

# National Disability Employment Awareness Month

## Disability: Part of the Equity Equation



### AbilityOne Advances Equity

America celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) every October. For 2022, the NDEAM theme is “Disability: Part of the Equity Equation.” It recognizes the important role people with disabilities play in a diverse and inclusive American workforce.

#### What Is the AbilityOne Program?

The AbilityOne® Program taps America’s underutilized workforce of individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities to deliver high quality, mission-essential products and services to Federal agencies in quality employment opportunities. Established in 1938, the Program is administered by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, an independent Federal agency (whose statutory name is the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled). The Commission has designated National Industries for the Blind and SourceAmerica® as central nonprofit agencies that assist in administering the Program.

#### AbilityOne at a Glance

- Employs approximately 40,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including more than 2,500 veterans. An estimated 25,000 AbilityOne employees work on Department of Defense (DoD) contracts.
- Approximately 450 nonprofit agencies operate nationwide at more than 1,000 locations representing 40 government agencies.
- Supplied \$3.9 billion in products and services to the Federal Government in FY 2021.
- Supplies more than \$2.1 billion in products and services annually to DoD, the largest customer of the AbilityOne Program.
- AbilityOne is a key part of the U.S. defense industrial base and provides essential and uninterrupted services to ensure continuity of government operations.

#### Did You Know?

- AbilityOne’s workforce is an indispensable part of America’s response to the COVID-19 crisis. AbilityOne employees manufacture vital Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and clean and sanitize Federal buildings, including the Pentagon, military hospitals, and Veterans Affairs medical facilities.
- An AbilityOne-participating nonprofit maintains the Congressional phone line for sensitive calls from Senators, Representatives and other dignitaries.
- AbilityOne is the secure mailroom “Vendor of Choice” for the Department of Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service.
- AbilityOne supplies the gloves used by Transportation Security Administration agents in airport security.
- Calls to the U.S. Passport Call Center toll-free number are handled by AbilityOne.



*Lashawn Ford works at the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, N.Y., where she sews apparel for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and also works on the Transportation Security Administration gloves contract.*

**Executive Orders issued by President Biden affirm the importance of leveraging acquisition as a catalyst, particularly in providing employment opportunities and economic justice for historically underserved populations, including people with disabilities.**

**More Information**  
[ABOR@AbilityOne.gov](mailto:ABOR@AbilityOne.gov)

**Key Websites**  
**U.S. AbilityOne Commission**  
[www.AbilityOne.gov](http://www.AbilityOne.gov)

**National Industries for the Blind**  
[www.NIB.org](http://www.NIB.org)

**SourceAmerica**  
[www.SourceAmerica.org](http://www.SourceAmerica.org)

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### Every new AbilityOne contract creates more jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

- October 2022 marks the two-year anniversary of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memo on [“Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting.”](#)
- OFPP encouraged Federal Government agencies to increase spending on AbilityOne, which could create tens of thousands of new jobs for years to come for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities – providing critical support to a chronically underserved and underemployed population, while helping to power America’s economic recovery.

The OFPP memo is addressed to Chief Acquisition Officers and Senior Procurement Executives, and:

- Acknowledges the contributions of Americans with disabilities to our country’s economic strength.
- Commits to furthering their participation in the workforce.
- Creates a stronger pathway for the increased participation of persons with disabilities in Federal contracting through the AbilityOne Program.
- Seeks to promote greater awareness and use within the Federal acquisition workforce of other Federal programs that facilitate employment of persons with disabilities.

### AbilityOne Representatives

- An AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) program created by the OFPP memo has made significant progress in areas including training, monthly meetings and developing strategic plans.
- AbilityOne Representatives:
  - Advocate Federal buying in accordance with mandatory source contracting procedures.
  - Engage with the workforce to build use of the AbilityOne Program.
  - Offer feedback to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission to improve the value of the AbilityOne Program.
  - Create opportunity in the Federal marketplace for people who are blind or have significant disabilities, beginning with heightened management promotion and workforce attention on the AbilityOne Program.



## Mission Moment

As our nation commemorates NDEAM, join AbilityOne in celebrating its essential employees who are blind or have significant disabilities, and the Federal customers who make the AbilityOne Program possible.

### **Gary M. McCarthy, Jr.**

InspiriTec  
Fort Knox, Kentucky

Gary M. McCarthy, Jr., spent 23 years in the United States Army, deploying to various locations, including Kosovo, Bosnia, and Iraq, and receiving 39 military awards, including a Bronze Star. While in the military, he sustained back injuries and other service-related disabilities. After returning to civilian life, he joined InspiriTec’s IT service desk operations contract at Fort Knox as an entry-level Tier 1 contact center agent. His performance earned him five promotions in five years, and he now manages a team of more than 80 IT help desk professionals.