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC). The materials were developed as part of six research projects funded under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research evaluating the most common barriers and facilitators to employment for people who are blind or visually impaired. For a full list of resources, visit the NRTC website at: [www.blind.msstate.edu/our-products/](http://www.blind.msstate.edu/our-products/) ▣





## NIB EXPANDS BUSINESS BASICS COURSE SELECTION

Business Basics, the distance learning track of NIB's Business Leaders Program, has expanded its selection from five to 13 courses. The self-paced courses focus on entry-level business and workplace topics, providing practical skills that can enhance job performance and opportunities for professional advancement. Delivered through a partnership with The Hadley School for the Blind, the courses are free and open to anyone with a vision impairment who meets Hadley's eligibility requirements. [□](#)



## SAVE THE DATE! NIB/NAEPB PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

This year's NIB/NAEPB Public Policy Forum is scheduled for May 24-25, 2016, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. Last year, representatives from 34 NIB associated nonprofit agencies held 150 meetings with congressional offices to discuss priority issues impacting employment for people who are blind. Don't miss your chance to connect with Congressional leaders – mark your calendar and stay tuned for registration information. [□](#)

## BINGHAMTON AGENCY UNVEILS NEW MANUFACTURING EQUIPMENT

The Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment (AVRE) announced completion of a \$1.7 million project in its manufacturing facility in downtown Binghamton, New York. In addition to building modifications and upgrades, AVRE invested in a copy paper sheeting machine expected to increase production capacity by 70 percent and create 8-10 new jobs for people who are blind. [□](#)



[▶](#) Charles Gardner, director of manufacturing, cuts the ribbon on AVRE's upgraded and expanded manufacturing facility. Also shown (left to right) are AVRE Chief Operating Officer Jenn Small; Luigi DiRusso, production manager; Chief Executive Officer Ken Fernald; Binghamton Mayor Rich David; Mark Foster, machine operator; Gardner; Binghamton University President Harvey Stenger; and Cassie Burgess, marketing communications specialist.

## CONTRACT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TRAINING PROGRAM FEATURED IN JOURNAL

NIB's Contract Management Support services program was featured in an article in the October 2015 issue of Policy & Practice, the journal of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA). The article, part of the journal's "Partnering for Impact" series, explained how NIB developed a partnership with the Department of Defense to meet a critical government need and provide upwardly mobile, career-oriented employment for people who are blind. APHSA pursues excellence in health and human services by supporting state and local agencies, informing policymakers and working with partners to drive innovative, integrated and efficient solutions in policy and practice. [□](#)







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A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing blue jeans and a dark belt. They are holding a black cane with a red tip. The background is a blurred green field.

**70%**  
OF WORKING-AGE  
**AMERICANS**  
WHO ARE BLIND  
ARE **NOT EMPLOYED**

NIB's mission is to change that.

Find out more at [nib.org](http://nib.org).

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