

A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

# O P P O R T U N I T Y

Volume 10 | Issue 1 | Winter 2017

PAGE 6

## Emerging Professionals

A new training program paves a talent development pathway

Meet Mike Edwards, a senior production coordinator at The Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis.

PAGE 10

## No Limits

NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo stresses the power of partnerships

PAGE 14

## Like Family

East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind helps employees embrace potential

Special Insert

## Nationwide Network

Foldout map of NIB associated nonprofit agencies and AbilityOne Base Supply Centers

NEXT PAGE

# DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

In the business world, providing employees with learning and development opportunities is key to maintaining a competitive edge. But finding the time for training programs that may take valued employees away from the workplace for days or weeks can present employers with a real conundrum.

With this challenge in mind, NIB and several of its associated nonprofit agencies set out to create a new professional training program that could be integrated into individual employees' workdays. In this issue of Opportunity, you'll read about the result of those efforts: Emerging Professionals, the newest offering in NIB's Business Leaders program.

Emerging Professionals is a flexible program, designed to meet employees where they are and provide development opportunities that mesh with their skillsets and interests. Implemented by individual agency human resources departments, Emerging Professionals can be adapted for employees in any position, from the production floor to the front office.

Emerging Professionals is just one of six tracks in NIB's Business Leaders program, a

comprehensive suite of training courses that help employees at NIB associated agencies master everything from general business concepts, to supervisory skills, to the business acumen needed to launch a professional managerial career.

As part of our core mission, NIB works continuously to provide development opportunities in addition to the Business Leaders program, such as ProMOTE, which provides advanced technology training; the Contract Management Support training program, which prepares people who are blind for professional careers supporting government agencies; and the cybersecurity program, which prepares people who are blind for careers in a rapidly expanding field.

NIB training and development programs help our associated agencies sharpen their competitive edge in the business world, but more importantly they help fulfill our most important objective: opening up options for rewarding careers for people who are blind.



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

**OPPORTUNITY** is published quarterly in the winter, spring, summer and fall. It is also available at [www.nib.org](http://www.nib.org).

**Jennifer Click**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Laura Reimers**  
Vice President, Communications

**Mike Johnson**  
Communications Program Director

**Lisa Koroma**  
Communications Design Manager

**Jessica Carneal**  
Communications Specialist

**OPPORTUNITY** welcomes news and stories about the careers and capabilities of people who are blind. Contact [communications@nib.org](mailto:communications@nib.org).

To add or change a mailing address, contact [communications@nib.org](mailto:communications@nib.org).

### Executive Team:

**Kevin A. Lynch**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

**Angela Hartley**  
Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer

**Steven T. Brice**  
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

**John Qua**  
Senior Vice President, Operations

**Carrie Laney**  
Executive Director, New York State  
Preferred Source Program for People Who Are Blind

*Since 1938, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) has focused on enhancing the opportunities for economic and personal independence of people who are blind, primarily through creating, sustaining and improving employment. NIB and its network of associated nonprofit agencies are the nation's largest employer of people who are blind through the manufacture and provision of SKILCRAFT® and other products and services of the AbilityOne® Program. For more information about NIB, visit [NIB.org](http://NIB.org).*



**02 LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Developing the Future

**04 EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION**

For NFB President Mark Riccobono, education is the key to helping people who are blind lead more fulfilling lives.

**16 TECHNOLOGY REVIEW**

Colorino provides accurate color identification at an affordable price.

**17 READY TO LAUNCH**

NIB associated agencies introduce and update SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne® products.

**18 NEWS & NOTES**

- RLCB Celebrates 50 Years Serving North Carolinians
- Sixth Fellowship for Leadership Development Underway
- NIB Breaks Ground for New Headquarters Building
- A Long Journey Home

**06**

**EMERGING PROFESSIONALS**

NIB's new training program helps associated agencies pave a talent development pathway for employees.



**05**

**REINFORCING RELATIONSHIPS, EMBRACING ABILITIES**

Social media showcases the NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum and celebrates inclusive workplaces.



**10**

**NO LIMITS**

The NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo stresses the power of partnerships in creating opportunities for people who are blind.



**14**

**LIKE FAMILY**

At the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, employees and staff encourage growth and cheer achievements, just like family.

# EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

**For National Federation of the Blind President Mark Riccobono, education is the key to helping people who are blind lead more fulfilling lives.**

BY AMY GRAY

Throughout his life, determination and a passion for learning have been key to Mark Riccobono's success, both personally and in his mission to empower other people who are blind.

Diagnosed with glaucoma and declared legally blind at age 5, by the time Riccobono entered high school he was totally blind in one eye, with little vision in the other. Fortunately, the high school he attended had a resource room for students who were blind and supportive teachers who encouraged Riccobono to get involved in public speaking, which led to him winning a state competition.

When he arrived at the University of Wisconsin, Riccobono came with only a white cane and a laptop with no screen reading or enlargement technology. After a rehabilitation counselor ordered an evaluation, Riccobono began using speech and other assistive technology. Realizing that he needed to connect with other successful people who were blind to learn techniques and strategies to achieve his goals, he learned about the National Federation of the Blind (NFB).

"In this group, no one ever asked or tried to limit where I could go," he said. "For the first time, I didn't feel as though I had to decide what I would or would not do based on my vision."

After attending the NFB national conference in 1996, Riccobono learned braille, started using the white cane and learned about techniques used by people who are blind that might be helpful to him. He returned to college in the fall and founded the Wisconsin Association of Blind Students, a division of the NFB of Wisconsin, serving as the group's first president.

Elected president of the Wisconsin chapter of the NFB in 1998, Riccobono served on an advisory committee that helped transform the state's school for the blind into the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, housing



Recognizing the important role education played in his own life, NFB President Mark Riccobono has developed a number of innovative education initiatives for people who are blind.

ten different programs including the school. Hired to direct the Center just before his twenty-fourth birthday, Riccobono managed the agency's \$6 million budget, putting in place new programs reflecting higher expectations for what people who are blind can accomplish. Through this work, Riccobono discovered his true passion: supporting education and creating innovative educational programs.

Despite his success at the Wisconsin Center, Riccobono was frustrated with the slow pace of change and wanted to make a bigger impact. Then-NFB President Marc Maurer hired Riccobono to work at the Jernigan Institute, the research and training arm of the NFB, where he later became executive director. At the Jernigan Institute, Riccobono pioneered innovative education programs, including establishing the National Center for Blind Youth in Science, expanding literacy through the Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) program, and developing cutting-edge technologies including a car that people who are blind can drive (the NFB Blind Driver Challenge®).

Elected president of the NFB in 2014, Riccobono pledged "to give all of my energy, my creativity, and my love to our movement. This is how I intend to pay it back, pay it forward, and make a future full of opportunity for blind people. I have no illusions that this will be easy, but I have every expectation that it will happen when all of us pull together to create the kind of future in which we truly live the lives we want." □

*Amy Gray is communications project manager at National Industries for the Blind.*

# REINFORCING RELATIONSHIPS, EMBRACING ABILITIES


Social media showcases the NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum and celebrates inclusive workplaces.

BY MARIA EGAN

NIB and its associated agencies used social media to promote visits by members of Congress, congressional staffers and other elected officials during the fifth annual NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum. NIB Advocates for Leadership and Employment arranged and participated in more than 20 meetings and visits designed to reinforce relationships formed during the 2016

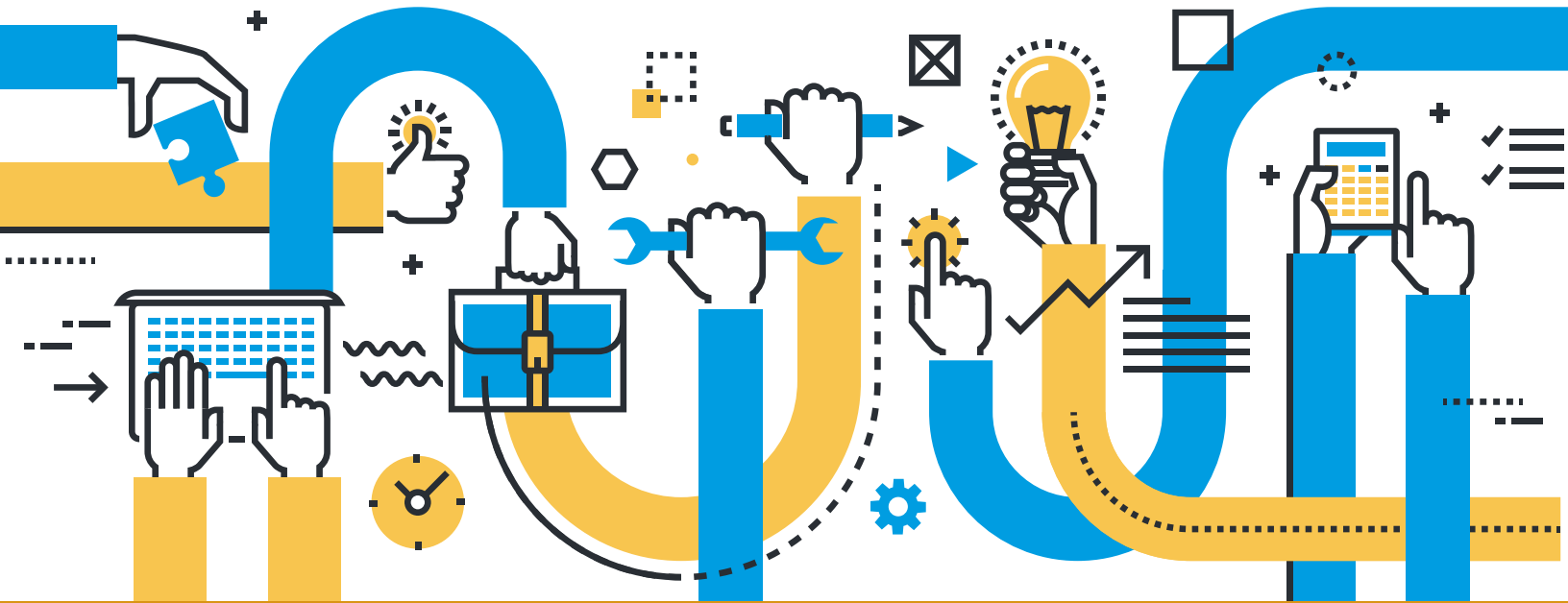
Public Policy Forum. The official hashtag, #NIBGrassrootsForum, reached more than 27,000 people.

In October, NIB associated agencies and AbilityOne Base Supply Centers™ participated in the annual observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year's theme, #InclusionWorks, encouraged

employers to embrace the talents of people with disabilities to create more inclusive communities. Throughout the month, special events and social media posts highlighted the value and capabilities that employees with disabilities bring to the workplace. 

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





# EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

NIB'S NEW TRAINING PROGRAM HELPS ASSOCIATED AGENCIES PAVE A TALENT DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY FOR EMPLOYEES.

BY SHARON HARRIGAN

Developing business and leadership skills is essential to NIB's mission of enhancing opportunities for economic and personal independence of people who are blind. Launched in 2003, the Business Leaders Program has provided training and work experiences to more than 8,000 people who are blind or visually impaired to help them advance in their careers. The program, which until recently consisted of five tracks – the Fellowship for Leadership Development, Business Management Training, Leaders at All Levels, Business Basics and Effective Supervision – added a new track, Emerging Professionals, for 2017.

Emerging Professionals prepares high-potential employees at NIB associated nonprofit agencies who are blind for upward mobility using learning and development strategies from several Business Leaders programs – the hands-on work experience of the Fellowship, the formal training of Effective Supervision and the distance learning offered through Business Basics – while participants remain at their agencies, in their current jobs. During the eight to 12-month program, employees develop new skills through on-the-job training, job shadowing, coaching, and independent learning, and take on new responsibilities.

The desire for an agency-based talent development pathway using in-house, hands-on training had been percolating at several agencies for a while, but development was hampered

by a lack of time and resources. At NIB, Business Leaders Program Director Karen Pal had the same idea, but didn't know of an agency with the time and resources to devote to developing and piloting a program. So when Mark Plutschak, human resource (HR) director at Outlook Nebraska Inc. (ONI), called Pal to pitch the idea, she was all-in.

"We [at NIB] thought it was a great idea because it would help agencies attract and retain employees and would help us all achieve our missions – to improve the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired," says Pal. "We welcomed the opportunity to collaborate and make the program a reality."

The program is customized based on each participant's skillset and developmental interests, and the timeline is flexible, allowing agencies to respond to unanticipated events. NIB provides various types of support, helping HR professionals gain leadership buy-in, clarifying roles and responsibilities, setting up enrollment and program launch, identifying appropriate workplace experiences and providing learning opportunities. Agencies carry out the program, which requires a high level of involvement by HR staff, the employees' managers, and other supervisors throughout the organization.

The first pilot program launched at ONI in the spring of 2014. By fall of that year, two other agencies – The Lighthouse for

the Blind in St. Louis and Beyond Vision in Milwaukee, Wisconsin – rolled out pilot programs of their own. After evaluating the success of the pilots, NIB added Emerging Professionals as the sixth track in the Business Leaders program.

### Piloting the Pilot

The required level of agency involvement didn't deter ONI's executive team from jumping on board. "We truly try to live our mission here at ONI – to help people who are blind or visually impaired reach their dreams, their career goals," says Plutschak.

ONI used a multi-step application process: After first communicating the program, Plutschak invited anyone interested in learning more to meet with him individually. Of 13 employees who showed interest, six ultimately submitted applications, and one applicant – Johnny Botsford, then an entry-level machine operator – was selected as the program's first participant.

Botsford's supervisors at ONI had identified him as a high-potential employee when he told them of his desire to continue to learn, grow and move up at the agency. His drive and business background made him a perfect choice to pilot the program – Botsford opened a successful business selling protein shakes and healthy snacks at a gym on a nearby Air Force Base when he was just 18, and ran it for five years.

Although his business was successful, Botsford lacked the experience needed to grow it into something more. "Plus, I had been steadily losing my eyesight since I was 18, so I thought it was time to get a steady job and benefits," says Botsford. He landed a job at ONI, where his commitment and work ethic led the agency to name him employee of the year in 2014.

Botsford entered Emerging Professionals with an interest in becoming a trainer and increasing his confidence in communicating with people in a professional capacity. He learned to run the machines in his division, shadowed supervisors throughout ONI to learn about their work, and took NIB-provided courses in communications, email and voicemail.

"The experience helped me see the big picture of what ONI does and why," says Botsford. "I gained so much insight about what people do across the organization, and I learned how to interact with them in a professional manner. It was a great experience." Shortly after completing the program, Botsford was promoted to machine operator III, a position with responsibilities that include training employees on all of the shop machines.

### Leaving a Comfort Zone

HR Director Karen Nelson already had an employee in mind

**"I gained so much insight about what people do across the organization."**

– Johnny Botsford



▲ At Outlook Nebraska in Omaha, Emerging Professionals helped Johnny Botsford develop a deeper understanding of what the agency does and why.



▲ Botsford's increased self-confidence and improved communication skills help him train employees.



## Basing the training program at NIB associated agencies will allow more employees to participate.

▲ Emerging Professionals helped Mike Edwards become more comfortable initiating communication with supervisors and department heads at The Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis.

when the Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis agreed to pilot the program. Mike Edwards, then a production coordinator, “had been with us for several years, and we knew we had to get him out of his comfort zone,” says Nelson. “The Emerging Professionals program helped do just that.”

Before coming to the Lighthouse, Edwards worked as a pre-assembly aircraft inspector. Diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at 37, the disease caused his vision to deteriorate to the point that he could no longer perform the job. “They didn’t want me inspecting aircraft for safety anymore,” jokes Edwards. “Imagine that.” Neither the inspector position nor his production position at the Lighthouse required a great deal of professional communication with others, a skill Edwards wanted to improve.

To help get Edwards out of his comfort zone, the program required that he schedule meetings with department heads, introduce himself and schedule times to shadow them. “I wanted to become more comfortable initiating communication to supervisors. This program certainly helped me with that,” says Edwards. The final project in the program showcased his accomplishments: Edwards

spoke at a quarterly all-employee meeting about Emerging Professionals and what he had learned. “I was in tears that day, seeing how much Mike had grown through this program,” says Nelson.

For Edwards, the program was incredibly rewarding. “Coming to work every day during the program was eye opening, especially getting the chance to learn about all aspects of the Lighthouse,” he says. “It was definitely confidence building. Now I know I can handle anything.” And as for that comfort zone, Edwards – promoted to senior coordinator at the Lighthouse – says “Let’s just put it this way: I’m not content yet. There’s always more to learn.”

### Keeping it Local

Rob Buettner, Beyond Vision’s senior director of relationships and business services, selected call center representative Mary LaPointe to participate in its Emerging Professionals pilot program. LaPointe, who has been legally blind since birth, ran her own home child care business for twelve years.

“That experience gave me good negotiating, daily planning, communication and management skills,” explains LaPointe.



“But my work was focused on children, not adults. I wanted to learn about the different learning and communication styles of the people I work with, and how my communication style affects them.”

Emerging Professionals was invaluable, says LaPointe. “I’m a somewhat strong willed, outspoken person. The program helped me learn how to be a better listener, how to compromise and be a team player, and how to give employees constructive feedback. And I loved the fact that I could do it all without having to travel. I wouldn’t have been able to do it otherwise.” As a result of the program, LaPointe has taken on more responsibility and was promoted to team leader in the agency’s call center.

### It’s the Mission

Achieving buy-in for such an intensive program might seem daunting, but senior leaders at agencies piloting the program are some of its biggest supporters.

“This program meets the mission of NIB and our associated agencies,” explains Pal. “As the nation’s largest employment resource for people who are blind or visually impaired, we all want to provide education and training opportunities that develop the skills for upwardly mobile professional careers, whether inside or outside NIB agencies. Programs like Emerging Professionals help us fulfill that mission.” □

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



▲ Team Leader Mary LaPointe, shown here with Customer Service Representative Deb Wenzel, says Emerging Professionals improved her listening skills and her ability to provide constructive feedback.

## Fueling Career Options



Since 2003, NIB’s Business Leaders Program has been helping employees who are blind expand employment opportunities by providing training programs that cover everything from entry-level business skills to graduate-level management courses taught by faculty from nationally recognized business schools. The Emerging Professionals program joins five existing tracks:

- **Business Basics**

Produced in partnership with the Hadley School for the Blind, this online course covers general business concepts, business writing and communications, spreadsheets and web-based research.

- **Leaders at all Levels**

On-site training for staff and management that focuses on team building, leadership, communications and other fundamentals that enhance workplace effectiveness and morale.

- **Effective Supervision**

A combination of self-study and three in-person classroom sessions designed to develop supervisory abilities and prepare employees for increasing levels of responsibility.

- **Business Management Training**

An intensive curriculum taught by graduate-level faculty that builds business acumen with classes in general management, finance, production, HR management, and marketing and communications.

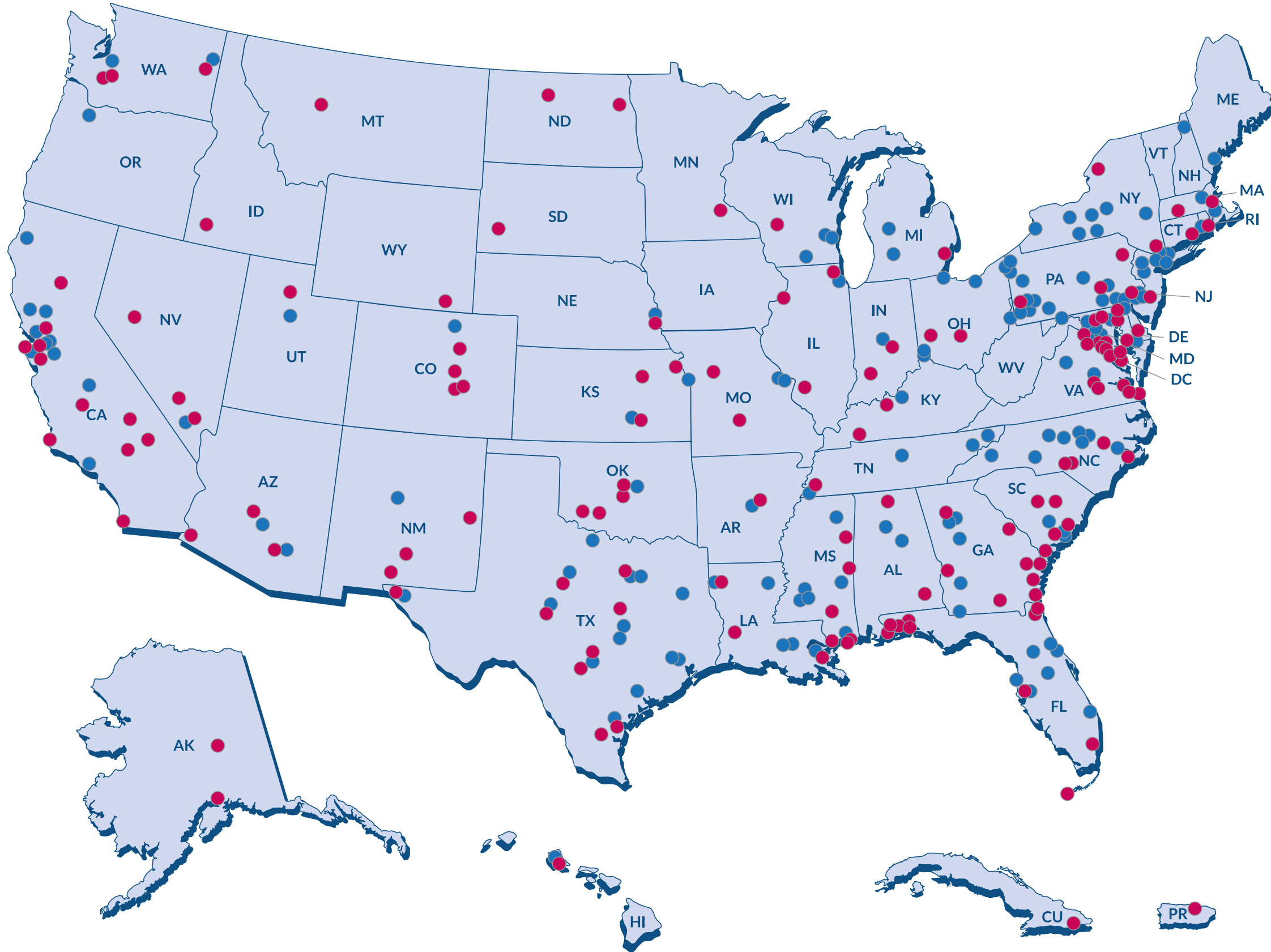
- **Fellowship for Leadership Development**

A 16-month program that combines business-focused, on-the-job experience with professional development activities designed to prepare participants for professional managerial positions.



# NIB ASSOCIATED NONPROFIT AGENCIES AND ABILITYONE BASE SUPPLY CENTERS

HEADQUARTERS AND SATELLITE LOCATIONS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2017



● NIB ASSOCIATED NONPROFIT AGENCIES  
● ABILITYONE BASE SUPPLY CENTERS

PREVIOUS PAGE

NEXT PAGE

## 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, CA

San Leandro, San Rafael, Berkeley, Eureka and Napa, CA

Lions Center for the Blind Oakland, CA

Valley Center for the Blind Fresno, CA

## COLORADO

Ensign Skills Center, Fort Collins, CO

## 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 the 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

Chicago Lighthouse Industries, Chicago, IL

## INDIANA

Bosma Enterprises Indianapolis, IN

## KANSAS

Envision Inc. Wichita, KS

## LOUISIANA

Blind Ambitions, Baton Rouge, LA

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; 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

Cloverhook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Cincinnati, OH; Memphis, TN

The Sight Center of Northwest Ohio Toldeo, Ohio

## 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 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; Summerville, SC

## 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

Beyond Vision Milwaukee, WI

More than 800 participants representing 100 NIB associated agencies and public- and private-sector business partners attended the 2016 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo.



# NO LIMITS

The 2016 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo stresses the value of partnerships.

BY ROSEMARIE LALLY

The 2016 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo – emphasizing the importance of building strong alliances among NIB associated agencies, government customers, and other associations dedicated to improving opportunities for people who are blind – lived up to the expectations conveyed by its theme, “No Limits.”

More than 800 participants representing 100 NIB associated agencies and public- and private-sector business partners attended the event in Arlington, Virginia, to discuss the unlimited potential of people who are blind and the positive changes that result when employers, partners, customers and supporters work together to create meaningful employment opportunities.

Launching the general session, 80 employee of the year nominees made



The Arlington County (Virginia) Honor Guard presented the colors, followed by a beautiful rendition of the national anthem by Regina Henderson, the Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award Nominee from Envision in Wichita, Kansas.

their grand entrance to enthusiastic and sustained applause and the energetic vibe of “What I Like About You.” Opening remarks by NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch focused on collaboration amongst NIB associated agencies and other nonprofits

representing the interests of people who are blind to achieve goals.

Guest speaker Kirk Adams, president and CEO of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), echoed Lynch’s comments, noting the critical role strategic partnerships and alliances play in creating high-quality employment opportunities in the knowledge economy. National Federation of the Blind President Mark Riccobono agreed that working together spurs innovation and boosts mutual expertise. Embracing the partnership messages of Adams and Riccobono, Lynch said “we share the same goals, so let’s work together to achieve them.”

### Successes and Goals

In his Executive Update, Lynch provided an overview of recent NIB successes as well as innovative new projects,

including a number of programs aimed at developing the technical and leadership skills of people who are blind.

Lynch cited NIB's 16-month Fellowship for Leadership Development, where participants receive hands-on training at NIB headquarters, an NIB associated agency and a private sector employer. The fellowship is one track in NIB's Business Leaders Program, which has provided training to more than 8,000 people who are blind or visually impaired.

"Providing skills-based training programs and offering the opportunity to practice these skills creates pathways for choice," Lynch explained, pointing to two training programs launched in 2016: Professional Mastery of Office Technology for Employment (ProMOTE), an intensive, four-week program that provides advanced technology skills for professional careers, and the cybersecurity training program, which teaches the skills needed for careers in a field with ever-growing demand.

NIB's specialized training programs are leading to real advances in professional employment for people who are blind, Lynch said, noting that 20 graduates of NIB's Contract Management Support training program have secured positions with federal agencies and defense contractors.

### Self-empowerment is Key

During his address, Lynch introduced four employee of the year nominees who shared their stories of challenge and growth. Melissa Merrell, of the Travis Association for the Blind in Austin, Texas, credited her success to an unwavering belief in herself and her abilities, and persistence in holding on to a childhood dream of independence. Curlie Bailey, a data processor at the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, spoke of the importance of "pushing yourself out of your comfort zone and becoming the best person you can



▲ Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Elliott Branch discussed how NIB associated agencies have successfully adapted to the changing nature of the military.



▲ Defense Commissary Agency Director and CEO Joseph Jeu received a Customer Appreciation Award for sustained contributions in providing employment opportunities to people who are blind.



▲ Brigadier General Charles Hamilton, Commander of Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support, praised the quality of supplies and equipment provided by NIB associated agencies.

possibly become." At the end of the day, Bailey said, "being proud of where you are and doing positive things leads to positive things."

Jonathan Ott, an aerospace machine shop employee at the Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. in Seattle, urged attendees to encourage each other and act as conduits of change. A proponent of "Blind Power," Ott shared his mantra: "Adapt, improvise and overcome." Sharrell Bailey spoke about the obstacles she faced in leaving her native Jamaica to come to the Olmsted Center for Sight for career opportunities that have allowed her to build a better life for her son and family.

Featured speaker Valorie Burton, a certified executive coach specializing in applied positive psychology, echoed the speakers with her presentation on building resilience. Burton advised attendees to envision goals, learn from mistakes, reach out for help when needed, maintain perspective and help others.

"Positive emotions, such as gratitude, connection, anticipation, play and purpose, expand our abilities and resilience, expand our boundaries," Burton said. Explaining that people can direct their thoughts, rather than allowing their thoughts to direct them, she acknowledged that "Doubts and negative thoughts will come, but we must be aware of which thoughts we choose to dwell on. Fear will keep popping up, but if we just keep pushing past it, our comfort zone grows."

Following Burton's presentation, employee of the year nominees and their companions headed out on a perfect fall afternoon for a luncheon cruise on the Potomac River.

### Adapting to a Changing Military

Speakers from the Department of Defense (DOD) discussed ways NIB



## Shay Assad Receives R.B. Irwin Award

Director of Defense Pricing Shay Assad received the 2016 R.B. Irwin Award, the highest honor bestowed by NIB to a professional who has devoted his or her career to creating and improving employment for people who are blind. A long-time champion of the AbilityOne® Program, Assad issued a directive urging senior contracting officials to look for more opportunities to contract with participating agencies, resulting in the creation of 7,000 jobs for the AbilityOne Program. He also drove the strategic partnership between DOD and NIB that created the AbilityOne Contract Management Support program.

“Working with NIB and other similar agencies is the easy thing to do, it’s the right thing to do,” Assad said in accepting his award to a standing ovation. “There is no limit to what we can do together. Please believe that DOD embraces our relationship and we’re going to do everything we can to show we appreciate you and everything you do to help us to be the greatest fighting force ever.”

can maintain valued partnerships as the military evolves to meet changing needs.

Joseph Jeu, director and CEO of the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), credited innovative approaches such as cross-merchandising for a 3.5 percent increase in NIB commissary sales in the past year. Jeu said DeCA looks forward to continuing and strengthening its partnership with NIB.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Elliott Branch shared his insights on contracting with the military. Noting that the Navy will be a “fundamentally different operation” soon, Branch encouraged NIB associated agencies to adapt products and services to accommodate the changes and be ready to demonstrate both their capabilities and relevance to the military.

Brigadier General Charles Hamilton, Commander of Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support, praised NIB associated agencies for producing high-quality uniforms and cold-weather gear, medical supplies, safety equipment and hardware for the military since the 1940s. “You don’t always get to experience what it’s like for the item you’ve created to land in our hands, but I want to tell you, as someone who is in that position, your work and the quality of the items you produce is vitally important to our troops.”

As the military moves toward a leaner, more agile structure with fewer troops on the ground, strategic posts around the world will still need supplies. Hamilton encouraged NIB associated agencies to keep up with military developments to accurately predict the need for their services and products.

### Celebrating Employment Achievements

The 2016 Agency Employment Achievement Awards, recognizing agencies that have been most successful in increasing employment

for people who are blind while also delivering excellence in contract performance and compliance over the past year, were presented to four associated agencies.

First-time winner Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Cincinnati, Ohio, increased employment by 11,000 hours, largely through partnering with commercial companies to provide contract packaging services. Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, New York, increased employment by 14,000 hours as a result of opening a satellite location in Syracuse.

Alphapointe, a three-time achievement award winner, increased employment by 200,000 hours, primarily through its acquisition of New York City Industries for the Blind, which not only sustained existing employment, but added 17 new positions for New Yorkers who are blind.

A special award went to Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB) of North Carolina, which acquired the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind in Little Rock, preserving employment opportunities for people who are blind and NIB’s employment presence in the state. During the year, WSIFB saw an increase of more than 100,000 employment hours.

The NAEPB Supplier of the Year Award in the large business category went to Essilor of America. A long-standing supplier of eyeglass lens materials to WSIFB, Essilor helped the agency expand its optical lab capabilities by modifying software codes to allow lens manufacturing machinery to be operated by people who are blind. As a result, WSIFB now employs 45 people who are blind in its state-of-the-art eyeglass manufacturing operation.

Mayflower Trade received the Supplier of the Year Award in the small business category for its instrumental role in the

re-design, procurement and launch of SKILCRAFT® LED flashlights in partnership with CABVI-Utica. In addition, Mayflower Trade works with the agency on fulfilling its state-use program requirements and actively seeks ways to provide additional employment opportunities and more efficient and accessible production methods for employees who are blind and visually impaired.

### Recognizing Professional Excellence

The capstone of the conference, the awards banquet kicked off with a video featuring each of the 82 employee of the year nominees.

Peter G. Salmon Award winner David Perry, of the Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, was recognized for excellence in his position, as well as his work in the community as an advocate on issues of importance to people who are blind. In accepting the award, Perry, who successfully lobbied Congress for minimum sound standards for hybrid and electric vehicles, expressed his desire “to change the perceptions of what we can do” and his “determination to always finish strong.”

Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award winner Patrick



▲ Peter G. Salmon Employee of the Year Award winner David Perry shared his determination to “change the perceptions of what we can do.”



▲ Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award winner Patrick Engasser encouraged attendees to turn their dreams into goals.

Engasser told attendees he “sat in the audience last year, thinking ‘Wow, I’d really like to be up there next year!’ So I’m here to tell anybody who is out there today as a nominee, there’s no reason you can’t be up here next year.”

Engasser, a life-long client of the Olmsted Center for Sight who now serves on its board of directors, worked his way up with AFLAC insurance company from customer service representative to district sales coordinator and top sales representative in New York State. “We all have challenges in life,” he said, “and we all have the opportunity to overcome those challenges and turn our dreams into goals.”

Concluding his remarks, Engasser urged attendees to remember the words of Muhammed Ali: “Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It’s an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It’s a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.” ■

*Rosemarie Lally is a freelance writer and editor based in Washington, D.C.*



▲ The NIB Marketplace gave conference attendees a chance to try out new SKILCRAFT offerings and speak with NIB marketing and business development representatives.



▲ This year’s Expo offered attendees the opportunity to speak with more than 100 exhibitors representing NIB associated agencies, commercial vendors and suppliers, and government agencies.

# LIKE FAMILY

## East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind helps employees embrace their potential.

BY ANDY BROWNSTEIN

On December 1, 1996, a drive-by shooting on the streets of Tyler, Texas, instantly reduced Curlie Bailey's 20/20 vision to total darkness. Bailey was pronounced dead twice that night, once by paramedics on the street and again in the emergency room. After his recovery, Bailey was referred to NIB associated agency East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind (The Lighthouse) and its manufacturing entity, Horizon Industries. Bailey credits that move – and the embrace of the “family” he met there – with giving him another chance in life.

“I have to admit that Horizon saved me from myself,” he said. “I might have made bad choices in the past, but those managers saw something in me that I didn't see in myself.”

It's been just over twenty years since Bailey lost his sight. In 2016, his family at Horizon and The Lighthouse celebrated a more auspicious anniversary: forty

years since first opening its doors to Texans who are blind in 1976. In October, the staff celebrated the anniversary by cutting the ribbon on a new distribution center.

First known as East Texas Workshop Industries, The Lighthouse opened with one employee who was blind working in a single building on a single federal contract: sewing and packaging dental chair headrests for the General Services Administration.

Today, under the leadership of President and CEO David Huffman, The Lighthouse operates three facilities with an annual operating budget of more than \$6.9 million. It employs 98 people, 52 of whom are blind. Its eight federal contracts include the production of industrial-grade wiping towels and lightweight nylon paracord. Initially designed for the suspension line of parachutes, the cord is now used to attach equipment to harnesses, secure camouflage nets to trees and to make bootlaces and clotheslines.

In addition to its production facility, The Lighthouse has a client services division that provides free rehabilitation services to people who are blind or visually impaired in a 40-county area. Client services features technology classrooms, an independent living apartment with a fully functioning kitchen, and a low-vision store that carries a wide variety of aids suitable for

all levels of vision loss. Its employment services department assists clients with job skills, job searches and on-the-job training, as well as connecting them with local employment partners.

The new Horizon Distribution Center will allow the operation to expand its inventory and house more products on site.

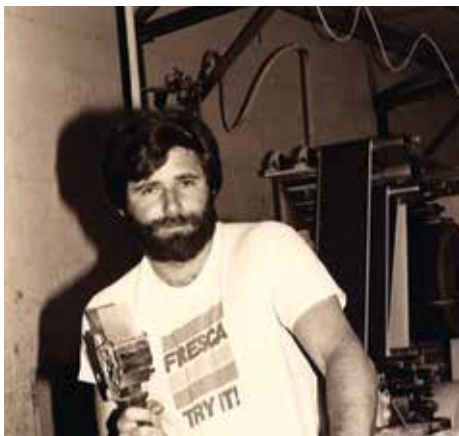
“It was getting a little cramped,” said Lee Tilson, vice president of operations. “This gives us some breathing room.”

Born with optic nerve atrophy, which keeps his vision at around 20/400, Tilson is a model of The Lighthouse's empowerment philosophy. He came to Tyler in 2004 to work for another company, only to be told that he fell out of consideration for the position due to his visual impairment.

He joined The Lighthouse as a machine operator and took advantage of NIB training programs, including Business Management Training, to work his way up to upper management.

“There is absolutely no reason a visual impairment should keep someone from being who they want to be,” he says. “I'm certainly not going to be the person to place a limitation on anyone's success on the job.”

Megan Dodd grew up near Tyler, but didn't know about The Lighthouse until she was drawn there after



▲ Shown here taping boxes of finished goods in the 1980s, Bruce Hendon still works in production at The Lighthouse some 30 years later.



▲ Ed Hickman, Horizon Industries production employee; Lindsey Dengler, IT manager/security officer for The Lighthouse; Mary Walker, Cynergy Technologies; and Heath Honzell, director of business development, celebrate the anniversary and ribbon cutting for the new production facility.

losing her vision in college. Before obtaining employment at The Lighthouse, Dodd said she “lacked the confidence and ability” to discuss her blindness with potential employers.

“I always felt it was something I needed to hide and be ashamed of,” she said. “I needed to pretend like I didn’t have a disability. Working here has blown out of the water any notion that I needed to hide my blindness or be ashamed. It’s become a point of power and great pride.”

She initially worked as a marketing associate for The Lighthouse’s client services center, where her work designing brochures, assisting with the website, and shooting and editing video earned her NIB’s Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award in 2014.

Promoted to community outreach specialist for The Lighthouse after completing NIB’s Business Management Training program, Dodd draws on her personal experience to convince potential employers of the benefits of hiring people who are blind or visually impaired.

“I say, ‘Hey you’re hiring. Let’s have this conversation about people with vision loss,’” she explains. “Many of them would never have imagined the idea of a marketing person who



▲ The Lighthouse gave community outreach specialist Megan Dodd the confidence and ability to discuss her vision loss.

is designing graphics and filming video who also has vision loss. These talks help get past stereotypes and misconceptions, and they’re the kinds of conversations I absolutely was not able to have before coming here.”

For Rosie Reed, the idea of The Lighthouse as a family is no figurative concept. On her first day on the job, she met Larry Reed, the man who would become her husband, as she was packing boxes and he was running a tape machine. She remembers his welcoming smile, which quickly broke through her shyness.

Larry also introduced Rosie to a favorite pastime: beep baseball. She is now vice president of the local team, the Tyler Tigers. The Lighthouse supports the team, which includes three employees.

A close cousin to the national pastime, beep baseball is played with a 1-pound

ball that beeps. Each player – whether blind or sighted – wears a blindfold, so the playing field is literally even. The pitcher and batter work in concert. The pitcher announces his throw, which the batter detects with sound. If there’s a hit, the goal is to get to one of the buzzing bases before players in the outfield can find the ball. Games last six innings or two hours, whichever comes first.

For Reed, who comes from an athletic, military family, the game provides a welcome outlet. “It’s highly competitive and very physical,” she said. “It takes a lot of endurance.”

Curlie Bailey likens his experience to a quote from “The Shawshank Redemption”: “Get busy livin’ or get busy dyin’.”

It’s the spirit that led him to be the first employee who is fully blind to operate the table saw at The Lighthouse production facility and more recently, to take courses and try his hand at data processing.

“I don’t want to become stagnant or complacent,” he said. “I want to know what the next challenge is.”

At the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, employees and staff take on challenges and cheer one another’s achievements, just like family. □

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



▲ Phillip Traylor, shown here packing Tuff Wipes, an industrial wiper, into shipping boxes in the 1990s, is now a quality auditor at Horizon Industries.



▲ Rep. Louie Gohmert (right) joined East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind President and CEO David Huffman (left) and his wife Judy at the ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration.



# SEEING COLOR LIKE STEVIE WONDER

BY DOUG GOIST

Thanks to a tremendous focus on capturing flawless visual images, digital camera developers are closer than ever to mimicking the complexities of human vision. Some ultra-high-definition (UHD) and virtual reality (VR) image technologies have even gone well beyond the limits of our own human capabilities.

But when it comes to interpreting the 2-4 million different color combinations that appear within our world, synthesized human vision technology still falls a bit short – at least the technology that falls within most people’s budgets.

For those of us who are blind and simply want to know what color socks we’re about to wear, this leaves only two options other than real-time sighted assistance: buy a potentially costly spectrophotometer device, or download any number of free, often inaccurate, color-identification smartphone apps that will incorrectly tell you that your dark brown socks are beige or gray.

For the purposes of this article, we’ll focus on the former. What exactly is a spectrophotometer? In simple terms, a spectrophotometer is an analytical device that uses a light probe to “shoot” a beam of white light at an object such as clothing fabric and then measures relative values based on how much the beam of light was absorbed or reflected by the object’s color.

At one end of the spectrum is the color black which, being devoid of all color itself, absorbs nearly all of the light from the spectrometer. At the other end of the spectrum is the color white which, being a combination of all colors, reflects all of the beamed light. Colors are represented by the millions of absorption versus reflection ratio values based on the seven colors that make up the spectrum of colors visible with the naked eye – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – often referred to by the acronym ROY G BIV.

Enter the Colorino, arguably the world’s most accurate and – more importantly, affordable – hand-held color identification device for people who are blind. Vienna, Austria-based developer CareTec markets the Colorino asking “Stevie Wonder has got one! Have you got one



**Product:** CareTec Colorino

**Cost:** \$170-190

For more information visit [www.caretec.at](http://www.caretec.at)

yet?” The Colorino has been my own personal go-to color identification device for nearly 10 years.

While not always perfect in analyzing the 150 different colors it recognizes, the remote control-sized Colorino prevents you from the horror-inducing prospect of wearing white socks with black dress shoes and gets you within at least the ballpark of your clothing’s color shades, making color coordination possible.

And at around \$170-\$190 in price, Colorino is much easier on the wallet than its flagship older brother, the award-winning ColorTest which, it pains me to say, I paid around \$800 for 10+ years ago, purely out of desperation to appear professional in client meetings and job interviews.

The Colorino is very simple to use with just two buttons for operation: hold the top of the device against your clothes and press the top red button to hear a spoken response, such as “light gray” or “mid-gray.” Press the bottom yellow button to activate Colorino’s audible light intensity meter – as you point Colorino toward objects in your environment, such as an illuminated table lamp or burning candle in a dark room the higher tone the unit squeals like something out of a Fifties sci-fi movie.

Colorino automatically turns itself off after 30 seconds, operates on two triple-A batteries (included) that last for months of use, comes with a lanyard and protective case, and is available in English or Spanish through most popular independent living aids suppliers in the US. ☐

*Doug Goist is program manager for IT services projects at National Industries for the Blind. A recognized leader in the field of technology accessibility, Doug has worked with the U.S. Department of Defense, the military services, federal agencies and private sector partners. In 2013, he served as the technical steering committee representative for the U.S. Agency for International Development on a study of mobile money transfer and handset accessibility in Africa.*



# READY TO LAUNCH

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

## 1. SKILCRAFT® Spiral Wound Shipping Tubes



Ship and store maps, blueprints, compliance posters, artwork and other important documents in easy-to-use, cost-effective SKILCRAFT® Spiral Wound Shipping Tubes. Constructed of fiberboard to provide solid protection, the telescoping feature allows a custom fit for a variety of document sizes. Produced by the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth, Texas.

## 2. SKILCRAFT® Emergency Personal Hygiene Kit



Meet the basic hygiene needs of displaced persons in times of disaster with the SKILCRAFT® Emergency Personal Hygiene Kit. Body wash, shampoo-rinse, comb, toothpaste, toothbrush, razor and shave gel help maintain personal cleanliness and hygiene, reduce possible infection and illness, and restore a sense of normalcy in tumultuous environments. Produced by NewView Oklahoma

## 3. SKILCRAFT® Pink Nitrile Powder-Free Exam Gloves



SKILCRAFT® Pink Nitrile Powder-Free Exam Gloves with no natural rubber proteins provide soft comfort with excellent tactile sensitivity, superior chemical resistance and barrier protection. Ambidextrous, non-sterile gloves are FDA 510 approved for medical use and meet or exceed all ASTM standards for FDA-approved nitrile examination gloves. Produced by the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Utica, New York.

These and thousands of other products are available for purchase at [AbilityOne.com](http://AbilityOne.com), [GSAAdvantage.gov](http://GSAAdvantage.gov), your local AbilityOne 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 [NIB.org/products](http://NIB.org/products).



## Lockout Tagout Devices, Kits and Stations are Here!

Ensure Workplace Safety and Comply with OSHA Standard 1910.147

- Features a variety of components needed to build a comprehensive Lockout Tagout program
- Includes locks, hasps, circuit breakers and lockouts for gate valves, large plugs, small plugs, cylinders and wall switches
- Lockout tags and AC Sensor also available
- Made of easy-to-use, durable, heavy duty materials

Now available at [AbilityOne.com](http://AbilityOne.com), [GSAAdvantage.gov](http://GSAAdvantage.gov) or your local AbilityOne Base Supply Center.



## RLCB CELEBRATES 50 YEARS SERVING NORTH CAROLINIANS

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch was on hand to congratulate NIB associated agency RLCB, in Raleigh, North Carolina, at its 50th anniversary celebration October 26, 2016. Noting the hundreds of people served by RLCB over the years, Lynch commended the leadership of President Janet Griffey and the RLCB board of directors in guiding the organization in creating employment opportunities for people who are blind.

“Throughout its history, RLCB has diversified its product and service offerings to expand employment opportunities and services,” Lynch said. Starting, as many NIB associated agencies have, in manufacturing, Lynch explained that RLCB has grown its capabilities to include assembly, switchboard operations and distribution services, in addition to operating several successful AbilityOne Base Supply Centers™ and entering the commercial marketplace. “In short,” Lynch declared, “RLCB represents what makes our program great.” □



▲ NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch presented RLCB President Jan Griffey with a plaque at the agency's 50th anniversary celebration in October 2016.

## SIXTH FELLOWSHIP FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY

In October, NIB welcomed Joe Conway, April Havey and Irwin Ramirez for their first rotation in the Fellowship for Leadership Development. All three spent the first four months of their fellowship working on projects in various NIB departments, learning NIB operations, and participating in training.

Conway holds a Master of Public Administration degree with a public

management emphasis from Westfield State University in Massachusetts, and a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he studied Spanish and history. Before starting the fellowship, he worked at LIFT in New York City, providing social services to people living in poverty.

Havey earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Bob

Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. After working several years with a mobile pet grooming company she established her own business, Animal Care, in Temperance, Michigan.

Ramirez recently finished coursework for his Master of Science in Computer and Information Science at the State University of New York (SUNY) Polytechnic Institute in Utica. He has a bachelor's degree in information systems from the Zicklin School of Business at the City University of New York's Baruch College. Prior to being named an NIB fellow he interned at the American Foundation for the Blind in New York City, working in IT.

In February the fellows will move on to NIB associated agencies, where they will have the opportunity to work on projects at the professional managerial level. The final rotation of their fellowships will begin in August 2017 and run through January 2018, at an NIB associated agency or private sector employer. □



▲ After their first rotation at NIB Headquarters, Irwin Ramirez (left) Joe Conway and April Havey will move to NIB associated agencies in February as part of the Fellowship for Leadership Development.

## NIB BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW HEADQUARTERS BUILDING



▲ NIB Board of Directors Chairperson Jeanne Morin, NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch, Alexandria City Mayor Allison Silberberg and NIB Board Vice Chairperson Bill Carty and guide dog Hartley turn over the first shovels of dirt at the October 28 groundbreaking ceremony for NIB's new building.

On a blustery fall day, NIB leadership, staff and local government officials gathered for a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of NIB's new headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. Expected to open in mid-2018, the building will provide space for NIB to better fulfill its mission to create meaningful employment for people who are blind. The new headquarters will include an expanded training facility that incorporates the latest accessible technologies.

Chris Downey, a building architect and expert in universal design, will advise NIB on the building's universal design elements. Downey's life experiences as a person who is blind give him a unique perspective on how people who are blind interact with the world around them, and how to enhance that experience through architectural design. □

## A LONG JOURNEY HOME

NIB associated agency Mississippi Industries for the Blind (MIB) has been making barracks bags for the U.S. Army for more than 60 years. Recently, one of the bags completed a long journey back to the agency where it was produced in 1958.

Robert Freitas, of Vermont, found the barracks bag while going through the home of his recently deceased father. Seeing the name of the agency stamped inside, Freitas contacted MIB and returned the bag to its birthplace. Although some design changes have been made since 1958, the barracks bags MIB produces today meet the same high standards for quality and durability that have been in place for the past 60 years. □



▲ 1958

▼ 2016



1310 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, VA 22314

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
WASHINGTON, DC  
PERMIT #3070



## Discover All That AbilityOne Offers Online *or on Paper*

Browse online at **AbilityOneCatalog.com**. To order a printed catalog, contact AbilityOne customer care at 1-877-438-5963 or [CustomerCare@AbilityOne.com](mailto:CustomerCare@AbilityOne.com).



Created with pride by Americans who are blind or have significant disabilities.

PREVIOUS PAGE

FIRST PAGE