

A Publication of National Industries for the Blind

# OPPORTUNITY

## Mission Ready Medical Products



Plus

- Milwaukee Industries
- Shining Stars
- NIB/NAEPB Opportunity Forum

Volume 4 | Issue 4 | FALL 2011

# Celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October, for many, marks the beginning of festive fall events, the transition from summer to winter and preparations for the holiday season. At NIB, it is a time when we celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of people who are blind during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Since 1945, the federal government has acknowledged the employment needs and contributions of people with disabilities during the first week in October. In 1988, Congress expanded this recognition from a week to a month. This year, the Department of Labor selected the theme, "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities," to promote the contributions people with disabilities make to the economy and places of employment all across America.

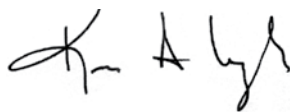
We kicked off the month with our Annual Training Conference in New Orleans, where we invited all nominees of our national employee of the year awards. The event showcased their accomplishments and proved to be a wonderful opportunity to reaffirm our mission, celebrate their successes and get to know each of these nominees on a more personal level.

Our associated agencies also join us in celebrating NDEAM with creative observances held at the

grassroots level across the country. Activities range from base supply center customer appreciation events and product showcases at Defense Logistics Agency facilities, to community events to raise awareness about employment opportunities.

All of these activities share a common tie — the AbilityOne Program, which creates thousands of employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. In this issue of *Opportunity*, we bring you a few success stories of people who have faced life's challenges, and through training and career opportunities afforded through NIB, its associated agencies and the AbilityOne Program, rose to the top. As they have taken on increasing responsibilities and moved up to higher-level positions, they have also grown in confidence and self-esteem.

We are immensely proud of their accomplishments. Congratulations and keep moving forward!



Kevin A. Lynch  
President and Chief Executive Officer



## OPPORTUNITY

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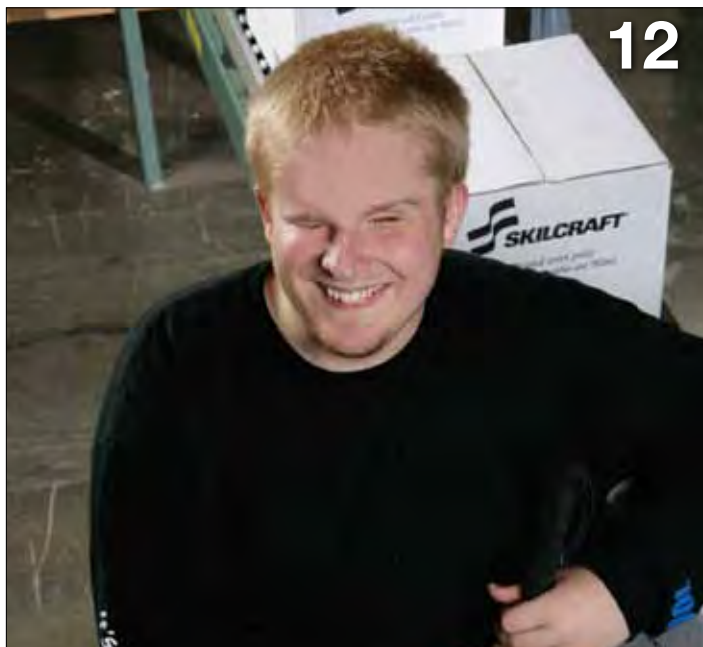
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# OPPORTUNITY



Matt Riendeau, assembler, Industries for the Blind, West Allis, Wisconsin.



Motivational speaker Robert Stevenson at the 2011 NIB/NAEPB Opportunity Forum.



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- NIB Awards Assistive Technology Scholarship
- DLA Recognizes Lions Industries for the Blind

## Meet J. Anthony (Tony) Poleo, the new chairperson of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission.



J. Anthony (Tony) Poleo

J. Anthony (Tony) Poleo possesses a wonderful balance of pragmatism and imagination. As the chief financial officer for the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), he knows firsthand that the federal government is facing some stiff fiscal challenges, which will make it more difficult for NIB and NISH associated agencies to sustain contracts that provide employment for people who are blind or otherwise severely disabled. He also believes, however, that these agencies have the creativity and ability to step up to that challenge.

No stranger to the AbilityOne Program, Poleo was appointed by President George W. Bush to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission (formerly the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled) in February 2007, as the Department of Defense representative. In July 2011, Poleo was elected Chairperson. But by the

nature of the positions he has held at DLA, Poleo has been aware of the AbilityOne Program for many years.

Poleo started at DLA in 1981 as an undergraduate cooperative education student. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in finance from Virginia Tech in 1984 and returned full-time to the DLA Directorate of Financial Operations. Poleo earned a master's degree in public financial management from American University in 1989 and holds Defense Financial Management and Government Financial Management certifications. He has also completed the Program for Senior Executive Fellows at Harvard University, the Leadership for a Democratic Society program at the Federal Executive Institute and the Navy Executive Business Course at the University of North Carolina. During these years, Poleo's career took off as he moved up the ranks in DLA and was selected as a member of the Senior Executive Service in 2001. In 2007, Poleo became DLA's chief financial officer, responsible for the financial stewardship and management of DLA's budget, which is \$42 billion. He develops overall financial management strategy, leads efforts to apply new technology to financial management operations and ensures metrics are available to customers that fully assess DLA's financial health.

In 2009, Poleo was awarded the Presidential Rank Award, which is given by the president to an elite group of senior government executives and employees for excellent performance and commitment to public service. The

award recognizes leaders, professionals and scientists who achieve results and consistently demonstrate strength, integrity and a commitment to excellence in public service.

As a member of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, Poleo has toured several participating nonprofit agencies. "Whenever I visit an NIB or NISH associated agency, I am always impressed with the people," said Poleo. "They have overcome a lot of challenges in their daily lives, and it is evident they want to do a high-quality job. Their motivation is inspirational to me, and I try to convey that back to my colleagues at DLA."

Poleo's top priorities as Chairperson of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission are very straightforward — employment growth and quality work environments for the people served by the program. To further those goals, Poleo actively seeks input from Commission members and staff, as well as NIB, NISH and associated agencies, which know firsthand the challenges facing people who are blind or otherwise severely disabled. "We have to figure out ways to mitigate the impact of the current federal fiscal environment because the contracting community is under intense pressure to get the best value," said Poleo. "We need to better convey that the AbilityOne Program delivers best value to our customers through the products and services it provides every day to the government and the military. By doing this, we can keep growing jobs and maintaining a quality work environment for the people we serve." ■■

## NIB Recognized by Computerworld Honors Program



*Pictured left to right at the 2011 Computerworld Honors Program awards ceremony are NIB employees Luis Interiano, e-commerce website operations manager, and Thomas Panek, vice president, relationship management.*

NIB was named a Laureate in the 2011 Computerworld Honors Program, in recognition of NIB's Enterprise Resource Planning project to support the organization's internal operations and provide a fully accessible web-based e-commerce platform. NIB's information technology team submitted a case study about the project in the Digital Access category.

At an awards ceremony June 20 in Washington, D.C., NIB accepted a medallion inscribed with the Computerworld Honors Program's mission, "A Search for New Heroes." The NIB case study was one of more than 1,000 nominated from organizations worldwide in award categories that included Business Responsiveness, Collaboration, Economic Opportunity, Emerging Technology, Environment, Health, Human Services, Innovation, Safety and Security, and Training/Education.

The award program is designed to promote thought leadership for using technology to promote and advance public welfare, benefit society and improve quality of life for future generations. ☘

## Business Leaders Program Honored with ASAE Summit Award

NIB's Business Leaders Program was named a recipient of the Summit Awards, the highest honor presented by ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership. ASAE received 100 entries for "The Power of A" Awards, and six organizations, including the Business Leaders Program, received Summit Awards October 5 in Washington, D.C.

"The Power of A" awards honor associations that exemplify how the association industry and professionals are essential to a stronger America and world. According to ASAE, one in every three Americans is a part

of the nation's vital association and nonprofit industry, as an employee, member, volunteer or donor.

NIB's Business Leaders Program, recognized in "The Power to Create a Competitive Workforce" category, prepares individuals who are blind for careers across business-related fields. By providing educational and employment opportunities, this program encourages professional development and transforms high-potential employees and participants into successful business people and future business leaders. ☘

## NIB and Associated Agencies Connect with Recently Blinded Wounded Warriors

For the sixth year, NIB and several of its associated nonprofit agencies participated in the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) National Convention and Operation Peer Support (OPS) program August 16-20 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

OPS and the BVA National Convention enable recently blinded active duty and retired service women and men from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to learn about national and local resources available to help re-establish their personal and professional lives.

NIB sponsored a discussion panel and luncheon on August 17 to share information about the employment opportunities available at NIB and its 90 associated nonprofit agencies through the AbilityOne Program.

During the lunch, each wounded warrior shared how they were injured and their employment aspirations. Convention exhibitors included NIB associated agency, The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired. ☘

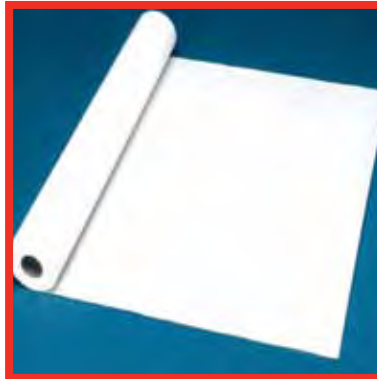
### NIB Mailbox

**... From a U.S. Army Major in Iraq:**

I thought you might be interested in a photo of one of your pens in Anbar Province, Iraq. I received this "Limited Commemorative Edition" SKILCRAFT® pen at last year's Association of the United States Army Convention in Washington, D.C. The photo was taken while on a patrol from Fallujah to Ramadi. We are inside of a mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle . . . Please forward to anyone who might be interested in seeing the product in action!



# Mission Ready





# Medical Products

**From the battlefield to the bedside, NIB associated agencies have a rich history of supplying quality medical products to support the military in the hospital and in the field.**

Military medics face a unique set of challenges when soldiers are injured on the battlefield. Besides taking quick measures to stabilize a patient, the medic must have equipment that is lightweight, rugged, portable, dependable and easy to use to evacuate a patient from a hazardous environment. This is critical to the safety of the patient as well as the medic.

In World War II, the most common means of transporting wounded personnel from the frontline was on U.S. Army litters (more commonly referred to as stretchers). Litters were used to carry patients across rugged terrain and to transport casualties in moving ground vehicles or evacuation aircraft. They were also used as an improvised operating table and to carry Army doctors' heavy medical chests between installations. As a result, it was important for all litters to have the

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Lester Simkins has been making litters for a decade at Arizona Industries for the Blind in Phoenix. First, he assembled the litters, but today he is a CNC (computer numerically controlled) machine operator. Meticulous about his work, Simkins takes great pride when milling the litter poles.



James Caldwell, senior CNC (computer numerically controlled) machine operator and machine shop team leader at Arizona Industries for the Blind, Phoenix. Caldwell has also worked as a quality assurance inspector, making sure litters meet military standards.

same specifications. That enabled a patient to move through various stages of transport quickly and without having to be moved from the litter.

### When a Life is on the Line

Today, many of those needs are still relevant, making design a critical factor so that a wounded warrior is transported efficiently and safely on the same litter from the point of injury to the medical facility, whether that transport is by ground, sea or air.

Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) in Phoenix started making Army litters in 1982. At that time, specifications called for the litters to have wooden handles and canvas covers. In the early 1990s, the U.S. Army Medical Materiel Development Activity upgraded construction of the litter to include high-strength plastic handles and nylon covers. Today, the covers are made from a polypropylene mesh material, which is flame retardant, resistant to chemical warfare agents and decontaminating solutions. The litter is designed to support up to 1,600 pounds, yet it is extremely portable. When collapsed for shipping and storage, it is just seven feet long and six inches high and wide. Four retractable, locking, nylon handles allow for easy grip, and four aluminum legs provide strong support. All of the components for the litter are machined and assembled by 25 employees at AIB.

The litter is used by the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and American allies worldwide and is designed to fit into the Army's portable field operating table, also manufactured by AIB. The table includes three poles to hold intravenous bags, two arm boards,

an instrument tray, a refuse bag frame, two shelves, two adjustable halogen lamps, an anesthesia shelf and drain panel. It can be assembled in remote environments in less than 30 minutes. The table is used for surgical procedures in field operations, and when disassembled, can be stored into a reusable carrying container.

### Hospital Supplies

AIB is just one of many NIB associated agencies that make hospital and medical products for use in the field and in military hospitals. The Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Ohio began making examination paper products in 1982. The semi-crepe absorbent table paper comes 18 inches wide, in three different lengths – 125, 150 and 500 feet long. Three employees who are blind run the operation, with two operating a Dusenbery paper slitter to convert the paper into rolls, while the third person packs and palletizes the finished product for shipment to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other government authorized distributors.

Employees at the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, New York, make blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes and pajamas for the VA. Two employees assemble and package more than \$100,000 worth of stethoscopes each year in partnership with Medline, a manufacturer of healthcare products.

Ten CABVI employees who are blind sew pajama tops and bottoms in all colors and sizes from small to five extra-large. Another two employees do custom imprinting to the VA specification on the



pajamas. Just two years into making this product, annual sales to the VA have grown to \$500,000, and CABVI was able to hire people who are blind off their waiting list.

Hospital pillows for the VA are made by employees at RLCB, Inc., in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis, Missouri. The pillows are washable and non-allergenic and feature a nylon cover treated with ultra-fresh antimicrobial finish, which is fluid-proof, but breathable for a cooler effect. The pillow production line at RLCB is staffed by 14 employees and a supervisor, all of whom are blind.

The Travis Association for the Blind (TAB) in Austin, Texas; Industries for the Blind in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and LC Industries in Durham, North Carolina, make soap dispensers. TAB also provides hand sanitizers in partnership with Purell.

Washington-Greene County Branch of the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind in Washington, Pennsylvania, has been a long-time provider of suture removal kits, and employees at the Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services in Pittsburgh makes tourniquets.

### **Quality and Purity**

The team at Alphapointe Association for the Blind in Kansas City, Missouri, takes great pride supporting the health and welfare of America's veterans by producing more than 50 million prescription bottles a year. They have been manufacturing specimen containers, spray bottles, and 120cc and 250cc prescription bottles since the late 1990's for the VA's seven Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy



*Mom Samith, sewing machine operator, Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Utica, New York.*

*Continued on page 10*

## Medical and Surgical Products Produced by NIB Associated Agencies

- Ambulance Medical Kits
- Blood Pressure Cuffs
- Body Fluids Barrier Kits
- Catheters
- Disposable Operating Room Kits
- Examination and Surgical Gloves
- Examination Table Paper Sheeting
- Field Operating Tables
- First Aid Kits
- Hand Sanitizers
- Hospital Pillows
- Incontinence Urinals
- Litters
- Operating Room Kits
- Pajamas
- Patient Security Straps
- Pharmaceutical Bottles
- Shelter-in-Place Kits
- Specimen Containers
- Stethoscopes
- Suture Removal Kit
- Tourniquets
- Vaccination Kits

*Continued from page 9*

(CMOP) locations across the United States. Eighteen specially trained employees who are blind work three shifts, five days a week, to meet the demand. More employees work within the quality control, customer service, warehouse and shipping departments to support production and quality. Their roles contribute to adherence to ISO 9001:2008 processes, 48-hour truckload deliveries and overall customer satisfaction. Dedication at all levels has been the key in maintaining certification within Alphapointe's current good manufacturing practices (cGMP) environment. This certification is critical in the pharmaceutical industry to assuring quality, potency, identity, safety and purity of products, and it has led to additional work with other healthcare partners including Rexam, Sanofi-Aventis and Splintek, which need the consistent, quality production of Alphapointe.

### **Personal Protective Apparel**

Bosma Enterprises in Indianapolis, Indiana, ships more than \$30 million worth of nitrile and latex, textured and smooth examination gloves and \$7 million worth of various types of surgical gloves each year to VA hospitals. Packaged in a sterile environment, these gloves exceed a broad range of demanding specifications. Almost 99 percent of the orders are shipped in less than three days. The project provides jobs for more than 40 people who are blind at Bosma and more jobs at other NIB associated agencies.

Dwane Craig is one of those employees at Bosma. Craig survived a debilitating motorcycle accident, which left him with vision complications three years later. He began rehabilitation services at Bosma and started as a temporary employee in 2010. "I watched everything that went on at



*Prescription bottle production line at Alphapointe Association for the Blind, Kansas City, Missouri.*



*Dwane Craig, surgical room labeler at Bosma Enterprises, Indianapolis, Indiana. Craig was a certified mechanic for the majority of his life. Vision loss forced Craig to forego his dream of racing, but he continues to build and maintain a race car for his nephew. "My job is to make sure he stays safe, and that is really how I manage — I live through his success."*



*Martha Hoover, production employee, Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.*

Bosma Enterprises and knew right off the bat that I wanted to work here," said Craig. "They make work more accessible and deal with everyone's disability." Craig hopes to work his way up to a line leader position in the production area at Bosma.

While examination and surgical gloves are Bosma's bread and butter, the organization offers a number of other medical, health and safety products to the VA. Employees assemble ambulance packs, containing latex-free bedding, patient gowns and pillows, and disposable linen kits used to transport patients between facilities. They package vaccination kits, which contain all supplies necessary to vaccinate 200 people in one setting, as well as personal protection kits that include gloves, face masks, protective eye shields, anti-microbial hand sanitizers and germicidal wipes for disinfecting hard surfaces. The Shelter-in-Place kit contains essential supplies designed to meet the basic needs of an individual in a variety of emergency situations and Bosma's Accelerate-OR kit was developed to increase the

speed of operating room turnover. The table sheet, arm board and positioner covers are impervious, preventing patient fluids from contacting medical staff. The kit also contains disposable linens, disposal bags and a mop head.

### **Trusted Source**

When quality is important, when seconds count, or when a life is on the line, medical and surgical products made in NIB associated agencies

have proven to be reliable and trusted, whether used in a hospital setting, or in the field. Easy online product ordering coupled with a customer care team helps ensure each customer's experience is up to the same high quality as the products. ❖❖



# Outstanding customer service and highly incentivized employees are the secrets to success at Industries for the Blind in Wisconsin.



*Chuck Lange, president and CEO, Industries for the Blind, West Allis, Wisconsin.*

In these days of fierce market competition, fewer business opportunities and uncertain economies, it is crucial for organizations to stand out as innovative, flexible and resourceful. Thriving companies are as strong as their leadership teams, who have the dynamism and vision necessary to grow and achieve long-term goals. Thriving companies also have skilled workforces with diverse, up-to-date skills.

Industries for the Blind (IB) in West Allis, Wisconsin, is such a workplace — customer-centric and continually innovating, with employees who are committed to providing the best products and services to customers. Headquartered near Milwaukee, IB is considered one of the best places to work in Wisconsin. But it was not always an outstanding performer.

### Thinking Big

Incorporated in 1952, IB was primarily a manufacturer of brushes for many years and then expanded into making a variety of pens and pencils. The company was losing money for years, until about 16 years ago when the Board appointed Chuck Lange as president and chief executive officer. Lange promised the Board he would increase sales from \$6 million to \$10 million within five years. In actuality, Lange orchestrated a complete financial turnaround of the company, with sales reaching \$20 million. At the end of 2010, IB's sales surpassed \$100 million with 245 employees, 120 of whom are blind or visually impaired. Lange led initiatives for IB to achieve ISO 9001 quality certification in 1998 and opened a satellite manufacturing operation in Janesville, Wisconsin. Today IB operates 11 base supply

centers on military installations in California, Florida, Maryland, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Utah, as well as state-of-the-art e-commerce divisions. In addition to an impressive list of federal and military customers, IB does business with large corporations, such as Walmart and AmeriCorps.

### A Great Place to Work

In 2008, the company moved to its current 100,000-square-foot facility, situated on 13 acres in an industrial park in West Allis. A tour of the plant offers behind-the-scenes glimpses of manufacturing in the 21st century at its finest. The facility is clean, spacious and relatively quiet, with temperature and humidity-controlled areas. Employees make approximately 300,000 writing instruments and 250,000 glassine envelopes daily, along



*Danielle Creapeau, e-commerce customer service representative, and her dog, Abbie, Industries for the Blind, West Allis, Wisconsin.*

with other big selling items, such as brushes, brooms, soy candles and chamois. While more than half the jobs directly involve manufacturing, packaging and distribution, there are also many diverse employment options in research and development, marketing, and sales support positions.

### Highly Incentivized Employees

The secret to IB's success rests with Lange's belief that all business operations must be focused on identifying and meeting the needs of customers, and that the level of expertise and motivation of IB's employees are its greatest assets. Lange describes IB as a "highly incentivized company," with upscale jobs as well as very competitive salaries, pensions and other benefits. As a result, employee turnover is extremely low.

"Our employees are treated with respect and feel appreciated," said Lange. "We hold monthly 'all-hands' meetings so that our leadership team can share with employees news about business opportunities and downturns that affect the company and their jobs."

### Developing a Family of Brands

In anticipation of declining demand for manufactured products by the federal government in the future, IB has taken aggressive steps to focus on the development of professional jobs for people who are blind by promoting its brands (IB Express, National Service Gear and Cedar Lake DVD), more than its products. IB Express serves the needs of federal customers in offices and military bases around the country. National Service Gear is a comprehensive on-line source for purchasing clothing, gear and promotional items, and Cedar Lake DVD offers a collection of instrumental



Steve Heesen, inside sales associate, and his dog, Rattan, Industries for the Blind, West Allis, Wisconsin.



Yer Xiong, brush machine operator, Industries for the Blind, West Allis, Wisconsin.

music and nature videos. Recently, IB has launched a furniture solutions initiative that includes design, project management and installation of furniture in military barracks, kitchens, dorms, hospitals and offices.

### Focusing on Professional Opportunities

Word has gotten around about IB repositioning itself as an employer of professional jobs for people who are blind. "I will hire someone who is blind with good grades and a business degree without job experience," said Lange. "I will provide that candidate with a management training opportunity and then find the right "fit" for him or her within the company."

Ben Zellmer was one such candidate who went through IB's management training program. Zellmer, who has a master's degree in mechanical engineering, is IB's strategic pricing manager, overseeing pricing for approximately \$50 million in IB's sales.

Sandy Werner is another example of an individual who has benefited from management training at IB. One of eight blind sales representatives, Werner says, "We take a proactive approach to account management, maintaining contact with about 3,800 customers on a regular cycle."

"We have a terrific team that is dedicated to providing outstanding services to our customers," said Lange. "For the last 15 years, we have grown our business based on heavy government spending. Now that is changing, and I am confident we have repositioned ourselves to invest in new and emerging market opportunities to build more sales and professional career opportunities for people who are blind in the years ahead." ❖

# Get to know some of the amazing people who have moved up in the AbilityOne Program, or outside it, due to education and employment offered by NIB and its associated agencies.

NIB's Business Leaders Program and Contract Management Support Training Program are changing the culture of associated agencies as people who are blind enhance their skills, advance in their professions and improve their organization's capacity.

*Opportunity* magazine introduces a few of the stars of these programs — a bright procurement systems analyst with a passion for technology, a young marketing manager who excels in customer service, an energetic production floor supervisor, and an award-winning advocate who has made a difference in the lives of those around him.

Some have gone through Business Management Training, facilitated by the University of Virginia's Darden Graduate School of Business. The 18-month curriculum develops critical business perspective and management abilities for qualified, high-potential employees of NIB and its associated agencies. Some have relocated or moved on because they have been offered jobs outside the AbilityOne Program. These stars are well positioned to become tomorrow's leaders.

### Finding His Own Path

Prior to joining the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in 2009, Harry Staley worked as a laptop support technician and then a data analyst after earning several college degrees in business, marketing, information technology and other disciplines. He learned of NIB's Contract Management Support (CMS)



*Harry Staley, procurement system analyst, Mission and Installation Contracting Command, San Antonio, Texas.*

initiative, which provides training to help people who are blind succeed in a career-oriented, upwardly-mobile professional field, while also providing contract closeout support services to federal government contracting offices. Staley breezed through the online courses offered by the Department of Defense's Defense Acquisition University in partnership with NIB.

Soon after, he relocated from Springfield, Missouri, to work on a CMS pilot project at the San Antonio



*Will Vaughn, marketing manager, Virginia Industries for the Blind, Charlottesville, Virginia.*

Lighthouse for the Blind. He was stationed at Fort Sam Houston, a U.S. Army post in San Antonio. After Staley showed his talent by designing excel spreadsheets to gather and analyze the data, John Campos, branch chief of knowledge management in the Contract Support, Plans and Operations Division of Mission and Installation Contracting Command (MICC) offered Staley the opportunity to work as a procurement system analyst at MICC headquarters in San Antonio under an excepted service hiring authority for persons with disabilities. The MICC is responsible for planning, integrating, awarding and administering contracts in support of Army commands, direct reporting units, U.S. Army North and other organizations. Today, Staley works with a team to analyze contracting data for MICC for all Army bases in the United States.

### Catching Up With Will Vaughn

*Opportunity* magazine featured Will Vaughn a few years ago when he was assistant supervisor of NIB's customer care center. He was involved from the beginning of this initiative and worked to improve relationships with procurement departments to increase sales of products produced through the AbilityOne Program. The performance of NIB's E-commerce team led to year-after-year record-breaking sales of products through this distribution channel.

Diagnosed with juvenile macular degeneration at 15 years old, Vaughn graduated from high school as a track star, winning the state high

jump championship. His Bachelor of Arts degree in integrated marketing communications as well as 10 years' experience in retail positions made him a natural for customer service. While at NIB, Vaughn applied for Business Management Training and graduated with the class of 2010. At the same time, he enrolled in the online Business Basics courses offered by the Hadley School for the Blind in partnership with NIB.

Over the last year, Vaughn was actively looking for an upward career move closer to his hometown in Staunton, Virginia. His education and experience proved to be extremely helpful when he landed a position as a marketing manager at Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) in Charlottesville. Today, he is busy promoting AbilityOne Program products and services, representing VIB at events and conferences, and thanking customers for their support of the AbilityOne Program.

### Solid Achievements

"I'm learning so much not only through my job but through the opportunities that Alphapointe has given me," said Joyce Smith. She started off as a floor employee in the writing instruments department at Alphapointe Association for the Blind in Kansas City, Missouri, in 2007. Seven months later, Smith



Joyce Smith, floor supervisor, office products division, Alphapointe Association for the Blind, Kansas City, Missouri.

was promoted to the quality control division and learned to operate scientific testing machines that simulate desert and arctic conditions, as well as how to monitor the quality of the plastic resin used to make over 50 million prescriptions bottles annually for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

A devastating house fire did not deter Smith from successfully completing the final segment of NIB's Business Management Training and graduating with the 2010 class. Earlier this year, Smith moved up again to floor supervisor in the office products division at Alphapointe. "Coming here has really opened up so many doors for me in terms of a career, not just a job."

### Award-Winning Advocate

His range of activities is extraordinary, but his rise to success is even more impressive. Having lost most of his vision from retinitis pigmentosa in his mid-twenties, Chris Flynt went to Blue State College in West Virginia and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. He then worked several years managing a warehouse until he came to Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (WSIFB) in North Carolina in 2003. Flynt started in the assembly department applying labels to poly-bags for finished products. From there, he worked in other manufacturing positions, a data input job, and on to the low vision center as a counselor. Today, he is director of A Brighter Path at WSIFB, a program that he created and implemented in 2006 to provide training, education and other services for people who are blind.

A Brighter Path offers free computer classes with text-to-speech software and screen magnification; a lending library of Braille, large print and audio books; a low vision center; craft programs; sensitivity to blindness



Chris Flynt, director, A Brighter Path, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

classes; adaptive technology courses; a literacy program; field trips for children and more. In 2007, Flynt organized a free summer camp for grade school students with visual impairments. He was instrumental in forming WSIFB's Visionaries in Public Speaking Toastmasters as well as a choir, which performs at WSIFB's annual fundraising and other community events.

A graduate of NIB's Business Management Training, Flynt keeps expanding A Brighter Path. His most recent enhancements include support groups, a dart team and a renewed focus on orientation and mobility training to enhance safer travel outside of WSIFB. From his own personal experience, Flynt realizes that "there are a lot of people who are blind or visually impaired working on production lines who have the capability to do more." In his work at A Brighter Path, Flynt hopes to equip more people who are blind with the confidence, training and skills to succeed.

His contributions to the community earned him the 2010 Nancy Susan Reynolds Award for Personal Service, which honors individuals for exemplary and often unrecognized leadership in North Carolina communities. ❖

# 2011 NIB/NAEPB Opportunity Forum

## Program Success: It's Worth the Climb!



More than 100 exhibitors displayed their capabilities at the vendor fair.

The 2011 Opportunity Forum, sponsored by NIB and the National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind, brought together NIB and NIB associated agency employees, buyers, sellers, distributors and customers to learn, discuss and collaborate on new ideas to expand business and create jobs for people who are blind. The annual sales-focused conference was held June 22-24 in Denver, Colorado.

More than 475 attendees looked at challenges and opportunities in today's economy. The conference included a line-up of government and industry speakers, numerous award presentations, and more than 100 exhibitors for a lively vendor fair.

U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson Andy Houghton, whose term ended in July, noted two of the major successes that he and NIB had shared together, the Quality Work Environment (QWE) initiative and the rebranding of the AbilityOne Program. Motivational speaker Robert Stevenson

urged the crowd to do what it takes to get the "wow" factor from their customers. He encouraged the audience to get their teams working together as a focused unit, to show appreciation for employees, to develop new ideas and strategies, and to make "easy to do business with" their company motto.

Vice Admiral Alan S. Thompson, director, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), said while reduced defense budgets have an impact on the AbilityOne Program, DLA looked forward to working with NIB agencies on an expanded portfolio of products and services. "There's nothing like budget pressure to force revolutionary change," he said.

Larry Allen, president, Allen Federal Business Partners, said government contractors are open to partnering with the AbilityOne Program to develop win-win solutions in a down economy.

Susan Mazrui, director, public policy, AT&T, spoke about her company's accessibility initiatives and how access to technology is

absolutely critical for everyone, with or without disabilities, to compete for education and in their careers.

Strong support for the AbilityOne Program was voiced by a panel of NIB channel partners: Toria Meadors, president and CEO, EZ Print Supply; Rod Manson, president, Office Advantage; Eric Reilly, director of government sales, Chesapeake Office Supply; Cheryl Ansaldi, customer service director, GSA Federal Acquisition Service; and Nelson Gonzalez, strategic sourcing program manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. John Matchette, executive director, Accenture, discussed how to identify and deliver services opportunities; Janie Maddox, lecturer, Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School, addressed how to manage price negotiations; and Angela Coletti, president, B2B Practice, GolinHarris, offered guidance on how to secure commercial business opportunities.



Vice Admiral Alan S. Thompson, director, Defense Logistics Agency.



NAEPB President Karen Walls and NIB President and CEO Kevin A. Lynch presented several awards to key business partners in recognition of their contributions toward the mission of NIB. Awards presented were:

- **Channel Management Partner in Excellence Awards:** Eric Reilly, director of government sales, Chesapeake Office Supply; and David Ostan, National Account Manager, Capitol Supply
- **Channel Management Best New Dealer of the Year Award:** Rod Manson, president, Office Advantage
- **Office Products Partner in Excellence Awards:** Peter Corritori, president/CEO, Clarity Imaging Technologies Inc.; David Conner, senior vice president of sales, Accentra/PaperPro; and Mike Fingerhut, general manager, MACO
- **Base Supply Center Partner in Excellence Awards:** Mark Thompson, chief, supply policy, U.S. Air Force Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB; Mark Jones, eGPC initiative lead, Northrop Grumman, Wright-Patterson AFB; and Shawna McGowan, Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force, chief, airman clothing and individual equipment, Air Staff, Arlington, Virginia



Mike Gilliam, president and CEO, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind, and Kevin A. Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.

- **Business Development Partner in Excellence Awards:** Al Diaz, NEXCOM; Rubie King, Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration; Mike Payne, innovation and partnership leader, and Gretchen Mueller, small business project manager, Humana Military Healthcare Services; and Bob King, director, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Distribution
- **Jan/San Partner in Excellence Awards:** Tom Seitz, director of sustainability; Joe Scime, vice president, sales; and Craig Hallman, national account executive, Zep Inc.
- **Textiles and Niche Partner in Excellence Awards:** Terri Scheetz,

chief, equipment/tent division, DLA Troop Support; and George Foley, business development manager, 3M

- **Services Partner in Excellence Award:** Nancy Gunderson, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Grants and Acquisition Policy and Accountability, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Two Supplier Awards were presented in recognition of outstanding support from vendor partners teaming with NIB associated agencies. Alliance Rubber Company, which produces rubber bands, teams with Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for packaging and distribution. Enterprise Group – a division of Domtar, teams with Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Inc. as its primary supplier of roll stock manila and paper to produce folders, copy paper and tabulating paper.

Agency Achievement Awards were presented to two NIB associated agencies that had the greatest increase in employment for people who are blind during the prior year, coupled with outstanding contract compliance. Outlook-Nebraska and San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind were honored. 🌟



Pictured left to right: Merv Riepe, chairman of the board, Outlook-Nebraska; Eric Stueckrath, CEO, Outlook-Nebraska; and Kevin A. Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.



Outgoing U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson Andy Houghton was presented with a special award by NAEPB President Karen Walls.

### Associated Agencies Celebrate 100 Years of Service

Three of NIB's 90 associated agencies celebrated their milestone 100th anniversaries in 2011: Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Cincinnati, Ohio; Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI) in Rochester, New York; and Alhaphointe Association for the Blind in Kansas City, Missouri.



*The Ohio State School for the Blind Marching Band lifted spirits during a rainy CABVI 100th anniversary event in Cincinnati.*

CABVI celebrated its Centennial on May 4, cited as "CABVI Day" by city, county and state proclamations, with a public event on Fountain Square in downtown Cincinnati. The program included music from the Ohio State School for the Blind Marching Band and a historical agency slide show on the big screen over the square. Also this year, CABVI was named winner of the 2011 Nonprofit of the Year Award by the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber.

In Rochester, ABVI has grown from four volunteers and one paid employee into a socially entrepreneurial organization that serves more than 4,000 people annually.

According to Gidget Hopf, ABVI's president and CEO, ABVI's vision for the future is born out of the organization's core belief that the sky truly is the limit for what people who are blind or visually impaired can accomplish.

Alhaphointe in Kansas City held several events throughout the year, including a reunion picnic September 16 for former board members, clients, employees, and other special guests. The agency is planning a benefit concert November 12 featuring the Grammy award-winning group, The Blind Boys of Alabama. ☺

### Nonprofit Agencies Honored by Vendors, Customers

One of NIB's associated agencies, Industries of the Blind Inc. in Greensboro, North Carolina, was recognized through Sage North America's third annual Customer Awards Program. The software and technology services company honored six companies July 13 at the Sage Summit conference in Washington, D.C., for outstanding business achievements using Sage products and services.

As the Community Stewardship Award recipient, Industries of the Blind Inc. keeps payroll processes in-house, using Sage software combined with visual aid software for finance and accounting employees who are blind.

Another NIB associated agency, Envision of Wichita, Kansas, was honored for the third consecutive year by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with the Food Safety and Inspection Service AbilityOne Program Contractor of the Year award for its business card production. Envision also received the USDA AbilityOne Contractor of the Year award. ☺

### Blake Lindsay Jumps into New Challenges

Although Blake Lindsay, communications specialist at Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind in Texas, has been totally blind since infancy, he relishes new and exciting experiences, including skydiving. Each September, he speaks to a group of high school seniors attending Camp Enterprise, a business education weekend sponsored by the Rotary Club of Dallas.

One of the students asked, "Is there anything you haven't done on your list of adventures that you want to accomplish?" Lindsay immediately responded, "skydiving." Two weeks later, he was surprised and pleased to learn that the Rotary Club of Dallas was sponsoring him on a skydiving adventure.

Lindsay boarded a plane with 22 other people, including his instructor, Ernie Long. After the plane climbed up to 13,500 feet, Lindsay and Long hit the air at 140 miles per hour, and maintained that momentum as they dropped for one minute.

Lindsay says, "Each time I reflect upon this exceptional experience, I'm more determined than ever to motivate people to be the best they can be in finding joy in life at work, at home, and in the community each and every day." ☺

## Boeing to Purchase SKILCRAFT® Office Supplies

Through a recent agreement with the AbilityOne Program, the Boeing Company has added SKILCRAFT office supplies, produced by people who are blind or severely disabled, to its catalog of products for employees to purchase.

OfficeMax, an authorized AbilityOne Program distributor since 1996, offers Boeing employees the option to select SKILCRAFT products produced by 25 nonprofit agencies associated with NIB and eight NISH affiliated agencies.

“We are proud to work with Boeing, a manufacturing leader in the aerospace industry,” said Kevin A. Lynch, NIB president and CEO. “This partnership opens the door to more business opportunities with private sector corporations, which in turn, creates jobs for people who are blind. This is the first of what we hope is a prelude to more of these collaborations.”

This initiative supports Boeing’s leadership commitment to a diverse corporate culture. Boeing executive Rick Stephens, senior vice president for human resources and administration, has commended NIB and its associated agencies for the exceptional quality and on-time delivery of aircraft components manufactured by people who are blind from the Lighthouses for the Blind in Seattle and San Antonio. ❧

## Kesteloot Elected U.S. AbilityOne Commission Vice Chairperson

The former executive director and president of The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired, James M. Kesteloot, was elected Vice Chairperson of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission (formerly Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled), the independent federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program.

Kesteloot was appointed to the Commission by President Barack Obama in September 2010, as a private citizen representative providing insight into the obstacles to employment of persons who are blind. He replaces James H. Omvig, who completed his term as Vice Chairperson. ❧



U.S. AbilityOne Commission Vice Chairperson Jim Kesteloot.

## NIB Awards Assistive Technology Scholarship

NIB named the first recipient of the annual Joseph Roeder Assistive Technology Scholarship, a \$2,500 grant to an individual who is blind; interested in pursuing education in computer science, information systems or a related field; and pursuing a career in access technology.

Elizabeth Bottner, currently pursuing a Master of Science in Education from Northern Illinois University, specializing in rehabilitation education, was awarded

the scholarship in October. Bottner, who has worked as a Braille instructor, plans to complete her degree in May 2012 and pursue a career as a rehabilitation teacher and consultant. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from the University of Delaware.

The scholarship is named in memory of Joe Roeder, who served as senior access technology specialist at NIB from 1997 until his death in 2010. ❧

## DLA Recognizes Lions Industries for the Blind

Lions Industries for the Blind, Inc. (LIB), NIB’s associated agency in Kinston, North Carolina, was recognized on June 28 as Outstanding AbilityOne Program Vendor at the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Industry Conference and Exhibition in Columbus, Ohio.

This award is presented each year to one NIB associated agency and one NISH affiliated agency that exemplify overall excellence in superior product quality, on-time delivery, outstanding customer service, reliability, dependability, consistency and accuracy. ❧



Pictured left to right: DLA Director Navy Vice Admiral Alan Thompson; Sammy Sanderson, LIB Skid Board department employee; and LIB Executive Director Ray Amyette.



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[www.NIB.org/HowCanIHelp](http://www.NIB.org/HowCanIHelp)

When you buy SKILCRAFT® or other products or services produced through the AbilityOne Program, you're supporting employment and training opportunities for thousands of Americans who are blind. National Industries for the Blind's network of associated nonprofit agencies is the largest employer of people who are blind in the country. SKILCRAFT is the brand of choice and the AbilityOne Program is the preferred source for federal purchasers worldwide, offering more than 3,500 products as well as hundreds of services. Please join us in breaking down job barriers by supporting this dedicated workforce.



October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month