The AbilityOne Program

As the nation’s leading source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, the AbilityOne Program not only employs people—it empowers them by providing training, job opportunities and career advancement. In fulfilling our purpose to provide employment opportunities, the Program helps our employees achieve a level of independence and economic freedom that they might not otherwise enjoy given the staggering rate of unemployment within the disability community.

This year, we celebrate the theme, “People—Purpose—Partnership” to highlight the accomplishments of the nearly 46,000 AbilityOne employees who embody our purpose as well as the successful partnerships with our customers, stakeholders, industry and other government organizations who help us achieve our vision.

The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (Committee) is the independent federal agency that administers the AbilityOne Program. The Committee has designated two central nonprofit agencies to assist with program implementation: National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH-Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities. Together, the Committee, NIB and NISH—along with participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs)—provide meaningful employment to the population we serve.

For the federal government, the advantage is found in the value and quality of products and services that are available at fair market prices from a national network of approximately 600 NPAs across the United States, Puerto Rico and Guam.

AbilityOne traces its roots to the Wagner-O’Day Act of 1938, sponsored by Senator Robert F. Wagner and U.S. Representative Caroline O’Day and signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This Act provided employment opportunities for people who are blind by mandating the federal government to procure products manufactured by NPAs employing such persons. In 1971, under the leadership of Senator Jacob Javits, Congress amended the Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) to include people with severe disabilities and expanded the program to also provide services to the federal government.

Today, the AbilityOne Program operates at nearly 1,000 locations serving 40 government agencies nationally, including the operation of 126 supply stores on military bases and in federal buildings. AbilityOne delivers $2.7 billion worth of products and services annually to the federal government. Most importantly, AbilityOne is changing lives—one job at a time.
Listen, Learn and Lead Tour Builds Relationships and Defines Common Purpose

Informed leadership begins with listening.

From May through September 2009, Committee members and senior staff visited 35 nonprofit agencies nationwide to meet with 60 NPA leaders and hundreds of AbilityOne employees. They also held meetings with government customers and commercial business partners focused on successes, concerns and recommended priorities for the AbilityOne Program.

Committee Chairperson Andrew D. Houghton and Executive Director Tina Ballard envisioned the Committee to use its authority and influence to ensure that the rules are followed and program integrity is protected. They also championed policies that do not harm and do not leave behind people with the most significant disabilities. The need to guard against a “one size fits all” philosophy was often emphasized.

Expanded outreach efforts were highly valued, with many nonprofit agency leaders commenting that greater communication efforts were much appreciated. Executives at the nonprofit agencies stressed the need for the Committee to continue to engage in collaborative, creative problem solving with the nonprofits.

Supporting the employment mission was a frequent topic, with nonprofit agencies emphasizing the importance of education, training and advocacy of the program among government customers. Comments also addressed the desire for more partnerships with the small business community, and the need to assess policies and procedures for any impediments that might hinder business development efforts.

Several nonprofit agencies discussed the merits of legislative and regulatory changes related to modernizing aspects of the AbilityOne Program. Additional themes that emerged from conversations included recommendations that enabled alignment of strategic goals in an operational context.

“The feedback we heard during L3T visits will impact the way the Committee leads the AbilityOne Program in the future. We’re reaching out to people who work within the AbilityOne Program, to hear what is most important to them, and to share their passion for the mission,” said Kimberly Zeich, Committee Deputy Executive Director.

Business process modifications discussed during the meetings included recommendations that enabled alignment of strategic goals in an operational context.

“Supporting the employment mission
Modifying business processes
AbilityOne Program stewardship consistently emerged as a top priority. Several nonprofit agencies encouraged the Committee to use its authority and influence to ensure that the rules are followed and program integrity is protected. They also championed policies that do not harm and do not leave behind people with the most significant disabilities. The need to guard against a “one size fits all” philosophy was often emphasized.

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“We’re reaching out to people who work within the AbilityOne Program, to hear what is most important to them, and to share their passion for the mission.”

— KIMBERLY ZEICH, COMMITTEE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Employment Update

Increased Employment and Higher Wages Make 2009 a Banner Year for AbilityOne

A year in which jobs, direct labor hours and wages all increased is cause for celebration. The fact that these increases were achieved in a challenging economic period makes this success even more remarkable. Accordingly, the Committee is celebrating the AbilityOne Program’s 2009 achievements. Thanks to stronger-than-ever support of our federal government customers and growing partnerships with industry, the Committee is proud to report record numbers across the board for 2009 and expects the positive trend to continue for 2010.

During the fiscal year, the AbilityOne Program:

- Employed approximately 46,000 individuals
- Executed more than 45 million hours of work
- Generated roughly $493 million in direct labor wages
- Boosted the average wages to nearly $11 per hour

Direct labor hours and direct labor wages showed significant gains from FY 2008 to FY 2009. The nearly $494 million in wages paid to AbilityOne employees who are blind or have other significant disabilities represents an impressive increase of 8.1 percent over the previous year. Direct labor hours increased by 4.3 percent to 45.6 million direct labor hours. Wages averaged $10.82 an hour, an increase from $10.44 in 2008.

The number of people who are blind or have significant disabilities who were provided employment through the AbilityOne Program increased 5.9 percent from FY 2008 to a total of 45,936. This is more than double the growth rate that the program experienced from FY 2007 to FY 2008. Of the 45,936 people employed, 70 percent provided a wide array of services while the remaining 30 percent produced a variety of quality products for AbilityOne customers.

Caption: David Benitez
Goodwill Industries of South Florida

Number of AbilityOne Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>43,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>45,936</td>
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</tbody>
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Direct Labor Hours Increase 4.3 Percent

The 45.6 million direct labor hours worked by AbilityOne employees represents an overall increase of 4.3 percent. Hours worked on services increased 4.8 percent and hours worked on products increased 3 percent. Product hours grew for the second consecutive year, and services hours grew for the third consecutive year. Service-related job hours now represent 74 percent of all direct labor hours worked in the AbilityOne Program.

Individuals at NIB-affiliated agencies worked nearly six million hours (an increase of 4.3 percent over FY 2008), and individuals at NISH agencies worked approximately 40 million hours (an increase of 4.3 percent over FY 2008). People working at NIB agencies now average over 1,260 hours of work per year and people working at NISH agencies average over 960 hours per year.

Direct Labor Wages Grow 8.1 Percent

During FY 2009, AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies paid nearly $494 million in wages to AbilityOne employees who are blind or have other significant disabilities, which was an increase of 8.1 percent over the previous year. NIB agencies paid more than $53 million in wages, an increase of 6.2 percent over last year. NISH agencies paid over $440 million in wages, which represented an 8.4 percent growth compared to the previous year.

AbilityOne Average Hourly Wages in Dollars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$10.44</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$10.82</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Average Hourly Wage Rises to $10.82

Wages averaged $10.82 an hour, an increase from $10.44 in 2008. For NIB-affiliated nonprofit agencies (NPA), the average hourly wage was $8.95, which was a 1.8 percent increase over FY 2009. For NISH agencies, the average hourly wage was $11.10 per hour, an increase of 3.1 percent.
The Committee Honors DoD Procurement Leader

Shay D. Assad
Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy

Every year, one individual is honored by the Committee for above and beyond support of the AbilityOne Program and its employees. In 2009, the Committee bestowed its highest honor, the E.R. Dick Alley Career Achievement Award, on Shay D. Assad, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy. Assad’s personal commitment to growing jobs under the AbilityOne Program through Department of Defense procurement has been highly visible, unwavering and instrumental in changing the lives of hundreds of people with disabilities.

During his three-and-a-half years in the Pentagon, the scope and reach of Assad’s support has been extraordinary, spanning the DoD enterprise and the scope and reach of Assad’s support has been highly visible, unwavering and instrumental in changing the lives of hundreds of people with disabilities.

Assad issued a Memorandum of Support for the AbilityOne Program in August 2008, urging all DoD contracting officials to consider the AbilityOne Program in fulfilling procurement needs in accordance with federal acquisition regulations in areas where opportunities for growth exist. Assad’s memo reinforced an earlier communication from the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics regarding DoD support for the AbilityOne Program. This top-level support from DoD leadership has led to new initiatives to increase employment for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

“Shay’s leadership is something you can believe in because he delivers on his commitments.”

Andrew D. Houghton
Chairperson

In addition, Assad and his staff launched an AbilityOne page on the Department’s acquisition Web site and hosted program events at the Pentagon. Under Assad’s leadership, the Pentagon’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month event emphasizes the AbilityOne Program and culminates with a high-level award ceremony hosted by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and attended by senior government and industry officials. One of the highlights of these events is the participation of veterans who poignantly articulate how the AbilityOne Program has affected their lives.

“Shay’s leadership is something you can believe in because he delivers on his commitments,” said Andrew D. Houghton, Committee Chairperson. “His support has been one of the most important catalysts for employment growth in the program’s 70-year history.”

The E.R. Dick Alley Career Achievement Award is the highest award bestowed by the Committee. The award is named for the late Dick Alley who provided more than 25 years of dedicated service to the AbilityOne Program as the Deputy Executive Director of the Committee for People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

Osborne A. “Oz” Day AbilityOne Awareness Award

DoD Education Leader Expands Awareness and Opportunities for AbilityOne

Frank J. Anderson, Jr.
President, Defense Acquisition University

The Committee recognized Frank J. Anderson, Jr., President of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and Director of Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Human Capital Initiatives, with the Osborne A. “Oz” Day AbilityOne Awareness Award in recognition of his outstanding support of the AbilityOne Program. Anderson received the award in October 2009, during a ceremony hosted by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. In 2009, Mr. Anderson signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with AbilityOne establishing a framework for raising awareness of the program throughout the Department of Defense and other government agencies.

Through cutting-edge curriculum development and innovative delivery of learning resources, DAU is leading the transformation of the Department of Defense acquisition workforce. DAU is dedicated to supporting people and elevating the quality of the work they perform. In 2004, DAU was selected as the top corporate university in America by the American Society for Training and Development. In September 2005 and 2006, DAU was selected by Leadership Excellence magazine for the best Leadership Development Program in the military/government sector.

The Committee's Osborne A. “Oz” Day AbilityOne Awareness Award was named in honor and recognition of Osborne A. Day, who served as a private citizen member of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled from June 2005 to May 2008. Appointed by President George W. Bush, his service on the Committee was the culmination of a lifelong career of advocating for people who are blind. The Osborne A. “Oz” Day AbilityOne Awareness Award honors a federal agency employee or agency subcomponent for exceptional AbilityOne promotional efforts throughout the federal and local community.

“This award was named for Oz Day because he felt so strongly that the program name should be a common household word and dedicated his career to raising awareness. Frank Anderson has continued in Oz Day’s footsteps by establishing a framework for raising awareness throughout DoD,” said James H. Omvig, Chairman of the Committee.

Andrew D. Houghton, Chairperson of the Committee, Shay D. Assad, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, and Tina Ballard, Executive Director and CEO of the Committee.

“I welcome the partnership with the AbilityOne Program and feel that working together will benefit the DoD.”

Frank J. Anderson, Jr.
DAU President

Caption: Frank Anderson addresses the DoD audience after accepting the Oz Day award.
A Message from the Chairperson

Dear Stakeholders,

On behalf of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, and the entire AbilityOne family, it is my privilege as Chairperson to submit this Annual Report. I am happy to report that 2009 was not only an exciting year for the AbilityOne Program, but also a year of significant growth in some key programmatic areas. Achieving growth while optimizing federal resources became the cornerstone of success, built through accountability, transparency and collaboration.

In support of the AbilityOne core goals, we have chosen the theme, “People-Partnership” for this report, because in many ways it tells our story and frames our areas of focus for initiatives implemented during the year. In fact, this report contains stories that are representative of the thousands of hardworking employees who are blind or have other significant disabilities that participate in the AbilityOne Program. The Committee is dedicated to building an environment where, through a shared vision and collaborative partnerships, every AbilityOne employee succeeds in achieving their maximum potential.

Many of us fulfill our individual aspirations of independence, accomplishment and community through our family, friends and employment. In countless ways, our jobs provide a vital link to our community. After all, the workplace is where we earn a living as well as contribute our skills to meet organizational goals and develop long-term friendships. It is the AbilityOne Program’s mission to broaden employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities, enabling those individuals to maximize their potential to achieve the American dream.

The Committee fostered an exemplary level of achievement in strategic initiatives aimed at increasing employment, advancing customer satisfaction and enhancing stewardship. We strongly believe that emphasis on federal customers and a commitment to advance employment quality will yield positive results in all domains of the Agency and the AbilityOne Program. The following are examples of this year’s major successes:

- Growing the AbilityOne workforce to nearly 46,000 employees who worked more than 45 million direct labor hours;
- Improving the work environment and career opportunities for AbilityOne employees through the Quality Work Environment Initiative;
- Enhancing Program stewardship and compliance;
- Increasing the average wage to $10.82 per hour, up from $10.44 in 2008;
- Partnering with government, private companies and nonprofit agencies to expand program capabilities; and
- Diversifying business capabilities resulted in over 50 percent of the 2009 Procurement List additions coming from new lines of business.

Just as we celebrate our success, driven by people, purpose and partnerships, we continue to build a legacy of service to the nation. In these difficult and challenging economic times, we stand ready to deliver our federal customers the highest quality of products and services at a fair market price. We take great pride in being a member of the federal community.

During the past year, the Committee also continued working with the Administration and the Program’s congressional oversight committees to better align our enabling legislation, the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act, with today’s federal acquisition and prevailing disability policy.

On behalf of the entire AbilityOne family, it is my honor to thank and recognize all of you who contributed to the Program’s success in 2009. We look forward to maintaining a level of public service worthy of the trust of the American People.

ANDREW D. HOUGHTON
CHAIRPERSON
Mission

Provide employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the manufacture and delivery of products and services to the federal government.

Vision

To enable all people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to achieve their maximum employment potential.

Purpose

Caption: Josie Gordon

Lighthouse for the Blind Fort Worth
Members of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled are appointed by the President and oversee the AbilityOne Program to ensure accomplishment of its mission to employ people who are blind or have other severe disabilities through the delivery of quality products and services to the federal government.

Seated (from left to right): Andrew D. Houghton, Chairperson; James H. Omvig, Vice Chairperson.

Back row (from left to right): Paul M. Laird, Deputy Commissioner; Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner; Abram Claude, Jr., Deputy Commissioner; Robert Kelly, Jr., Deputy Commissioner.

Not shown: J. Anthony Poleo.

“Under the Committee’s leadership, the staff continually strives to improve the Program’s performance and provide value to our customers.”

— ANDREW D. HOUGHTON, COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON
Executive Director’s Update

Strategic Planning Initiatives Emphasize Stewardship, Employee and Customer Satisfaction, Employment Growth and Business Excellence

Stewardship, Employment Growth, Business Excellence, Employee and Customer Satisfaction. These are the four foundational pillars in the 2009 Strategic Plan upon which the Committee will continue to build the AbilityOne Program, to employ yet more people and deliver an increased number of quality goods and services to the federal government.

The writing of the Strategic Plan was only the first step of course. It’s the people behind the Plan that will bring the initiatives to life and ensure progress. To that end, the Committee identified four leaders who have agreed to carry the torch and report progress on each of the initiatives:

- Program Stewardship—Paul Laird, Department of Justice/Federal Prison Industries, Representative, Chair
- Employee and Customer Satisfaction—James Onwug, Private Citizen, Chair
- Business Excellence—Tony Polito, Department of Defense, Representative, Chair
- Employment Growth—RADM Michael Lyden, Department of the Navy, Representative, Chair

I want to take just a few moments in this update to call your attention to a few of the accomplishments we realized in 2009 in support of the Strategic Plan.

In the area of Program Stewardship, the Committee witnessed steady improvements in compliance over the past decade. Expanded compliance training and technical onsite assistance contributed to a reduction in the number of nonprofits out of compliance for one year and even further reduction in the number of nonprofits out of compliance for multiple years.

FY 2009 was marked by Employment Growth in jobs, direct labor hours and wages. We also established and expanded several strategic partnerships to promote future growth. Our new partnership with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) will not only help broaden our outreach and education efforts but also aid employment growth. We also formed new partnerships with the United Service Organizations (USO) and FedBid, which is a web-based resource that helps federal government procurement personnel interact with suppliers nationwide.

Several initiatives are being undertaken in the area of Business Excellence, to include updating the Procurement List (which specifies which products and services are to be purchased through AbilityOne and fair market pricing policies and procedures, which will ensure our customers are paying a fair price for the goods and services they receive from AbilityOne). The bottom line is about providing quality products and services on time and within budget to our federal customers.

And finally regarding the initiative of Employee and Customer Satisfaction, the Committee undertook several groundbreaking steps in 2009. For example, the Listen, Learn, and Lead Tour, which brought Committee, Program and Partner leaders together with AbilityOne employees in forums across the nation, gave us an invaluable opportunity to observe AbilityOne at work in nonprofit agencies (NPAs) and contract sites nationwide, as well as to hear people employed through AbilityOne express great pride in their work. It is inspiring to see the extraordinary levels of employee satisfaction employees have at work, with the ability to take their work home to their families. It is in their faces, in their voices, and with a smile.

FY 2009 was a year of progress, but we cannot stop here. We expect 2010 to see even more activity and more jobs than ever for AbilityOne employees.

Empowering People with Disabilities

Increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities is one of the four foundational elements of President Obama’s Plan to Empower Americans with Disabilities. Among federal sponsored employment initiatives for people with disabilities, the AbilityOne Program is unique in that it serves people who have the most significant disabilities and face the largest barriers to employment. The Committee’s high-priority goals and strategies to increase employment will provide more Americans with disabilities the opportunity to work.

In Closing...

I’ve shared a few examples of our 2009 accomplishments. I encourage you to read our Annual Report from cover to cover. It demonstrates how People Are Our Purpose, and how we accomplish that Purpose through delivery of quality goods and services, and strong Partnerships.

I hope this report inspires you to join with us and make an even greater commitment to advancing opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities.

Together with our partners, the Committee made 2009 a banner year and 2010 looks even brighter! Thank you for your continued support.

"My part of the assembly process for Fedcap's light markers is in the beginning, soldering the electronics. Without the attention to detail that I put into my job, the light markers won’t function when they are needed... I feel that my job is important because it can help save a soldier’s life.”

- JOSÉ PINEDA, EMPLOYED THROUGH THE ABILITYONE PROGRAM AT FEDCAP, NEW YORK, N.Y, FOR 22 YEARS

Committee Executive Director Tina Ballard speaks with José Pineda, who is employed through the AbilityOne Program, assembling light markers at Fedcap of New York, N.Y.
Stewardship

Training Focus and On-Site Visits Result in Compliance Improvements

We have achieved steady and significant improvement in compliance over the past decade. Since 1999, the number of NPAs out of compliance for one year has dropped by 80 percent, from 70 to 13 NPAs. Similarly, NPAs out of compliance for multiple years saw an 84 percent reduction in the same time frame, decreasing from 25 to 4.

Background: Requirements and Measures

The Committee reviews certified data to ensure that nonprofit agencies meet the requirement that 75 percent or more of direct labor hours performed under AbilityOne contracts be certified by individuals who are blind or have severe disabilities. NPAs that have been below the 75 percent direct labor ratio for two consecutive years come before the Committee to determine whether they should remain in the AbilityOne Program.

The compliance process consists of more than simply visiting nonprofit agencies and determining whether agencies are adhering to regulatory requirements. It also includes information sharing, training and providing technical onsite assistance to nonprofits. To help determine and improve compliance with AbilityOne regulations, the Committee uses two methods:

- Self-certification by nonprofit agencies on an annual basis
- Review and inspection visits to nonprofit agencies by Committee staff

The certifications involve documentation that the nonprofit’s executive director and a board officer must certify as accurate. Data collected include direct labor hours for overall and AbilityOne work, and confirmations that the nonprofit agency:

- Maintains files containing adequate documentation of disability
- Has performed an annual review for competitive employability
- Has a placement program to assist individuals in seeking competitive employment
- Complies with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards

Additional information collected includes whether there have been any changes to the nonprofits’ articles of incorporation or bylaws during the past year.

Ten Years of Improvement

There has been a steady and significant improvement in compliance over the last ten years. Since 1999, there has been a significant decline in the number of nonprofit agencies out of compliance for one year (a decrease from 70 to 13) and in the number of nonprofit agencies out of compliance for multiple years (a decrease from 25 agencies to four).

The number of people and direct labor ratio at an agency can be influenced by a number of things. In this context, the Committee has observed the following:

- The loss of work due to changes in demand or to a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina may be unforeseen.
- Improving Compliance through Training and On-Site Visits

The Committee’s publication of a Compliance Manual in June 2007 has helped to educate nonprofit agencies about requirements. Since 2007, the Committee has provided training on disability documentation at compliance symposia, NISH’s AbilityOne Academy, and through a joint NISH and Department of Labor (DOL) effort to improve compliance with DOL requirements.

Feedback from people who have attended the training sessions or read the Compliance Manual reflects a growing understanding of requirements. “The Compliance Manual and training sessions have been a tremendous help,” remarked Bartolot. “We have received many positive comments from nonprofit agency executives regarding the examples of the processes involved and all of the information about medical documentation, competitive employment assessments, direct labor ratio determinations and DOL requirements.”

The training sessions work hand-in-hand with changes the Committee made in February 2008 in how staff performs on-site compliance visits. “We are placing more of an emphasis on determining the selection criteria for on-site visits,” said Bartolot. Nonprofit agencies are selected for compliance reviews based on the following criteria:

- Nonprofits reporting total agency direct labor ratios below 75 percent
- Nonprofit agencies entering the AbilityOne Program for the first time
- Agencies that exhibit patterns of growth or concentrate in business lines that historically indicate potential compliance problems
- Random selection of nonprofits that have conducted an internal audit and certified they are in compliance

In addition to the annual desk audits of the NPA self-certifications, Committee personnel strive to review every participating nonprofit agency on a five-year cycle. All nonprofit agencies have the reasonable expectation of receiving a compliance review periodically, but the actual number reviewed annually based on random selection is driven by the number and complexity of reviews performed during the year.

“Our new approach to measuring compliance is designed to incentivize high performance,” explained Bartolot. “Rather than simply rating nonprofit agencies regarding compliance, we also rate them on the things they are doing well. Not only does this motivate our partners to continually improve, it also gives us the opportunity to share best practices across the AbilityOne Program, which in turn makes the Program, its participants and its customers even more successful.”
Employee Satisfaction: Quality Work Environment

QWE: Training, Productivity, Career Advancement, Competitive Wages

The Committee's vision of ensuring people with disabilities enjoy productive and meaningful careers gained momentum in 2009 when the Committee launched the Quality Work Environment (QWE) best practices initiative. QWE is a collaborative effort to assist all AbilityOne nonprofit agencies in sharing best practices to enhance the work environment and enable employees to achieve their maximum employment potential.

"This initiative is about people. It's about ensuring AbilityOne employees have the opportunity to realize their career dreams and full career potential. QWE will help us identify and promote 'state-of-the-art' best practices to make work environments better for all AbilityOne employees who are blind or have other severe disabilities," explained James H. Omvig, Vice Chairperson of the Committee.

At the core of the initiative are three guiding principles, which broadly state AbilityOne employees should be provided competitive wages, ongoing training and a clear career path. These principles serve as a framework for the development of best practice standards for the more than 600 nonprofit agencies across the nation participating in the AbilityOne Program. More specifically, the guiding principles state that AbilityOne employees will be provided:

- Opportunities to do the work of their choice with appropriate support and/or workplace flexibilities, alongside non-disabled employees where all workers receive competitive wages and benefits, either with their current employer or other community-based businesses
- Ongoing training opportunities that make employment with other community-based businesses possible, by teaching job and social skills, as well as by promoting the worker's leadership and management potential

"Quality Work Environment is about ensuring AbilityOne employees have the opportunity to realize their career dreams and full career potential. QWE will help us identify and promote 'state-of-the-art' best practices to make work environments better for all AbilityOne employees."

- JAMES H. OMVIG
  COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRPERSON

QWE Steering Group Sets the Foundation for Success

A QWE Steering Group composed of representatives from AbilityOne participating nonprofit agencies and other subject matter experts was formed to develop and execute the processes required to advance the initiative. The group will provide recommendations to NIB and DISAB for QWE business plans.

John Miller, CEO of Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin, serves as the group's chairman, and Robert Hanye, CEO of the Association for Vision, Rehabilitation and Employment of Binghamton, N.Y., serves as co-chairman. The Steering Group's roles and responsibilities include:

- Researching, identifying and adopting best practices to implement the guiding principles for AbilityOne employment
- Researching methods to bolster workforce productivity and wage rates
- Recommending ways to leverage employment tailoring and training to promote achievement of the guiding principles
- Identifying systems and resources to assist nonprofit agencies (NPAs) that are at various stages of implementing QWE plans

Commenting on the group's work, Committee Chairperson Andrew D. Houghton remarked, "The Subcommittee as well as the QWE Steering Group have initiated a collaborative process that will lead us in a new and innovative direction—one that will open the doors of opportunity wider for all Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities."

QWE Steering Group Members:

John Miller, Chairman
CEO, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Robert Hanye, Co-Chairman
CEO, Association for Vision,
Rehabilitation and Employment
Binghamton, New York

Jerry Bettenhausen, CEO
Work Services, Inc.
Wichita, Falls, Texas

Steve Pordue, CEO
Grand Traverse Industries, Inc.
Traverse City, Michigan

Robin Usalis, CEO
Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Cincinnati, Ohio

Lou Moneymaker, CEO
Bosma Industries for the Blind
Indianapolis, Indiana

Rich Gilmartin, Vice President,
Vocational Services
Lakeview Center, Inc.
Pensacola, Florida

Robert Silverstein, Counsel
ACCSES (American Congress of Community Supports and Employment Services)
Washington, DC

Deb Russell, Manager, Outreach
and Employment Services
Walgreens, Supply Chain
Deerfield, Illinois
Delivering Customer Satisfaction

At every level of the AbilityOne Program, delivering superior customer service is the overarching goal. From our chief operating officers, who execute day-to-day operations, to our direct labor employees, who represent AbilityOne every day at our contract sites nationwide, each team member plays an integral role in delivering customer satisfaction. The entire team works together to not only expand employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities, but also to ensure the delivery of high-quality products and services to all of our customers. Ace Burt, CEO of PCSI in Austin, Texas, says it best when he tells people, “We hire people for what they can do.”

“We hire people for what they can do.”

— ACE BURT, CEO, PCSI, AUSTIN, TEXAS
Quality + Customer Satisfaction = Employment Opportunities

Products and Services Sales

Total sales of AbilityOne products and services were $2.67 billion in FY 2009. This was an increase of 12.7 percent from FY 2008. Services increased 9.1 percent to $1.44 billion and products increased 17.4 percent to $1.22 billion.

NIB sales increased by 16.3 percent from FY 2008 to $633 million. For the first time, NISH total sales topped the $2 billion level at $2.04 billion, an 11.7 percent increase from FY 2008.

Caption: Norman Ford, Professional Contract Services, Inc.

Top Government Agency Sales Percentage
FY 2009

- DLA 24%
- Army 12%
- Navy 11%
- Air Force 9%
- GSA-PBS 7%
- GSA-FAS 7%
- DOD other than DLA 3%
- DoD accounts for approximately 60 percent of all AbilityOne sales. GSA represents approximately 16 percent of AbilityOne sales, making it the largest civilian agency customer.

Sales Data

- DLA $845,695,918
- Army $322,459,797
- Navy $296,068,916
- Air Force $242,395,721
- GSA-PBS $198,115,841
- GSA-FAS $184,205,725
- Distribution Channels $112,161,833
- DeCA $110,658,714
- Veterans Affairs $104,118,374

Other agencies, each less than 1 percent:
- Treasury 2%
- Homeland Security 2%
- Agriculture 3%
- Veterans Affairs 4%
- DoD other than DLA 3%
- Air Force 9%
- Navy 11%
- GSA-PBS 7%
- GSA-FAS 7%
- DLA 24%

Distribution Channels:
- $112,161,833
- DeCA $110,658,714
- Veterans Affairs $104,118,374

DeCA $110,658,714
Veterans Affairs $104,118,374
Agriculture $97,884,251
Homeland Security $90,058,440
Treasury $45,782,079
Other category $45,389,764
Commerce $35,204,217
Social Security $22,075,945
DoD other than DLA $21,689,933
Justice $21,204,359
NASA $19,972,567

DoD accounts for approximately 60 percent of all AbilityOne sales. GSA represents approximately 16 percent of AbilityOne sales, making it the largest civilian agency customer.

Caption: DoD
<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
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<th>Workers</th>
<th>Wages</th>
<th>Average Hourly Wage</th>
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<td><strong>43,394</strong></td>
<td><strong>$649,000,051</strong></td>
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</table>
“Through the collaborative efforts of AbilityOne Program partners, we are truly making a difference in the lives of so many people. We are part of the solution in terms of empowering people who are blind or who have other significant disabilities through the employment opportunities we provide. At the same time, we are helping our federal customers accomplish their missions.”

Andrew D. Houghton
Chairperson
Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled

“Developing NIB’s Strategic Plan, in alignment with the AbilityOne Strategic Plan, has afforded our Board of Directors the opportunity to reconfirm our mission and our vision for the organization, refine our strategic direction, and identify essential investments.”

James A. Kutsch, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
National Industries for the Blind

“A heartfelt thank you to the Committee, our catalyst for the AbilityOne Program strategic planning initiatives and growth goals. Ms. Tina Ballard’s dynamic leadership and collaborative energies served us well throughout the process. We’ve got the resources, the right people, the right focus, and all at the right time.”

James Barone
Chairman of the Board
NISH

“The Committee, NISH and NIB collaborated to identify core goals that all organizations involved in administering the AbilityOne Program will pursue and then measure our results. This strategy will posture the Program to employ even greater numbers of individuals who are blind or severely disabled.”

Tina Ballard
Executive Director
Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled

“Federal employees should feel incredibly proud because they are helping to reduce unemployment for people who are blind by purchasing products and services that are sold through the AbilityOne Program. With every purchase of SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products and services, federal and military procurement officers literally create and sustain more jobs for employees who are blind or have other severe disabilities working at our associated NPAs.”

Kevin Lynch
President and CEO
National Industries for the Blind

“The AbilityOne Program’s TOTAL focus on quality employment for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities makes it unique among all government programs. The employment made possible through AbilityOne allows participants to experience the true bottom lines of the Program—dignity, a sense of inclusion, and, most of all, the self-respect that comes from becoming taxpaying citizens. This sense of self-worth translates to total job commitment and unsurpassed quality of products and services for our valued Federal customers.”

E. Robert Chamberlin
President and CEO
NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities
Strong Partnership with DoD Results in New Service Line and More Employment Opportunities

In 2009, the Committee strengthened its partnership with its largest customer, the Department of Defense (DoD). As a result, in September 2009, the U.S. Army awarded a Contract Management Support (CMS) pilot contract to AbilityOne to provide contract closeout support to Army contracting offices. “Contract closeout is important,” said Ben McCarter, Assistant Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Army (Procurement). “AbilityOne can help us meet the growing demand to close contracts.”

The goal for the AbilityOne Program is to provide the contracting officer with files that are ready for their review and signature, affording contracting personnel the opportunity to focus on other critical and time sensitive contracting functions,” explained John Qua, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) Vice President of Services Development. The work includes digitizing contract documents, providing contract file destruction services and other administrative functions necessary to prepare a contract file to be closed out, including preparation work for the de-obligation of funds.

This successful Army pilot project will result in a strategic indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract vehicle accessible by all DoD components. Each of the military services and other Defense agencies will be able to issue task orders for the delivery of contract closeout services from a menu of listed capabilities. A long-term contract is expected to be awarded by the Army in the summer of 2010.

Contract Management Support Training Program

Training is the key to career advancement for AbilityOne employees.

The pilot employs 14 people who are blind or have other significant disabilities, including one wounded warrior and one service disabled vet,” said Dennis Fields, NISH Chief Operating Officer.

This successful Army pilot project will result in a strategic indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract vehicle accessible by all DoD components. Each of the military services and other Defense agencies will be able to issue task orders for the delivery of contract closeout services from a menu of listed capabilities. A long-term contract is expected to be awarded by the Army in the summer of 2010.

Since the establishment of the Contract Management Support (CMS) pilot project with the Department of Defense (DoD), more than 60 individuals have completed the rigorous training program. This curriculum has equipped them with the necessary contracting skills to closeout contracts that supported the Army’s mission in Southwest Asia. Currently, there are two AbilityOne pilot sites—one, located in San Antonio, Texas, and the other in Philadelphia, Pa.

The training curriculum required participants to complete approximately 80-90 hours of coursework over a period of several months. The training was designed in partnership with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), and it is just another example of DAU’s commitment to the AbilityOne Program. The training includes—CON 100: Shaping Smart Business Arrangements, CON 110 Mission Support Planning, CON 111: Mission Planning Execution, and CON 112: Mission Performance Assessment.

To be eligible, trainees must be a U.S. citizen, possess a four-year college degree or have equivalent work experience, and have proficient computer skills including the use of adaptive technology such as screen readers, JAWS (Job Access With Speech), or Zoom Text. The pay range for AbilityOne employees on the CMS projects is based on the federal government’s general schedule GS-5-7 pay scale, depending on the individual’s education and/or experience. As part of the CMS Program, NIB also is working with federal agencies to identify entry-level positions within the government in the contract management field when possible.

This successful Army pilot project for contract closeout will result in a strategic indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract vehicle accessible by all DoD components.
AbilityOne Celebrates 70th Anniversary

2009 National Disability Employment Awareness Month Kicks Off

AbilityOne kicked off the fiscal year with celebrations of the 70th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) and the 70th anniversary of AbilityOne. To mark these anniversaries, the AbilityOne Program partners organized events in several cities across the country to raise awareness of AbilityOne and the importance of expanding opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities. The events took place in four quadrants of the country in the following locations:

- Reagan Federal Building and Courthouse, Santa Ana, Calif.
- Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
- Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston, Texas
- Metcalfe Federal Building, Chicago, Ill.

At the events, AbilityOne employees spoke to the audiences about how the program has positively impacted their lives. Other presenters included Congress members, federal customers and elected officials. In conjunction with the Chicago event, AbilityOne received a letter of appreciation from President Barack Obama (then Senator).

The events also featured award presentations to contractors for their demonstrated support of AbilityOne, as well as to AbilityOne employees for their achievements. “I’m here to say thank you for your great, great work,” Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England told NDEAM award recipients at the Pentagon event, noting the “significant increase in the number of severely wounded warriors transitioning to the AbilityOne Program, which provides these brave men and women an opportunity to continue to serve their country.”

In addition to these celebrations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) demonstrated its AbilityOne support with expanded activities and co-sponsorship of the agency’s NDEAM celebration by the USDA Office of Civil Rights and the USDA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). After the singing of the national anthem by Augustus Morris, an AbilityOne employee, Margo McKay, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, provided remarks. Key presentations were made by USDA Secretary Sid Schafer, the Committee Executive Director and CTO Tina Ballard; Terry Thic; Departmental Diversity and Disability Employment Program Manager; and Elaine Ro, Director of the Office of Workplace Diversity and Inclusion. The USDA annual AbilityOne Vendor Expo followed, which featured 20 nonprofit agencies and authorized distributors.

In addition to USDA, AbilityOne also promoted events at Defense Supply Centers in three cities, NDEAM 2008 programs at Defense Supply Center Philadelphia (DSCP), Defense Supply Center Richmond (DSCR) and Defense Supply Center Columbus (DSCC) illustrated the support for AbilityOne that the Defense Department offers, as its largest customer, the Defense Logistics Agency.

At DSCP, AbilityOne Day and the Employment Awareness Program EXPO attracted a large crowd of vendors and visitors for the fifth year in a row. DSCP Commander Brig. Gen. Gustave Perna kicked off the event and other senior leaders also included: Gilbert Montoya, DSCP Deputy Commander and Nancy Heimbaugh, DLA Senior Procurement Executive. AbilityOne Day at DSCP was an opportunity for NIB associated agencies to interact with their counterparts at the Center. This year, about 500 nonprofit agencies and hundreds of DSCP employees attended. It was a joint Committee/NIB/NISH event sponsored by the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office at DSCP.

Like DSCP, DSCR demonstrated its strong endorsement of AbilityOne by the participation of DSCR employees at the agency’s first-ever AbilityOne Day celebration. At DSCP, 450 contracting officers and contract specialists from DSCC attended AbilityOne Program training presented by NIB, NISH and the Committee. Following the training, a meeting was held with the DSCC Director of Small Business Office and AbilityOne Program managers to discuss methods for increasing potential contract opportunities.

Through our NDEAM events, we reached approximately 2,000 federal employees in 12 federal agencies—our largest federal audience in the history of AbilityOne NDEAM celebrations.
Strategic Partnerships Expand Awareness of AbilityOne

To address the extremely high unemployment or underemployment rate facing people who are blind or have other significant disabilities, AbilityOne established and expanded key strategic partnerships with government and industry organizations during 2009. These newly established or enhanced partnerships ally the Committee with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), FedBid and USO. Strategic partnerships such as these help make the efforts of AbilityOne more widely known, increasing awareness and education in both public and private sector enterprises.

USO and AbilityOne Volunteers Support Wounded Warriors

In September, AbilityOne formed a strategic alliance with the USO (United Service Organizations), which is widely known for its outreach in support of military morale and recreational services to members of the military. As a result of this partnership, AbilityOne will provide volunteer support through its network of more than 45,000 employees. 2,000 of whom are veterans—for the USO’s Operation Enduring Care Program.

“The Enduring Care Program serves injured soldiers and their families,” said Pat Leahy, the Committee’s liaison for this effort. “AbilityOne employees will assemble ‘comfort kits’ for service members who arrive home after being injured on the battlefield. This illustrates the care and appreciation that AbilityOne employees have for those in uniform and who make important sacrifices in defense of our nation.”

“This first engagement between AbilityOne and the USO marks the start of a long-term partnership that will work to serve wounded warriors as they return home from overseas,” remarked Barry Lineback, the Committee’s Director of Business Operations.

FedBid Develops Seller Group of More Than 250 Authorized AbilityOne Distributors

In June 2009, FedBid and the AbilityOne Program announced a new strategic partnership that resulted in authorized AbilityOne commercial distributors having greater access to competitively bid on government requirements for commodities. Through FedBid’s The Buyer-Driven Marketplace®, a Web-based resource that helps federal government procurement personnel interact with distributors nationwide, federal customers are more aware of products available through AbilityOne.

“FedBid’s Web site helps streamline and simplify the buying process for purchasing a broad range of SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products manufactured by people who are blind or have other significant disabilities,” explained Eric Beale, the Committee’s AbilityOne Program Liaison. “When federal government buyers want to purchase AbilityOne products from authorized AbilityOne commercial distributors, the buyers can do so by simply clicking a button when posting a buy order—it’s as simple as that.”

FedBid developed an AbilityOne seller group that consists of more than 250 authorized AbilityOne distributors that have been registered and trained on how to use FedBid. FedBid also prominently highlighted the AbilityOne Program on its Web site.

DAU Provides Education and Awareness of AbilityOne

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) is one of our nation’s most honored corporate training institutions. Its innovative contributions to curriculum development and training are integral to transforming the defense acquisition workforce.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DAU and the AbilityOne Program established a new strategic partnership, increasing exposure and understanding of the Committee’s statutory mission and objectives throughout the Department of Defense and other government agencies.

“The MOU details how our organizations will work together to identify educational opportunities and increase the awareness of AbilityOne and our products and services produced by people who are blind or who have other significant disabilities,” explained Kimberly Zeich, the Committee’s Deputy Executive Director. “AbilityOne has the opportunity to make academic presentations within appropriate DAU courses and to coordinate with regional DAU campuses for student tours to AbilityOne nonprofit organizations.”

Highlights of the DAU—AbilityOne Partnership

AbilityOne Webinars — DAU will provide AbilityOne with assistance in producing educational Webinars for DAU students and other acquisition professionals, and will help ensure the Webinars are available at appropriate Web portals and learning sites.

AbilityOne Guidebook — DAU will add an AbilityOne Guidebook on the DAU Contracting Portal, which is located within the DAU Web site.

Support for Wounded Warriors — DAU pledged to work with the AbilityOne Program to create or locate job opportunities for wounded warriors, particularly through nonprofit agencies associated with AbilityOne. DAU and the DAU Alumni Association will provide links from their Web sites to the section of the AbilityOne Web site that lists wounded warriors who are seeking work.

Increasing awareness of AbilityOne will enhance employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities while allowing federal government customers to receive high quality products and services. AbilityOne’s partnerships with the USO, FedBid and DAU mark the start of an ever-increasing number of strategic partnerships with industry and government organizations to grow awareness of AbilityOne.

Patrick Leahy, Committee’s Liaison for the Enduring Care Program
Nationwide Network of Nonprofit Agencies

**ALABAMA**
- Alabama Goodwill Industries, Inc. (NISH)
- Central Alabama Rehabilitation Services (NISH)
- Columbus Community Services (NISH)
- Madison Rehabilitation Services (NISH)
- Montgomery Rehabilitation Services (NISH)
- North Alabama Rehabilitation Services (NISH)
- Tuscaloosa Rehabilitation Services (NISH)

**ARIZONA**
- Biskra Voice of the Handicapped (NISH)
- Biskra Voice of the Handicapped (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)
- Arizona Industries for the Blind (NISH)

**CALIFORNIA**
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)
- Bakersfield Association of the Visually Impaired (NISH)

**COLORADO**
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)
- Colorado Springs Goodwill Industries Inc. (NISH)

**DELAWARE**
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)
- Delaware Services for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (NISH)

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)
- Washington, D.C. Area Health Association (NISH)

**CONNECTICUT**
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)
- Enfield Developmental Disabilities Services, Inc. (NISH)

**FLORIDA**
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)
- Boca Raton Goodwill Industries of Florida, Inc. (NISH)

“I know when I look back at my career, I will be proud of the fact that we were able to meet the requirements of the American warfighter with the help of the folks in the AbilityOne Program. We use the AbilityOne Program because they provide quality items and services to us.”

— THOMAS BOUCHARD, ARMY SOLDER SYSTEMS CENTER US ARMY RESOURCES ACQUISITION CENTER
As a participant of the Warrior in Transition Program, Mittman has been detailed by the Army to...

In July 2005, Mittman was severely wounded in Iraq when an Improvised Explosive Device exploded near his vehicle, leaving him without a nose, lips, most of his teeth and the majority of his vision.

In the following years, Mittman was stationed at Fort Campbell, KY and in Korea. He later deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. In 2006, Mittman was stationed at Fort Campbell, KY and in Korea. He later deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

As a participant of the Warrior in Transition Program, Mittman has been detailed by the Army to...

"This is the first real stable job I've had...The thing I like most about the AbilityOne Program is the training I receive. Most of my training is hands-on right here...with the military.”

— ROLLAND BAILEY, ARMY WORKER EMPLOYEE, SODOM, FORT LEWIS, WA
"It makes me proud knowing that I’m helping G.I.s in the field."

— RUSSELL KEEL, ABILITYONE EMPLOYEE, SEDOMM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
“Our office and janitorial products not only help people like me who are visually impaired, but they help support our military. That makes me happy.”

— VICTOR CARDON, ABILITYONE EMPLOYEE, FORT BELVOIR’S SKILRAFT SELF-SERVICE SUPPLY CENTER
"Working with the AbilityOne Program is not only something that feels right but also it is right on the bottom line."

— JAMES FOLEY, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
In June 2006, SPC Alvin Ramlu and his team were on a three-vehicle convoy operation in Afghanistan when they were ambushed by a suicide bomber followed by an enemy engagement. Despite being wounded, SPC Ramlu called in a medical evacuation and was later awarded the Combat Action Badge for his actions. Upon returning to the United States, SPC Ramlu was diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), making it nearly impossible for him to stop reliving the horrific experience. Simple actions like driving down the street became mentally challenging. When Ramlu was medically retired from the Army, he was given a second chance by the AbilityOne Program to lead a productive life while serving his country. Through the Program’s nonprofit Project HIRED, which operates call centers in five locations in California, Ramlu helps fellow veterans by answering calls for the Veterans Administration Hospital in Mather, Calif. Today, SPC Ramlu and his wife are grateful to the AbilityOne Program and Project HIRED for giving him the chance to enter the civilian workforce.

“"I know that I’ll be alright as long as I can work and bring home a paycheck; and the AbilityOne Program makes that possible for me and thousands of others who desperately need it.”" – ALVIN RAMLU

Since 2002, David Gwin has served as a telephone switchboard operator for NewView Oklahoma (formerly Oklahoma League for the Blind) at Tinker Air Force Base. Many people look forward to hearing “Operator 15” when they call in because of his excellent customer service skills. He started his career at the agency in 1995 with summer employment while in high school. Gwin is truly a valued team member and has earned respect and admiration from his co-workers, base personnel and customers because of his strong work ethic and personal character. He has received numerous “Profiles in Success” recognitions for exemplary on-the-job performance. In 2009, Gwin received National Industries for the Blind’s Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award in recognition of his accomplishments. Gwin was diagnosed with retinal blastoma at age two, resulting in the loss of both of his eyes. He was a high achiever in school, graduating valedictorian of his class with honors in wrestling, jazz band, history and piano. Gwin graduated from East Central University in Ada, Okla., with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology and communications.

"The valuable feedback we heard from employees, partners and customers during the L3T visits will guide the Committee in leading AbilityOne into the future. We look forward to continuing the story in our 2010 annual report.”

– ANDREW D. HOUGHTON, COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

"I’ve come to work not feeling like giving my all,” she admits, “then I realize that our guys [at war] have to have this truck to complete their mission. I’m honored to work for a company like this:”

Committee member Abram Claude (left) meets AbilityOne employees Robert Nagel (center) and Bill Allen (right) during an L3T visit to the Sandy Dodd Institute.
“Government is competent when all who compose it work as trustees for the whole people. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of this country's interest and concern.”

—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Second Inaugural Address
January 20, 1937