

# ABILITY

2012-2013  
abilityone.org

# One

## HELPING OUR NATION'S HEROES BRAVE THE ELEMENTS

AbilityOne® designs and produces a new outdoor sleep system for the U.S. Marine Corps

page 34



CELEBRATING  
**75**  
YEARS

## Letter from Leadership



*Dear Friend,*

As executive director of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, I am often asked, "What makes the AbilityOne® Program special?" This is a great question because as we celebrate the 75 years since the enactment of the law that created it, the program continues to evolve and expand, providing more employment opportunities to many who would otherwise remain without work.

### A GREAT IDEA

In the late 1930s, leaders in the blindness community conceived an idea forever changing the vocational lives of Americans who were blind. After years spent encouraging Congress to open government markets to products made by people who were blind, the government passed the Wagner-O'Day Act in 1938. This landmark legislation paved the way toward empowering people who were blind to become self-supporting citizens.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed the first committee of representatives to administer the program, known then as the Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products. Shortly thereafter, National Industries for the Blind was established to help the Committee in its work, one of two central nonprofit agencies that would ultimately collaborate in its administration and its success.

That program success was immediate and the number and variety of products grew quickly—from mops and brooms to cocoa mats, mattresses, pillow cases and more.

This success led to the law being amended and the program transformed by the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act in 1971. The act greatly expanded the program's reach by allowing people with severe disabilities to participate and calling for the provision of services to the Federal Government. It also led to the creation of the

second central nonprofit agency that would collaborate in the program's administration: NISH- Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities.

The program continued growing and becoming more sophisticated in approach. In 2006 it took a new name: the AbilityOne Program. In 2011 the Committee chose a new operational name for itself: the U.S. AbilityOne Commission.

### GOVERNMENT AT ITS BEST

The goals and vision of the AbilityOne Program expanded along with its reach. Today, AbilityOne:

- Consists of more than 600 nonprofit agencies across the country
- Employs more than 50,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including more than 3,000 military veterans and wounded warriors
- Represents \$3 billion in products and services purchased by the U.S. government

### HOW CAN FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SUPPORT THE ABILITYONE PROGRAM?

Federal employees support AbilityOne and raise awareness about the program by purchasing SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products, and by considering AbilityOne as a source for their agency's service requirements. Visit [www.abilityone.gov](http://www.abilityone.gov) for more information.

The theme of our 75th Anniversary Celebration is, "AbilityOne: It Works!" So, watch for announcements on our website about special 75th anniversary events taking place across the country throughout the coming year.

Sincerely,

*Tina Ballard*

Tina Ballard, Executive Director and CEO  
U.S. AbilityOne Commission

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Cover: DoD photo by Lance Cpl. Michael V. Walters, U.S. Marine Corps. *AbilityOne* produces the hat and sleep mat.

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## HISTORY OF

# Ability

## 1930s-40s



**1938**

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs into law the Wagner-O'Day Act (named for Sen. Robert Ferdinand Wagner and Rep. Caroline Love Goodwin O'Day) and appoints founding members of the Committee

on Purchases of Blind-Made Products. The new law requires Federal agencies to purchase products made by people who are blind.

National Industries for the Blind (NIB) is incorporated.



The Committee publishes the first Procurement List.

**1939 - 1945**

Throughout World War II, employees who are blind manufacture the mops, brooms, pens and office supplies needed to support American forces.



## 1950s

**1950 - 1953**

The Korean War changes government procurement patterns and fosters new market opportunities, which increases demand for hundreds of products and quadruples the products sold to the Federal Government.

**1952**

NIB launches the SKILCRAFT® brand.



**1955**

The first military resale products reach commissary store shelves.



## 1960s

**1960s**

NIB establishes a rehabilitation services division.

As a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, NIB provides more than one million sanitation kits for the Federal Fall-Out Shelter Program.

## 1970s



**1971**

Under the leadership of Sen. Jacob Javits, Congress amends the Wagner-O'Day Act to include people with significant disabilities and allows the program to also provide services to the Federal Government.

The first Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program service contract commences (grounds maintenance for the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island).

**1974**

NISH is incorporated and begins operation.

**1975**

NISH adds its first product (Mechanic's Creeper) to the Procurement List.



## 1980s

**1980s**

Nonprofit agencies extend the array of services. Highlights include the first commissary shelf-stocking project and first food service at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas; major expansion of custodial services with the U.S. General Services Administration Public Buildings Service; and first operation of a Postal Service Center for the Air Force, at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

Fiscal year 2013 marks the 75th anniversary of the AbilityOne® Program. This extraordinary program began with the signing of the Wagner-O'Day Act on June 25, 1938, directing Federal agencies to purchase products made by Americans who are blind. In 1971, amendments proposed by Sen. Jacob Javits extended the program to include people with significant disabilities. In 2006, the independent Federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, adopted the AbilityOne brand and, in 2011, began operating as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™.

The timeline shown here walks readers through important moments and events in AbilityOne Program history, including the program's support of some of the most pressing challenges in our nation's history.

# AbilityOne

## 1990s

### 1991

The Committee changes its name to Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program provides millions of dollars in critically needed products to support our troops.

### 1995

The first military base supply center opens and establishes a new distribution channel for NIB's expanded SKILCRAFT® product line.



## 2000s

### 2001 to 2003

The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program provides "surge support" during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.



### 2002

NIB establishes the Business Leaders Training Program, providing professional development for people who are blind preparing them for upwardly mobile careers.

### 2005

NIB and NISH respond to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma with financial, technical and logistical assistance.

### 2006

The Committee adopts the AbilityOne® brand to show a unified program with broad capabilities, a clear purpose, and a capable, dependable workforce.



## 2000s (cont.)

### 2009

The Committee establishes the Quality Work Environment initiative with its three guiding principles stating that AbilityOne employees should be provided competitive wages, a clear career path and ongoing training.

With NIB as the lead, AbilityOne launches a contract management support (CMS) contract closeout services test pilot. In less than one year, people who are blind or have significant disabilities close out 3,000 contracts, leading to the de-obligation of more than \$3.8 million (with another \$1.8 million in the contracting officer approval queue) with a 99.99 percent accuracy rate.

### 2010

The Department of the Army awards AbilityOne an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract for provision of CMS contract closeout services for the Department of Defense.



AbilityOne provides contact center services for the U.S. State Department following a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010. AbilityOne nonprofit agencies also provide much-needed supplies, equipment and monetary donations.

### 2011

Sets a historical program record in creating jobs for more than 50,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities.



The Committee began operating as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™.

NISH formally establishes a Total Facilities Management (TFM) Program Office and a project of excellence at Fort Knox to standardize and enhance all TFM projects.

## Reflections

"Over the three-quarters of a century since the Wagner-O'Day Act was signed, the AbilityOne Program has broken down barriers and created thousands of jobs for people who are blind and people with other severe disabilities. These individuals can now build rewarding careers at one of hundreds of nonprofit agencies across the country and lead independent lives. I am proud to be part of this life-changing program and I look forward to bringing these opportunities to more of the people who need them."

### Kevin A. Lynch

President and CEO, National Industries for the Blind

"For 75 years people who are blind or have other significant disabilities have been employed through AbilityOne – last year alone we celebrated over 50,000+ success stories. Many of these individuals are performing in business lines not even thought possible 75 – or even 10 – years ago. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. We are continuously seeking new business lines and new customers, and, quite honestly, I can't wait to see what comes next!!"

### Bob Chamberlin

President and CEO, NISH

"AbilityOne is the best employment program ever devised for people with significant disabilities. For 75 years, it has created and sustained real jobs with good wages and benefits, at virtually no cost to the taxpayer. Goodwill is proud to be associated with AbilityOne and encourages further expansion."

### John L. Miller

President and CEO, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin

# A Shared Responsibility

By Kathy Martinez



**Kathy Martinez**  
Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability  
Employment Policy, Department of  
Labor; Presidential appointee to the  
U.S. AbilityOne Commission™

What can YOU do? It is a question wide open to interpretation. For many people, especially adults, the answer is often occupational in nature, serving to reinforce the intrinsic value of work. Put simply, work is fundamental to identity. It means much more than a paycheck; it offers purpose and the opportunity to lead a more independent, self-directed life for all people—including America's millions of people with disabilities.

I say this with conviction, because I am one of those millions of people. Like a lot of people employed through the AbilityOne® Program, I was born blind. My sister Peggy was also born blind. We were the middle of six children and, as of yet, there is no diagnosis for our blindness. From an early age, our parents instilled in us an expectation of work, and that has made all the difference in our lives. Indeed, work is essential to my self-fulfillment; it's a huge part of who I am. It's the same for Peggy, who today works as an information technology instructor and is also a talented musician.

But work's value actually extends far beyond the individual. When all people are able to contribute and be recognized for their skills and abilities, society as a whole reaps the benefits. Local economies are bolstered. Communities are strengthened—just like our family was strengthened when Peggy and I were expected to do our part.

This important principle is the premise behind this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme: "A Strong Workforce is an Inclusive Workforce: What Can YOU Do?" This theme reaffirms that we all have a role to play—and benefit to

gain from—increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Held each October, NDEAM is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. Its roots go back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the

**"When all people  
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Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1962, the word “physically” was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.”

Every day, in communities across the nation, the AbilityOne Program clearly does its part to advance NDEAM’s spirit and create a stronger, more inclusive American workforce. But the responsibility for doing so must stretch much further. Employers—of all sizes, publicly funded or not—must foster workplaces welcoming to employees and potential employees with disabilities. People with disabilities themselves must understand the importance of work and the value they have to offer. Youth with disabilities must grow up with the expectation of employment, and parents, educators and other adults of influence in their lives must reinforce this by cultivating a clear vision of work and community participation.

Put simply, America’s future success requires us to capitalize on the talents of all segments of the population, and the responsibility for making that happen must be shared. There is something everyone CAN do—every day of every month. ■



### 2012 NDEAM POSTER

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) offers a variety of resources, including a poster and ready-to-use articles, press releases and other materials, to assist organizations in observing NDEAM. To learn more, visit ODEP’s website at [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep).

## Reflections (cont.)

“The AbilityOne Program was born during the Great Depression, one of our country’s most challenging times. Over the past 75 years, the program has evolved, providing people who are blind with opportunities to live independent and self-sufficient lives. This program proudly creates meaningful employment and provides products and services of outstanding quality.”

**Kirk Adams**

President and CEO, Lighthouse for the Blind, Seattle

“The AbilityOne Program has been a leader among those seeking employment opportunities for people who are blind since its inception. It started with manufacturing jobs and that is still a major source of employment today. However, through advanced training, professional development and the use of ever-improving adaptive technology, other types of careers are available to talented individuals who are blind, including service positions and all levels of management. The AbilityOne Program has certainly earned its reputation as the most successful employment program ever for people with disabilities.”

**Michael Chew**

Executive Director  
Mississippi Industries for the Blind

“Having been in the human resource/employee relations field since 1972, I think I can truthfully say that the AbilityOne Program has been the most worthwhile and productive program established for people with significant disabilities. The growth of this program is essential and the steps that are being taken to grow are both promising and exciting. I look forward to our organization’s continued participation in the expansion of AbilityOne.”

**Gwen Ford**

Executive Director, Project HIRED



# THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO ACHIEVEMENT

At Lockheed Martin, we take on some of the most complex challenges imaginable. So we depend on a diverse supplier base to provide the widest range of abilities and perspectives. The AbilityOne® Program gives us access to a wealth of talent, and helps us deliver innovative solutions to our customers.

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**100** YEARS OF  
ACCELERATING  
TOMORROW

**LOCKHEED MARTIN** 



# For Federal Agencies: Getting Started with AbilityOne

## 1 IDENTIFY

your need for a product or service... AbilityOne® provides thousands of product and service options

## 2 CONTACT

AbilityOne... We have technical experts and a network of more than 600 experienced contractors nationwide

## 3 REVIEW

"no-obligation" price proposal from NIB or NISH

## 4 NEGOTIATE

terms, conditions and a fair market price with NIB or NISH

## 5 NIB or NISH

sends request to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™ for Procurement List addition

## 6 COMMISSION

approves Procurement List addition, issues notice to the Contracting Officer, contract begins

### AbilityOne PARTNERS

- Contracting agencies procure products and services for the Federal Government.
- U.S. AbilityOne Commission administers the AbilityOne Program.
- The central nonprofit agencies, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH-Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities, assist and support AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies in contracting with the government through the AbilityOne Program.
- AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies are community-based organizations dedicated to training and employing people who are blind or have significant disabilities; they also deliver quality products and services to Federal customers.

## AbilityOne by the Numbers

In the U.S., where nearly 80 percent of people who are blind or have significant disabilities do not have jobs, analysis of AbilityOne Program data for FY2011 shows:

- More than 50,000 Americans are employed through AbilityOne, 3,000 of whom are veterans
- The program is facilitated through a network of over 600 community-based nonprofit agencies



- Nonprofit members of the AbilityOne network operate at nearly 1,000 locations representing 40 government agencies nationally, including operation of 145 base supply centers
- AbilityOne nonprofit agencies deliver nearly \$3 billion of products and services purchased by the Federal Government



[www.AbilityOne.org](http://www.AbilityOne.org)  
800-999-5963

# Where SERVICE Meets



Andres Gonzalez,  
AbilityOne employee

For the AbilityOne® Program, there is strength in its growing numbers. The program employs more than 50,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including more than 3,000 veterans. Combined, AbilityOne product and service sales totaled nearly \$3 billion in fiscal year 2011.

People who are blind or have significant disabilities are employed by more than 600 nonprofit agencies that make up the AbilityOne network and provide more than 3,000 high-quality products and services to the Federal Government at fair market prices—with more added to the Procurement List throughout the year.

Contract successes in FY 2011 ranged from selling double-life laser toner cartridges and bio-based laundry detergent to packaging combat lifesaver kits. Low cost, high return services included laundry, grounds maintenance and call center services that saved money for American taxpayers.

## DOUBLE-LIFE, MONOCHROME, NEW HP AND LEXMARK COMPATIBLE TONERS

Toners are an enormous part of a company's office supply budget. Printer and copier ink, used to power an office day-to-day, constitutes between 20 to 30 percent of a company's office supply spend.

Realizing an opportunity to break into the toner market, Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB), Talledega, Ala., collaborated with the U.S. General Services Administration-NY Acquisition Center to sponsor and add 17 SKILCRAFT® Double Life Laser Toner Cartridges to the Procurement List.

These toner cartridges are made in the USA and are compatible with HP and Lexmark printers. They deliver double, or even triple, the page yield of new original equipment manufacturer-branded toners and “at a significantly reduced cost per page that saves customers 20 to 40 percent or more on printing costs,” says Jennifer Ruth, Director of Product Management for NIB.

AIB began selling these toner cartridges in April 2011. These higher yield toners reduce toner cartridge usage by at least 50 percent, leading to half as many cartridges needing to be manufactured, packaged, transported, and disposed of or recycled. Additionally, the components and packaging are 100 percent recyclable.

Today, AIB has contracts with the Department of Veterans Affairs and Defense Logistic Agency while the toner cartridges are also sold by commercial office products distributors.

Most importantly, stellar sales have given AIB the potential to employ at least 37 employees who are blind. AIB also is licensing the product to a Florida agency to use for state contracts.

## MIKE MONRONEY AERONAUTICAL CENTER, OKLAHOMA CITY

As one of the largest employers in the Oklahoma City metropolitan

# SAVINGS

By Suzanne Robitaille



Kham Len,  
AbilityOne employee

Billy Hallman,  
AbilityOne employee

area, the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (MMAC) serves as a training, research, logistics and services center for the FAA. Each day, approximately 7,000 people disperse throughout the campus, including Federal employees and contractors, as well as some 1,000 students who attend classes.

Needing custodial services, MMAC tapped a local resource, the Dale Rogers Training Center of Oklahoma City. The five-year custodial services contract began in April 2012.

To maintain the 91 buildings and 1.9 million square feet of office, research and training facilities at MMAC requires a massive custodial effort that provides jobs for over 65 individuals with significant disabilities to fulfill this contract.

## U.S. ARMY TANK-AUTOMOTIVE AND ARMAMENTS COMMAND

The demanding operations tempo of today's Army and a constricted budget compel an economical approach to use of resources. Through its Central Management Office (CMO), the office of Organizational Clothing and Individual Equipment (OCIE) established a nationwide Repair and Warehousing Program to clean and repair clothing and equipment, consolidate inventory, and reduce its logistics footprint at Army Installations and Central Issue Facilities (CIFs). The program also decreased the total life cycle costs of OCIE. The combined OCIE-CMO vision is to outsource all repair, warehousing, and distribution activities to Regional Logistics Support Centers located in just two geographic regions (Northeast and West) within the Continental United States.

The Army chose nonprofit agency Peckham to provide laundry, refurbishment and warehousing services for CIFs, including the Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM), headquartered in Warren, Mich.

Peckham, located in Lansing, Mich., employs 65 individuals who receive vehicles and equipment from all over the country for repair, and more recently, provide laundry services as well. Peckham was chosen because it performs sewing and supply chain management services on several other AbilityOne contracts.

The Army chose Travis Association for the Blind, Austin, Texas, to provide these same services in the West region. TACOM is one of the Army's largest weapon systems research, development, and sustainment organizations.

## U.S. NAVY MAIL

Beginning in June 2011, NewView Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, began providing mail-management support services for the U.S. Navy at three locations through implementation of a strategic contract. Services provided include pick-up, receipt and delivery of U.S. Postal Service internal and classified mail as well as packages and equipment at the respective locations served.

The three additional sites, Joint Base Anacostia Bolling in Washington, D.C.; the Regional Naval Mail Center Fleet and Industrial Supply Center in Norfolk, Va.; and the Naval Mail Center in Meridian, Miss., were added to the contract in December 2011 and employ more than 26 people who are blind.



AbilityOne employee performs grounds maintenance services

NewView Oklahoma serves as the prime contractor on all the sites served, and subcontracts a portion of the support to ServiceSource, Alexandria, Va.

#### COMBAT LIFESAVER KITS, DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY

Lighthouse of Central Florida (LCF), Orlando, won a contract to package medical and cleansing products for the Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) combat lifesaver kit.

The value of the contract is \$5 million, including the amount LCF generates for shipping—a large bulk of its revenues. This contract created 11 jobs for people who are blind, who collect a myriad of medical products supplied by manufacturers around the country, label the products, and then package them into the kit according to the DLA's specifications. The kits are then shipped to DLA facilities in Utah and Pennsylvania.

Under this packaging contract, LCF handles 11 products on the Procurement List, which make up 25 percent of the combat lifesaver kit. The kit includes bandages, IV drips, and other items for the care of injured soldiers on the battlefield.

For the first shipment, LCF employed over 10 individuals. The agency is planning the second shipment, which will include additional products for the kit and required the agency to hire six more people.

#### NAVAL RESEARCH LABORATORY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Nestled along the east bank of the Potomac River, the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) is located in Washington, D.C. Navy and Marine Corps scientists at the 132-acre installation conduct scientific research and advanced warfare technology development, as well as research related to oceanic, atmospheric and space science technologies. NRL is one of the principal in-house research and development laboratories for the U.S. government.

Skookum, Bremerton, Wash., provides comprehensive transportation management services, including vehicle and equipment maintenance and repair, for the vehicle fleet of NRL and its annex; on Joint Base Anacostia Bolling; and three other field sites in Maryland: Blossom Point, Chesapeake Beach and Pomonkey. As part of this contract, Skookum maintains a computer program that tracks vehicle inventory, maintenance, repair, mileage, and fuel usage. Skookum also provides shuttle bus services and logistics support to NRL employees.

To fulfill the requirements of this fleet management services contract, Skookum employs 10 full-time employees at NRL. "Skookum understands that with this contract, we are all a part of something much 'bigger' than ourselves, supporting the U.S. Navy and creating jobs for people with disabilities through AbilityOne," says Jeff Dolven, chief executive officer of Skookum.

#### BEALE AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

Beale Air Force Base is home of the 9th Reconnaissance Wing, and is also considered by many to be one of the show places of the U.S. Air Force. Beale covers nearly 23,000 acres of rolling hills in northern California, about 40 miles north of Sacramento. The base is home for approximately 4,000 military personnel.

On Aug. 1, Crossroads Diversified Services, Inc., Sacramento, Calif., started a grounds maintenance contract at Beale Air Force Base. Crossroads performs grounds maintenance on the base, such as lawn care, sprinkler and irrigation maintenance, policing of grounds, trash removal and mowing of roadways and antenna pads.

#### KAHULUI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT KAHULUI, HAWAII

The Hawaiian island of Maui is a popular vacation and honeymoon spot for thousands of Americans each year. The Kahului International Airport is the island's main airport, and it gets busier each year. When the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) needed custodial services to serve specific areas of Kahului Airport, it contracted with Ka Lima O Maui, LTD, based in Maui.

Ka Lima O Maui services the checkpoints, checked baggage area and onscreen alarm resolution area for the TSA at the airport. The approximate total area covered by the service is over 11,600 square feet. The project began July 1, 2012.

Ka Lima O Maui was handling the project commercially previously, but wanted AbilityOne to provide services under the next contract. "We take great pride in delivering a quality service, and that our employees love their work environment. The TSA staff has been wonderfully supportive of our efforts," says Chantal Ratte, executive director of Ka Lima O Maui.

#### CALENDAR BOOKS, WALL CALENDARS, AND WALL PLANNERS

Calendars and other dated products are hot sellers in the early fall and again around the Thanksgiving and December holiday seasons. National Industries for the Blind's (NIB) first entry into the dated products market began with spiral bound calendar books, wall calendars and wall planners.

NIB worked with Federal Prison Industries (FPI) and NISH to create and cross-market the new line of dated products, which were introduced to the marketplace in July 2012. NIB ensured the products complemented existing ones made by NISH and FPI. They are collaborating in joint cross-marketing efforts to build more sales for all three organizations, as well as to offer the Federal consumer a comprehensive, well-balanced portfolio of dated products.



The full line includes disposable spiral bound books, refillable daily, weekly, and monthly planner books, flip wall calendars, desk pads, calendar pads, and laminated and heavy paper planners. They're being sold on contract to the General Services Administration, with additional sales to large and small commercial office product distributors.

#### FEDERAL STOCK CLASS PRODUCTS FOR DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY

"Pick, Pack and Ship." That's the system in place at Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB), Phoenix, whose employees distribute more than 350,000 orders each year to military bases around the country for the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Products include everything from the stripes and medals that go on a soldier's uniform to the tiny bulbs that will illuminate a military pilot's instrument panel.

In 2012, additional Federal Stock Class (FSC) products were added to existing DLA warehousing and distribution contracts for AIB as well as for Greensboro Industries for the Blind in Greensboro, N.C.

For AIB, the new FSC products included bushings, rings, shims and spacers, thereby, increasing the contract to \$12.2 million over a five-year period while adding another 23 employees. For Greensboro, the added FSCs include chains and wire rope, which were added to its existing electric lamps, and electric ballasts, for an increase of \$4 million on the contract and an additional 29 employees.

"We have developed a reputation for exceptional on-time delivery and a focus on customer service," says Tim Adams, business manager of AIB's Warehouse/ Distribution Center in Phoenix, adding that in 2010, DLA selected AIB as its AbilityOne Contractor of the Year.

#### SAFETY VESTS

Bestwork Industries of Runnemede, N.J. and Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind updated their current Procurement List safety vests to meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) compliance regulations and enhance their existing lines.

Made by SKILCRAFT®, the vests meet the rigorous requirements of the Federal Highway Administration's American National Standard for High-Visibility Apparel and Headwear. They're made of lightweight, breathable, fluorescent polyester mesh fabric, which enhances visibility during the day– an important feature for people in traffic control positions, or anyone in a job where they need to be easily seen.

For nighttime, the vests feature 3M™ Scotchlite™ Reflective Material for enhanced visibility. Features include convenient pockets inside and outside, hook and loop closure, and a variety of sizes for secure fit.

ANSI-compliant safety vests account for more than 90 percent of the safety vest market and are distributed to GSA and NIB's key commodity distribution channels including base supply centers and commercial distributors.

#### BIO-BASED LAUNDRY DETERGENT

The Obama Administration recently directed the Secretary of Agriculture to work with the AbilityOne Program to promote the purchase of bio-based products manufactured by people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Procuring these bio-based SKILCRAFT® products through the AbilityOne Program also helps Federal agencies meet government requirements for green purchasing.

The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill Industries in Rochester, N.Y. makes SKILCRAFT® bio-based laundry detergent, which is distributed by GSA, base supply centers, AbilityOne.com and commercial distributors.

The bleach and laundry detergent is composed of 54 percent bio-based content that is derived from coconut and palm kernel oils, making it environmentally preferable. Plus, powdered laundry detergent is phosphate-free and biodegradable.

Each package contains two 214-ounce boxes of powdered detergent; each box holds enough detergent to clean a minimum of 95 loads of laundry. It contains color-safe bleach and has a fresh, clean fragrance. ■



Chicago  
Lighthouse  
Blues Band:

# Vision Quest



Carl Crawford and Cheryl Tillery, two of the singers in Vision Quest

The Chicago Lighthouse for People who are Blind or Visually Impaired, an AbilityOne® nonprofit agency, has a house band that's been jamming for over 30 years. The group, Vision Quest, is a living testament to the need of all people to express themselves and the capacity of these musicians to do it despite being blind. Some band members also have additional disabilities.

“Vision Quest is the soul of our agency,” says Executive Director Dr. Janet Szlyk. “When people come and hear our mission of improving quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired and then they see the band playing, they can't help but smile. They get it. They understand what we're trying to do. Vision Quest delivers our message through music.” Dr. Szlyk even has Vision Quest tunes on her iPod when she's out running. “They really keep me going.”

Ranging in age from 36 to 64, Vision Quest is made up of nine talented musicians: three keyboard players, two drummers and four singers. The Music Director, Victoria Gore, performs double duty playing keyboards and singing. She also does a lot of the band's arrangements, adapting a wide variety of songs to fit their instrumentation.

Vision Quest started in the 1970s as a rhythm and blues band, put together by the students in Chicago Lighthouse's Development Center. Three original members are still with the band. Back then, says Gore, “A few played piano and a few sang.” Over the years, the band has become more structured. In the 90s, the band began branching out to include more diverse sounds. They favor Motown, some jazz, and pop, particularly Michael Jackson hits. Vision Quest has

two CDs, available on the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind's website. The group also has a song on YouTube, a unique Lighthouse version of *Sweet Home Chicago*.

The band keeps up to 18 songs in rotation at any one time, changing its repertoire frequently. Band members learn new music by ear. Everyone in the group is required to contribute song ideas, including audio materials such as tapes and CDs. “I sit and listen to everything they bring,” says Gore. “Then I'll choose music that fits our style and instrumentation.” Sometimes Gore says she can make the music fit the band. For example, if the song doesn't have a piano part, she may arrange a part meant for guitar so it can be played on keyboard.

The band is serious; they rehearse five days a week and play up to 20 paying gigs a year at venues all around the greater Chicago area, including the Oak Lawn Hilton, Hyatt Regency Schaumburg, Navy Pier, Four Seasons, and the North Shore Country Club.

According to Robert Mantsh, director of Adult Day Services, Vision Quest members are ambassadors of the Lighthouse. The band “demonstrates that people with disabilities can perform well on a professional level. Similarly, people with disabilities can be judged on the merits of their performance as in other professions.” ■



Scan this QR Code to see a YouTube performance by Vision Quest.



Jeramie Holland,  
AbilityOne employee

# AbilityOne's Job-Creating Initiatives

Throughout the country, AbilityOne employees are on the job, delivering value to government customers in a variety of ways.

By Gwen Moran







Jorge Casco,  
AbilityOne employee



Elizabeth Hepler,  
AbilityOne employee

Since its origins in a 1938 Congressional law that enabled community based nonprofit agencies (NPAs) serving people who are blind to sell selected products to the Federal Government, the AbilityOne® Program has grown to be a multifaceted entity with a wide range of employment opportunity initiatives that now includes both products and services. Today, the program is the largest source of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the United States, employing more than 50,000 individuals in fiscal year 2011, and working with more than 600 nonprofit agencies nationwide.

With the assistance of the central nonprofit agencies, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH-Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™ administers the program. The three organizations collaborate to

create innovative and sustainable new products as well as timely services, including information technology support for “contract closeouts,” software program development, computer component recycling, and call center operations for high-profile Federal agencies such as Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. State Department. As the U.S. job market continues to dominate national headlines, here are just some of the AbilityOne job generating initiatives that have been putting people who are blind or have significant disabilities to work since the program began 75 years ago.

**Total Facilities Management:** One of AbilityOne’s most successful programs is the Total Facilities Management (TFM) services it provides to the Federal Government. Totalling more than \$100 million annually, TFM provides a range of technical support services through one

interface. Services include grounds and general maintenance, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, water treatment, vehicle maintenance, locksmith and many others. TFM contracts establish long-term relationships between the service provider and the government customer, creating a money-saving continuity of service and the benefit of having a single provider who knows the customer’s needs well and provides services on an ongoing basis. In one of the newest projects, through NISH, AbilityOne is responsible for facilities maintenance, grounds maintenance and custodial services for The Mark Center, a new Department of Defense facility that includes 2 million sq. ft. of office space, nearly 3,500 parking spaces, complex electrical systems, conference centers, retail establishments, an 800-seat cafeteria, and a workout and medical facility.

NISH was also awarded a TFM contract



Kevin Gregore,  
AbilityOne employee



Josie Gordon,  
AbilityOne employee

by Fort Knox Mission and Installation Contracting Command and the Directorate of Public Works, which includes maintenance of buildings, structures, utility systems, dining facility equipment, railroads and grounds, as well as custodial services, and supply and storage. AbilityOne's TFM program has been in place for more than 16 years and has created more than 1,000 jobs, including a diverse collection of highly skilled and well-paying jobs.

**Contract Management Support (CMS):** NIB is the prime contractor on a Department of Defense (DoD)-wide Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contract for non-inherently governmental contract closeout services. AbilityOne Program employees gather data, forms, and other necessary documentation required for final disposition of contracts, in accordance with applicable regulations, allowing government contracting officers to focus on inherently governmental and mission-critical functions. From September 2010 through August 2012, AbilityOne CMS specialists provided more than 65,000 'ready to close' contracts to DoD. "CMS services also facilitate the return of unused contract funds to the government, identifying more than \$144 million in such funding to date," says John Qua, vice president, NIB

Services. For the first civilian agency (non-DoD) award to NIB, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is piloting contract closeout services for its Washington, D.C. headquarters. Overall, the CMS program has created over 100 jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities since its inception.

**Enterprise Help Desk:** With roughly 27,000 civilian and military employees, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) generated approximately \$46.1 billion in revenue in FY 2011, putting it on par with the top 10 percent of Fortune 500 companies. NISH staff, including Senior Program Manager, Contact Center Services, Peggy Gritt, worked with the DLA to redesign its multi-location, -vendor, and -contract call center into a centralized, streamlined information technology (IT) support solution that will save the government more than \$20 million over the life of the seven-year contract.

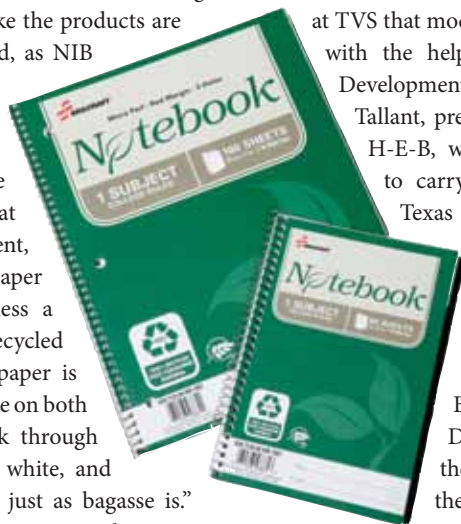
Employees simply call a single 1-800 number and are connected with call center employees who field their requests for help. "They're getting the streamlined solution they had been trying to put in place for 10 years," says Gritt. Her team is already fielding demand for follow-on projects that will replicate this model, which currently

provides 96 jobs for people with significant disabilities.

**Supply Chain Management:** Another promising business line is supply chain management, which includes everything from planning to procuring materials and supplies at the beginning of the supply chain through receipt, warehousing, issue, packaging, and transportation, as well as turn-in and disposal. "We have been successful this fiscal year in growing two significant warehouse and distribution contracts with a large DoD customer, thus creating 37 new jobs," Qua says. "In addition, we just secured a significant package reclamation opportunity creating 17 additional jobs for people who are blind."

**Green Products:** Since it launched in 1976, the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (ALB), Little Rock, has remained an innovator in paper operations. In spring 2012, ALB announced its new line of 17 sustainably manufactured notebooks, including two types of spiral notebooks in assorted sizes. One is made of 100 percent, post-consumer recycled paper and the other is made out of bagasse, the fiber left over after the juice has been squeezed out of sugarcane stalks. The notebooks are primarily sold through large distributors like United Stationers,

S.P. Richards Company, and LC Industries. Retailers like Office Max also stock some of the notebooks. All manufacturing processes used to make the products are highly sustainable and, as NIB Director of Product Development Jennifer Ruth says, “We are one of the few producers that offer a 100 percent, post-consumer paper in anything, much less a notebook. [In other recycled content notebooks], paper is so thin, and if you write on both sides you see the ink through it. Ours is clean, it’s white, and it’s price-competitive, just as bagasse is.” And those notebooks are expected to create nearly 22 jobs by later this year.



Department of Agriculture and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support. It was the creative team of food scientists at TVS that modified the recipes and with the help of NISH Business Development Manager Rose Tallant, presented the recipes to H-E-B, which in turn agreed to carry them in their 154 Texas stores. In addition, a local Brevard store has also decided to carry the product, says TVS Chief Operations Officer Becky Alderman. During periods when the factory is making the product, this program employs 15 people. Alderman says the team is recording the best practices of the pilot project “as a how-to road-map for other NPAs to do something similar.”

**Grocery Store Initiative:** A capability developed for AbilityOne contracts was leveraged to create commercial jobs. Two tasty new products—BLAZN’ Biscuits and BLAZN’ Cornbread—have been produced in an innovative partnership between H-E-B Grocery and Transylvania Vocational Industries (TVS) in Brevard, N.C. TVS was already producing baking mixes for the U.S.

**Section 508 Assurance:** An amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, called Section 508, requires that all IT systems and electronics, including systems and web sites procured, obtained, developed, or used by the Federal Government must be

accessible to people with disabilities. NIB created a new assurance service to provide testing, validation and remediation services to ensure compliance with the law. Section 508 Assurance review and remediation are available for many forms of technology and digital communication using a combination of automated testing tools and manual review by a team of blind and sighted IT specialists. NIB secured two commercial contracts for assurance services this fiscal year.

**3M™ Co-branding:** When a company with the stellar reputation of 3M works with another manufacturer on a co-branded project, there is almost no higher vote of confidence. For more than 20 years, the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill Industries of Greater Rochester (ABVI) have teamed up with 3M to make self-stick notes for the General Services Administration. In the early days of this partnership, ABVI made three sizes of yellow SKILCRAFT® self-stick notes, marketed under the combined ABVI and 3M brand names. Today, ABVI manufactures 36 different types of SKILCRAFT® self-stick pads for 3M in a variety of styles and colors. ■

### Talented musicians share their stories...

At the NISH National Training and Achievement Conference in Indianapolis in May 2012, two exceptional musicians performed and shared their incredible stories.



**Mandy Harvey** lives in Denver, Colo., and is a regular performer at Dazzle Jazz, a premier jazz club. Her love for music and singing has been years in the making. She was selected as the top female vocalist of her high school and entered the Music Education program at Colorado State University. During her freshman year, she lost her hearing and left the university.

While her dream of becoming a music teacher has ended, the music is still alive and well within her. Though her hearing loss is profound (110 decibels in each ear) her timing, pitch and passion are perfect. In 2011 Harvey was awarded the Very Special Arts International Soloist award and she continues to perform around the country, bringing joy to others through her music.



Though **Justin Hines** grew up singing in church at his grandmother’s bidding, his realization came at the most unlikely of places — at a basketball game in his hometown 15 years ago. The then 14-year-old Hines won a vocal competition and, suddenly, the world opened up before him. Thrown in the deep end, Hines realized he could not only survive, but thrive.

Then again, Hines has beaten odds that would discourage someone with a less indomitable spirit. Hines has Larsen Syndrome, a joint dislocation condition that requires a wheelchair for mobility. While Hines admits his condition has presented challenges, he primarily sees the good it has brought him and the inspiration he can provide others. That optimism permeates much of his three albums, including his American debut, “Days to Recall.”



# THE RIGHT STUFF



By D. Douglas Graham

The AbilityOne® Program offers thousands of quality products and services in support of our military, at home and abroad. The range of items includes everything from sophisticated fuel and water deployment systems, to routine maintenance on tactical vehicles at military bases from coast to coast. Materials and support functions such as these are essential for best performance in the field. AbilityOne employees across the country provide them with pride to our nation's armed services.

AbilityOne Program employees are doing their part to assist our military wherever their duty station may be, while enhancing their own economic future, sense of pride and well-being. They are patriots making products in America for use by Americans in uniform.

"We currently have about 150 employees producing military helmet covers and shirts," says Frank Dowell, director of the Mount Rogers Community Service Board, a member of the AbilityOne network in Wytheville, Va. "Our product output is about 18,000 helmet covers per month in various military fabric patterns, and approximately 10,000 Army combat shirts. Eighty-four percent of our workforce consists of people with significant disabilities."

Military-specific AbilityOne products include combat and dress clothing items, portable hydration systems and a recently-launched concept called the CUBE (Container Unitized Bulk Equipment), a simple yet innovative technology designed to efficiently transport water and fuel to remote locations. Essentially a polymer bladder enclosed in a stackable, collapsible, and reusable infrastructure, the unit is built with a cargo net attachable to a helicopter. Using this technology, vital liquids can be lifted to places otherwise inaccessible, making the CUBE a must-have technology for remote, mountainous terrain.

"The government inquired about the CUBE a little more than a year ago," recalls John Miller, senior project manager, Defense Acquisition Response Team, a department within NISH tasked with developing technologies for use by the military. "We worked with engineers at the Natick Solider Center in Massachusetts to create a viable system for deploying fuel, and water in remote places in Afghanistan. The CUBE is only one of 25 systems we've developed for the Army this year."

AbilityOne also enables the work of troops abroad via a range of essential tasks performed within U.S. borders. Fleet management services at military bases across the country help keep tactical vehicles and aircraft in good running order. Maintenance includes repair, detailing, up-fitting and inspection, as well as sophisticated diagnostics.

Another AbilityOne service, furniture reuse, supports today's resource-saving trend "reuse, repurpose and recycle," by restoring furnishings in America. According to NISH business development manager, Thomas Hawkins, the program's aim is to renovate used but salvageable cubical furniture from military and government offices.

"Furniture reuse has been in effect since 2004," Hawkins says. "The concept is to re-purpose used office furniture instead of throwing it away

and having to buy new. AbilityOne restores old furniture or reassembles new pieces out of old stock. We also manage the inventory of furniture once it's in the warehouse."

Furniture reuse is not only people friendly by providing employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities, but is also ecofriendly by recycling material that would probably wind up in a landfill.

#### QUALITY HOMEGROWN

Allowing for minor component exceptions, "Military clothing must be certified 'Made in the U.S.," says Dennis Pastrana, President/CEO, Goodwill Industries of South Florida, Miami. "Even the cotton we weave into military garments and flags must be American-grown, woven, finished and shipped within U.S. borders. We take that job very seriously."

Goodwill Industries of South Florida produces a wealth of American-made, military products, the short list of which includes Naval and Air Force garrison hats, Air Force dress pants for women, fleece jackets (part of an extreme cold weather system), non-Army combat uniform trousers, duffel bags and interment flags. Goodwill employs over 800 people with significant disabilities on AbilityOne contracts.

"There are 520,000 people with disabilities living in Dade and Broward Counties, Florida, most within a 37-mile radius of Goodwill Industries," Pastrana says. "We are very proactive in helping such people become wage-earners and productive citizens. We want to be of service to all of Florida's wage earners, and whenever possible, to working people nationwide."

"At the end of the day, you're giving military customers the highest level of service they can get," explains Norm Bradley, executive director, Southeastern Kentucky Rehabilitation Industries Incorporated (SEKRI), a nonprofit in Corbin, Ky. SEKRI currently manufactures 16 active government products in the AbilityOne Program, all used by the military. "A military customer has to know he or she can rely on product quality, and promised delivery dates. As such, we hold ourselves to the same high standard as any manufacturer, and this has enabled us to be of greater value to both our customers and the AbilityOne community."

#### BRINGING BEST

AbilityOne network member, Peckham Inc., of Lansing Mich., makes protective military apparel and cold weather products, as well as chemical protective gear and next-to-skin clothing for all branches of the service. AbilityOne field tests these products, and assists in development, prototyping and full-blown production. AbilityOne plays a vital role in all phases of military product-making from the receipt and cutting of material, to manufacturing, warehousing, shipping and the documentation for all processes.

Peckham works with a variety of community partners to identify employees available to work on AbilityOne contracts, which includes manufacturing made-at-home products for the U.S. military. Michigan Rehabilitation Services is a primary referral source for job candidates, as are the state's mental health service organizations and public schools.

"We partner with schools to provide graduates with significant disabilities solid work experience and long term employment," explains Peckham Inc. organizational employment manager, Sarah George. "Service specialists offer counseling and goal-setting, on and off the manufacturing floor. Most hold master's degrees from Michigan State University, which has one of the best programs of this type in the country."

Assistive technology helps AbilityOne employees produce better military products safely and more efficiently. National Industries for the Blind (NIB) provides combat-ready products from perspiration-deflecting t-shirts to various components used in combat helmets. Seventy-five percent of the direct-labor employees at NIB-associated agencies are legally blind and many use work station enhancements.

"Sewing machines and pocket setters with attachments turn a 'sighted job' into a 'blind job,' says NIB Director of Textiles and Niche Product Development, Paul Diamonti. "Chairs and tables are adjustable, minimizing body stress."

Computers also help accommodate the needs of those who are blind, adds LC Industries Inc. President Bill Hudson. "A person with no vision can sew a military hat or shirt using computer technology," he says. "More than half of the 780 employees we have on staff are legally blind and their job performance is outstanding."



#### THE RIGHT STUFF MADE BY THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

The Right Stuff concept benefits not only AbilityOne employees but all Americans. According to Peckham Inc. director of manufacturing, Ed Terris, many jobs sent offshore are drifting back to the United States because of rising fuel costs, the persuasive power of "Made in America" marketing campaigns and the goodwill paid by activist consumers who demand that for-profit companies also accept the role of conscientious corporate citizens.

"The movement to bring product manufacturing and design back to the U.S. is motivated by factors that are economic and political," Terris explains. "The transportation costs of off-shoring are high, and there's public pressure growing to put 'Made in America' labels back on garments. Combine the fact that such products are recyclable and made by people with disabilities, and you've got a potent tonic. This gives companies like Peckham Inc., a strong competitive edge and Americans a greater measure of security, whether they be AbilityOne Program employees, or not." ■



**Ludmilla Parnell**, General  
Dynamics Information Technology

# Defense Contractors Partner with AbilityOne

**“This has been a partnership of families, community, industry, academia, the government and the AbilityOne Program. Teamwork, innovative ideas and a strong commitment to people help set this program apart from others.”**

**Gloria Pualani, Northrop Grumman**

Northrop Grumman Corporation held its second in a series of “Lunch and Learn” events on July 9-10, 2012, in Chicago, Ill. Jointly hosting the event was the Federal agency which administers the AbilityOne® Program, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission™ (Commission), along with its central nonprofit agencies, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH-Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities (NISH).

This event was but one example of support Northrop Grumman has initiated, resulting from its execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in an effort to support the AbilityOne network of more than 600 nonprofit agencies to provide additional training, education, and outreach opportunities to people who are blind or have significant disabilities nationwide.

This “Lunch and Learn Series” focused on “Meeting the Challenge” – encouraging industry and nonprofits to collaborate and network

for future mutual benefit to all participants. This event provided AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies an opportunity to meet directly with corporate partners to address issues faced in expanding organizations, meeting customer needs, sharing knowledge about developing strong business relationships, and the mentoring process. The jam-packed event offered a diverse group of speakers and networking opportunities.

Kicking-off the event was Gloria Pualani, Corporate Director, Northrop Grumman Corporation. She provided a warm welcome to all, and encouraged the spirited collaboration that has become synonymous with Northrop Grumman. Following Pualani was Commission Executive Director Tina Ballard. Her message was clear – all of us need to think creatively and discover new opportunities, to realize the capabilities of the AbilityOne workforce to meet industry customer needs.



**Gloria Pualani**, Northrop Grumman and **James Kesteloot**, U.S. AbilityOne Commission



**Tizoc Loza**, Northrop Grumman

The event then shifted gears to a panel presentation composed of corporate executives describing how to do business with prime contractors. The speakers provided best value and best practices solutions, with helpful tips and advice for nonprofit agencies seeking to collaborate on future contract opportunities. Moderating the event was Elaine Howell, Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA). Panelists included Northrop Grumman’s Tizoc Loza, Lockheed Martin’s Pat McHugh, and General Dynamics’ Ludmilla Parnell. The corporate panel members provided practical, how-to information on doing business with their companies. Parnell, for example, spoke about how General Dynamics works with subcontractors and partners in developing and executing its business capture strategy.

An overview of EEO Compliance with Nikki Alphonse of Northrop Grumman was followed by a nonprofit agency panel of respected subject matter experts in the AbilityOne network. Moderated by Nancy Myrick of the Commission, the panelists provided best practices examples of networking with industry. Panelists included Seattle Lighthouse’s Kirk Adams, CONNECT’s Melinda Jenks, MVLE’s Ken Rush, and the George Mason Enterprise Center’s Wally Johnson. The nonprofit panelists spoke about successes they have had in partnering with defense prime contractors, or in the case of the George Mason Enterprise Center, spoke about how they provide procurement technical assistance.

Chris Porter from FCE, a provider of outsourced health benefit solutions to employers, closed out the speaker portion with

pertinent information on the Service Contract Act. Mary Seabolt, of DCMA, provided lunchtime remarks. Then, in the early afternoon, in gratitude for the support the AbilityOne Program continually receives from the panelists and their organizations, Commission Vice Chairperson James Kesteloot presented flags made by people with disabilities and AbilityOne coins of appreciation to the speakers. The event culminated with two hours of networking, during which industry and nonprofit organizations were able to talk one-on-one about future partnerships and collaboration. ■

**“It is our intention to put the focus on what people can do, rather than what they cannot do... To create jobs for people regardless of the physical or intellectual challenges they may face, and to maximize their human potential. Thank you to all of you from industry who are here today, working to make that happen.”**

**James Kesteloot**  
**U.S. AbilityOne Commission**

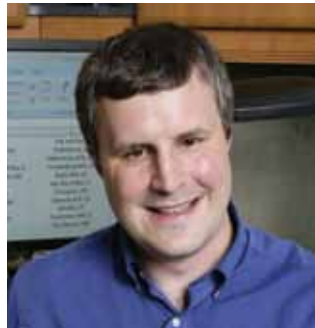
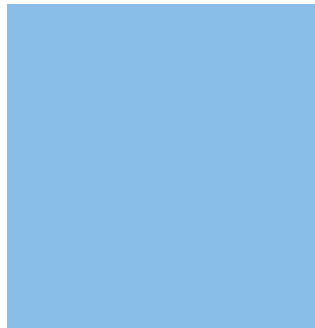


# FACES OF AbilityOne

Providing employment opportunities to more than 50,000 people, the AbilityOne® Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the United States.









# EVERY PURCHASE CREATES JOBS



When you choose SKILCRAFT® you're not just getting a great quality product, you also help support job opportunities for thousands of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Working through the AbilityOne® Program, this dedicated workforce produces over 3,500 products in categories ranging from office products to janitorial and cleaning supplies to environmentally responsible and technology-based products. It's easy to make the right choice.

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



Created with pride by Americans who are Blind or have other Severe Disabilities™

# 2011 AbilityOne

## EMPLOYEE AWARD WINNERS

Each year, the AbilityOne Program recognizes its employees' success stories.



**NATE BROWN**  
Cook II, Goodwill  
Industries of  
South Carolina

### WILLIAM M. USDANE AWARD

Nate Brown, who lost his sight in 2004, wanted one thing when he started working with Goodwill Industries of South Carolina — a chance to prove that he could make a difference and change perceptions of those who are blind. In June 2010, Brown began working for Goodwill on an AbilityOne® contract at the Joint Base Charleston galley. Since then, he has consistently shown his abilities and willingness to take on more responsibilities. He has always said, “Have faith in me. Let me try. If I can’t do it, I’ll let you know.”

Last year, Brown approached the project manager and asked for a chance to work in vegetable preparation, and he hasn’t looked back since. Nominator Reginald Hughes noted, “His story has touched the lives of so many in our community and we get several requests to see this individual who is blind cut vegetables and make hot rolls with no assistance getting around the galley.”

Brown was promoted to Cook II and has been named Employee of the Month for his outstanding work and great attitude. He motivates fellow workers and volunteers as a counselor for youth ages 6-16, encouraging them to never give up their quest for success.

**WILLIAM M. USDANE AWARD** Dr. William Usdane was a leader in the movement to provide vocational and employment opportunities to people with significant disabilities through his assistance in the creation of NISH. In memory of Usdane, NISH presents the William M. Usdane Award each year to an individual with a significant disability who has exhibited outstanding achievement at a NISH-producing nonprofit agency in the AbilityOne Program.



**KEVIN BURTON**  
Recruitment Specialist,  
Envision, Inc.

## MILTON J. SAMUELSON CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

When Kevin Burton graduated from McPherson College with a bachelor's degree in journalism, instead of job offers, he received a large stack of job rejection letters. At that time, his vision loss was considered an issue by newspaper editors. Undeterred, he moved to Mexico and taught English for a year. Then, figuring there would be little competition for a job in Alaska; he applied for and landed a newspaper reporter's position at The Frontiersman. That led to a position at a daily newspaper covering northern Illinois and eastern Iowa. His father's fading health brought Burton home to Ohio, where he worked as an office assistant until his father passed away.

Burton later moved to Wichita and joined the customer service team at Envision, Inc. Three years later, he was promoted to his current position as "recruitment specialist" in the organization's human resources department. Because he knows firsthand what it is like to be passed over for a job, Burton is dedicated to eliminating those barriers for others with his work at Envision. He makes presentations at community organizations to promote career opportunities at Envision, including its tuition reimbursement program. He credits National Industries for the Blind's (NIB) Business Management Training program for preparing him for his current position at Envision.

**MILTON J. SAMUELSON CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD** The Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award is presented to an individual who demonstrates career advancement at an NIB-associated agency or in the private sector. Samuelson championed upward mobility and placement programs for people who are blind.

## AbilityOne HONOR ROLL FOR VETERANS AWARD

Steve Hoffman, a wounded warrior, leverages his military background in his AbilityOne job, providing contract closeout services for the Department of Defense through ServiceSource's contract management support (CMS) contract in Wilmington, Del.

Hoffman served in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard for 24 years and was severely injured when he was thrown from a vehicle during Operation Desert Storm. His knee shattered, tearing tendons and ligaments; and Hoffman was exposed to neurotoxins that caused extensive damage to his peripheral nerves, outer extremities, liver and kidneys. He also has post-traumatic stress disorder.

During his military career, Hoffman trained the trainers in Brigade-level nuclear, biological and chemical operations. Today, he leverages his teaching skills and knowledge in contracts to mentor colleagues and train new hires on the CMS project and other AbilityOne contract startups. He also organized and developed a new contracts storage system and assists with disability accommodations for coworkers.

Steve's supervisor, Fran Smith, said Steve helps by "offering suggestions on how to help other team members. He is like the big brother to some as he will help organize their work and explain how things can work better for them if they use his methods."

**ABILITYONE HONOR ROLL FOR VETERANS AWARD** The AbilityOne Honor Roll for Veterans Award recognizes a service-disabled veteran with a significant disability who has exhibited outstanding achievement in his or her work life. This award was established to celebrate the successes of wounded warriors at a NISH-producing nonprofit agency in the AbilityOne Program.



**STEVE HOFFMAN**  
Contract Closeout  
Specialist,  
ServiceSource

## EVELYNE VILLINES AWARD

In 1998, Marcelino “Marc” Parra had a disastrous fall while working on scaffolding high above the ground. He damaged his legs and had to undergo three years of surgeries and rehabilitation. In 2001, after learning about the AbilityOne Program, Parra began work on an AbilityOne contract at Evans Army Community Hospital through Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI). Parra was provided extensive training in all aspects of hospital housekeeping, including floor care. He praises PCSI for the scheduling flexibility that allowed him to have time off for rehabilitation appointments.

Parra’s determination, willingness to learn and leadership abilities led him to promotions from trainer to crew leader, and then, to shift supervisor. He was soon named assistant director of housekeeping. In 2006, Parra joined the International Executives Housekeeping Association and is currently pursuing his Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Personnel certification through the American Hospital Association. In 2008, he was named the director of hospital housekeeping. As director, he spearheaded the effort to obtain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver level certification. “His lone efforts contributed to Evans being awarded in the top nine Environmental Services Department of the Year for two consecutive years,” stated chief of Environmental Services Judith Darbyshire.

**EVELYNE VILLINES AWARD** Evelyn Villines is a leading national spokesperson and advocate for people with disabilities. As a person with a disability, her major objectives have been to remove structural barriers and to get others to see people with disabilities as people first. In recognition of her ongoing contribution to the employment of people with disabilities, the Evelyn Villines Award was established by NISH.



**MARCELINO PARRA**  
Director of  
Housekeeping, PCSI



**FRENCHIE RANDOLPH**  
Production Employee,  
Assembly and Packaging  
division, Beyond Vision

## PETER J. SALMON EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD

At the age of one, Frenchie Randolph experienced moderate vision loss due to optic nerve damage. By the time Randolph enrolled in college, she was diagnosed with glaucoma, which left her with just light and color perception. She reached out to the low-vision rehabilitation resources at the Milwaukee Area Technical College and the Badger Association for the Blind (now Vision Forward Association) and conquered everything from computer classes to skills of daily living, and earned a certificate in medical transcription. Unable to find a position in this field, she set her sights on another career and received an associate degree in teaching in 2011. She plans to attend Cardinal Stritch University to pursue a bachelor’s degree in education, with a certificate in special education. Randolph’s goal is to “help the children who need it most.”

To support her family, Randolph joined Beyond Vision, a manufacturing company that operates as a nonprofit employing people who are legally blind by selling blind-made products and services. She has helped Beyond Vision’s engineers evaluate several pilot projects and assisted with process improvements that allow totally blind employees to work on all jobs in the plant. Randolph has also worked closely with NIB’s rehabilitation engineers to develop the Briggs and Stratton shroud label application fixture and tooling, which resulted in substantial increases in productivity and quality.

**PETER J. SALMON EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD** The Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award honors employees who excel in their positions at NIB-associated agencies. Dr. Salmon was instrumental in the passage of the Wagner-O’Day Act in 1938 and the formation of NIB.

# Federal AWARD Winners

The AbilityOne® Program recognized the following individuals and organizations for their exemplary support of creating employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

## E.R. "DICK" ALLEY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



U.S. AbilityOne Commission™ Executive Director Tina Ballard, Vice Chairperson James M. Kesteloot, Alley Award winner Thomas Bouchard and Chairperson J. Anthony Poleo.

### THOMAS BOUCHARD

Deputy Chief, Natick Contracting Division, Soldier Systems Branch, Army Contracting Command- Aberdeen Proving Grounds, U.S. Army. During his career, Bouchard helped create jobs for more than 1,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities. He routinely invites AbilityOne nonprofit agencies to be involved in the manufacturing and development process and initial production runs to ensure successful outcomes, and his support has led the U.S. Armed Forces to procure hundreds of AbilityOne apparel and equipment items, such as the Army's extreme cold weather clothing systems; a new chemical protection suit for combat vehicle crews; the Army combat shirt; the Air Force fleece jacket; the Navy working uniform; and the Special Operations Forces protective combat uniform. Bouchard also helped develop a contract for high school graduates with disabilities to assist Natick with reviewing open government contracts to identify unused procurement monies and assist the government in recapturing unspent funds and closing out the contracts.

The Alley Award is bestowed on one Federal employee whose sustained dedication and support of the AbilityOne Program are exemplary, and worthy of the agency's highest recognition. The award is named for the late E.R. "Dick" Alley, who gave 25 years of dedicated service to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission as its deputy executive director.

## OSBORNE A. "OZ" DAY AbilityOne AWARENESS AWARD



Ballard and Poleo present the Oz Day Award to Rear Adm. Mark Heinrich, along with Kesteloot.

### REAR ADM. MARK HEINRICH

Commander, Naval Supply Systems Command, and Chief of Supply Corps. Heinrich was responsible for the Navy's first task order for contract management support services under the AbilityOne Program. He also orchestrated trips to AbilityOne nonprofit agencies. By taking the Commanding Officer of FISC Norfolk and their senior managers from operations and contracting, his leaders had an opportunity to speak with a number of AbilityOne employees at NewView and Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind. He also recently took his call center manager to the Travis Air Force Base call center operation, to continue to raise AbilityOne awareness in order to set the stage for creating like opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the COMFISCS enterprise. While there, he also toured an AbilityOne Base Supply Center, and afterward sent a note to his field Commanders to consider adding AbilityOne stores at their installations. During every opportunity he has, he increases awareness of AbilityOne, from visiting nonprofits to see wheel chock operation, to speaking at the 2010 National Industries for the Blind Opportunity Forum about "Engaging in Relationships Benefiting Military Procurement."

This award recognizes a Federal employee, service member or agency subcomponent for extraordinary efforts in advocating and promoting AbilityOne. It is named in honor of Osborne A. "Oz" Day, a private citizen Commission member from 2005 to 2008.

## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS AWARD



Andrew Houghton, former U.S. AbilityOne Commission chairperson, presents the Outstanding Contributions Award to Pamela Munoz.

### PAMELA MUNOZ

Director, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, MICC, Contracting Directorate, U.S. Army

Munoz's efforts recently led to the addition of more than 300 AbilityOne jobs to the Procurement List. She actively promotes AbilityOne with contracting peers at other installations and has hosted fleet management training classes and maintenance site tours to DoD customers. She also served as an advisor to the Commission on ways to improve program processes.

This award recognizes Federal employees for their efforts in creating employment opportunities on Federal contracts for people who are blind or have significant disabilities under the AbilityOne Program.



Vicki Taft receives the Outstanding Contributions Award from Poleo.

### VICKI TAFT

Chief, Base Support Flight, 72 CONS/PKA, Tinker Air Force Base

Taft participates on conference panels and works with contracting officers from other commands to educate them about AbilityOne capabilities. Through two decades of support, she has created more than 180 AbilityOne jobs through contracts in food services, basewide grounds maintenance, custodial services and vehicle operations/maintenance.

## MOST VALUABLE LIAISON AWARD



Ballard and Poleo present the Most Valuable Liaison Award to Susan Pollack, along with Kesteloot.

### SUSAN POLLACK

Senior Procurement Analyst, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy

Pollack coordinated the Pentagon's AbilityOne National Disability Employment Awareness Month event for six years, transforming it into a high-level award ceremony hosted by the Deputy Secretary of Defense. With her assistance, DoD leadership has signed numerous memorandums of support for AbilityOne, including one directing mandatory use of AbilityOne contract management support and a DoD joint memorandum to ensure AbilityOne contracts are not adversely impacted by insourcing initiatives.

This award recognizes an AbilityOne liaison for efforts in supporting AbilityOne.

## NATIONAL INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND AWARDS



Chris Burns, DeCA director of sales; Charlie Dowlen, Jr., chief, promotions branch; Joyce Chandler, chief, semi-perishables; Scottie Knott, NIB COO; Joseph Jeu, director and CEO; Michael Dowling, deputy director and COO (acting); Richard Ray, president and CEO, S&K Sales Co.; Anne-Marie Wallace, NIB military resale program director; and Pete Murphy, national sales manager, S&K Sales Co.

### THE DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) was honored by National Industries for the Blind with the Excellence in Government Award in recognition of the agency's superb efforts to support the AbilityOne Program mission to create employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities. The award was presented in appreciation of the DeCA team's outstanding support, which created 37 jobs for people who are blind through the Military Resale program for the FY 2009-2011 period. Jobs are created through the sale of products to the defense commissary system.



### VICE ADMIRAL ALAN S. THOMPSON

In honor of his retirement, NIB recognized Vice Adm. Alan Thompson for his support of the AbilityOne Program. Through tireless efforts to promote the SKILCRAFT® Brand and other products and services produced through the AbilityOne Program, Thompson is an advocate for the program, which ultimately provides employment opportunities for Americans who are blind or have significant disabilities. Thompson was responsible for providing the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and other Federal agencies with logistics, acquisition and technical services including logistics information, materiel management, procurement, warehousing and distribution of spare parts, food, clothing, medical supplies and fuel, reutilization of surplus military materiel and document automation and production.

**BASE SUPPLY CENTER PARTNER IN EXCELLENCE**



Karen Walls, president, Midwest Enterprises for the Blind, Inc.; Mark Thompson; Kevin Lynch, president and CEO, NIB.

**MARK THOMPSON**

Chief Supply Policy, U.S. Air Force Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois

Thompson was recognized for his outstanding support of the Base Supply Center, Individual Equipment Element and Hazmat programs within the Air Mobility Command (AMC), and, furthering the use of AbilityOne Base Supply Centers in support of AMC.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE**



Walls; Rubie King; Lynch

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Rubie King, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) FMCSA contracted NIB to operate its New Entrant Contact Center with the goal of adding the requirement to the Procurement List, generating 14.5 blind work years.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE**



Lynch, Mike Payne, Gretchen Mueller, Walls

**HUMANA MILITARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

Mike Payne, Innovation and Partnership Leader  
Gretchen Mueller, Small Business Project Manager, Small Business Liaison Officer

Humana Military Healthcare Services has demonstrated a true sense of partnership and collaboration by engaging NIB and Bosma to employ individuals who are blind under a pilot as subcontractors on their Beneficiary Representative Services contract with TriCare East Region.



Walls, Bob King, Lynch

**DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY**

Robert King, Director, DLA Distribution, Warner Robins, Georgia  
Bob King worked with NIB and Georgia Industries for the Blind on a package reclamation service project that was added to the Procurement List and resulted in the creation of five jobs for people who are blind. King is also responsible for identifying an opportunity to create the storage rack labels for the depot warehouse.





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The following four awards were presented by NISH at the National Training and Achievement Conference in Indianapolis, Ind. in May 2012.

**GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR PRODUCTS**



Bob Chamberlin, NISH President & CEO; Keith Ford, DLA Troop Support, and Bill Coleman, Jr., NISH Board chair.

**DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY TROOP SUPPORT**

Philadelphia, Penn.

DLA Troop Support is an extraordinary promoter of the AbilityOne Program and its product manufacturing capabilities for the U.S. Armed Forces. Under the leadership of DLA Director Navy Vice Adm. Alan Thompson, the agency has looked to AbilityOne to provide uniforms and other products. Vocational Guidance Services of Cleveland, Ohio produces five different product lines for the Department of Defense.

This award recognizes a military or other Federal agency that has provided outstanding support to the AbilityOne Program for Products.

**GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR SERVICES (CIVILIAN)**



Chamberlin; Karone Blondin, GSA; Mike Payne, Betty Williams and Karin Farrow, Didlake; and Coleman

**GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (GSA) WHITE HOUSE CENTER EISENHOWER EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING**

Washington, D.C.

GSA's support for AbilityOne is showcased at the GSA White House Center Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Since Didlake of Manassas, Va. took over the custodial services in 2008, the Contracting Officer Representative, William Dietz and his team, have expanded the contract by 30 percent to encompass 800,000 sq. ft. of building space.

This award recognizes a civilian Federal agency that has provided outstanding support to the AbilityOne Program for Services.

**GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR SERVICES (MILITARY)**



Chamberlin, Lt. Col. Scott Svabek, USAMEDCOM, and Coleman

**U.S. ARMY MEDICAL COMMAND**

Fort Sam Houston, Texas

Under the leadership of Col. Scott A. Svabek, commander of the U.S. Army Medical Command Health Care Acquisition Activity and Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, AbilityOne Program jobs for people with disabilities have increased 300 percent in three years (encompassing contracts managed by Professional Contract Services, Inc. and Job Options, Inc.).

This award recognizes a local military installation that has provided outstanding support, technical or other assistance to an AbilityOne-producing nonprofit agency that is providing a service under the AbilityOne Program.



Dr. Carol Lowman, executive director of the Army Contracting Command (and former member of the Commission) accepts the award on behalf of the Army from Chamberlin and Coleman

**US ARMY GARRISON-REDSTONE ARSENAL**

Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

The Federal community of Redstone Arsenal, Ala. has supported the AbilityOne Program since its inception in the 1970s. Today, 425 AbilityOne Program employees work there, providing custodial services for over 500 buildings and grounds maintenance on 6,000 acres—the largest U.S. Army grounds maintenance contract in the world.

*If you would like to nominate someone for any of the awards, contact us at [customerservice@abilityone.org](mailto:customerservice@abilityone.org) or 800-999-5963.*



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**U.S. General Services Administration**



# Helping Our Nation's Heroes Brave the Elements

By Christine McLaughlin

AbilityOne designs and produces a new outdoor sleep system for the U.S. Marine Corps



USMC photo by 2nd Lt. Jeanscott Dodd



Reyna Rubio,  
ReadyOne

Cold weather is one formidable enemy. Unfortunately, the cold has been responsible for countless injuries and deaths in our country's military history. For U.S. Marines who must tackle the powerful forces of Mother Nature head-on at any time without missing a beat, cold weather continues to be a significant challenge, especially at night while trying to sleep.

In fact, it's not uncommon for infantry members to utter "travel light, freeze at night" reflecting their thoughts of prioritizing the weight of the pack for a warm sleeping bag and personal shelter vs. being cold and having less to carry. Weight is a tradeoff they're often willing to make over comfort.

But thanks to evolving technology and the collective efforts of AbilityOne®, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) and the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research Development and Engineering Center (NSRDEC), a drier, lighter and more portable sleeping bag solution has been developed.



The “Extreme Cold Weather Outer Sleeping Bag and Compression Stuff Sack” will be in use by Marines this winter. In fact, AbilityOne started producing 50,000 units in August and should be ready to start delivery by the end of October 2012.

#### THE BAG’S BEGINNINGS

While a cold weather modular sleeping bag has been used by the USMC for decades, it was too heavy and bulky by today’s standards. It was comprised of two sleeping bags: one heavier for coldest temperatures and a lighter one for warmer temperatures. Many times Marines would leave the heavier bag behind in order to “travel light.”

The USMC knew they had a problem that could be fixed with modern technology. So two years ago, it began fielding a Three Season Sleep System from the commercial market, which was its general purpose sleeping bag, suitable for 20 degrees Fahrenheit and higher. This included a sleeping bag, a bivy cover (a one-man shelter that encapsulates the soldier) and a compression stuff sack (the sack that contains the entire sleep system).

Yet, what was still needed was a bag that could protect Marines in temperatures as low as minus 12 degrees Fahrenheit without a tactical shelter and was lighter and less cumbersome with better waterproofing than the old and warm but heavy and bulky, modular system. Basically, a bag for the fourth winter season needed to be created.

So the staff at NSRDEC was charged with translating the USMC’s requirements for the extreme cold weather sleep system in terms that technology and suppliers could respond to, and then finding the suppliers who eventually provided them with a winning product.

#### THE FOURTH SEASON SOLUTION NEEDED

The main idea was to keep today’s warmth but incorporate a lighter, smaller and more waterproof sleep solution to interface with the existing Three Season sleeping bag and bivy cover. (The old two-piece modular bag was going to be phased out.) The NSRDEC and USMC

required an outer sleeping bag that fit over the Three Season sleeping bag and inside the bivy cover. This would allow Marines to still have the flexibility of tailoring protection to field conditions (Three Season bag and bivy for 20 degrees and higher, Outer sleeping bag and bivy for 5 to 20 degrees, or combining the Three Season bag with the outer sleeping bag plus a bivy for the coldest temperatures down to minus 12 degrees). In addition, all of the pieces had to attach to each other easily because Marines must often put the sleep systems together in the dark and they needed to handle multiple components as a single item.

The pieces also had to quickly stuff into a compressible sack to keep the system dry. This required designing a new more efficient waterproof stuff sack. Additionally, to accompany the new sleep system, the USMC requested a new visual user guide to help Marines see and learn how to easily put the pieces together and pack them in the stuff sack and then in their field packs.



After a thorough review of cold weather sleeping bags and waterproof stuff sacks in the marketplace, a suitable example could not be found. As a result, the USMC and NSRDEC turned to AbilityOne in June 2011. The USMC wanted to have input into how the sleep system worked since the contract required the new components be easily integrated with the Three Season sleep system, meet challenging insulation, weight and volume limits, and be ready in time for winter 2012-2013. The USMC knew it needed a flexible, efficient partner to make it all happen. With these stringent product and delivery requirements in mind, USMC procurement officials chose AbilityOne with full confidence.

“This ability to interact, collaborate [with all parties] and then be delivered in time so that we would be ready for this coming winter was really key,” said Dee Townes, USMC project officer at NSRDEC in Natick, Mass. “We thought that AbilityOne was the best approach.”

It also helped that AbilityOne had a solid background in producing similar equipment. “We had some experience with both of those items so they felt comfortable that we could work with them to do the development,” said John Miller, senior project manager and member of the Defense Acquisition Response Team at NISH (one of the central nonprofits associated with AbilityOne), in Vienna, Va.

ReadyOne Industries, El Paso, Texas, manufactures the outer sleeping bag and The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., Seattle, Wash., produces the compression stuff sack. These two AbilityOne network members were chosen to execute the project based on previous experience working on similar items for the military.

#### READYONE AT THE READY

ReadyOne joined forces with commercial outdoor retail designer Mountain Hardwear to create the outer sleeping bag portion of the new sleep system. The retailer had its own sleeping bag that was used as a starting point. ReadyOne’s knowledge, expertise and contacts within the industry helped build upon that initial bag. They drew on those resources to make samples of the new outer bag that needed to be lighter in weight and easier to compress for less bulk with the same or greater thermal warmth than the old modular sleeping bag. Again, it needed to work seamlessly with the fixed Three Season Sleep System component designs.

“The Marines wanted to be able to take one bag or both depending on the climate in question. So, essentially [what we created as part of the overall system] is analogous to throwing more covers on you,” says Juan Bezanilla, head of engineering at ReadyOne.

ReadyOne, along with its suppliers, developed an outer sleeping bag prototype. Also, as part of the development of the prototype, the

engineering team headed by Bezanilla designed a piece of equipment to help with the bonding of the insulation within the sleeping bag to reduce cold spots.

This bonding process keeps the heat in the bag and prevents it from escaping through sewing holes, explains Cynthia DeHaro, vice president of products at ReadyOne. “(For) this process, you’re not using a needle or creating any holes and still able to bind the outer layer to the insulation,” she says.



The prototype was evaluated by NSRDEC on a thermal manikin and then by a group of Marines during a design review on what works in the field. With that feedback, ReadyOne made production tweaks in time to complete a 100-piece order run for a two-week Marine field-user evaluation.

#### THE LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND, INC. DEVELOPS STUFF SACK

ReadyOne also worked with Seattle Lighthouse to ensure both sleep system components would work easily together.

The USMC wanted to enable the Marines to easily get out of the sleeping bag, stuff it in the waterproof sack and stow it in their field pack in under four minutes even in the dark. Seattle Lighthouse worked with outdoor manufacturer Cascade Designs Inc. to develop seven possible designs. The USMC selected one, and the Seattle Lighthouse made certain design adjustments and produced 100 samples for the Marine field-testing.

“The manufacturing method used to fabricate the stuff sack is one that we have used before. It’s called radio frequency welding,” says Paul Fletcher, director of product development at The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. This type of sealing is a way to weld seams for a waterproof bag without using needles.

“It uses radio frequency waves to polymerize and fuse the nylons together, so it’s like conventional heat sealing but it’s using electromagnetic pulses (similar to a microwave) for more controlled generation of the heat,” explains Fletcher.

Not only is it waterproof, but the stuff sack underwent a radical design change to facilitate ease of stuffing. On both ends of the cylinder, there are now purge valves that allow the air to escape (to compress the bag) and keep water out.

#### VISUAL USER GUIDE

However, these components cannot be fully understood without the proper instructions. Based on its positive experience with Kwikpoint Visual Language Translators, the USMC asked the company to produce a new visual user guide for the extreme cold weather sleeping



ReadyOne employees proudly display the new sleeping bag

bag and compression stuff sack, which expanded upon the guide it produced for Three Season Sleep System.

“The Marines find Kwikpoint’s presentation very effective. The Visual User Guide gives enough details in the illustration and the corresponding text that a Marine can see it and quickly know what to do,” said Townes.

#### REQUIRED TESTING

Once the design was selected, the next step in the development process was for the outer sleeping bag and the compression stuff sack to be extensively tested at the NSRDEC labs to predict if they were going to be reliable in the field before issuing to Marines for operational evaluation. Townes explains, “Once products pass the lab tests, they go through a field user evaluation in the proper operational environment.”

A cold weather field test was conducted with the Three Season sleeping bag, the bivy cover, the new outer sleeping bag and the new compression stuff sack among 100 Marines in January 2012 in the mountains of Bridgeport, Calif. for two weeks. They evaluated the effectiveness of design and the ease of use, and also verified laboratory measures like warmth, waterproofing and size.

#### SUCCESS

With a few minor modifications after the field testing, the hard work of ReadyOne, The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., the USMC and NSRDEC paid off in the successful development of a new sleep system that is 1.2 pounds lighter and 10 percent smaller in packed volume than the old modular sleep system for the same warmth. In addition to the weight and volume savings, the new sleep system provides better waterproofing protection, and is much easier to use.

“We also found the new system has better temperature increments, so Marines don’t have to choose to be too warm or too cold, and we can

tailor the components better to have good temperature protection for the least weight and volume,” says Townes, happily.

#### A GOOD FIT

That successful outcome would not have been possible if the teams did not collaborate effectively. It took just 12 months from the initial meeting to make prototypes and design revisions; deliver samples to the Marine Corps; incorporate additional design revisions; field test; collect and analyze the required data and then make final changes. “That is pretty aggressive. But ReadyOne and The Lighthouse were fantastic through it all and very responsive,” said Townes.

The best part of the project from AbilityOne’s perspective is that a minimum of 75 percent of the production hours required for the outer sleeping bag and compression stuff sack will be performed by people who are blind or have significant disabilities—putting hundreds of people to work from ReadyOne and The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. (The visual user guide will be contracted out to be Kwikpoint for manufacturing.)

“It’s very, very exciting,” said Miller. “We stepped in and provided something for the USMC that they’re really pleased with....We feel this is a big deal, not just for AbilityOne, but a big deal for our military and a big deal in providing employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.” ■



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# Nonprofit Agency Connection: Recent Awards and Recognition

**The Arc of San Diego** received Three-Year Accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), valid through May 2015. Among recognitions, The Arc of San Diego's AbilityOne food service and grounds maintenance programs in partnership with the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) were recognized for "exemplary" conformance to the standards for the third time in a row. CARF "exemplary" designation is given only when an organization's practices can be held up as a model throughout the country for others to emulate. The Arc of San Diego's AbilityOne contracts at MCRD employ 287 individuals with significant disabilities.



Ingrid Bivens, The Arc of San Diego

**Adelante Development Center, Albuquerque, N.M.**, unveiled its Secure Document Center, a 30,000 sq. ft. newly purchased and remodeled warehouse that houses Adelante's secure document destruction and document imaging enterprises. Adelante opened the facility in January 2012 and held a Grand Opening celebration of this high-security

document center on May 31. Adelante launched its document destruction services seven years ago with an AbilityOne contract for the Internal Revenue Service and leveraged its AbilityOne experience to expand into the commercial sector. In 2011, Adelante's secure document destruction revenue totaled \$1.6 million. Adelante increased its space by two-thirds with the new location and added an additional shredder, increasing its shredding capacity to 140,000 pounds per day.



Members of the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce join Mike Kivitz (center), Adelante CEO, on the podium to cut the ribbon during the Grand Opening Celebration of Adelante's Secure Document Center.

Members of the Recipient Identification Number (RIN) program, a collaborative effort between **The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired** and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) were saluted recently for achieving a major milestone: the production of two million Electronic Recipient Identification Numbers (E-RINS). First inaugurated at the Lighthouse in 2008, the RIN program enables employees, all of whom have disabilities, to

use an internet-based system to retrieve and assign recipient identification numbers to clients receiving services from social services agencies. Using RIN numbers instead of social security numbers helps lessen the threat of identity fraud.



DHS Secretary Michelle R.B. Saddler; Jay Hidalgo, account/customer support supervisor at DHS; RIN team member Mindy Joy Mayer; and Chicago Lighthouse President Dr. Janet Szyk.

Kim Greenfield Alfonso, chief operating officer of **Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind** in Washington, D.C., was appointed by Mayor Vincent C. Gray to the District of Columbia Interagency Coordinating Council (DCICC) for a two-year term. DCICC's function is to work alongside the Mayor and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to create and implement a plan that will enhance the delivery and availability of services for early intervention programming for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Alfonso was also appointed to the Board of Directors of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, and will serve a three-year term.

**The Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI)** in Cincinnati, Ohio, recently earned International Standards Organization (ISO) certification. Performance Review Institute Registrar auditors reviewed CABVI's Quality Program in relation to the ISO 9001:2008 standard. This standard helps to ensure that products are of good quality, will meet or exceed customer requirements and continually improve. The CABVI Industries Program manufactures a variety of products for customers that include the Federal Government and state of Ohio, and employs 48 people who are blind or visually impaired. ISO is the world's largest developer of voluntary International Standards, which determines state-of-the-art specifications for products, services and best practices. Earlier this fiscal year, two additional NIB associated agencies became ISO-certified, **Alabama Industries for the Blind and Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind.**



CABVI ISO Team

DePaul Packaging, **DePaul Industries' (Portland, Ore.)** packaging and contract manufacturing division, won the 2011 PepsiCo North America Foods Contract Manufacturing Quality Award, achieving first in quality among all PepsiCo Americas Foods contract manufacturers across the United States for 2011. PepsiCo Americas Foods is PepsiCo's food and snack business in North and South America, which includes Frito-Lay, Quaker Foods & Snacks, and other major brands. The accomplishment is particularly noteworthy considering the volume of product DePaul employees packaged and shipped for Frito-Lay during this period increased by 15 percent from the previous year—and noteworthy in the fact that DePaul employees have set the bar high for all contract manufacturers nationwide. DePaul Industries also packages nuts for Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support in Philadelphia and has three AbilityOne services contracts.

For the sixteenth consecutive year, **Eastern Carolina Vocational Center (ECVC), Inc., Greenville, N.C.,** received a Gold Award from Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Land and Maritime. ECVC, which supplies batteries and

terminal lugs to the Department of Defense, received a perfect score for quality and on-time shipments. During the award period from January to December 2011, ECVC shipped 44,076 orders to DLA customers. Army Brig. Gen. Darrell K. Williams presented ECVC with the award on June 13 in Columbus during an awards ceremony. ECVC was among 37 companies out of 6,000 to receive a Gold Award.



Army Brig. Gen. Darrell K. Williams (left), commanding general, presents the Gold Award to Bob Jones, president of Eastern Carolina Vocational Center.

**The Envision Foundation** in Wichita, Kansas, received generous gifts from four community partners for its Assistive Technology (AT) program for youths who are blind or low vision: \$7,500 from the Spirit Aerosystems Good Neighbor Fund, \$5,000 from Cox Communications, \$2,500 from Cargill, and \$1,500 from Westar Energy Foundation. Envision's AT Program includes a week-long residential summer camp featuring technology training, opportunities to learn from successful business professionals and role models living with visual impairments, and development of skills to assist with job searches and business communications.

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission™ presented AbilityOne Challenge coins to four AbilityOne Program employees while touring AbilityOne network members Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana and Bosma Enterprises. The tours were held in conjunction with the NISH National Training and Achievement Conference in May in Indianapolis. Commission Vice Chairperson James Kesteloot presented the coins to **Norman Sears and Shannon Gunn, Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana; and Dwane Craig and Awedi Kej Ashor, Bosma Enterprises.**



James Kesteloot, U.S. AbilityOne Commission, presents a Challenge coin to Dwane Craig, BOSMA Enterprises.

**Goodwill Industries of Arkansas** celebrated 85 years during its 2012 Annual Awards Luncheon held at the Clinton Presidential Library and Center in Little Rock on May 9. The keynote speaker was Gov. Mike Beebe, and Former President Bill Clinton offered taped remarks. During the luncheon, Goodwill honored **PRIDE Industries, Roseville, Calif.,** with the Employer of the Year Award. Joan O'Connor, HR representative/case manager, accepted the award on behalf of PRIDE Industries. Goodwill also honored AbilityOne employee James Henderson, who works on a grounds maintenance contract at Little Rock Air Force Base, with the Frank Lyon Achiever of the Year Award. Henderson joined PRIDE's landscaping crew in summer 2011 after showing progress and growth as a member of Goodwill's cleaning crew through Goodwill's job training program.

Impact Oklahoma awarded **NewView Oklahoma** a \$100,000 grant to support a low vision clinic that will serve more than 1,500 patients each year. The funds will help purchase optometric and specialized low vision equipment for the clinic. The low vision clinic will enable NewView Oklahoma to conduct detailed low vision exams for Oklahomans experiencing vision loss, particularly older citizens. Impact Oklahoma, Inc. funds charitable organizations working in the areas of family, health and wellness, community, education and culture.



Pictured left to right: Sandy Wright, Stan Chase, Lauren Brandon, Cathy Holden, Melinda Olbert, Carrie Palmer, Janet Hudson, Jackie Davis, Laura Ingram, Susan Amis, and Dick Cain.

Government Fleet Magazine and 100 Best Fleets recently recognized **Tinker Air Force Base**, where **PCSI, West Austin, Texas**, provides fleet maintenance, as one of the Top 100 Best Fleets. The program recognizes and rewards peak performing fleet operations in North America. Currently in its tenth year, 100 Best Fleets identifies and encourages ever-increasing levels of performance improvement within the fleet industry. **Joint Base Lewis McChord, Fort Riley and Fort Meade**, where **Skookum, Bremerton, Wash.**, provides fleet maintenance, also received Honorable Mentions. Award winners were honored at the Government Fleet Expo in Denver, Colo. on June 20.



PCSI at Tinker AFB

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed delivered the keynote address to prospective employers of wounded, injured and ill military job seekers at the third annual **Project HIRED** Wounded Warrior Workforce Conference and Career Fair held March 8, 2012 at Juniper Networks in Sunnyvale, Calif. AbilityOne nonprofit Project HIRED holds this annual event in order to advocate on behalf of recruiting, hiring and retaining these military service members. Designed to educate attendees about the realities and benefits of adding our wounded, injured, and ill military service members to the civilian workplace, the conference offers employers hands-on workshops led by medical, legal and human resources experts, and an afternoon career fair for military service members that brings together job-seeking vets and actively hiring employers.



San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed

The South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce honored the **San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind** (SALB) as a "2011 Legend of the Southside" at the Chamber's Legends Gala in October 2011. To select the award winners, the selection committee members focused on nine adjectives that describe their contributions to family, business and community: Service, Character, Passion, Vision, Talent, Integrity, Persistence, Achievement and Respect. The committee determined that the San Antonio Lighthouse personifies those adjectives and the mission of the Legends: "Creating a Legacy, Living a Legacy for the Benefit of San Antonio and its People."



Pictured left to right: San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind employees Marti Hawthorn, assistive technology supervisor; Mike Gilliam, president and CEO; and Daniel Patton, 2011 Employee of the Year; Barbie Scharf-Zeldes, board chair; and Michael Guajardo, assistive technology trainer.

Nominated by Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support, **Southeastern Kentucky Rehabilitation Industries Inc. (SEKRI), Corbin, Ky.**, will receive the DLA Outstanding AbilityOne Program Vendor Award during an awards ceremony scheduled for Oct. 23 in Fort Belvoir, Va. DLA presents this award to nonprofit agencies that exemplify overall excellence in superior product quality, on-time delivery, superior customer service, reliability, dependability, consistency and accuracy. SEKRI manufactures individual first aid kits and a variety of hats and caps for DLA Troop Support.



Billie Jean Nesbitt, SEKRI

**Susquehanna Association for the Blind and Vision Impaired (SABVI)** in Lancaster, Pa., announced that its Vice President/Chief Financial Officer Jodie Reinhart, was recently named "2012 CFO of the Year" in the category of large nonprofit awards by the Central Penn Business Journal. The CFO of the Year Award honors the unsung heroes of business-financial officers. The program celebrates their work, which is vital to the success and stability of businesses and organizations, as well as to the region's overall economic growth.



Jodie Reinhart, SABVI

**Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth in Texas** has been selected to receive the Outstanding AbilityOne Program Vendor Award by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Presented to organizations that exemplify overall excellence in product quality, on-time delivery, customer service, dependability and accuracy, this award recognizes the Lighthouse's extraordinary efforts to rapidly and consistently supply Energy Dissipating Pads, manufactured by people who are blind or vision impaired. The Lighthouse has been the sole source manufacturer and supplier of this unique and critical product for the U.S. Army Air Command since 1998. The 3 x 6 foot cushioning pads are used in air drops around the world for humanitarian aid and delivery of life-saving supplies to our military troops. ■

# VISIONARY MEDIA: Making Products You Can Hear



Craig Janssen, audio engineer

When National Industries for the Blind (NIB) offered an opportunity for nonprofits to apply for an Entrepreneurial Grant, Doug Maxwell, a successful composer and record producer, stepped up with a great idea.

Legally blind since birth, Maxwell wanted to create a unique talent agency and recording studio for other professional audio artists—musicians, singers, composers, recording engineers, producers and voice-over talent—specifically those who were blind and facing challenges in the demanding entertainment industry. With grant money in hand, Maxwell founded the nonprofit Visionary Media (VM) in 2006.

It was apparent to Maxwell that the audio entertainment industry had become very visual and increasingly virtual.

“Traditional record companies were looking for talent on the Internet, record sales were taking place electronically through iTunes, and promotion was happening on YouTube, MySpace and Facebook. Many of those websites, even today, have limited accessibility for people with visual impairments,” he said.

One part of VM’s mission is to provide training and bridge the digital divide with adaptive resources. This sometimes means building a website for a blind artist to expand his or her reach or teaching artists to use audio software so they can have more input

into recording their music. The second part of the mission is representing the artists by pooling their talents and going out into the marketplace to promote them. VM’s sales force can personally address any hesitation a client might have about hiring a blind artist.

“Someone might say, ‘I’d love to go with this blind artist to play at our wedding, but what if he can’t find it or can’t show up on time.’ We are there to explain that this isn’t a concern they need to have. Our representation gives equal footing to those blind artists in the marketplace,” Maxwell says.

The first 50 or more artists to sign up with VM were referred by NIB associated agencies. Word then got around that there was going to be a new agency run by people in the music industry who understood the challenges faced by artists who are blind.

Today, VM represents approximately 350 professional audio production and performing artists. With its artists, the company has created numerous commercial audio and video products from audio branding for corporate advertising to entertainment for special events. It has produced over 25 full-length videos and a CD of original holiday music that can be custom-branded and distributed as a promotional item to staff or customers. VM has also developed turnkey audio systems, complete with music playlists and voice-over advertising, which are now being used in 18 AbilityOne® Base Supply Center stores. ■



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