



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Research
Education
Economics

Office
of the Under
Secretary

Room 216W
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Washington, DC 20250-0110

OCT 28 2009

SUBJECT: National Disability Employment Awareness Month
and the AbilityOne Program

TO: All ARS Employees
All ERS Employees
All NASS Employees
All NIFA Employees

FROM: Edward B. Knipling, Administrator, ARS */s/ Carol Rexroad 10-14-09*
Kitty Smith, Administrator, ERS */s/ Kitty Smith 10-16-09*
Cynthia Clark, Administrator, NASS */s/ Joe Riley 10-28-09*
Roger Beachy, Director, NIFA *Ray A. O'H*

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). It is the month where we celebrate and recognize the talents, skills, and dedication of those disabled Americans who are a vital part of our workforce. In addition, NDEAM promotes the recognition of individuals who support the AbilityOne Program and encourages dissemination of knowledge about AbilityOne capabilities. The AbilityOne Program is a unique Federal acquisition program which employs more than 45,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

During this month and throughout the year, every employee should:

- Learn more about the AbilityOne Program;
- Find ways that nonprofit organizations participating in the AbilityOne Program can assist us in meeting our needs for quality goods and services; and
- Put increased emphasis on procuring goods and services from the AbilityOne contractors.

Research, Education, and Economics (REE) is committed to an annual increase in AbilityOne acquisitions of at least ½ percent of total procurement expenditures per year in accordance with departmental regulations. We should all commit ourselves to greater utilization of the AbilityOne Program, thereby creating new opportunities and employment for persons with disabilities. In particular, purchase cardholders should always buy items on the mandatory Procurement List from AbilityOne Program vendors before considering other commercial sources. All REE personnel are encouraged to support the AbilityOne Program whenever possible.

Products available under the AbilityOne Program include a wide range of office supplies, toner cartridges, cleaning products, hardware items, janitorial/custodial services, grounds maintenance, temporary help services, mailroom support services, laundry services, medical/surgical products, and textiles. These items or services are available through online shipping services from the GSA Advantage! (www.gsaadvantage.gov) and GSA Global Supply (www.gsaglobalsupply.gov).

Non-monetary and promotional items, such as plaques, pens, cups, t-shirts, caps, jackets, etc., are available from the National Industries for the Blind (NIB). Contact the NIB customer service representatives on 1-800-433-2304 or e-mail customer_service@nib.org to obtain information about purchasing items or to perform product research. More information about the AbilityOne Program can be found at www.abilityone.gov.

The REE liaison to the AbilityOne Program is Linda Wilson, Acquisition and Property Division, Administrative and Financial Management, Agricultural Research Service. She may be reached on 301-504-1733. Each REE agency and ARS Area has an AbilityOne Coordinator. To identify the AbilityOne Coordinator for your Agency/Area, refer to: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/acquisitions/pdffiles/REEAbilityOneLiaisonandCoordinators.pdf>.