Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award

In 1968, on the 30th anniversary of the Wagner-O’Day Act, the NIB Board of Directors created the Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award to honor those employees who excel in their positions at NIB associated agencies. Dr. Salmon was instrumental in advocating passage of the Wagner-O’Day Act of 1938 and the subsequent formation of NIB. This award recognizes the outstanding work and achievements of people who are blind working at NIB associated agencies across the country.
Salmon Nominees

SCOTT AUERMAN

Beacon Lighthouse
Wichita Falls, Texas
Scott joined Beacon Lighthouse in August 2018 as a general operator and by December of that year was promoted to machine operator. He chairs the agency’s EPIC committee, a role he enjoys because he can engage with co-workers and make workplace improvements.

BEVERLY BAKER

South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
Corpus Christi, Texas
A previous employee at the Lighthouse, Beverly rejoined the agency in 2015 as an assembler/packer, where her keen attention to detail results in work that is consistently error free. Always willing to learn and be flexible, she has worked in many areas in the production department.

GAIL CHAMBERS

Lions Volunteer Blind Industries
Morristown, Tennessee
With more than 30 years of experience at Lions Volunteer Blind Industries, Gail is always willing to give new employees helpful advice and direction. Before joining the agency, Gail earned her bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

THERESA CHRISSTENSEN

Georgia Industries for the Blind
Bainbridge, Georgia
Theresa is cross trained in a number of agency operations, including file folder assembly, creaser feeder, label, binders, and metal assemblies. Her cross training is a point of pride because it enables her to produce many high-quality products that support the military.
BARBARA CISSELL

LCI
Daytona Beach, Florida
Barbara says the many skills learned during her years at LCI have improved her independence and confidence. She is very proud of the work she does making products for disaster relief and the military, because she has family members in every branch of the armed forces.

MATTHEW COFFMAN

VIA
Buffalo, New York
As an information and referral specialist in the agency’s contact center, Matt helps train new staff members through role playing, monitoring calls, and providing constructive feedback. He is a natural leader, and his co-workers frequently seek him out for information and advice.

MARKITA COOPER-LANE

East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
Tyler, Texas
Markita’s dedication to teamwork has led her to actively seek out new opportunities and take on additional responsibilities. A valued member of the production team, she also helps put together agency celebrations and White Cane Safety Day events as an activities committee member.

JOHN COVELESKI

Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Utica, New York
John trains new hires and offers tenured employees refresher on call center programs. He has traveled to Washington, D.C., and New York City to evaluate call center systems compatibility for people who are blind, and tested new call center systems and software for user compatibility.
ROSEMARIE DENNIS

Bosma Enterprises
Indianapolis, Indiana

Rosemarie’s experience as a kitting room quality inspector allowed her to provide valuable feedback as the agency transformed its kitting room to create a Class 8 cleanroom. In addition to streamlining the process, her ideas helped reduce processing times and downtime.

DESTINY DIAZ

Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired - Goodwill of the Finger Lakes
Rochester, New York

Destiny joined the sewing division shortly after graduating from high school and has grown in her role, moving seamlessly from job to job within the department. Destiny is bilingual, so she helps translate for co-workers who speak only Spanish, and hopes to become a licensed interpreter.

JASON EVANS

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment
Binghamton, New York

Although Jason has experience working on various product lines, he has found a home in the copy paper department. Despite health challenges, he gives 100% in everything he does and is known for making people laugh throughout the workday.

STEVEN FLOYD, II

North Central Sight Services
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Steven can perform any job at the agency, from production and shipping to document imaging. A member of the agency’s safety committee and the Lion’s Club, he studied computer science in high school and hopes to become a software developer.
HERBERT GALAN
San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind
San Antonio, Texas
Herberth, who has sewn chin straps for the Marines and combat jackets and extreme weather pants for the Army, constantly seeks out ways to learn more and appreciates the support he receives from his co-workers. He says the ability to work and learn at San Antonio Lighthouse is empowering.

ROMIA HALL, JR.
Alphapointe
Kansas City, Missouri
Romia has developed a track record of success at Alphapointe. Since his department upgraded equipment, he prevents downtime by using his excellent hearing to detect the beginning of operating issues with the new machinery and fix them before they become problems.

VIRGINIA HERNANDEZ
Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth
Fort Worth, Texas
Her high quality of work, flexibility, and openness and interest in learning new things have given Virginia the opportunity to work on a number of products at the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth. In her free time, she frequently advocates for people who are blind.

MIA HIXON
Lions Industries for the Blind
Kinston, North Carolina
One of the highest producing and highest quality operators in the agency’s military embroidery department, Mia is cross trained to work in other areas, such as making name tapes for the military and packaging clothing for the U.S. Geological Survey.
MICHAEL HORA

VisionCorps
Lancaster, Pennsylvania
A member of the 2017 class of NIB’s Advocates for Leadership and Employment program, Mike is also a member of the agency’s safety committee and its quality process committee, where he frequently contributes insightful suggestions on how to improve practices.

JOANNE JOHNSON

Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
A natural mentor, Joanne’s patience and support have helped her younger co-workers thrive in their roles. Joanne serves on the agency’s safety committee, where her insights have helped create a safer and more inclusive work environment.

ARTHUR JONES

Mississippi Industries for the Blind
Jackson, Mississippi
During his long tenure with Mississippi Industries for the Blind, Arthur has worked in nearly every production department. His enthusiasm and willingness to learn new skills have made him a true asset for the agency.

GARY JONES

Alabama Industries for the Blind
Talladega, Alabama
Gary, who has worked in nearly every department at the agency, has participated in several training courses, including Leaders at All Levels and communication skills training. Away from the agency, he serves on the board of the Birmingham Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind.
JAMES JONES

Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany
Albany, New York
Hired in January 2018 as a machine operator, James’ ability to work well as a team player and excellent communications skills quickly earned the respect of his peers. He has often taken a lead role in training co-workers in document preparation, inspection, and tagging.

ERICKSON JORGBOYAN

MidWest Enterprises for the Blind
Kalamazoo, Michigan
Erickson’s high quality of work, great attitude, attention to detail, and ability to work well with everyone at MidWest Enterprises led to a promotion from a seasonal employee in the assembly and packaging division to production associate.

JOHN KOIGI

The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Seattle, Washington
John started his career as a production employee with no experience in machining, but quickly earned several promotions. He is now training to become a department lead and is enrolled in the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship program offered through the state of Washington.

EASTON KONS

IBVI
West Allis, Wisconsin
As a tool kit specialist, Easton ensures that Vertical Skills Engineer Construction Kits (VSECKs), which consist of 800 different tools packed in 80 unique tray layouts, are precisely assembled and crated. His attention to detail helped the program achieve a 100% accuracy rating with no delayed shipments.
LAURIE LEDWELL
Lions Services
Charlotte, North Carolina
Laurie is known among her co-workers as a warm and open person who offers encouragement every step of the way. Their overwhelming approval of her as the agency’s 2020 employee of the year is a reflection of the deep respect and admiration she has earned.

ANGEL LOPEZ
Lighthouse Works
Orlando, Florida
As a fulfillment specialist in the supply chain department, Angel consistently looks beyond the basics of his role to find creative ways to improve processes. He is passionate about collaboration and teamwork, helping others succeed by inspiring, motivating, and encouraging them.

BARBARA LUCHT
Louisiana Association for the Blind
Shreveport, Louisiana
In more than 50 years with Louisiana Association for the Blind, Barbara has been a Base Supply Center administrative clerk, cashier, supervisor, packer, and sales associate. Her current role as a greeter fits her outgoing personality and natural warmth toward others.

THOMAS MARTIN
Industries of the Blind
Greensboro, North Carolina
Thomas volunteered to work on a new production line to provide stability, leadership, and sewing knowledge, and those qualities quickly earned a promotion to team lead. He has an associate’s degree in criminal justice and served in the South Carolina Army National Guard for 10 years.
WILFREDO MARTINEZ

Bestwork Industries for the Blind
Cherry Hill, New Jersey
With his long tenure and experience running numerous types of equipment, Wilfredo, who serves on the agency’s safety committee, is often asked for input on the work environment. He mentors new employees to ensure their success and recently spoke to potential employees at an agency job fair.

CHRISTOPHER MENDEHAL

NewView Oklahoma
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Chris improved process workflows on several manufacturing projects, including converting positions so that they can be performed by people who are blind. He is studying to become a licensed professional counselor with the goal of working with at-risk youth.

JEDIDIAH MOSS

Beyond Vision
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Jedidiah has made a big impact in his relatively short time with Beyond Vision, where he serves as an assembly and packaging product line champion and participates in leadership development meetings.

RODOLFO MUNOZ

West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
San Angelo, Texas
In addition to his work in hand assembly and packaging, Rudy helps with remodeling and repairs at the agency’s remote locations. He is especially proud of his work on completing the remodeling in the agency’s Midland, Texas, facility.
LACEY RASELY

Keystone Blind Association
Hermitage, Pennsylvania
A general clerk in the mailroom, Lacey frequently serves as a mentor to new employees. Her ability to learn and use assistive technologies has helped her advance within the agency, and she has set a goal of mastering each of the 40 mailroom functions in the general clerk position.

GINA ROWELL

Associated Industries for the Blind
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Gina’s razor-sharp customer focus, strong interpersonal, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills have made a positive impact since she joined the agency as a customer care specialist at the Base Supply Center at the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) in Warren, Michigan.

JOSHUA SCARBOROUGH

Outlook Nebraska
Omaha, Nebraska
Joshua, an Army veteran, is a floater on the production line where he is trained to operate many pieces of complex machinery, thus improving operating efficiency. He is known for consistently giving his all to help his team succeed.

SCOTT SMITH

IFB Solutions
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
As an optical lab technician, Scott pays attention to detail, operating machinery that takes special knowledge and skill, and his dedication shows in the final product. Known as a cheerleader for IFB, Scott has become an ambassador for the agency on a national scale.
TERRY STRADER
Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Cincinnati, Ohio
A proofreader in the braille printing house, Terry earned his Unified English Braille certification in 2019, a process that culminated with submission of a 35-page manuscript. With UEB certification, Terry can take on new braille projects and responsibilities.

ALISA SUTTON
Chicago Lighthouse Industries for the Blind
Chicago, Illinois
Alisa joined the Lighthouse in 2018 and quickly became known as a person who is generous in sharing her knowledge and training new employees. She consistently exhibits a positive attitude and encourages her co-workers to strive for excellence.

ROBERT TENBRINK
Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Cincinnati, Ohio
Bob came out of retirement to rejoin Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired as a gadget assembler and also worked in the LED lights assembly line, an assignment of particular interest to him as a Navy veteran with an associate’s degree in electronics.

KEITH TYSON
Blind Industries and Services of Maryland
Baltimore, Maryland
A retail associate at the agency’s Base Supply Center at Joint Base Andrews, Keith not only teaches the BSC credit card class for purchasing personnel on military bases, he converted text to braille so other associates who are blind can teach the class.
ADOLFO VARGAS
Envision Dallas
Dallas, Texas
With his unfailingly positive attitude, Adolfo is always ready to lend a hand and challenges his colleagues to do their best. He never passes up an opportunity to provide support and help them believe that if he can do it, so can they.

SEDRICK VEAL
Envision
Wichita, Kansas
As chair of Envision’s Employee Advisory Group, Sedrick leads a forum that explores such topics as job enrichment; employee engagement; and diversity, inclusion, and culture. He is refreshing his typing skills in the agency’s Upward Mobility program to open new career paths and hopes to return to college to become a social worker.

PAUL VEDROS
Lighthouse Louisiana
New Orleans, Louisiana
Paul, who has steadily worked his way up at the agency from production assistant to machine operator, plans to keep learning all the facets of manufacturing at the Lighthouse so he can move into a management role.

ERIC WALLACE
The Lighthouse for the Blind
St. Louis, Missouri
Eric serves as a mentor and trainer for his co-workers. When product demand threatened to overwhelm his production line, he not only kept up with requirements, but also prepared to launch a new line and learned to operate the new equipment, all without missing a beat.
The only disability is when people cannot see human potential.

Debra Ruh
CEO and Founder
Ruh Global IMPACT