



A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

# OPPORTUNITY

**NIB**  
CELEBRATING  
75 YEARS



## Celebrating 75 Years!

**Plus**

- The Early Years — 1938 - 1963
- Blind Industries and Services of Maryland
- 2012 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo

Volume 6 | Issue 1 | WINTER 2013

## Recognize and Celebrate!

We welcome 2013 as a special year for NIB and its associated agencies. All of us are very excited and proud to celebrate 75 years of creating, sustaining and improving employment opportunities for people who are blind. We are kicking it off in *Opportunity* with a historical feature, which covers the visionaries, the early years of NIB's existence and the careers available at that time. During the year, subsequent issues of *Opportunity* will continue our story over the decades, and show how the past has influenced our future initiatives.

Recognizing the need for employment for people who are blind began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many organizations, such as local Lions Clubs, and other community leaders pulled together to establish industries to provide work for people with severe visual disabilities. It was the leaders of this effort that inspired members of Congress to join the cause. The campaign bore fruit when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Wagner-O'Day Act in 1938, creating a federal market for products produced in agencies employing people who are blind. NIB was created that same year to create, sustain and improve opportunities for economic and personal independence of people who are blind. And that mission has inspired NIB ever since.

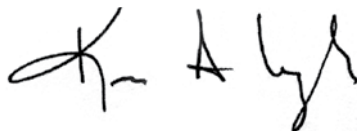
The blindness movement in the United States made a significant contribution to the future of people with disabilities when Congress amended the 1938 landmark legislation to include agencies serving people with other severe disabilities. The Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act of 1971 is based on the belief that the success of our economy and the well-being of our nation are dependent on the opportunity for every individual to contribute to the fullest extent of his

or her capabilities and to participate in society. Opportunities for education, training and employment are something that every American should enjoy.

But it has been a two-way street. Although NIB and its associated agencies have empowered people and changed many lives through the years, America has benefited also from their contributions to the success of our economy — during war and peace and during depression and prosperity.

Throughout our year-long celebration, NIB will engage our associated agencies to build support for our program by cultivating new advocates and highlighting the capabilities of people who are blind. Our year-long marketing and communications plan will include aggressive outreach to a variety of audiences with advertising, production of commemorative items and promotional materials, special events and outreach to the media. In addition, we will actively participate in joint planning and promotion of the JWOD Act with our partners in the AbilityOne Program.

We thank our federal and military customers for their long-standing advocacy of the AbilityOne Program. Their collaboration, along with the support of all our business partners, has truly made a difference in the growth and diversification of career opportunities for the people we serve. And we invite every business in America to join us in exploring the untapped potential and capabilities of people who are blind.



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

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Winter 2013

# OPPORTUNITY



Robert McMahon, production associate at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland in Baltimore.



Vice Admiral Mark Harnitchek, director, Defense Logistics Agency, addresses attendees at the NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo.



Five millionth clock produced by employees at The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Illinois.



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### From accounting clerk to customer service representative to vice president of inside sales, Sandy Werner shares her incredible experiences and opportunities at Industries for the Blind in Milwaukee.

When Sandy Werner began her employment in 1988 at Industries for the Blind (IB) in Wisconsin as an accounting clerk, she never dreamed in a million years that she would someday be one of the organization's vice presidents. As her vision deteriorated, Werner, who was accustomed to using visual assistive devices to accomplish her job duties, adapted by learning to use audio devices instead of screen magnification tools. At the same time, IB provided Werner training opportunities in working with customers and vendors, as well as developing and managing Excel spreadsheets. A few years later, Werner was promoted to inside sales representative and then to inside sales manager — two very proactive customer service positions that are primarily focused on retaining existing customers, while outside sales personnel concentrate on attracting new customers. Last fall, IB promoted Werner again to the position of vice president of inside sales.

"Sandy's strong work ethic and leadership over her many years working at IB have dramatically impacted our image as an industry leader and solution for federal supply procurement," said CJ Lange, IB's vice president of corporate sales and marketing. "In her new role, Sandy will take her customer expertise to a whole new level of next-generation marketing, aimed at reaching customers in new and innovative ways. This will include new and emerging technologies in web optimization, social market positioning and increasing



*Sandra A. Werner, vice president, inside sales, Industries for the Blind, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

IB's organic net worth online as a corporate and strategic directive for our future business prospects in all of our core target marketplaces."

"One of the things I love most about being in an executive position is being able to mentor others," said Werner. "When I needed help, IB provided me with appropriate training to move up in the organization. Now I have the opportunity to help other talented people at IB achieve their career goals."

Recognizing that social media is the new frontier to reach out to customers and the general public, Werner knows she has a lot on her plate. "We are developing a social media presence for promotion of our mission, our products and our capabilities," explained Werner, "and we are also

using it to recruit more individuals who are blind to join our organization."

Werner also feels fortunate to be part of the first graduating class of NIB's Effective Supervision: The Essentials Program, stating that it was an incredible experience for her and her classmates, and it helped to improve her skills working with people.

When Werner is not at IB, she is happy bike riding, reading, spending time with her children or indulging her 18-month-old grandson. Looking ahead, she wants to become more involved with social activities in the blindness community. Her ever-constant smile is a great indication of how happy she is with her achievements, with her work at IB and with her ability to help others reach their full potential. ☼

### 2013 Marks NIB's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



NIB's Diamond Jubilee will be celebrated with special events and activities during the year. Each issue of *Opportunity* will highlight NIB's history with stories that have shaped the organization and portray how NIB's growth over the last 75 years has paved the way for more diverse career opportunities for people who are blind. Today, NIB and its 91 associated nonprofit agencies serve as the largest employer of people who are blind in the United States.

Visit [www.NIB75Years.org](http://www.NIB75Years.org) to view NIB's 75th anniversary microsite, which highlights key milestones and profiles individuals who have contributed to the organization's growth. The year of celebration will culminate with the 2013 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo in October at the Gaylord National in National Harbor, Maryland. ::



### NIB Honored by USBLN, Represented at Industry Events

The U.S. Business Leadership Network (USBLN®) "Disability at Work" honored NIB for its support with an award during the October 2012 USBLN 15th Annual Conference and Expo in Orlando, Florida, focused on "Disability Inclusion Driving Success in a Competitive Business Environment."

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch moderated a panel on commercial partnerships. Panelists Robert Council, general manager of government markets, 3M, and member of NIB's Board of Directors; Gidget Hopf, Ed.D., president and CEO, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill; and Sharon McDonald, training assistant, Lighthouse of Central Florida, told conference attendees how they could increase workforce productivity by tapping into a skilled, diverse workforce that adds to the bottom line.

In September, Lynch joined other nonprofit leaders in addressing the National Governors Association's Advocacy Community Briefing on Disability Employment. His remarks focused on state-use programs that provide employment opportunities for people who are blind, and highlighted NIB's efforts to provide career paths with upward mobility.

At the Annual Meeting and Exposition of ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership, held in August in Dallas, Texas, Lynch participated in a panel discussion on diversity issues, noting that assistive technology has helped to level the playing field for people who are blind. ::

### NIB Earns Best Places to Work Recognition for Second Year

NIB was named one of the 2013 Best Places to Work in Virginia by *Virginia Business* magazine and Best Companies Group. NIB earned the same honor in 2012.

The Best Places to Work in Virginia list recognizes and honors 80 companies, split into small, medium and large-sized categories. NIB made the list in the medium category.

Organizations from across the state entered the two-part process to determine the Best Places to Work in Virginia. The first part evaluated each nominated company's workplace



policies, practices, philosophy, and demographics. The second part measured the employee experience through an employee survey. The combined scores determined the winning organizations. NIB's final ranking will be unveiled and published in the February 2013 issue of *Virginia Business*. ::





# Celebrating 75 Years!

## The Early Years — 1938 - 1963

The first in a three-part series about the history of National Industries for the Blind from 1938 to 1963, covering the early leaders, the production of mission-critical products during two wars and the development of product lines.

*Inside the modern textile department at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) in Baltimore.*

*Inset photo: Employees hemming pillowcases at the Maryland Workshop for the Blind (now known as BISM). During World War II, this agency produced 50,000 pillowcases a week.*





The Great Depression. In the United States, it started with the stock market crash on Black Tuesday in 1929 and lasted for almost a decade. During that time, the nation's production fell by 44 percent, banks closed and unemployment rose to 25 percent.

Elected President in 1932 at the depth of the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt brought his optimism and energy to renew America's spirit. Perhaps it was his personal triumph over polio that provided Roosevelt with the courage and activism to propose sweeping programs to bring relief to the unemployed, reform to banks and recovery aid for businesses and farms. In his Inaugural Address, he brought hope to Americans as he promised prompt action. In short order, Roosevelt spearheaded major legislation and issued executive orders designed to provide government jobs, economic growth and banking reform to the country. It was in this political and economic climate that Congress passed the 1938 Wagner-O'Day Act, the predecessor to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act of 1971.

Roosevelt, along with the bill's sponsors, Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Caroline Love O'Day, hailed from New York and all were concerned with labor issues.

### The Visionaries

A longtime suffragist and close personal friend to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, O'Day was a staunch supporter of the New Deal and looked to advance the cause of labor issues and the working-class poor. She helped attach a child labor amendment to the Walsh-Healy Act, which set employment standards for federal contracts, and to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which fixed minimum wages for employment. O'Day urged her colleagues to adopt federal aid programs for children of migrant workers.

In the aftermath of New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, Wagner became chairman of the State Factory Investigating Committee. His committee's findings led to 38 new laws regulating labor in New York State and helped propel him to the U.S. Senate. Wagner fought for employee

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*Representative Caroline Love O'Day (rear seat) with President Franklin D. Roosevelt (front seat).*

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rights as evidenced by his work in the Senate. After Roosevelt was elected President, Wagner was a leader in crafting the New Deal. His most important legislative achievements were the National Labor Relations Act (also known as the Wagner Act), the Railway Pension Law and the Wagner-Peyser Act, which created the U.S. Employment Service. Wagner was also instrumental in writing the Social Security Act and originally introduced it in the United States Senate. But it was his friendship with Moses C. Migel that stimulated Wagner's interest in legislation that would create better employment opportunities for people who are blind.

Migel was a pioneer in his day when advocacy for the needs of people with visual impairments was largely non-existent. While working with the American Red Cross during World War I, Migel came into contact with veterans who had lost their sight in combat. He assisted in the establishment of the American Foundation for the Blind in 1921, becoming its first president and a tireless advocate for people

who were blind. A philanthropist, Migel contributed financially toward developing standardized Braille and co-sponsored the World Conference on Work for the Blind, which eventually became the World Blind Union.

When two young blind leaders — Peter J. Salmon, executive director of the Industrial Home for the Blind, now Helen Keller Services for the Blind in Brooklyn, New York, and Robert B. Irwin, executive director of the American Foundation for the Blind — sought Migel's assistance in seeking federal legislation to create stable employment for people with severe visual impairments, Migel prevailed upon his good friend Senator Wagner to assist. Salmon's idea was to pursue the possibility of having federal and state governments purchase brooms and mops from industrial facilities employing people who were blind. Salmon and Irwin were persistent in their efforts to lobby for passage of legislation and were rewarded when President Roosevelt signed the Wagner-O'Day Act into law on June 25, 1938.

The law provided for the appointment of a Committee on Purchases of Blind-



*Moses C. Migel, first private-citizen representative on the U.S. AbilityOne Commission (formerly the Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products), first president of the American Foundation for the Blind and first chairman of National Industries for the Blind.*



*Senator Robert F. Wagner with Helen Keller.*



*Peter J. Salmon, executive director of The Industrial Home for the Blind (now Helen Keller Services for the Blind), Brooklyn, New York.*



Made Products. Salmon, Migel and Irwin then led the effort to incorporate National Industries for the Blind in the State of New York on August 10, 1938 as the central nonprofit agency to allocate the broom and mop orders among qualified agencies serving people who were blind. Migel chaired the NIB Board during its formative years and became the first civilian member appointed by President Roosevelt to the Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products (now known as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™.) While Wagner, O'Day, Migel, Salmon and Irwin are well-known names recognized as being largely responsible for the passage of the Wagner-O'Day Act, Robert LeFevre, the first secretary of the Committee, was key in the successful implementation of the legislation and the mainstay of the Wagner-O'Day Program for the first 25 years. Chester C. Kleber became NIB's first general manager and served in that capacity until his death in 1960.

### For the War Effort

Previously competing for business among themselves, 36 NIB associated agency leaders learned to work together as government contractors to supply the federal government in 1939 with \$220,000 worth of brooms and mops, the first products on the federal Procurement List. The next few years proved to be valuable learning opportunities for NIB associated agencies, which became skilled at dealing with precise terms of government specifications and requirements for packaging and shipping. They gained marketing experience and learned how to control production and maintain quality standards. More products followed, such as cocoa mats and pillowcases, which provided work for skilled blind sewers.

As the U.S. economy mobilized to support the war effort, production in NIB



*Robert B. Irwin, executive director of the American Foundation for the Blind.*

associated agencies soared. In 1941, NIB associated agencies added more than 1,000 blind employees to their payrolls to meet the demand. The capabilities of people who were blind to manufacture quality brooms, mops, pillowcases, deck swabs and mailing bags were firmly established with the government and the military. By the end of the war, a number of NIB associated agencies proudly displayed Army-Navy "E" pennants and stars, or the Army-Navy Production Awards, for excellence in the production of war products. For its role, NIB was given the Navy's Certificate of Achievement.

### The Post-War Years

In the spring of 1945, NIB associated agencies started planning for the post-war period. By that time, NIB was assisting its associated agencies with developing and pricing products, central purchasing of raw materials, coordinating interagency sales, developing production manuals and promoting the Wagner-O'Day Program to federal agencies. The agencies were certain there would be a reduction in orders at the end of the war and The General Committee on Sheltered Workshops for the Blind (a predecessor to the National Association for the



*The first of three stars for the Army-Navy E pennant was awarded on June 6, 1944 to The Industrial Home for the Blind (now Helen Keller Services for the Blind) in Brooklyn, New York, for excellence in support of the war effort. The star was presented by Commander William J. Strachan, USN, to a group of employees who were blind.*

Employment of People Who Are Blind) wanted to minimize the effects on employment. To prevent too many agencies from producing the same items and forcing NIB to allocate the orders into small quantities, they agreed to manufacture only those items they were producing for one year after V-J Day. New products to fill a government need were exempt from this prohibition. This cooperation would provide greater opportunities for employees who were blind to achieve higher productivity and steadier wages and enhance the agencies' competitiveness in commercial markets on the basis of greater volume.

With the war's end, federal sales plummeted from \$8.5 million a year to \$586,000 in 1946. But with the production and quality control experience the agencies gained during

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*Sanitation kits produced for the Defense General Supply Agency during the Cuban missile crisis.*

## The 1950s and the Korean War

By 1950, American troops were deployed to the Far East when North Korea invaded South Korea. Once again, NIB associated agencies met the military's need for critical products to support the war effort. Sales jumped from \$3.4 million in 1950 to \$14 million the next year and gradually declined as the conflict ended.

These erratic buying patterns by federal procuring activities prompted NIB associated agencies to explore other markets. They sought subcontracts with industry and developed more commercial products. By 1960, commercial sales reached almost \$25 million, double the amount a decade ago.

The General Services Administration was established and was given authority over the purchase of products produced in NIB associated agencies. To develop closer ties with this important market for associated agencies, NIB established an office in Washington, D.C.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis

The Cuban missile crisis escalated Americans' fears of attack. NIB associated agencies began assembling a sanitation kit for use in bomb shelters. One of the first major projects facing Bob Goodpasture, NIB's new general manager, was the production of a Civil Defense Sanitation Kit for the Defense General Supply Center. The contract provided employment for 300 people who were blind at seven associated agencies — Arizona Industries for the Blind in Phoenix; The Industrial Home for the Blind (now Helen Keller Services for the Blind), in Brooklyn, New York; Blind Work Association (now the Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment) in

*Continued from page 9*

the war, many were able to develop commercial markets for their products, thus maintaining employment and wages by developing commercial sales to almost \$8 million per year at the end of 1946. Some obtained subcontract work from commercial companies, such as assembling parts or packaging products, which did not require new equipment or funds to purchase raw materials. The agencies became more sophisticated about federal contracting and specifications for products and began scanning government bid invitations and supply catalogs to find new products to provide to the federal government.

It was during this post-war period that NIB developed the SKILCRAFT® brand name for products made in associated agencies and initiated plans to enter the military resale market with the sale of products in commissary stores. But there were a number of hurdles to overcome, with marketing and distribution being

the major challenges. It was Major General Kester L. Hastings, then Quartermaster General and appointed in 1954 to the Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products, who eliminated the roadblocks. A year later, nine products consisting of various brooms, brushes and mops were added to the Procurement List for sale in Department of Defense commissary stores.

NIB and its associated agencies developed display racks for the commissaries, and the first products reached display shelves in 1955. Within the next few years, commissaries stocked many additional items, including polishing cloths, door mats, clothespin bags and wax applicators, and there were an additional 259 line items on the federal Procurement List. NIB associated agencies also looked toward states and municipalities as potential markets and worked to secure state-use laws similar to the federal Wagner-O'Day Act.





Modern office and janitorial products produced in NIB associated agencies.

Binghamton, New York; The Maryland Workshop for the Blind (now Blind Industries and Services of Maryland) in Baltimore; The Cleveland Society for the Blind, Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City Association for the Blind (now Alphapointe) in Missouri; and Industries of the Blind, Greensboro, North Carolina. The kits contained canteens, water tablets, hand cleaner, privacy curtains, toilet tissue, can openers, twine, wire, commode seats and cleaners and other essential products. NIB coordinated the project among the participating agencies and purchased all the components for the kits for delivery to the associated agencies. The project was a success in that seven associated agencies assembled more than 1 million sanitation kits for the federal bomb shelter program.

During this time, NIB initiated a centralized procurement program for raw materials that were standard for many associated agencies. Broomcorn, block sponge mop components, mop yarn, seat belt components, and packaging materials were purchased in large quantities by NIB, resulting in substantial savings for associated agencies.

A number of other new products were brought to federal market. NIB associated agencies initiated production of tourniquets, patient securing straps, military neckties,

bulletin boards, expandable portfolios and deodorant. Safety iron rests, drapes, greeting cards and plastic cone fan-flare brooms were introduced into commissaries and commercial outlets.

### Product Development Laboratory Established

With the emphasis on product development, NIB established a product development laboratory, occupying some 4,000 square feet, in New York City. The laboratory was developed as a source of new processes and techniques in production, marketing and costing of products. NIB lab staff also prepared production specifications, developed training methods, modified equipment, designed jigs and fixtures, conducted time and motion studies for costing purposes, performed physical and chemical tests of components and products, appraised new machinery and materials, and trained agency production supervisors in techniques and equipment.

### NIB's Silver Anniversary

1963 marked the 25th anniversary of NIB, which used the opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of people who are blind to a global audience. At the New York World's Fair, NIB unveiled a redesigned SKILCRAFT® logo as a focal point for its promotions at the fair, where household products were offered



Men making mops at an NIB associated agency in the 1940s.

for sale. Licensing agreements were offered to associated agencies to use the SKILCRAFT tradename on products.

At that time, 67 nonprofit agencies were associated with NIB. The early successes of the Wagner-O'Day Program and the spirit of cooperation instilled among the associated agencies motivated them to expand and improve employment for people who were blind far beyond the federal government market. Sales to the federal government surged to \$18.3 million, with the help of \$7 million in sanitation kit orders, and another \$20.3 million in sales to other markets.

The next 25-year period proved that the potential of NIB associated agencies had just begun to be tapped. The spring issue of *Opportunity* magazine will cover NIB's growth from 1964 to 1988, a period of development of complex textiles and office products, which set the stage for expanded business opportunities and more diverse career choices in the years ahead. ❖

# Blind Industries and Services of Maryland

## Reflecting on 75 years of association with NIB.



*Exterior views of Blind Industries and Services of Maryland in 1908 and 2012.*

More than 100 years ago, employment opportunities for people who were blind were very limited. Recognizing this, the Maryland State Legislature created the Maryland Workshop for the Blind in 1908, which is known today as Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM).

In its early years, the organization was located in downtown Baltimore, and employees caned chairs, wove rugs, made brooms, did needlework and tuned pianos. Sales that first year were \$1,190. There was definitely a need for a work program because by 1910, the organization was providing employment to 80 men and women who were blind. It was the passage of the Wagner-O'Day Act, however, which fueled the growth and expansion of jobs for Marylanders with low vision.

The 1940s were dominated by World War II. In the United States, women left their homes to work in factories to support the war effort. At BISM, blind seamstresses made thousands of pillowcases and other products for the military. With the war over in the 1950s, BISM and many other NIB

associated agencies expanded sales into state and commercial markets.

### **A Premier Agency**

As a result of its association with NIB and expansion into state and commercial markets, BISM is known today for its excellent craftsmanship in sewn products as a leading producer of Army, Navy and Air Force uniforms and various other complex sewn products. Tote bags make up a distinctive product line that consists of canvas, mesh and drawstring bags. The organization's state-of-the-art, computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) cutting operation offers quality cut goods. BISM employees also manufacture a large line of writing tablets, memo pads, loose-leaf paper and easel pads, most made with recycled paper. BISM boasts a diverse offering of janitorial products, and the BISM Beverage division uses state-of-the-art bottling and purification technology with a variety of synthetic, waterproof, custom labels. BISM also offers many office and cleaning supplies through its e-commerce site and eight AbilityOne® Base Supply Centers (BSCs) located on military installations



*Military uniforms produced by employees at BISM.*



*In 2012 Alfred Gordon, assembly associate, celebrated his 55th anniversary with BISM.*





*Travel Instructor Dezman Jackson guides Shannon Jno Baptiste with cane travel at BISM.*



*Technology Instructor Sylvia Yasa provides one-on-one training to Jonathon Smith at BISM.*



*Kim Utley, store manager of the AbilityOne Base Supply Center located at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, operated by BISM.*

in Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

BISM President and CEO Fred Puente attributes BISM's growth to its employees and the AbilityOne Program. "The program has given BISM the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to quality products and services at competitive prices, and BISM associates have exceeded the customers' expectations in all areas."

### Living Proof

More than 200 BISM associates who are blind enjoy employment and challenging career opportunities. One such associate, Kim Utley, lost her sight as a result of an auto accident in 1988. At the time, Utley was in nursing school and held part-time retail jobs for extra money. She then adjusted her career goals to be a medical transcriptionist so that she could work from home and take care of her two young children. However, her goals changed in 1997 when she landed a retail associate position at a new "Office Eagle" BSC, which was opened by BISM at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. With a promotion two years later, Utley took on store purchasing responsibilities, and in 1999, Utley moved up to assistant store manager, adding various management and human resource responsibilities to her job duties. Two years later, Utley was recognized for her achievements

by NIB with the Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award. Today, she oversees 16 associates as the store manager of the Dover-based AbilityOne BSC and also supervises the operation of the Individual Equipment Element and Hazmat operations at this location.

"BISM has helped me to develop confidence on the job and in my personal life, and it has also been a real blessing from a financial standpoint," said Utley. "I have been able to purchase a home over the years and care adequately for my family." Utley feels she would not have had the upward mobility opportunities elsewhere that she has experienced at BISM.

"I hope to be with BISM for a long time. I've experienced many positive personal changes and have seen the positive impact it has had on fellow associates who are blind," said Utley. "Being here gives me the opportunity to mentor other associates and educate the public about our capabilities in the workforce."

### Other Vital Services

But what started as an organization to create jobs has evolved into the major driver of providing comprehensive rehabilitation programs for people who are blind of all ages. "BISM's mission is to positively change people's attitudes about blindness," said Puente. "We have created an environment at BISM where

people who are blind of all ages have an opportunity to receive free training that provides them with the skills to be successful in all aspects of their lives."

Comprehensive instruction is offered in Braille, cane travel, adaptive computer technology and independent home living. Most instructors are blind and serve as mentors and counselors to students. A confidence-building curriculum enables students to acquire skills to be successful at home, in school and on the job. Year-round programs for blind and low-vision youths, young adults, their parents and teachers offer mentoring, networking and resources, and vocational and school-to-work training. The organization also offers comprehensive services for senior citizens with declining vision, which empowers individuals to regain independence and enjoy life to the fullest. Options include center-based or in-home training, residential retreats, community-based programs and monthly support group meetings at BISM's three training centers in Baltimore, Cumberland and Salisbury.

Looking forward, BISM's diverse career opportunities and rehabilitation programs will continue to support and inspire people who are blind to achieve their full potential at work, at home and in their communities. ■■■

# One Flag One Mission: NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo

**National event features business insights, awards and exhibits.**



*NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch recognizes Lee Nasehi, president and CEO of Lighthouse Central Florida, upon "graduating" from NIB's emerging agency program.*



*Pictured left to right: U.S. AbilityOne Commission Vice Chairperson Jim Kesteloot; Dennis Steiner, president and CEO of Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired, receiving the Chairperson's Award for Leadership; and Tina Ballard, Commission executive director.*

The 2012 NIB/NAEPB National Conference and Expo, held in October in Baltimore, Maryland, provided learning and networking opportunities for more than 800 attendees. The conference was a whirlwind of activity, including speeches and presentations from key government customers and industry leaders, breakout sessions led by subject matter experts on important business issues, an accessible technology showcase, plus dynamic exhibitors and recognition of agency employees, vendors and customers.

The conference theme, "One Flag One Mission," symbolized the many employees and business partners who work with NIB toward the mission of creating meaningful employment opportunities for people who are blind. It was also fitting as Baltimore celebrated the 200th anniversary of the writing of the "Star Spangled Banner" at Fort McHenry.

## **Attendees Welcomed to "Charm City"**

Dr. Nollie Wood, Ph.D., executive director of the Mayor of Baltimore's Commission on Disabilities, declared October 24-28 to be "National Industries for the Blind Days" in Baltimore. Dr. Wood presented a proclamation from Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake to NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch.

Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM), NIB's associated nonprofit agency headquartered in Baltimore, hosted tours of its manufacturing operations and other special events for conference attendees.

## **Key Defense Customers Demonstrate Advocacy**

Shay Assad, director of defense pricing, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), said he was optimistic about the future of the AbilityOne Program, and pledged his support for creating and expanding employment opportunities for people who are blind. Vowing to be an advocate to Congress on behalf of the AbilityOne® Program, he stated, "I will be relentless on your behalf."

Vice Admiral Mark Harnitchek, director, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), stressed the importance of the products and services provided for defense customers, ranging from Army combat uniforms, medical litters and computer components, to supply chain and Contract Management Support (CMS) services. Noting DLA's mandate to cut costs over the next decade, he said, "We need to try new things, come up with new ideas. The country and the taxpayers demand it."

## **Gift Honors Navy Supply Corps**

Lynch presented an officer's sword to Captain Mark Pimpo, accepting on behalf of Rear Admiral Mark Heinrich, commander, Naval Supply Systems Command, and chief of Supply Corps. Lynch said the sword, to be presented to the valedictorian at each Basic Supply Corps School graduation, is a recurring gift to the Navy Supply Corps officer community and a symbol of NIB's long and successful partnership. Recalling his visit to Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Captain Pimpo said the opportunity to





*Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD3) applauded conference attendees for their dedication to creating jobs for people who are blind and their devotion to helping people live the "American Dream."*



*Kaye Dengel, senior vice president, Marriott Global Customer Care and Reservation Sales.*

meet the employees and see the pride they took in doing their jobs and serving their country was something he never forgot. "You play a huge part in winning wars and preserving the peace."

### **Speakers Challenge and Inspire Attendees**

Lynch highlighted 2012 successes, including the addition of new products to the Procurement List, and strong performance in the growing services market. He outlined three broad priorities for NIB in the coming year: innovation, diversification and education.

William Sisk, assistant commissioner, Office of General Supplies and Services, U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), and a member of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™, said almost 50 percent of GSA's revenue from green products comes from the AbilityOne Program. "Our partnership is greening the federal government," he said. Sisk highlighted several product successes produced by NIB associated agencies, including "tree-free" bagasse paper notepad products, fire hoses

needed to fight summer wildfires, and the entrenching tool used by soldiers.

Kaye Dengel, senior vice president, Marriott Global Customer Care and Reservation Sales, described the company's Visually Impaired Program, which began with a \$50,000 investment in 1999 and two call center agents, and through the use of accessible technology and partnerships with blindness organizations in several cities nationwide, now employs 3,000 individuals who are blind.

Motivational speaker and author Steve Gilliland inspired and captivated the crowd with humor and real-life stories on wide-ranging topics. Despite day-to-day challenges, Gilliland declared how much he loves life and "enjoys the ride." He commended the group on its mission, noting "certain careers aren't careers — they're a calling."

### **Employees of the Year Share Successes**

Ron Tascarella, vice chairperson and treasurer of the NIB Board of Directors, moderated the Employee of the



*Shay Assad, director of defense pricing, U.S. Department of Defense, receives the "Spirit of Independence" award from Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.*



*William Sisk, assistant commissioner, Office of General Supplies and Services, U.S. General Services Administration, and member of U.S. AbilityOne Commission.*

*Continued on page 16*

Year panel discussion. Panelists Jason Stradone, Virginia Industries for the Blind; Margaret Currie-Ruffin, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind; and John Sherwood, RLCB Inc. in North Carolina, shared personal stories and perspectives on how they've succeeded in the workplace, including using adaptive technology and keeping a positive attitude.

### Recognition of Business Partners

NAEPB President John Mitchell presented the 2012 NAEPB Supplier of the Year Awards to two vendor partners. Small business Meterpak, Inc. provides cleaning and sanitation products packaged and distributed by Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill. Large business 3M Corporation provides masking, packaging and filament tape materials for Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and other NIB associated agencies to convert, package and distribute under the SKILCRAFT® brand.

Three NIB associated agencies — Outlook Nebraska, NewView Oklahoma, and Blind Industries and Services of Maryland — were honored for their achievements to increase employment for people who are blind. Other award presentations included:

- **NIB Achievement in Business Leadership Award:**  
Al Avina, Blinded Veterans Association
- **Performance of Excellence Award for NIB Services:**  
Terri Nunn, Defense Logistics Agency – Contracting Services Office



*The Honorable Gary Krump, chairperson, NIB Board of Directors, and Kevin Lynch, NIB president and CEO, present the 2012 Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award to Frenchie Randolph of Beyond Vision.*

- **DLA Customer Appreciation Awards:**  
Michael Smith and Steven Hawkins, Defense Logistics Agency Document Services
- **DoD Customer Appreciation Awards:**  
Theresa Rucci and Daniel Price, Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support
- **DoD Customer Appreciation Awards — Product Deal of the Year:** Roger Dixon and Lisa Flight, Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support
- **Performance of Excellence Award in Contract Management Support (CMS) Services:**  
William Sproule, Chief, Installations Sourcing Support, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition and Contracting
- **Outstanding CMS Training Program Participants:**  
Ahsan Zaidi, Contract Closeout Specialist, The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired, and Ian Elliott, Contracts and Pricing Administrator, Digital Receiver Technology, Inc. — A Boeing Company
- **Quality Work Environment Excellence Award:**  
Bosma Enterprises
- **Federal Customer Appreciation Awards:**  
Scott Kidd, General Services Administration, and Ron Buckhalt and U.S. Department of Agriculture BioPreferred Program Team
- **Commercial Performance of Excellence Award — NIB Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business Distributor:** Bo Clift, ASE Direct, Inc.
- **Commercial Performance of Excellence Award — NIB Distributor Small Business:** Rob Wangard, Cartridge Savers, Inc.
- **Commercial Performance of Excellence Award — New Distributor:** Joel Herringa, Postal Products Unlimited
- **Commercial Partner of Excellence Award — Contact Center Services:** Barry Maners, Fraser Group
- **Performance of Excellence Award — Newcomer:**  
Geoff Edwards, FedBid
- **AbilityOne Base Supply Center (BSC) Compliance Excellence Awards:**  
Bill Hudson, LC Industries, Inc., Fort Gordon BSC; John Marstall, Envision Industries, Inc., Grand Forks Air Force Base BSC; and Chuck Lange, Industries for the Blind, Inc., Milwaukee, Naval Air Station Key West BSC

### Awards Banquet Celebrates Excellence

Through the Joseph Roeder Assistive Technology Scholarship program, two students received \$2,500 grants toward their education. Lynch presented checks to Estin Talavera, assistive





*R. B. Irwin Award winner Arun Shimpi, NIB Board Chairperson Gary Krump and NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch.*



*Mike Edyvean, sales manager, Meterpak Inc., accepts 2012 NAEPB Supplier of the Year Award – Small Business from NAEPB President John Mitchell.*

technology specialist at Envision, and Jorge Hernandez, information technology student at Miami-Dade College, and network administrator for a trucking company.

Lynch, along with The Honorable Gary J. Krump, chairperson, NIB Board of Directors, presented the R. B. Irwin Award to Arun Shimpi, former NIB vice president, strategic business issues. The Irwin Award honors leaders in the blindness field who have given exemplary service to the program.

Krump and Lynch honored the winners of NIB's two top national awards. Frenchie Randolph of Beyond Vision (formerly known as Wiscraft) received the Peter J. Salmon

Employee of the Year Award, which recognizes employees who excel in their positions at NIB associated agencies.

Kevin Burton of Envision Inc. received the Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award, presented to individuals who demonstrate career advancement at NIB associated agencies or in the private sector.

Upon accepting their awards, both Randolph and Burton said they chose not to focus on what people in the past have told them they can't do. Instead, they set out to demonstrate what they can do. Burton's message to people who are blind or visually impaired: "Be an innovator . . . find your passion . . . find your voice." ❖❖



*Pictured left to right: NAEPB President John Mitchell, presenting the 2012 NAEPB Supplier of the Year Award – Large Business, to George Foley, business development manager, 3M Government Markets, along with Rob Council, general manager of 3M Government Markets and member of NIB Board of Directors.*



*Kevin Burton of Envision Inc., winner of the 2012 Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award.*

### NIB Manages New York State Preferred Source Program

NIB was selected by the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped to manage the New York State Preferred Source Program for people who are blind, which enables customers to purchase commodities and services from qualified nonprofit agencies serving people who are blind.

Effective December 1, 2012, NIB assumed the day-to-day management of the Preferred Source Program for

eight affiliated nonprofit agencies for the blind in New York State. These agencies employ nearly 400 people who are blind and generate approximately \$30 million in sales of products and services sold primarily to New York State and local government agencies. This business opportunity supports NIB's strategic goal of diversifying its business lines and increasing employment for individuals who are blind. ❧

### Effective Supervision Graduates Celebrate Success

NIB associated agency employees participating in the "Effective Supervision: The Essentials" track of NIB's Business Leaders Program celebrated their completion of the 10-month program on October 5. Each of the 17 graduates received a Certificate of Achievement from NIB, and the graduation banquet and festivities were preceded by a tour of NIB's Alexandria, Virginia, headquarters and a reception attended by guests from their agencies and NIB staff.

Effective Supervision: The Essentials, taught by leadership instructors from Management Concepts of Washington, D.C., develops participants' abilities to perform supervisory jobs with greater confidence and higher productivity so they are prepared to acquire greater levels of responsibility within their organizations. ❧



*Effective Supervision participants pictured left to right in first row: Rehan Ahmad, NIB; Hien Tran, Travis Association for the Blind; Lee Strickler, Blind Industries and Services of Maryland; Monika Williams, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind; Randy Sanchez, New York City Industries for the Blind; Sheri Shaw, Olmsted Center for Sight; Kevin Mossberger, Bosma Enterprises. Pictured in second row: Tonia Walters, The Lighthouse for the Blind – St. Louis; Joanna Richardson, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill; Mike Davis, Inland Northwest Lighthouse of The Lighthouse for the Blind Inc. – Seattle; Ray Montgomery, Bosma Enterprises; David Pressley, Midwest Enterprises for the Blind Inc.; Steve Hopkins, NewView Oklahoma; Annamarie Parker, Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired; Doug Adams, Lions Volunteer Blind Industries Inc.; Kelly Marsh, Lighthouse Louisiana.*

### DLA Demonstrates Support of AbilityOne Program



*Vice Admiral Mark Harnitchek (pictured on left), DLA director, presents award to Platt Allen, president of Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth.*

The Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth in Texas received the Outstanding AbilityOne® Program Vendor Award from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Presented to organizations that exemplify overall excellence in product quality, on-time delivery, customer service, dependability and accuracy, this award recognized the Lighthouse for its partnership with DLA to provide supplies and services to America's military forces worldwide.

DLA Aviation nominated the Lighthouse for its extraordinary efforts to rapidly and consistently supply Energy Dissipating Pads, manufactured by people who are blind. The Lighthouse has been the sole source manufacturer and supplier of this critical product for the U.S. Army Air Command since 1998. The 3x6-foot pads are used in air drops around the world for humanitarian aid and delivery of life-saving supplies.

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, DLA Land and Maritime in Columbus, Ohio, and DLA Aviation in Richmond, Virginia, hosted "AbilityOne Days" for nonprofit agencies associated with the AbilityOne Program to exhibit products and discuss services offered to DLA. Attended by DLA acquisition, technical, and quality product specialists, the events encouraged participants to identify opportunities for addition to the AbilityOne Program Procurement List. ❧



## Customer Agreements to Enhance Customer Service

NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch signed memorandums of agreement with key defense customers — the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM), and Army and Air Force Exchange Service (Exchange) — in a ceremony in Washington, D.C., October 3.

The agreements formalized the commitment to enhancing customer service and identifying and pursuing business opportunities that are mutually beneficial for both NIB and each of the three organizations.

Joseph H. Jeu, director and CEO of DeCA, co-signed the DeCA joint vision statement. NEXCOM Chief Executive Officer Robert J. Bianchi and Exchange Director/CEO Tom A. Shull co-signed joint statements of guiding principles for their organizations.

NIB and DeCA, NEXCOM and the Exchange have historically collaborated in the areas of retail products, services and operational supplies for the AbilityOne® Program. ::



*Pictured left to right: Joseph H. Jeu, director and CEO of DeCA; NEXCOM Chief Executive Officer Robert J. Bianchi; Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB; and Exchange Director/CEO Tom A. Shull.*

## Chicago Lighthouse Produces Five Millionth Clock

The Industries program at The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired reached a new milestone recently with the production of its five millionth clock. Lighthouse employees marked the special accomplishment by signing the clock and celebrating with a team luncheon. Lighthouse President Dr. Janet Szyk congratulated staff members, noting the importance of the clocks in generating revenue for the agency's programs to assist people with visual impairments.

Since the late 1970s, the Lighthouse has had the exclusive contract to manufacture clocks for the U.S. government. Each year, the program turns out more than 200,000 clocks produced by employees who are blind. Lighthouse clocks adorn federal offices throughout the United States and around the world.

To further boost production, the agency has also been working with the commercial sector to sell additional clocks. The Lighthouse operates one of the few remaining clock factories left in the United States. ::



*Chicago Lighthouse employees, most of whom are blind or visually impaired, with the five millionth clock produced by the agency.*

## Super Storm Sandy: NIB Agencies Lend Support

In late October, Hurricane Sandy left thousands on the East Coast without power, gas or access to basic necessities. NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch and NAEPB President John Mitchell asked NIB associated agency leaders to consider donating supplies, such as batteries, food, water, blankets and cleaning products, to the relief effort.



*New York City Industries for the Blind employees deliver relief supplies following Hurricane Sandy.*

New York City Industries for the Blind in Brooklyn volunteered to collect and distribute donated products, which included \$25,000 in trash can liners from Envision of Wichita, Kansas; \$10,000 in batteries and supplies from the Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Inc. (A.V.R.E.), in Binghamton, New York; and 5,000 hygiene kits from the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth in Texas.

During the storm, customers such as the Veterans Administration Medical Centers at the Bronx, Castle Point and Montrose locations in New York needed continuous support for switchboard operations. A.V.R.E. employees demonstrated their commitment to customer service by operating the switchboards 24x7, some even sleeping on cots between shifts. These dedicated employees ensured that the switchboard service continued to provide emergency code response and alarm monitoring for intensive care unit beds, fire, elevator and medical gas, along with other security systems. ::



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