



A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

# OPPORTUNITY

**NIB**  
CELEBRATING  
75 YEARS



## Leading the Way

**Plus**

- Where It All Began
- 75th Anniversary National Conference and Expo
- Second Annual Public Policy Grassroots Forum

Volume 6 | Issue 4 | FALL 2013

# Pursuing Growth in Challenging Times

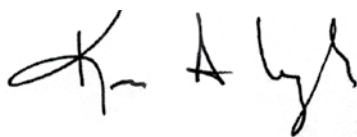
As the holidays draw near, so does the end of our diamond jubilee recognition. Our 75th anniversary year has been a difficult time for our associated agencies. Sequestration, federal budget cuts and military drawdowns continue to impact sales and employment. While we have been communicating the urgency of our situation on an ongoing basis to government officials and federal customers, we have also been trying to minimize the impact of reduced spending by the federal government. From pursuing new opportunities within and outside of the AbilityOne® Program, to stepping-up outreach efforts with current and potential customers and partners, we are working diligently to sustain employment in a very challenging environment.

New product and service development remains a priority across all business lines, especially as new technology is making more and more career opportunities accessible to people who are blind. We continue to aggressively identify and eliminate the sale of essentially-the-same items to ensure the sale of AbilityOne products, and we continue to open base supply centers as additional avenues to distribute our products.

Our initiatives to generate business outside of the AbilityOne Program are gaining traction. We are working with consultants on nearly two dozen prospective commercial projects across all of our business lines and are building relationships

with potential partners, from large defense contractors such as Boeing and Lockheed Martin, to other nationally recognized organizations such as AT&T and Hewlett-Packard.

We are fortunate that our associated agencies are joining NIB in engaging and educating key customers, influencers and partners. Many of our agencies hosted very successful events during the second annual NIB/NAEPB Public Policy Grassroots Forum in August. They took advantage of another opportunity to promote the importance of the AbilityOne Program for people who are blind during National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. And our 75th Anniversary National Conference and Expo in National Harbor, Maryland, last month was a huge success in showcasing our accomplishments over the years. While there, we had the honor of meeting a record number of employees who were nominated for NIB's national employee of the year awards. Having the experience of learning more about them on a personal basis is a powerful reminder of how important it is for the NIB family to continue to drive innovation and invest in new opportunities to prepare for the next generation who will turn to NIB to lead the way.



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

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

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Fall 2013

# OPPORTUNITY



Gloria Bradler, customer service representative, Envision Xpress, Fort Carson, Colorado.

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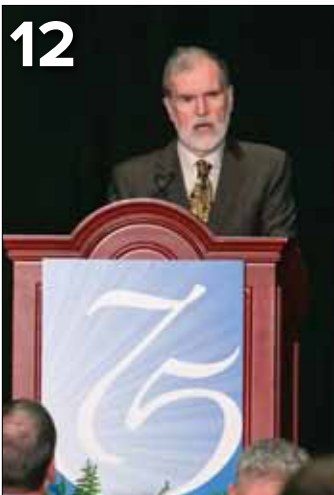
NIB honors a record number of nominees for the national employee of the year awards at its diamond jubilee event in National Harbor, Maryland.

## 16 2013 NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum

"Building Partnerships, Expanding Opportunities" was the theme for the second annual NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum hosted by associated agencies across the country.

## 18 Quoted & Noted

- NIB Associated Agencies Step Up to Offer Disaster Relief
- NIB Recognizes Former U.S. AbilityOne Commission Member
- Customer Events Celebrate NDEAM
- FDA Honors Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind Employees
- IB Milwaukee Hiring Wounded Warriors



Carl Augusto, president and CEO, American Foundation for the Blind, was one of the featured speakers at the 75th Anniversary National Conference and Expo.



Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired employee Bruce Jester packages t-shirts to help aid victims of the bombing at the Boston Marathon.



### ON THE COVER:

Since joining The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Illinois in 2008, Kristy Myvett has excelled in the customer service, database and industries programs, and the low vision clinic, earning her current position as supervisor of the Lighthouse's new call center.

## Signing of 1938 Wagner-O'Day Act recognized with special event in New York City.



*Pictured left to right: New York State Senator Martin Golden, 22nd Senate District; Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; Victor Calise, commissioner, New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities; and Gary Krump, chairperson, NIB Board of Directors.*



*Pictured left to right: Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; Barbara Taylor, senior manager, Corporate Supplier Diversity Strategy and Integration, The Boeing Company; Frank Mayer, regional director, Office of Customer Accounts and Research, General Services Administration; Robert Woodside, program manager, Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative Program, General Services Administration.*

On June 27, 2013, NIB returned to its “birthplace” in New York City to recognize the enactment of the Wagner-O'Day Act on June 25, 1938 and the subsequent formation of NIB. Representatives from its associated nonprofit agencies, corporate and government partners, and elected officials joined NIB at Lighthouse International in Manhattan to honor the historic milestone.

The Wagner-O'Day Act, signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, opened up federal government markets for products made by people who are blind. Through this landmark legislation, NIB and its nationwide network of 91 associated nonprofit agencies provide high-quality products and services to the federal government and military customers, while at the same time providing quality jobs for nearly 6,000 people who are blind. This is important, because 70 percent of working-age Americans who are blind are not employed. “This is a very special year for NIB and Americans who are blind,” said Kevin Lynch, president and CEO of NIB. “With the help of our partners, customers and supporters, NIB and

its associated agencies continue to show the world that there are no limits to what people who are blind can do.”

New York State Senator Martin Golden, from Brooklyn's 22nd Senate District, attended the event and expressed his support and appreciation for NIB's mission and contributions to the blindness community. NIB received a personal letter of commendation from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg released a proclamation declaring June 27, 2013 “National Industries for the Blind Day” in New York City.

New York City was a fitting location for the event because of NIB's strong historical ties to the Empire State. Senator Robert Wagner and Congresswoman Caroline O'Day, both from New York, authored the Wagner-O'Day Act, and NIB opened its first office in New York City. Last year, NIB assumed the day-to-day management of the New York State Preferred Source Program for People Who Are Blind, a state government purchasing initiative that employs more than 400 New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired. ■■

## Hot Off the Press: “Empowering People”

To remember the people and events that led to the creation of NIB and its history over the past 75 years, NIB has published “Empowering People: The Story of National Industries for the Blind and its Associated Agencies; 75 Years — 1938-2013.” The author, *Opportunity* editor Mary Jane Surrago, dedicated the book to “the men and women in NIB associated agencies who have inspired the NIB team, generation after generation, to champion opportunities for people who are blind to achieve their full career potential.”

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch notes in the introduction, “. . . this commitment [to our mission] includes the process of celebrating our roots and history, nurtured by generations before us. . . . Our story reflects not only the diversity of the people we serve, but also

the diversity of their career aspirations, and how NIB and our associated agencies have embraced their desires and drawn on their untapped capabilities.”



While other books about NIB's history were written in 1966 and 1988, many new developments have occurred in the last 25 years. Advances in technology and NIB's learning and development programs have created more diverse employment opportunities.

“Empowering People” was distributed to attendees at the 2013 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo in National Harbor, Maryland. The book is available at [www.abilityone.com](http://www.abilityone.com). ❧

## Article Dispels Myths About Capabilities of People Who Are Blind

NIB worked with the North American Precis Syndicate (NAPS) news service to develop the “People Who Are Blind Can Have Successful Careers” article, which notes, “Here’s something many may consider eye-opening news: A person who is blind can perform

almost any job as well as a sighted person. Today, people who are blind seamlessly use computers, operate machinery and serve in management roles – but many misconceptions still exist about what they are capable of in the workplace.”

NAPS distributed the article to 10,000 newspapers across the country, as well as thousands of online papers, niche websites and bloggers. The article was developed by NIB to raise awareness and dispel myths about the capabilities of people who are blind. ❧

## NIB Leader Scottie Knott Inducted Into DLA Hall of Fame

Claudia “Scottie” Knott, NIB's former chief operating officer, was inducted into the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Hall of Fame on July 30 at DLA headquarters in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The DLA Hall of Fame was established to recognize and honor former members of the DLA community who have made significant and enduring contributions to the agency. Knott was recognized for her contributions in electronic commerce and acquisition.

After being selected into the DLA intern program in 1981, Knott held various leadership positions within DLA and was selected as a member of the Senior Executive Service in 1998. In her last position at DLA, she served as the director of acquisition management and senior procurement and component acquisition executive, where she led the agency's overall acquisition program valued at more than \$38 billion.



NIB's former Chief Operating Officer Scottie Knott and Vice Admiral Mark Harnitchek, director, Defense Logistics Agency.

Knott retired from DLA in 2009, ending a distinguished government career that spanned more than 30 years and subsequently joined NIB. She retired from NIB in September 2013. ❧





# Leading the Way

**Ingenuity and innovation are positioning NIB and its associated agencies to accelerate and diversify career opportunities in the years ahead.**



Tiffany Jolliff, research coordinator, National Industries for the Blind, Alexandria, Virginia.

Within 25 years, life expectancy in developed countries jumps by five percent. Technological advances help the United States achieve energy self-sufficiency and fuel a resurgence in American manufacturing. As climate scientists studying the rise in sea levels revise their forecasts upward, the demand for more environmentally friendly products and services increases. PCs have long been obsolete. The digital revolution changes the way people work, almost beyond recognition.

But along the way, businesses seek more cost-effective technology to cope with increasingly complex challenges, and those technologies open up more career options for people who are blind. Cloud sourcing enables people who are blind to log into any device and convert it into a speaking or magnification tool, eliminating the need for employers to invest in assistive technology at each workstation. As more smart devices emerge, an increasingly mobile world offers even more career opportunities.

### Staying Ahead of Change

To position itself for these opportunities, NIB's strategic plan sets forth long-term goals and objectives for carrying out NIB's mission and includes comprehensive learning and development initiatives; the development of new strategic services lines of business; advances in traditional manufacturing through technology; as well as a focus on creating more employment through state-use programs, new markets and emerging agencies.

Today, NIB associated agencies are diversifying into services, expanding their business lines, moving into commercial markets and promoting more people who are blind into supervisory and leadership positions. Young college graduates are

leveraging and growing their skills in jobs that have growth potential and can easily transfer to the public sector. NIB's Learning and Development team, under the leadership of Jack Tootson, is expanding training and professional opportunities for people who are blind.

NIB's Business Leaders Program (BLP), launched in 2003, continues to evolve. "Because our target audience is changing as more and more people who are blind are becoming supervisors and managers, we have expanded the Leaders At All Levels track of our Business Leaders Program with more of a focus on supervisory and leadership skills," said Karen Pal, BLP director. Leaders At All Levels is on-site training that focuses on fundamental skills and qualities designed to enhance workplace effectiveness throughout NIB's network of associated agencies. The training has something for everyone in the areas of interpersonal communication, teamwork and the ability to cope with change, with the benefit of enhancing effectiveness and morale.

Starting with just four modules in 2005, Leaders At All Levels now offers eight, 90-minute modules. "We are looking forward to introducing a ninth module, *The Ladder of Inference*, which teaches how to refine an individual's reasoning process to avoid using assumptions or conclusions and remain objective when working with others," continued Pal. "Sandy Finley, our training and development specialist, will be bundling four of the modules we currently offer into a half-day session to streamline the learning process for our target audience." The team is also looking to reintroduce *Business Management Training* and *Effective Supervision: The Essentials* in the next year or two.

One of the primary goals of NIB's Learning and Development team is supporting training needs on new

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*Andrew Thomas, Contract Management Support specialist, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas.*

*Continued from page 7*

service projects. In 2009, NIB established the Contract Management Support (CMS) Training Program to assist in the development of high-growth career opportunities for people who are blind by providing high-level training in the field of contract management.

“While the services team is opening doors for new opportunities, we want to be prepared with candidates that possess business-relevant computer skills,” said Doug Goist, accessible technology program manager, who is exploring funding for such a training program. He considers the government’s push to digital as great news for people who are blind, who can have access to more jobs through changing technology.

CMS services have been very successful, too. With instruction available through the Defense Acquisition University, people who are blind are equipped with the skills to be contract closeout specialists. “When they land jobs as contract closeout specialists in the federal government or private sector, it opens up space for another person to have this opportunity,” said Billy Parker, CMS training program director.

In another initiative, Parker and Goist met with representatives from Disability Support Services at Northern Virginia Community College to discuss a potential partnership for providing accessible courses online to meet the required 24 business credits to work at the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in contract management. “There are candidates who receive their CMS training from the Defense Acquisition University, but they are also looking to earn more business college credits to better position themselves for higher level job opportunities,” added Parker.

Some NIB associated agencies are also equipping their employees with learning and development opportunities. According to Brian Hurley, NIB’s workforce relations program director, the Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment in Binghamton, New York, developed a job shadowing program, and the South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind in Corpus Christi is cross-training employees interested in learning about other positions in the organization. The Louisiana Association for the Blind in Shreveport installed computer kiosks at each of its facilities to give employees the opportunity to take online courses.

## **Creating New Opportunities**

Progressive career opportunities are also available in knowledge-based computer jobs, professional and managerial positions, call center operations, high-tech manufacturing and assembly, packaging and distribution. According to NIB’s Vice President of Services, John Qua, NIB and its associated agencies provide best-value solutions to federal and commercial customers with a need for high quality. This high quality is ensured through ISO certifications, customizable training programs and a dedicated staff boasting the lowest turnover rate in the industry. In contact centers, the employee turnover rate is 18 percent, versus 31 percent industry wide, and overall quality ratings are 97 to 98 percent, compared with 80 percent industrywide.

With the military drawdown of troops in Iraq and withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, NIB is concentrating on developing services with civilian agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services, due to the rise of healthcare services. Another civilian agency being cultivated by NIB is the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). NIB recently submitted a statement of capability to provide all the requirements — both manufacturing and supply chain management — for TSA uniforms. Boasting its U.S. based textile workforce and existing supply chain management capabilities and software, NIB associated agencies could support TSA with the flexibility and scalability needed to ensure contract performance.

## **Driving Innovation**

One NIB associated agency, the Travis Association for the Blind (TAB), in Austin, Texas, already performs military uniform supply chain management functions for the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps recruit training centers, a similar process required by TSA for its new hires. TAB’s high inventory accuracy and on-time delivery rates support military recruits to start their training properly outfitted. A new



Organizational Clothing and Individual Equipment (OCIE) refurbishing contract with the Department of the Army is being finalized with TAB, which is expected to create about 30 new jobs for people who are blind. As part of TAB's commitment to access technology that allows individuals with visual impairments to perform warehouse jobs, TAB is working with Raymond Corporation to modify forklift turret trucks to have visually impaired turret forklift operators. The trucks operate by an electrical signal that guides them through a wire beneath the warehouse floor, thus eliminating the requirement that the operator steer. Unlike traditional forklifts, the turret truck allows the operator to ride up and down with the forks, keeping the operator within 6-9 feet of the target pallet. Rack selection features, high-resolution cameras, additional lighting, painting the forks with high-contrasting color, and radio frequency identification of the rack locations are some of the features that make this possible, with safety and efficiency as top priorities.

TAB and other NIB associated agencies not only make many military products, but they also forecast requirements, maintain inventory, perform order fulfillment and manage returns for DoD and commercial customers. Some perform warehousing and distribution functions for more than 700,000 individual and bulk orders in more than 782,000 square feet of space at multiple locations. All seamless to the customer, NIB associated agencies provide end-to-end solutions, from receiving supplier stock, processing customer orders, to shipping

and fulfilling orders. As a result of efficiencies and expertise, these warehouses have averaged accuracy rates over 99.8 percent for 14 years and order accuracy and on-time delivery rates are more than 99 percent.

It is due to these experiences and successes in supply chain management that the Department of the Navy awarded NIB a prime contract to provide Third Party Logistics services for hazardous materials across the southeast region of the United States. Leveraging five associated agencies located in Durham, North Carolina; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Corpus Christi and Fort Worth, Texas, NIB proposed a "Hub and Spoke" solution relying on centralized inventory management and decentralized customer support and service. Since assuming responsibility for this service, the agencies' enhancements in inventory control, management and customer service have resulted in 36 percent reduction in costs to the Navy. These cost reductions include those associated with ordering, inventory maintenance and management, storage and handling of hazardous materials, training and certification of personnel to handle HAZMAT and environmental risks. This supply chain management solution results in cost savings for the customer, reduces the HAZMAT footprint in the Southeast Region and reduces associated risks to the Navy for HAZMAT operations.

In addition to providing complete supply chain management solutions to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and the Navy, NIB associated agencies perform warehousing,

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*Stephen Grier, production associate in the textiles cutting division of Blind Industries and Services of Maryland in Baltimore.*



*Annie Marie Pluyman, sewing chin straps for Army combat helmets at the Travis Association for the Blind, Austin, Texas.*

distribution, pick-and-pack fulfillment, break bulk, assembly and kitting for the United States Army, Coast Guard, Department of State, state contracts and other commercial customers, including Boeing and Northern Outfitters.

Qua remains very optimistic about new service opportunities for associated agencies, citing services as a way of creating a steady revenue stream, and technology as a means of diversifying employment opportunities for people who are blind. He is also confident of the capabilities of NIB associated agencies. "The NIB family has the experience, infrastructure, financial stability and leadership needed to successfully manage a variety of service contracts," said Qua. "But more importantly, we have a dedication that drives us to exceed quality, customer service and order fulfillment requirements to meet our mission."

### Manufacturing Still Matters

Since NIB's beginnings in 1938, manufacturing has been the mainstay of employment in NIB associated agencies, with sewn products accounting for a significant amount of employment hours. There are 28 associated agencies that manufacture uniforms, organizational clothing and physical training gear for DoD. Over the last three years, NIB associated agencies have produced between 9 million and 11 million individual apparel items annually. Custom gauges, jigs and fixtures ensure critical tolerances are met, manufacturing to a standard of excellence. Textile, rehabilitation and process engineers oversee and implement the latest manufacturing equipment to best utilize employees' skills, with the goal of creating the maximum number of jobs that can be performed by people who are blind. All of this results in a 99 percent acceptance rate for up to \$200 million in apparel production for DLA each year.

This business has grown tremendously in the last decade. NIB pursued opportunities with the Army when it updated its uniforms and equipment in the 1990s to use the most technically advanced textile fabrics and designs to provide soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines similar products to what is available in the commercial market. Upgrades and improvements in uniforms, field gear and equipment resulted in huge increases in textile business for associated agencies.

But sales to DoD have plummeted this year due to sequestration and the military troop withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. "With the decline in DoD textile items, which has affected every other government supplier, employment hours have equally dropped, resulting in employee layoffs," said Paul Diamonti, director of niche

and textile product development. "To counter this trend, NIB is seeking opportunities with commercial companies." One of the early successes of this effort is a partnership with Northern Outfitters, which specializes in extreme cold weather clothing suitable for arctic climates.

Four NIB associated agencies located in Runnemede, New Jersey; Morristown, Tennessee; and Greensboro and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, are making face shields; wind mitts, pants and anoraks; fleece jackets; sleeping bags; parka shells, liners and mittens; and other extreme cold weather items. Industries of the Blind in Greensboro, North Carolina, is handling the inventory and order fulfillment program for Northern Outfitters products. The project started in 2012, and gradually built up to the present workload. Several projects are under consideration by other commercial companies where NIB associated agencies could manufacture outdoor sporting apparel, fleece jackets and ski clothing. "If we are successful in landing these contracts, it will be a win-win for all partners," said Diamonti. "Besides keeping jobs in America and creating jobs for people who are blind, the customer would be assured of high-quality products, produced in safe working environments by environmentally responsible companies."

### Strategic Markets

While continuing to foster new products and services for the federal government and the military through the AbilityOne® Program, NIB is looking to also create more employment opportunities through additional business with state governments. Last year, NIB assumed management of the New York State Preferred Source Program for People Who are Blind, as the central nonprofit agency to create, sustain and improve employment for more than 400 New Yorkers who are blind.

In another initiative to reach potential employees in cities not being served by NIB associated agencies, the NIB Board funded grants to foster business development



Marlys Newhouse, assembler at Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, Port Richey, Florida.



in agencies that were providing rehabilitation services, rather than employment. As a result, NIB partnered with Lighthouse Central Florida in Orlando to develop a business plan, resulting in new contact center contracts with commercial customers and two projects for DLA through the AbilityOne Program. One of NIB's newer, strategic agencies, Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind in Port Richey, Florida, recently received its first product order for Meter Mist fragrance canisters from the Florida Department of Transportation through Florida's state use program. According to Mary Johnson, director of strategic market development, NIB is also working with agencies serving people who are blind in Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles and New York to create employment opportunities. "Success with these initiatives will expand the reach of the NIB family to new cities, enabling us to serve new populations," said Johnson. "It is the first time in NIB's history that we have had so many resources devoted to this effort."

### Preparing for the Next Generation

Today, NIB is about education, training, connections and careers through NIB's learning and development initiatives and the wide variety of manufacturing, service, management and executive positions available at NIB and its associated agencies. NIB will continue to deliver solutions to valued customers, deepen relationships with consumer groups, and work with leading-edge and emerging associated agencies to create new career opportunities for people who are blind. With all of these initiatives in the works, there will come a time when America's business community will realize the untapped talent of people who are blind, finally making a significant dent in their high unemployment rate. ❧

## A New Way to Pursue His Goals

### By shifting focus from international relations to contract management, Ian Elliott got a jump start on a new career.



*Ian Elliott, contracts and pricing administrator, Digital Receiver Technology, Inc., a Boeing Company, Germantown, Maryland.*

Back in 2010, Ian Elliott took a course that changed his life. Since graduating from California State University Northridge with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2006, he could not find a full-time job in his career field, despite being on the dean's list. He moved to Virginia, hoping that careers in international relations would be more plentiful, but to his disappointment, he found none. The next few years, Elliott took whatever office and temporary positions he could land, while going for a Master of Arts degree in government. Still no prospects for employment. Then he read about NIB's partnership with the Department of Defense's Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to provide people who are blind with the core training courses required to establish a foundation on contract management. Elliott applied and was accepted into the program.

Over the next few months, Elliott took five DAU courses to achieve his certification as a contract closeout specialist. Meanwhile, NIB was working with potential employers to place these specialists in government or commercial organizations. Knowing of its commitment to hiring a diverse workforce, NIB worked with Boeing to place one of the DAU graduates at that organization. When an opening became available in 2011, Elliott landed the position as a contracts and pricing administrator at Boeing Defense, Space & Security, Digital Receiver Technology in Germantown, Maryland.

"Boeing is a great company and they take care of their employees," said Elliott. "On my first day of work, all of the assistive technology needed for me to do the job was in place."

Elliott is enjoying his new career at Boeing and has aspirations to move up into management or to another Boeing division. "The work is interesting and I feel I am helping to support national defense," said Elliott. "Even though the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are winding down, counterintelligence is important to our national defense."

With a good start on his career, Elliott and his wife, Melanie, are in the process of adopting a legally-blind child from Bulgaria. ❧



## 2013 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo

# LEADING THE WAY

## Annual Gathering Recognizes History, Focuses on Future

NIB's special year of recognizing its 75th anniversary culminated with the 2013 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo, held October 9-11 in National Harbor, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. While the federal government shutdown challenged NIB with last-minute agenda changes, the more than 800 participants, including NIB and associated agency staff, vendors and business partners, took advantage of the many opportunities for networking and learning from conference speakers and breakout sessions.

### Celebrating Business Partnerships

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch and NAEPB President John Mitchell kicked off the conference at the opening general session. Lynch noted that in spite of the challenging business climate, a record number of attendees, sponsors, exhibitors and associated agency employees of the year turned out for the conference.

Mitchell presented 2013 NAEPB Supplier Appreciation Awards to two vendors. Small business The Boxmaker Inc. provides innovative and green packaging solutions, dependable customer service and significant cost savings for The Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. in Seattle. Large business United Stationers offers key product programs,

on-time deliveries and competitive pricing to support Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind in North Carolina.

Carl Augusto, American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) president and CEO, told the crowd that NIB and AFB had enjoyed a rich and productive working relationship throughout NIB's 75-year history. Augusto said that Chester C. Kleber, NIB's first executive director, and all of NIB's early leaders would be amazed at the growth of the program and variety of jobs available today for people who are blind.

### Employees of the Year Featured

One of the highlights of the annual conference is the opportunity to honor employees of the year nominated for NIB's two national awards by their associated nonprofit agencies. More than 80 agency employees were nominated and several were showcased during the general session, inspiring attendees by speaking briefly about their experiences, their passion for their jobs and their positive and self-reliant attitudes.

"I'm doing a lot of things I never thought I'd be doing," said Greg Szabo, senior production employee at Inland Northwest Lighthouse, Spokane, Washington, who uses heavy machinery



*Pictured left to right: Gary Krump, NIB board chairperson; 2013 R.B. Irwin Award winner Jim Kutsch, president and CEO, The Seeing Eye, and former NIB board chairperson; and Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.*



*Abram Claude, honorary lifetime director, NIB Board of Directors, was honored with the Crystal Flag award in recognition of his 50 years of volunteer service to support the mission of NIB.*



to produce products used by the U.S. military. “I am a visionary,” said Stephanie Davis, optical data entry clerk at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind. “As I reach for my goals, they are behind me, pushing me along the way.”

### Speakers Inform and Inspire

Attendees were entertained by a lively speech and Q&A from journalist and political commentator, Tucker Carlson, who gave attendees his unique insights into the current political environment. He shared stories from his experiences living in Washington, rubbing elbows with policymakers and reporting on numerous presidential campaigns.

Motivational speaker Murray Banks shared his life experiences as a triathlete, ski racer, teacher and coach, offering guidelines for attendees to recharge, reenergize and refocus so they can “fire on all cylinders” every day. He reminded attendees how leaders set the tone for their organization, noting that how they communicate is as important as what is communicated.

Lynch presented a business update from his perspective as NIB’s chief executive, noting 2013 had been bittersweet, as many associated agencies had reduced hours or furloughed employees because of sequestration and federal budget uncertainties. At the same time, there were many successes, including new contracts awarded, doors opened to new market opportunities, and new jobs and promotions for people who are blind. He recognized two agencies that successfully graduated from NIB’s strategic market development initiative – Center for the Visually Impaired in Atlanta and the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind in Port Richey, Florida.

### Recognizing Associated Agencies, Customers, Vendors

Local celebrity Charles “Topper” Shutt, chief meteorologist at WUSA Channel 9 News in Washington, D.C., served as MC at the awards luncheon, which featured the accomplishments of numerous government and commercial

partners who have helped NIB toward its mission of creating employment for people who are blind.

Lynch and Mitchell presented 2012 Agency Achievement Awards to three associated agencies – Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind in Little Rock; and Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas. They were recognized for their accomplishments during the previous fiscal year to increase employment for people who are blind, coupled with excellence in contract performance and compliance.

Bob Hanye, president and CEO, Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Inc., Binghamton, New York, was honored for his nearly 40-year career in the blindness community, including experience at both A.V.R.E. and NIB. Hanye plans to retire in December 2013. Also recognized were two other agency executives retiring this year – Bill Price from Lighthouse Louisiana in New Orleans and Subie Green from Center for the Visually Impaired. Hanye expressed his delight that A.V.R.E. was honored with the 2013 Quality Work Environment Outstanding Achievement award.

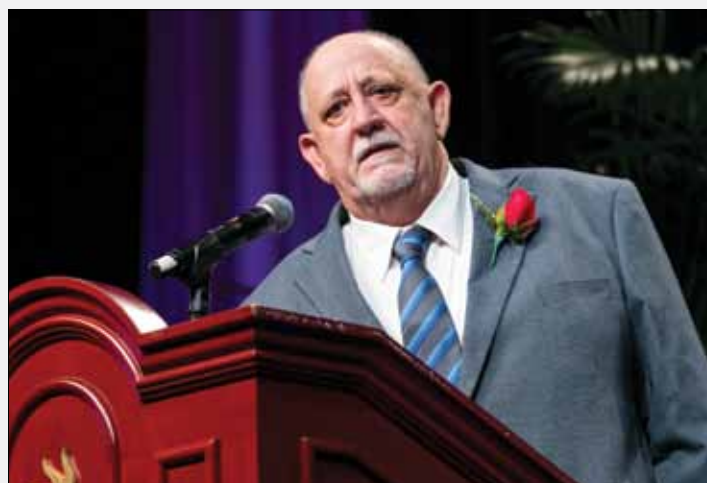
Three agencies were honored with Base Supply Center (BSC) Compliance Excellence awards – San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas (Fort Hood BSC); LC Industries, Durham, North Carolina (Fort Benning BSC); and Blind Industries and Services of Maryland in Baltimore (Fort Knox BSC). Lighthouse Central Florida of Orlando and MidWest Enterprises for the Blind, Kalamazoo, Michigan, received 2013 Communications Awards for their outstanding campaigns to recognize and promote the 75th anniversary of the Wagner-O’Day Act, the AbilityOne® Program and NIB.

Christopher Cooper, contract closeout specialist on the Defense Logistics Agency contract with Virginia

*Continued on page 14*



*Pictured left to right: Gary Krump, NIB board chairperson; Ramona Samuelson, wife of the late Milton J. Samuelson; Chad Gorshing; 2013 Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award winner Christian Gorshing, NewView Oklahoma, Oklahoma City; and Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.*



*2013 Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award winner Gerald Jones, Lions Volunteer Blind Industries, Morristown, Tennessee.*



Pictured left to right for presentation of 2013 Quality Work Environment Outstanding Achievement Award to Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment (A.V.R.E.), Binghamton, New York: Kelly Storm, board chair, A.V.R.E.; Brian Hurley, workforce relations program director, NIB; Katie Humphreys, Employment Practices Implementation Committee (EPIC) team chair; Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.



Pictured on left is George Kraft, sales representative, The Boxmaker Inc., accepting the 2013 NAEPB Supplier Appreciation Award – Small Business Category, from John Mitchell, president, NAEPB.



Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB, presents 2013 Communications Award to Lee Nasehi, president and CEO, Lighthouse Central Florida, Orlando.



Pictured left to right: Chris Powers, government channel manager, and Marc McCullough, channel manager, both representing United Stationers, accepting the 2013 NAEPB Supplier Appreciation Award – Large Business Category, from John Mitchell, president, NAEPB.

Continued from page 9

Industries for the Blind, was recognized as 2013 Contract Management Support Training Program Outstanding Participant. Other awards presented included:

- **Customer Appreciation Awards – Products:** Laura Ray, Center for Supply, General Services Administration, and Jim Harrison, president, Northern Outfitters
- **Customer Appreciation Awards – Services:** Alynne Faughnan, G3 Operations Group, Contract Operations Directorate, Army Contracting Command; Timothy Callahan and team, Defense Contract Management Agency; John Matchette, managing director of U.S. Public Safety Portfolio, Accenture; and Emily Adams, president, Fresh Revenues
- **Commercial Performance of Excellence Award – Commodities:** John Rosmarin, Saunders Manufacturing Company
- **Co-Brand Partner of Excellence Award – Commodities Large Business:** George Foley, 3M
- **Best New Supplier – Medical Products:** Carlito Iglesias and Garet Rembert, McKesson
- **Federal Customer Appreciation Award:** Christine Metz, Tim Stark, Deborah Kemble, Susan Williams, Defense Logistics Agency Headquarters
- **Partnership Excellence Award – Base Supply Center:** Morris McIlwain, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Procurement

### Business Experts Offer Hands-On Learning

The conference offered many opportunities for intensive learning of business practices to apply back at the office. In a board track session, Steve Player, coauthor of “Future Ready: How to Master Business Forecasting,” taught participants how to rethink the way businesses organize and run forecasting processes and how executives use the insights provided by forecasts to help navigate through turbulent times. Award-winning author, trainer and consultant Peter Brinckerhoff addressed how to make better decisions in tackling new business opportunities. Other breakout session panelists focused on how to develop business outside of the AbilityOne Program and how to implement best practices in creating new business opportunities through the program.

### Forum for Exchanging Ideas

The Expo was a perfect venue for conference attendees to network and meet with the more than 100 exhibitors representing NIB associated agencies, vendors and business partners. The Technology Showcase offered a variety of new adaptive technologies and software to





*The Expo provided an excellent forum for conference attendees to meet and share ideas.*



*Erika Arbogast, CEO, Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, received a 2012 Employment Achievement Award from NIB.*



*Pictured left to right: Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; Bill Johnson, CEO, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, Little Rock, receiving a 2012 Employment Achievement Award; and John Mitchell, president, NAEPB.*

support individuals who are blind on the job. Special tactile displays highlighted photos and vignettes from NIB's history, including braille text. The event also showcased the Mobile Eye Care Van that serves citizens in Washington, D.C., operated by Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind.

### **Awards Gala Salutes Achievement**

The 75th anniversary awards gala featured award presentations to NIB's two national Employee of the Year winners. Christian Gorshing of NewView Oklahoma in Oklahoma City received the 2013 Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award and Gerald Jones of Lions

Volunteer Blind Industries, Morristown, Tennessee, received the 2013 Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award. Both awardees gave inspiring speeches about how their employers and their jobs had made a difference in their lives.

Former chairman of the NIB Board of Directors, Dr. James A. Kutsch, Jr., president and CEO of The Seeing Eye, was honored with the 2013 R.B. Irwin Award for his exceptional service and commitment to NIB's mission. A special award in recognition of 50 years of volunteer service was presented to Abram Claude, Jr., honorary lifetime director, NIB Board of Directors. ...



*Pictured left to right: Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB, presents 2013 Communications Award to Karen Walls, president, and Vicky Hickok, administrative manager, MidWest Enterprises for the Blind Inc., Kalamazoo, Michigan.*



*Pictured left to right: Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; Nancy Perkins, president, Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind, receiving a 2012 Employment Achievement Award; and John Mitchell, president, NAEPB.*

# 2013 NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum: Building Partnerships, Expanding Opportunities

Following on the success of the NIB/NAEPB Public Policy Forum last May, NIB associated agencies across the country further strengthened their grassroots advocacy efforts by holding events throughout the month of August, when congressional members were on recess in their home districts.

## Second Annual Grassroots Forum Takes Root

The theme for the second annual NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum was “Building Partnerships, Expanding Opportunities.” The events enabled associated agencies to highlight what products and services they provide for customers and how they create a wide range of jobs for people who are blind.

Collectively, there were 25 events held with elected officials and their staff members at 13 NIB associated agencies. Ten Members of Congress, seven congressional staffers, six state legislators, two city mayors, one Secretary of State, and a member of the British Parliament toured NIB associated agencies in 11 states, from Seattle to Pittsburgh, and Dallas to Kalamazoo.

## Focus on Employment

Agency leaders and staff spotlighted the 75th anniversary of NIB, established in August 1938, and the AbilityOne® Program. But they also stressed the negative impact sequestration has had on employment of people who are blind. Solutions such as ending the purchase of essentially-the-same products were noted as one way to curtail the effects of sequestration and budget uncertainty.

The continued communication and outreach to members of Congress during the Grassroots Forum was crucial at a time when Congress is inundated with competing voices who have been negatively hit by sequestration.

## Elected Officials Visit Agencies Nationwide

One of the many NIB/NAEPB Grassroots Forum events was at Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (ALB) in Little Rock on August 13. Visitors from the local chamber of commerce, state government and Capitol Hill toured ALB’s manufacturing operations. They came away impressed with ALB

employees’ abilities and skills, as well as with the quality and quantity of products produced for government and commercial customers.

Discussion focused on the effects of sequestration. Because of fewer orders by federal customers, ALB and other NIB associated agencies have been forced to conduct layoffs and reduce hours for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Representative Pete Gallego (D-TX23) visited San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind (SALB) on August 5, an event that made the Fox Nightly News in San Antonio. He encouraged SALB employees, whose hours have been cut, to write letters to their elected officials explaining that the sequester is drastically affecting them.

On August 16, MidWest Enterprises for the Blind (MWEB) in Kalamazoo, Michigan, hosted a big supporter and repeat visitor – Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI6), chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Other guests at the luncheon event, a celebration of MWEB’s 20th anniversary, included



*Pictured left to right during a visit to Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind in Little Rock: Jay Chesshir, president, Little Rock Chamber of Commerce; Toni Fraser, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind; Debera Coleman and Terry Ross, Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind; Larry Dickerson, CEO, World Services for the Blind; and Jill Cox, federal grants director for Congressman Tim Griffin (R-AR2) Seated is Arkansas Lighthouse employee James Walker, assembling spiral notebooks.*



*Congressman Pete Gallego (D-TX23) tried out a sewing machine in the textiles department at the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas.*





Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC10); Randy Buckner, director of operations at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind's Asheville facility in North Carolina; and Tony West, sewing machine operator in the textiles department.



Misty Steinberg, public policy liaison at MidWest Enterprises for the Blind, Kalamazoo, Michigan, with Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI6) during his visit to MWEB.

state and local elected officials, Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell, MWEB Board members, business partners and community supporters. After guests toured the agency's facility, they heard remarks from MWEB's President, Karen Walls, and Chair of the Board of Directors, Chuck Lange. Rep. Upton presented a flag, which had been flown over the U.S. Capitol building, that was then raised and flown at the MWEB facility by officers from the Kalamazoo police department.

### New AbilityOne Champions

While there were fewer agency events than in 2012, due in part to the difficult economic conditions felt throughout NIB's nationwide network of associated agencies, four members of Congress met the criteria for becoming AbilityOne Champions.

Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC10) was recognized as an AbilityOne Champion

at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind's Asheville, North Carolina, facility on August 7. Three more members of Congress – Rep. Todd Young (R-IN9), Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) – also met the criteria toward becoming AbilityOne Champions and were formally recognized this fall.

Members of Congress are recognized as AbilityOne Champions by demonstrating support for the AbilityOne Program and for related community-based nonprofit agencies in their district or state through congressional actions while supporting the enhancement of opportunities for economic and personal independence of persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

### Social Media Expands the Message

Even agencies that were not able to schedule events engaged in the Grassroots Forum social media

campaign on Facebook and Twitter. All NIB agencies were equipped with an NIB Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit that offered advice and guidelines for posting photos and videos, updating their Facebook status or posting on Twitter; following their congressional member's social media pages and thanking them for their visits; and sharing posts to build momentum and interest in Grassroots Forum activities and messaging.

Combining social media efforts for the Grassroots Forum increased every interaction that agencies had with congressional, state and local leaders. Social media outreach provided NIB and associated agencies the capability for their stories to go viral, expanding the message of employment opportunities for people who are blind. ☘



Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI6) visited MidWest Enterprises for the Blind in Kalamazoo, Michigan, during the agency's 20th anniversary celebration.



Dennis Steiner, president and CEO of VisionCorps, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, shows Rep. Pat Meehan (R-PA7) a chin strap that VisionCorps employees assemble for the U.S. military.

### NIB Associated Agencies Step Up to Offer Disaster Relief

Tragedy struck America at the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013 when two pressure cooker bombs exploded. Sometimes helping victims after a crisis can be challenging. But employees from the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, New York, helped collate, package and ship t-shirts that raised \$10,000 for the victims of the Boston Marathon.

The idea began with Libby Lemire, the merchandising manager for The Boilermaker 15K road race that takes place in Utica every July. Her plan to sell t-shirts, printed with "Boilermaker 2013" on the front and "Run for Boston" on the back, was for 100 percent of the profits to help aid the victims of the bombing. But she needed the shirts to be assembled quickly and she turned to CABVI for help.

CABVI answered with a resounding "Yes!" "We decided to do it for free, so that more revenue could go to the bombing victims," explained Dennis Webster, vice president of manufacturing and business services at CABVI.

Another disaster this spring – the devastating F-5 tornado that ripped through Oklahoma City and its suburbs on May 20, 2013 – destroyed thousands of homes with its record-breaking width of 2.6 miles and winds that reached in excess of 200 mph. For many employees of NIB associated agency NewView Oklahoma Inc., the impact of the tornado was personal. While some employees and their families lost everything, others were spared damage but still concerned for their community.

NewView set up a fund using the savings from a long-planned employee picnic to support the disaster relief effort. The agency also donated \$3,500 worth of plastic bags. Due to the destruction caused by the tornado, the



*Pictured left to right are Envision Industries employees Mike Simunic, vice president-general manager; Gary Gregg, director of operations; and David Wells, director of sales.*

need was great for special adaptive aids, used eyeglasses, magnifiers, cleaning supplies, towels, sheets, clothing, bottled water, first aid and other disaster relief items.

Envision Inc., based two hours away in Wichita, Kansas, answered the call for help, volunteering to collect donations for NewView from other NIB associated agencies. Envision also stored, inventoried and transported items from across the country to NewView, including a shipment of mattresses. After a month of shipping several pallets, Shamain Bachman, Envision's director of marketing, said NewView ran out of storage space and asked Envision to stop sending items.

"It's hard to express how much we appreciate everyone stepping up and helping us in Oklahoma. It's heartwarming to see people across the country help our employees and our clients get back on their feet," said Thomas Larson, director of communications and marketing at NewView. ❧

### NIB Recognizes Former U.S. AbilityOne Commission Member



*NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch presents plaque to Dr. Carol Lowman, deputy to the commanding general, Army Contracting Command, Department of the Army.*

Kevin Lynch, NIB president and CEO, honored former U.S. AbilityOne Commission® member Dr. Carol Lowman, deputy to the commanding general, Army Contracting Command, Department of the Army, at the Commission meeting on July 11, 2013. Lowman served as the Department of the Army representative on the Commission from October 2011 through August 2012. NIB recognized Lowman's work on the Commission to help further NIB's mission to enhance opportunities for economic and personal independence of persons who are blind.

Lowman was also recognized by the Commission with the Executive Director's Award for Enduring Leadership for her outstanding contributions to the AbilityOne® Program. As a result of her leadership, Contract Management Support (CMS) is a well-established line of business for the AbilityOne Program. Since 2009, more than 130 employees who are blind or have severe disabilities have been employed through CMS. ❧



## Customer Events Celebrate NDEAM

“Because We Are EQUAL to the Task” was the theme of this year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a national campaign held in October to communicate about employment issues and celebrate contributions of American employees with disabilities.

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) sponsored “AbilityOne Days,” providing opportunities for NIB associated agencies to showcase their products and services for acquisition and technical personnel. These events offered a forum for government and nonprofit agency staff to collaborate on new products and services to be added to the AbilityOne Program Procurement List.

Anastasia Powell, program associate at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind in North Carolina, attended the DLA Land and



Anastasia Powell, program associate at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind.

Maritime event in Columbus, Ohio, on October 2 to speak about her career experiences and opportunities made possible through the AbilityOne® Program. Powell, who is blind, also serves as an Advocate for Leadership and Employment, working with other associated agency and NIB employees on public policy issues. Richard Oliver, director of sales, Industries of the Blind, Greensboro, North Carolina, spoke at DLA Aviation in Richmond, Virginia, on October 22.

Other AbilityOne events this year included those hosted by DLA Troop Support in Philadelphia; the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) in Warren, Michigan; the Defense Medical Materiel Program Office (DMMPO) at Fort Detrick, Maryland; and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in Arlington, Virginia. ■■

## FDA Honors Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind Employees

Two employees of NIB associated agency Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB), Stephen Martin and James Dietz, were honored with the Customer Service Excellence Award at the 2013 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Operations Honor Awards Ceremony on July 2 at FDA’s White Oak Campus in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Martin and Dietz, both of whom are blind, staff the FDA’s Tier 1 User Fee Help Desk, under a contact center services contract held by Deloitte Consulting. NIB and CLB, based in Washington, D.C., have supported the User Fee Help Desk contract as a subcontractor to Deloitte since November 2010. Both Deloitte and FDA customers have consistently praised Martin and Dietz for the calm, efficient and professional manner in which they perform their jobs, demonstrating in-depth business knowledge to respond to hundreds of inquiries each week from the pharmaceutical industry. ■■



Pictured left to right: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind employees Stephen Martin and James Dietz, FDA contact center representatives.

## IB Milwaukee Hiring Wounded Warriors

Industries for the Blind in West Allis, Wisconsin (IB Milwaukee), as part of its commitment to supporting wounded warriors, recently hired Jonathan Hurley as Wounded Warrior Supply Program coordinator. Hurley is helping to launch a new customer supply solution that creates employment for returning veterans.

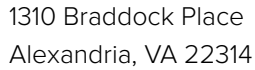


Jonathan Hurley, coordinator of IB Milwaukee’s Wounded Warrior Supply Program.

“This is an amazing opportunity,” said Hurley, a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, who was medically retired after being badly wounded in Iraq. “My main priority is to find returning service men and women like me out there who need jobs, to find people with skills this company can employ. That’s my goal.”

CJ Lange, senior vice president of sales and marketing, IB Milwaukee, said, “We are just getting started, and hiring Jon has helped us to launch this opportunity. We now employ 21 military veterans, but are looking to hire more to meet the needs of our ever-growing customer base.” ■■





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