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TO: Agency Heads and Staff Office Directors

FROM: Dr. Gregory L. Parham
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OCT 29 2015

SUBJECT: National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the AbilityOne® Program

The National Disability Employment Awareness Month held annually in October is a time to recognize the contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace. With this year's theme "My Disability is One Part of Who I Am," this awareness campaign is an appropriate opportunity to celebrate the AbilityOne Program, which annually delivers nearly \$3 billion in products and services in response to Federal Government mission critical needs. Altogether, USDA purchases over \$20 million annually in products and services through the AbilityOne Program thus enabling the employment of more than 500 people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The AbilityOne Program supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) mission and provides USDA's acquisition workforce with a unique opportunity to provide employment for Americans who are blind or have significant disabilities. For many years, through AbilityOne, individuals with disabilities have manufactured, packaged, and distributed dry milk and bakery mixes that USDA uses to support domestic feeding programs. Most recently, USDA formalized an AbilityOne contract for the Farm Service Agency for production of Super Cereal Plus to help fight childhood hunger through international humanitarian feeding programs. USDA also contracts with AbilityOne agencies for uniform program management, mailroom services, grounds maintenance, information technology help desk, biobased office products, and custodial services.

USDA Departmental Regulation 5080-001 outlines USDA's policy to support the program to the maximum extent practicable and sets a goal of increasing acquisitions by at least one-half percent annually. We can be proud of our historical support of the AbilityOne Program and I strongly encourage you to continue to increase awareness and understanding across our workforce to grow our efforts in the future.

For information about AbilityOne supplies or distributors, please visit www.AbilityOne.gov. For additional information or to suggest new products or services you may wish to procure through AbilityOne, call 800-999-5963 or email customerservice@abilityone.org.