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OPPORTUNITY

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GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Contract Management
Support Services

Meet Yvette Kelly, sales associate at the U.S. Department of Energy's AbilityOne BSC.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Years ago, if you worked on a government installation and needed supplies quickly, your options were limited. In most cases, finding what you needed meant traveling to the nearest retailer, or waiting for your order to arrive in the mail.

This changed in the mid-1990s when a new retail model emerged in the AbilityOne® Program – a model that created jobs for people who are blind through on-site retail stores.

Today's Base Supply Centers – or BSCs – are one of many purchase channels available to federal government customers. BSCs play an important role in keeping the federal government and military operations running smoothly, offering convenient one-stop shopping for thousands of SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products.

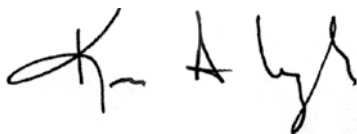
But BSCs are more than just retail stores. Operated by NIB's associated nonprofit agencies, BSCs create and sustain careers for hundreds of people who are blind, from retail positions such as cashiers and store managers, to manufacturing jobs that support the production of a wide variety of products.

BSCs offer an interactive environment, where federal customers can meet and

engage our associated agency employees. Customers experience firsthand the positive impact their purchases have on the lives of people who are blind.

We've come a long way since the first BSC opened in 1995 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Today, 150 BSCs are located on federal installations nationwide. Four new BSCs opened just last year, and plans are in the works to open more in 2014.

In this issue of *Opportunity*, you'll read about the men and women who are blind employed at BSCs across the country who are working to keep the shelves well-stocked for our federal and military customers. The BSCs are a win-win model for customers and for employees who are blind.



Kevin A. Lynch
President and
Chief Executive Officer



OPPORTUNITY

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Mary Jane Surrage
Editor

Laura Reimers
Vice President, Communications

Mike Johnson
Communications Program Director

Martha Fassett
Senior Communications Specialist

OPPORTUNITY welcomes news and stories about the careers and capabilities of people who are blind. Contact editor@nib.org.

To add or change a mailing address, contact opportunity@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

Sylvie Joseph
Vice President,
Business Development and Account Management

John Qua
Vice President, Services

Marie-France Vareilles
Vice President, Products

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



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SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS AND BEYOND

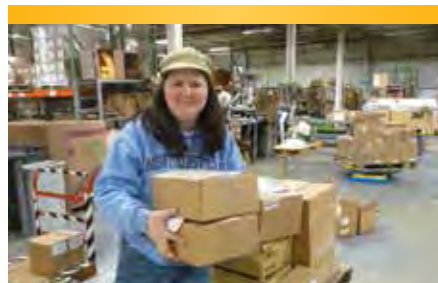
Employees at AbilityOne® Base Supply Centers keep products flowing and customers happy.



04

SPECIAL EDUCATOR

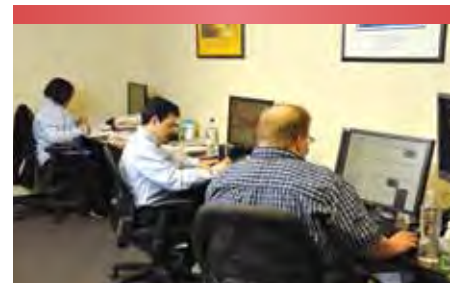
Bosma Enterprises' Bill Powell has spent his career teaching and mentoring people with visual impairments.



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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

NIB associated agencies team up with small businesses to make planet-friendly products.



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RIGHT ON TRACK

NIB marks an important milestone with 100th placement for Contract Management Support Program.

PROFILE



▲ Bosma Enterprises' Assisive Technology Director Bill Powell guides a student in computer assembly.

SPECIAL EDUCATOR

In the classroom and the computer lab, Bill Powell helps students thrive.

More than 30 years after landing his first job as an early childhood teacher at his alma mater, the Indiana School for the Blind, William (Bill) Powell remains committed to teaching and mentoring his students and advocating on their behalf.

No stranger to visual impairments, Powell was born with optic nerve hypoplasia, which left him with an extremely limited field of vision in his right eye and no vision in his left eye. He underwent an array of treatments and 26 surgeries as an infant and toddler. Upon his graduation from Ball State University, Powell had a double

teaching license in special education and health and orthopedics.

In his first post, Powell taught early childhood skills, but moved up to middle and high school to teach braille. "Throughout the course of a day, my colleague and I would handle a heavy caseload of 50 students," said Powell, "They were competitive and learned well enough to move into public school, which was a more challenging environment."

His achievements earned him several awards from the Indiana School for the Blind, the distinction of Special

Alumnus from Ball State University and multiple listings in *Who's Who Among American Teachers*.

When Powell retired from teaching at the school in 2007, he started a second career as an assisive technology instructor at Bosma Enterprises in Indiana. He rose quickly to manager in 2009 and then to director of the department the following year. While at Bosma, he created the Build Your Own Computer Program. "Most of my students did not have computers at home to practice the skills we taught in the classroom," said Powell. "So with donated computers and some funding from Bosma, we started Build Your Own Computer." The program has been a resounding success. In the past six years, students have built or refurbished over 200 computers to use at home, and the experience of doing so has built their confidence. In several books published by Bosma, he documented details of teaching individuals without vision how to build a computer.

Through all his years of teaching, Powell has never used a teacher's desk nor has he followed traditional teaching methods. He inspires his students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. "Bosma is wide open to my approach," said Powell. "You really have to see it in action."

There are many rewards with the job. "A lot of people that come to Bosma are devastated with the onset of blindness," said Powell. "They leave here to go back into the world and do incredibly well. It makes my job so satisfying."

For the last two decades, Powell has also taught a braille instruction course at Indiana State University. But when he is not teaching, Powell loves spending time with his son and grandson. He has traveled extensively, and is an avid advocate for children's rights. "If I feel a child is denied something needed to succeed, I am always there to provide support," said Powell. "Because nothing is more important than our children!" ▣

NIB HONORED BY PR NEWS

NIB's Communications team was recognized on February 26, 2014 as one of four national finalists for the 2013 Nonprofit Team of the Year Award in the *PR News* Nonprofit PR Awards program. The program honored 98 organizations in various award categories during an awards event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

The team's nomination highlighted its multifaceted communications campaign during NIB's 75th anniversary year, including media relations, publications and branding, electronic and social media, special events, and marketing and advertising. The campaign focused on raising awareness about the capabilities of people who are blind and describing how government budget cuts have impacted the lives of these individuals. □

NIB DESIGNATED AS ADMINISTRATOR FOR NYSPSP FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and its New York State Commission for the Blind officially designated NIB as administrator of the New York State Preferred Source Program (NYSPSP) for People Who Are Blind.

The program includes nine affiliated nonprofit agencies in New York state that employ nearly 400 people who are blind and generate approximately \$30 million in sales of products and services to New York state and local government agencies.

In December 2012, NIB assumed the interim day-to-day management of the NYSPSP for People Who Are Blind. After a successful one-year interim period, NIB was formally

designated on December 30, 2013 to administer the program.

"NIB's expertise has already led to increased employment opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind," said Sheila J. Poole, OCFS acting commissioner. "I'm confident this business model will encourage continued job growth at the nine certified affiliates around the state."

NIB maintains an office in Albany and manages order processing, customer service, sales and accounting functions for the NYSPSP for People Who Are Blind.

For information about products and services available through the program, visit www.NYSPSP.org. □



PUBLIC POLICY FORUM IN MAY

The 2014 Public Policy Forum, hosted by NIB and the National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind (NAEPB), informs NIB associated agency leaders and staff about current legislative priorities and prepares them for face-to-face meetings with elected officials and staff on Capitol Hill. This year's event is focused on the theme, "Safeguarding Employment Opportunities for People Who Are Blind."

The annual forum provides an opportunity for the NIB network to build relationships with members of Congress, and to share success stories about the employment of people who are blind across the country. □

2014 NIB/NAEPB Public Policy Forum
May 20-21, 2014
Westin Arlington Gateway
Arlington, Virginia



Join the social media conversation on Facebook and Twitter! #NIBPolicyForum

NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND EXPO IN OCTOBER

Planning for the 2014 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo, attended by NIB and its associated agency leaders and staff, customers and vendors, is well underway. The annual event includes general sessions featuring government and industry leaders, a vendor fair, and recognition of NIB associated agency Employee of the Year nominees and national award winners. □

**2014 NIB/NAEPB National
Conference and Expo**
October 6-9, 2014
Hyatt Regency Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia

Interior photo of Beyond Vision's BSC at Naval Station Great Lakes in Illinois.



SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS AND BEYOND

For employees at AbilityOne® Base Supply Centers (BSCs), exceptional customer service is in their DNA. Since the first AbilityOne BSC opened in 1995, dedicated employees have been committed to meeting the needs of military and government customers.

Yvette Kelly likes to WOW her customers. At Paperclips, Etc., a AbilityOne BSC operated by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind at the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C., Kelly begins a typical day by retagging merchandise to make price adjustments, and then tidies up the stock on the shelves. When the doors open, the store is immaculate. Kelly and her teammates are front and center greeting and taking care of customers. If a customer needs an item that is not in stock, Kelly takes the order and follows up with a phone call when the product arrives. She uses assistive technology and a hand-held magnifier to compensate for the lack of vision in her left eye and limited sight in her right eye. “We have good foot traffic every day, which makes the day go by fast,” said Kelly. “I really enjoy working with my teammates and our friendly customers.” In between customer interactions, she restocks and straightens up products on shelves and follows up on special orders, so that by closing time, the store is ready for the next day. Having spent her entire career in the retail business, Kelly is a pro at customer service and retail operations. She knows her job well.

Meanwhile, Keith Tyson is stocking shelves at the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling BSC, operated by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland. Kevin McLain is busy at Redstone Arsenal Army Base BSC in Huntsville, Alabama, operated by Alabama Industries for the Blind, receiving orders from customers and overseeing fulfillment. And a thousand miles away, in Warren, Michigan, Alma Brown is rearranging the products and displays to create a fresh look for the stock at the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) Life Cycle Management Command BSC operated by Beyond Vision.

One-Stop Shopping

Yvette, Keith, Kevin and Alma, and 250 of their colleagues at other AbilityOne BSCs around the country, are a strong force in distributing thousands of high-quality, competitively priced AbilityOne and other name-brand products, while providing one-stop shopping and same-day procurement at 150 federal installations nationwide. They serve all branches of the armed forces — Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps and the Coast Guard — and two stores support the Defense Logistics Agency. In the federal government sector, AbilityOne BSCs serve the Census Bureau, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Justice, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs.

Continued on page 8



▲ Yvette Kelly, sales associate at Paperclips, Etc., located at the U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C., and operated by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind.



▲ Keith Tyson, retail associate at the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling BSC operated by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland.



▲ Customers shopping at the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling BSC operated by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland.

SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS AND BEYOND

Continued from page 7



Victor Carino assists a customer at the U.S. Army Fort Belvoir AbilityOne BSC operated by Virginia Industries for the Blind.

Thousands of Products

The BSC network offers a wide range of office products, such as computer accessories, file folders, writing instruments and shipping supplies. Their cleaning and janitorial products include environmentally “green” cleaners and detergents, as well as disposable paper and food service supplies. Individual equipment elements carry organizational clothing and equipment and mission-essential deployment gear.

Special orders are filled for unique military items and office furniture. In total, more than 500,000 AbilityOne and commercial items are available in BSCs or through special order, and BSCs tailor their inventory to meet individual base needs. They offer multiple ordering options, including walk-in, call-in, fax or online; multiple purchasing methods; and multiple delivery options, including same-day delivery for many items. And when necessary, BSCs have the ability to operate 24/7 to support military deployments and end-of-year requirements.

Superior Service

Service is what BSCs are all about, and customers are not shy about showing appreciation. Terri Smythe, from the Fort Bliss Recycling Center in Texas, wrote to NIB to recognize the Fort Bliss BSC employees. Operated by the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, the Fort Bliss BSC joined forces with the Fort Bliss Recycling Center to bring environmental stewardship to the forefront of the Fort Bliss community. Their partnership resulted in the Green Patch program, where BSC employees placed Green Patch logos on the shelf next to pricing information to identify environmentally friendly products for the soldiers and other shoppers. The BSC also offered its site as a drop-off point for used ink and toner cartridges.

“The store manager, Reggie Daniel, and his amazing BSC staff care deeply about the environment and work constantly to provide a greater shopping experience to the Fort Bliss community,” said Smythe. “Their continued commitment to environmental excellence is welcomed by all who pass through the doors.”

Rick Lacey, division head at Mission Support Directorate of the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC) commended the job performance

of employees at the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) BSC in Suitland, Maryland, operated by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB). “Everyone at ONI/NMIC is extremely pleased with the BSC. Everything we could ever want is at our fingertips in the store,” he said.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Genevieve Hebb, program support specialist at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), who said, “WSIFB’s BSC at the SEC has been a wonderful addition to our organization for the past year. Our customers are really pleased with the set-up of the store and the availability of the supplies needed to complete their daily tasks.”

And during the transition from the Department of Defense’s supply system to purchasing from local sources and companies, LC Industries (LCI) heard from James Taylor, chief of Readiness, Plans and Mortuary at the Defense Supply Network about LC Industries’ BSCs located at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center in Harrisburg, Mississippi, and Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. “The working relationship and experience between LC Industries staff at Camp Shelby and the new BSC on Keesler and this office has truly been outstanding,” said Taylor. “Every time we have asked for a solution to our needs, LCI has come through with great products. I have to say LC Industries is my go-to source for any government needs.”

Fire Inspector Jason Sanders from Keesler Air Force Base is also impressed with LC Industries’ BSC. “If the BSC does not have an item in stock, the store employees do research to acquire it in order to meet the organization’s needs with competitive pricing,” said Sanders. “They also give updates on anticipated delivery dates of items and email us for pick-up when the items arrive.”

Purchases Ensure Employment

Since the launch of the first AbilityOne BSC in 1995, they have become a vital partner to the military and federal government employees they serve, and have also provided an important distribution link for SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products produced by NIB associated agencies.

When customers purchase these products, they help to maintain America’s manufacturing job base and sustain employment for thousands of Americans who are blind who make these products. Over the last two decades, AbilityOne BSCs have become a valuable asset to the U.S. government, its military bases and the local communities they serve, and its dedicated workforce remains committed to total customer satisfaction. □

MAKING A COMEBACK

Despite various medical setbacks, Beyond Vision’s Alma Brown perseveres on the job and at school.



▲ Alma Brown, cashier and shelf stocker at Beyond Vision’s BSC at the U.S. Army TACOM Life Cycle Management Command in Warren, Michigan.

Prior to joining the BSC team at the TACOM BSC store in Warren, Michigan, Alma Brown worked for CVS drug stores. She prefers working at the TACOM BSC because of the great environment and people that surround her, including the appreciation she feels when receiving recognition with several awards for her service and performance. And because she always delivers 110 percent when given a particular assignment, her boss has coined the phrase, “the Alma touch,” referring to times when employees go above and beyond.

“One of the most rewarding things about my job are the challenges I am presented with on a day-to-day basis,” said Brown. “I like trying to come up with new ideas to generate business.”

A few years after Brown started at the TACOM BSC, she was fitted with a prosthesis after undergoing surgery to remove her left eye, which had a cancerous tumor. Born with congenital glaucoma, Brown adjusted after the surgery to use her remaining vision in her right eye and returned to work. Recently, a torn ligament in her knee sidelined Brown again, but she is back on the job.

A single mother of two young children, Brown is expecting to graduate next year from the University of Phoenix in Southfield, Michigan, with a B.S. in business management and criminal justice. Brown hopes to use her education to take on more challenging marketing and business functions at Beyond Vision. □

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT



▲ Dorothy Goodin and Kyle Shaults, production associates at Envision, Wichita, Kansas, folding and packing colorful Susty Party tablecloths.

▼ Carmelita Harvill of the Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio, packages Susty Party straws.



▶ Recycled ink jet and laser address labels produced by employees at North Central Sight Services, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

Small businesses benefit from alliances with NIB associated agencies.

The vast majority of businesses in the United States are small businesses, which start with a handful of people, just like many NIB associated agencies did. But imagination, engagement and a “can-do” attitude can add up to a winning combination for all parties.

Partnering with the Little Guys

One of the best ways for a small company to gain entry to the government contracting scene is to partner with NIB associated agencies,

which are already established in the federal market. Government contracting is a difficult hurdle for small businesses, but an experienced government contractor can simplify the process.

That’s exactly what happened a few years ago when The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired was looking for a potential supplier of materials to manufacture calendars. “We found a small business, House of Doolittle, right



▲ Chicago Lighthouse Industries supervisor Mike Wallace (right) watches as Linda Audain binds a monthly planner book.

in our backyard,” said Jean-Claude Kappler, vice president of Lighthouse Industries. Based in Arlington Heights, Illinois, House of Doolittle has been a manufacturer of quality desk pads, calendars and appointment books since 1919. With its close geographical proximity to the Lighthouse and all of Doolittle’s products made with chlorine-free, 100 percent post-consumer paper and soy inks, it seemed like a perfect match. The Lighthouse purchased a binding machine to start

producing paper wall calendars and daily, weekly and monthly planner books. It is also laminating wall calendars, using Doolittle's materials.

We like partnerships with small businesses," said Kappler. "House of Doolittle has benefited from the Lighthouse's promotion of the calendars and its access to multiple channels of distribution, and the Lighthouse has been able to expand employment opportunities for people who are blind." Kappler hopes to grow sales and expand employment in the coming year through distribution in AbilityOne® Base Supply Centers (BSCs), among the many channels that supply the federal sector.

Supportive Partners

When North Central Sight Services Inc. (NCSS) in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, wanted to provide to the federal government cost-effective labels that contained recycled content, Mike Fingerhut, executive vice president and general manager at the MACO Division of Chartpak, was instrumental in helping NCSS make the transition. He also assisted NCSS in developing a display for use by AbilityOne® BSCs and channel partners.

NCSS offers 19 types of 8.5 by 11-inch sheet address labels that are marketed under NIB's SKILCRAFT® brand and are made from 100 percent recycled post-consumer fiber and processed chlorine-free. The adhesive can also be safely recycled.

"Address labels are our core product, and 100 percent of the supervisory, packaging and shipping operations are accomplished by employees who are blind or visually impaired," said Lesley Larson, NCSS marketing and

public relations manager. "Two years ago, it was typical for us to operate four production lines, but with the drop in government orders, we are running just one to two lines. We are hoping that sales will come back so that we can sustain employment."

Think Green and Party On!

In 2009, Emily Doubilet and Jessica Holsey started Susty Party, a company based in Brooklyn, New York, which creates eco-friendly party supplies and compostable tableware made from renewable or sustainably harvested materials in North America. They saw an opportunity to make parties more sustainable and developed Susty Party's tableware, which includes paper party cups, bioplastic cups and tablecloths, paper straws, cocktail napkins and wooden cutlery.

Because these women started a mission-driven company, they were looking to partner with other organizations with worthy missions.

That led them to Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Cincinnati, Ohio, which was already making bio-degradable, compostable and marine-friendly cups for the United States Navy. "This was an opportune time for Clovernook to partner with Susty Party," said Christopher Faust, acting president and chief executive officer of Clovernook. "Having recently lost some projects to overseas competitors, we have been able to create new types of jobs for people who are blind and help them round out their skills." There are currently 12 Clovernook employees manufacturing 10 and 16-ounce party cups.

When Susty Party was looking for a tablecloth supplier, Clovernook suggested Envision, a long-time manufacturer of plastic bags for the federal government. A similar partnership has developed between Susty Party and Envision Industries, located in Wichita, Kansas.

Susty Party's green approach to tablecloth production required that the product be made from a compostable material, allowing the new tablecloth product to break down in a commercial compost center. "We reached out to one of our vendors, Dakota Western, to help us develop the product," said Vern Weaver, director of product development at Envision. Located in Agency Village, South Dakota, Dakota Western Corporation is also a small business and a long-time supplier of raw materials to Envision. Envision converted the plastic bag-making process into one that would enable it to create flat sheets of plastic for the tablecloths. The business is new for Envision, but there are already four employees working on the product line. □



▲ North Central Sight Services' production supervisor Rudy Vanemon. □



RIGHT ON TRACK

NIB secures employment for 100th Contract Management Support Training Program participant.

Since its launch in 2009, NIB's Contract Management Support (CMS) Training Program has developed career opportunities for people who are blind by providing high-level training in the field of contract management. In January 2014, the program reached a historic milestone when Douglas Bowman became the program's 100th placement.

Bowman was hired by Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) as a contract closeout specialist in support of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. He has a form of macular degeneration called Stargardt disease, which is characterized by loss of central vision and low visual acuity.

"I was diagnosed when I was seven years old," said Bowman. "Since then, my vision declined from 20/20 to 20/800, but is stable now."

A Perfect Fit

Bowman applied and was accepted to NIB's CMS Training Program in May 2013 and began taking online courses at the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). NIB partners with DAU to provide eligible candidates with the core training courses required to establish a foundation in contract management. Within the first month, Bowman completed the first course, qualifying him for any potential openings found through the CMS Training Program.

"I frequently received emails [from NIB] with job opportunities," said Bowman. "When the team at [Fort] Belvoir asked me to fill a vacancy, NIB was there to get me the pre-job training I needed, so I could hit the ground running my first day."

Bowman is continuing to take additional training courses at DAU and works alongside four VIB

colleagues at DLA responsible for contract closeout activities.

"This is an incredible milestone for our CMS training program," said Kevin Lynch, NIB president and CEO. "With the right training and experience, coupled with advances in accessible technology, there's no limit to the capabilities of people who are blind."

Success From the Beginning

In 2009, NIB took the lead in developing CMS services for the AbilityOne® Program and established a pilot program, which demonstrated to the Department of the Army that people who are blind or severely disabled could be fully successful performing contract management services. Fourteen employees worked at three pilot locations at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas; in downtown San Antonio at the Army Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan

Did You Know? CMS Training Program applicants must meet the following criteria:

- 4-year college degree or equivalent work experience
- Legally blind
- Proficient computer skills
- Highly proficient using adaptive technology
- U.S. citizen



▲ Contract Management Support team members at Fort Belvoir, pictured left to right: Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) employees Christopher Cooper, contract closeout specialist; Isatu Barrie, general clerk II; Peggy Jackson, contract closeout specialist; and Douglas Bowman, contract closeout specialist, with Nancy Heimbaugh, director, DLA Acquisition Management; Sarah Allan, contract closeout specialist, VIB; and Anna Ferguson, site manager, VIB.



location; and at an agency facility in Philadelphia operated by VisionCorps.

One member of that 14-employee power team was Harry Staley, the CMS Training Program's very first placement. Following the successful completion of the pilot program, Staley was hired full-time with San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind and assigned to the Mission and Installation Contracting Command at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston as a contract closeout specialist. While working at the Lighthouse, Staley successfully finished the required DAU courses and completed the CMS Training Program. His skills and dedication led him to a full-time position with the federal government, where he analyzes contracting data for all Army bases.

Opportunity Keeps Growing

Since January 2014, NIB secured employment for 17 additional program participants, bringing the total to 117 CMS Training Program placements. Of these placements, 22 were direct hires to NIB, the private sector and the federal government. The remaining 95 were hired as closeout specialists at NIB associated agencies to work on CMS services contracts.

▲ Harry Staley, former contract closeout specialist at San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, today employed as procurement systems analyst, U.S. Army Mission and Installation Contracting Command.



▲ Jaime Cameron, contract closeout specialist at VisionCorps in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The continued success of both CMS services and the CMS Training Program creates additional career growth opportunities for people who are blind. □

Since 2010, the CMS program has:

- Returned more than \$558 million to the federal government.
- Provided more than 140,000 ready-to-close contracts.
- Achieved an accuracy rate of higher than 99 percent.
- Created 154 new positions for people who are blind or have severe disabilities, 27 of whom are wounded warriors or disabled veterans.

In FY 2013, NIB created 25 new contract closeout positions for people who are blind, providing services for customers such as:

- Defense Logistics Agency, with several commands supported by Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Virginia Industries for the Blind and The Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. in Seattle.
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland, supported by Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind in Washington, D.C.



◀ Students trained as customer service representatives, pictured left to right in front row: Ben Dallin, Jean Crocker, David Valencia, Shannon Garner and Miguel Palomar; and back row: Melissa Evans, Cliff Rau and George Zavala.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

NIB associated agencies in New York and North Carolina team up to create call center jobs.

In 2013, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB), based in North Carolina, secured a high-profile employment contract to fill call center positions in El Paso, Texas. But WSIFB faced rigorous training requirements from the prime contractor, which needed experienced call center operators to provide customers with information concerning immigrant and non-immigrant benefits. WSIFB turned to the Statler Career Center at Olmsted Center for Sight, headquartered in Buffalo, New York, for its expertise in call center and hospitality training for people who are blind.

Mobile Customer Service Training

After assessing the training needs and technology challenges, Statler Career Center staff designed and conducted an intensive two-week customer service training program, which equipped 11 students who are blind or visually impaired with the experience and skills to serve as Tier-1 type customer service representatives. The Statler team mobilized its “Deployable Contact Center” – the program’s state-of-the-art adaptive technology equipment and proven educational techniques used at Statler’s office in Buffalo – to train students in El Paso.

The training enabled students to advance their Microsoft Outlook skills, participate in lectures and role-play scenarios in customer service concepts, hone their active listening and note-taking skills, and learn new terminology and concepts in contact center operations. Students used Avaya IP Agent software to make outbound calls and take inbound calls from Statler graduates working in the Buffalo contact center, who were thrilled to share their experience with Statler’s newest generation of students.

Building on the success of the first training session, a second training prepared eight more students who are blind or visually impaired for new jobs, and plans are underway for a third session.



▲ Ben Dallin and Shannon Garner in training to become customer service representatives.

High-Performing Professionals

The joint training initiative between Statler and WSIFB has enabled people who are blind to take on new employment challenges. According to Cynthia Watson, director, contract services, WSIFB, the prime contractor said the employees who are blind have performed as well or better than their sighted peers in call center roles. “Our customer service agents have demonstrated the ability to get up and running quickly and that is directly related to their training,” said Watson.

“Statler Career Center has been able to build on the success of the collaboration with WSIFB,” said Mary Ellen Mest, manager of new initiatives, Statler Career Center. “We have highlighted our experience with this project when talking to prospective employers about their needs and how our students and training fit their work environment.”

The success of the collaborative efforts between Statler and WSIFB has opened up doors to new business opportunities. The two nonprofits are looking at new ways to grow their partnership with future training programs. ◻

NIB PRODUCTS

READY TO LAUNCH

NIB and its associated agencies introduce new products to support federal government customers through the AbilityOne® Program.

Successful organizations must continually launch new products and improve the old ones in order to sustain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Highlights of new product introductions by NIB and its associated agencies during the first quarter of fiscal year 2014 include innovative SKILCRAFT® office products, cleaning supplies, tools and safety items produced by people who are blind employed at NIB's associated agencies.

1. Twist and Flip SKILCRAFT Rite-N-Lite Deluxe: Produced by West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind in San Angelo, this high-quality ballpoint pen and highlighter combination features low-viscosity ink for smooth writing.

2. SKILCRAFT Hanging Classification Folders with Dividers: These heavy-duty portable classification folders, produced by Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Cincinnati, Ohio, feature 60 percent total recycled content and 30 percent post-consumer materials.

3. SKILCRAFT DeskMate II Plastic Storage Clipboards: Produced by LC Industries in Durham, North Carolina, this clipboard features a 1-1/2" storage capacity, a tray for small office supplies, and a built-in solar/battery-powered calculator with a protective snap closure.

4. SKILCRAFT Safety Helmets: Keystone Vocational Services in Sharon, Pennsylvania, produces certified helmets with four-point woven nylon suspension that offers not only comfort and durability, but also accommodates a wide variety of protective paddings.

5. SKILCRAFT Non-Abrasive Scrubbers: Industries for the Blind Inc. in West Allis, Wisconsin, produces reusable and long-lasting scrubbers that can be used for non-scratch cleaning.

6. SKILCRAFT Professional-Grade Paint Brushes: Industries for the Blind Inc. in West Allis, Wisconsin, produces a line of professional-grade paint brushes featuring two different types of bristles — synthetic filament and white natural bristle brushes. They are available in flat and angled formats.

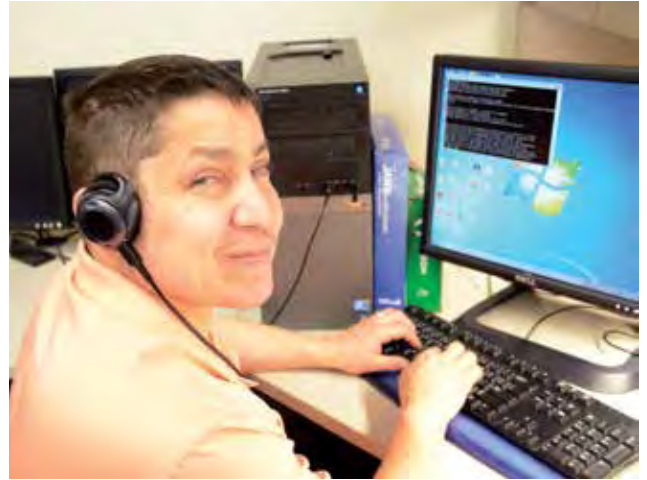
7. Total Flare Safety Flares: These waterproof commercial-grade red LED light safety flares, produced by Tarrant County Association for the Blind in Fort Worth, Texas, feature a rechargeable battery pack and are a sensible alternative to hazardous incendiary road flares. □



These and thousands of other products are available for purchase at AbilityOne.com, GSAAdvantage.com, or through AbilityOne authorized distributors. For more information about how to purchase SKILCRAFT and other products produced by people who are blind, visit <http://www.nib.org/products/purchase-products>.

THE NETWORK TENDER

Network technician Anthony (Tony) Creapeau keeps information flowing at IB Milwaukee.



Some people come to their careers automatically; for Tony Creapeau, the path was a little less obvious. Having had 20/20 vision as a teenager, he graduated from high school and acquired his driver's license, just as other young men do. Instead of college, Creapeau chose to work at various jobs in the retail and food industries, and then as a security guard. Although he noticed a change in his vision, it wasn't until Creapeau started learning a trade in the steel fabrication industry that he truly realized the rapid decline in his vision. At 20 years old, Creapeau learned he had diabetic retinopathy and his retinas were detaching.

Treatments started with laser surgery, but within six months, he lost all of his vision. After four more surgeries, which yielded no better results, Creapeau thought he lost all of his ability to be a productive member of society.

Solid Achievements

It was at the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Wisconsin where Creapeau became interested in computers and assistive technology. He enrolled in college as a means of learning something that would lead to a new career. He earned an associate degree in computer information systems at Milwaukee Area Technical



"My rise at IB Milwaukee definitely highlights the organization's focus on upward mobility."

▲ Anthony Creapeau, network technician, IB Milwaukee in Wisconsin.

College, and then a bachelor's degree in management information systems at Milwaukee School of Engineering. During his junior year, he secured a summer internship as a network administrator at IBM, where he helped to configure Cisco switches, add users to the network and troubleshoot user

issues. He returned to IBM the following summer as a software engineer.

After graduation, his job search led him to Industries for the Blind Inc. (IB Milwaukee) in West Allis, Wisconsin. With no positions available in IB Milwaukee's Information Technology department, Creapeau accepted a station on the production floor. Just four months later, IB Milwaukee promoted Creapeau to computer specialist. Today, he is the organization's network technician. "I got to where I am today by lots and lots of disappointment, frustration, determination, and most of all, hard work," said Creapeau. "I always kept my sights focused and my vision clear."

Moving Up

By using JAWS software, Creapeau navigates through the routers and switches to troubleshoot and configure the network. "My rise at IB Milwaukee definitely highlights the organization's focus on upward mobility," said Creapeau. "My goal is to continue to grow professionally, so that I move into a management position in the future."

When he is not at work, Creapeau and his wife, Danielle, enjoy their weekly bowling night with the local Blind Bowlers League. □

QUOTED & NOTED



Pictured left to right in award ceremony February 6, 2014 at DeCA headquarters in Virginia: Rogers E. Campbell, SES, executive director, Sales, Marketing and Policy Group, DeCA; Mary Ann Finlon, S&K marketing manager; Marie-France Vareilles, vice president, products, NIB; Joseph H. Jeu, director and CEO, DeCA; Keith Hagenbuch, SES, executive director, Store Operations Group, DeCA; and Randall L. “Randy” Chandler, director of sales, DeCA.

NIB RECOGNIZES SUPPORT FROM DECA

In recognition of the Defense Commissary Agency’s (DeCA) long-time support of the AbilityOne® Program, NIB presented its “Outstanding Performance Award” to Joseph H. Jeu, director and CEO, DeCA, who accepted the award on behalf of the DeCA team. DeCA’s promotion of SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products and services helped create seven new jobs for people who are blind in FY 2013.

The award was presented on February 6, 2014 at DeCA headquarters in Fort Lee, Virginia, by Marie-France Vareilles, vice president, products. Vareilles presented the award on behalf

of NIB’s Military Resale (MR) team and the associated agencies that participate in the MR program.

DeCA received additional honors on February 26, when NIB recognized the DeCA Pacific Area as the top-selling DeCA region during FY 2013. During a ceremony at DeCA’s Pacific Area headquarters in McClellan, California, Anne-Marie Wallace, NIB’s MR program director, said, “In a program where sales equals employment, DeCA’s Pacific Area team contributed greatly to AbilityOne’s mission to create employment opportunities for Americans who are blind or severely disabled.” □

IB EXPRESS BSC CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF SERVICE TO EDWARDS AFB

The IB Express Base Supply Center (BSC) at Edwards Air Force Base (AFB) in California celebrated a big milestone this year – a decade of providing mission-critical supplies for military customers at the base. The BSC is operated by Industries for the Blind Inc. (IB Milwaukee), headquartered in West Allis, Wisconsin. The IB Milwaukee team hosted a celebration on February 25, 2014 to honor and thank the Edwards community for supporting the AbilityOne® Program through their purchases at the BSC.

The special event began with a ceremony that included the presentation of a plaque to Patricia Kondrotas, IB Express store manager, and her staff. CJ Lange, president of IB Milwaukee, presented a 10-year Appreciation of Support plaque to Colonel Robert Hoff, commander, 412th Mission Support Group.

Colonel Hoff said the IB Express store “provides a tremendous service to Edwards AFB by offering quality products and services while providing jobs for people who are blind and visually impaired.” He noted the BSC has earned high marks for being a “tremendous” supplier and the Edwards community has great respect and loyalty for the store.



Pictured left to right: Colonel Robert Hoff, commander, 412th Mission Support Group, receives a plaque from CJ Lange, president of IB Milwaukee, in recognition of the Edwards AFB community’s support for the IB Express BSC over the past decade.

“Together with your committed support, we are making a huge impact on the lives of nearly 48,000 Americans across the country who are blind or have severe disabilities.” said Lange. Tommy Thomas, director, base supply centers, NIB, added that “millions of adults in the United States are legally blind – some as a result of being wounded at war – and 70 percent of working-age Americans who are blind are not employed.” □

QUOTED & NOTED

U.S. ABILITYONE COMMISSION HONORS NIB CUSTOMER, AGENCY LEADER

Each year, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® recognizes several individuals who have demonstrated outstanding support for the AbilityOne® Program's mission. At the Commission's March 20 meeting at its headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, one of NIB's key Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) customers and one of NIB's associated agency leaders received top honors.

Nancy Heimbaugh, director, DLA Acquisition Management, received the 2013 E.R. "Dick" Alley Career Achievement Award, presented to a federal employee for exemplary, sustained dedication and support of the program. The Commission's highest achievement award is named for the late Mr. Alley, who provided 25 years of dedicated service to the Commission as deputy executive director.

During her career, which included managing field contracting for the Navy Supply Systems Command, serving

as senior procurement executive at DLA Troop Support, and leading the immense DLA Acquisition system, Heimbaugh's leadership has resulted in the creation of new jobs for people who are blind or severely disabled. Heimbaugh recently retired from DLA.

Mike Gilliam, president and CEO, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, was honored with the 2013 Chairperson's Award for Leadership, which is presented annually to two nonprofit agency leaders, one associated with NIB and one with SourceAmerica. The award recognizes leaders who consistently meet or surpass the Commission's statutory and regulatory requirements, fulfill its guiding principles for a quality work environment, and exhibit business acumen that leads to increased employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled.

Under Gilliam's visionary leadership since 2005, the San Antonio



▲ Nancy Heimbaugh, director, DLA Acquisition Management, receives the 2013 Dick Alley Award from J. Anthony (Tony) Poleo, chairperson, U.S. AbilityOne Commission.

Lighthouse has grown from 150 to 470 employees, increased its community outreach to serve more than 6,000 citizens, improved financial results and raised funds for a new building to accommodate job growth. □

EMPLOYEE STORIES FEATURED IN ABILITYONE PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

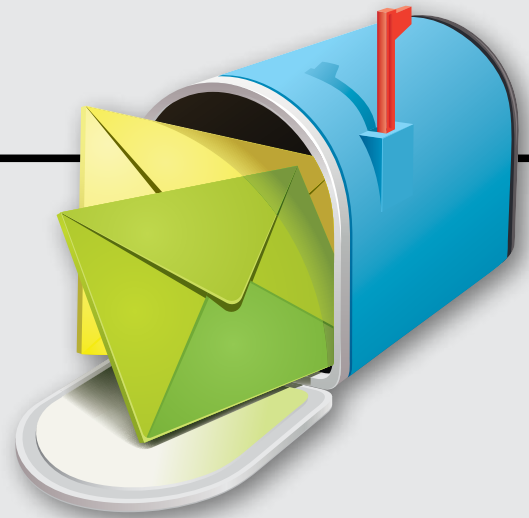
In April, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® released the FY 2013 AbilityOne® Program Annual Report, with the theme of "Our People." This year's report was distinctively designed to focus on the individuals who benefit from the program's mission. In FY 2013, nearly 48,000 people who are blind or severely disabled were able to work and live more independently.

The report features inspiring employee success stories and candid testimonials about how the AbilityOne Program has positively impacted people's lives. The report also spotlights accomplishments such as growth in service delivery to customers and strategic program efforts. To view the annual report and learn more about the AbilityOne Program, visit www.abilityone.gov.



NIB MAILBOX

**We appreciate our customers –
thanks for your feedback!**



... From a U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant,

Retired: “I recently purchased an item with a card in it that stated the item was created with pride for the men and women of the U.S. armed forces. I want to thank you for that. I am a veteran who served for 26 years. Whenever I find items like this it makes me feel very good . . . and I admire all you have done.”

... From a flight paramedic:

“Just wanted to shoot you a quick message to let you know how much I appreciate your products. I have been wearing the DSCP 100% poly shirts for several years now, since I was deployed to Iraq in 2003. I’m out of the Army now and still buy them. They have lasted me a very long time. I refuse to buy anything else. I’m a flight paramedic and work 24-hour shifts. I put a lot of time in these. I have always bought them because they’re the best quality and made in the USA. I bought some today and read the SKILCRAFT® card that came in the package. I had no idea that these were created by blind people. I had to write a message to let you know how awesome I think you all are. Thanks so much for what you do. I’m gonna spread the word.”



SKILCRAFT U.S. government ball point pen and Army moisture-wicking T-shirt.

From a U.S. Air Force Captain in Qatar:

[An Aviator pen customer who needed a replacement] “Thank you very much for the exceptional customer service from you and your team. My pen has arrived and I’m again a ‘happy camper.’”

From a former NIB engineer: “While hiking in Sedona, Arizona, I found a SKILCRAFT pen used by the U.S. Forest Service to sign in hikers. What’s interesting about this pen is that it is still writing in an outdoor environment, although it is at least six years old.”



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