

ABILITY

one

2015-2016
abilityone.gov



WE MAKE IT HAPPEN

Outfitting the Nation's Military **page 4**

Providing Uniform Items to U.S. Forest Service **page 10**



Message from the Executive Director



DEAR FRIEND:

If you are a Federal acquisition professional, you have the position and the power to satisfy government business requirements while helping bring about important societal change. The former goal is outlined in your position description or contractual agreements, and in laws and regulations such as the Federal Acquisition Regulation. The latter goal may be less formally defined, but is no less important given the mandatory nature of the AbilityOne® Program. In FY 2014, the AbilityOne Program created jobs for more than 46,000 people - a noteworthy achievement on every level. We invite you to be a part of this ongoing effort.

By recommending and purchasing AbilityOne products and services, you help create jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. This segment of our population has the most barriers to competitive employment, and includes wounded warriors who are transitioning into civilian careers. People who are blind or have significant disabilities contend with a chronic jobless rate of 70 percent. That accounts for approximately 11 million men and women.¹

The impact of persistent non-employment affects one's very being. Fortunately, thanks to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act of 1938, which originally was limited to those who are blind, and the program's expansion in 1971 to include people with all significant disabilities, we have a very specific mandate and means to improve the job participation rate. This is accomplished by requiring the Federal Government to purchase more than 3,000 specified products and services from participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs) employing people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

WE MAKE IT HAPPEN

By creating tens of thousands of jobs in this manner, we enable people to join the ranks of taxpayers, open the door to upward mobility and provide the Federal Government with the products and services it needs to achieve its mission, at fair market prices. This is the essence of the AbilityOne Program.

Procuring these products and services makes it possible to equip our military personnel from duty station to deployment; supports the U.S. Forest Service's mission to manage and protect our national forests and grasslands; and contributes to the success of day-to-day operations of the Department of Defense and more than two dozen civilian agencies. This is a huge effort, and the total AbilityOne fulfillment of these products and services is valued at more than \$2.8 billion annually.

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission® administers the program, but relies on you in your professional roles, with the position, the purpose and the authority, to make doing business with AbilityOne nonprofit agencies a natural course of your day-to-day work and an integral part of your strategic business plan.

A GREAT AMERICAN RESOURCE

Our 77-year track record of success underscores the fact that the AbilityOne Program is a great American resource. As you read through this magazine, you will gain a better understanding of our capabilities, meet a few of the exemplary men and women of AbilityOne; and see how we can help you in accomplishing your mission.

Together, we make it happen.

Sincerely,

Tina Ballard

TINA BALLARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CEO

U.S. AbilityOne Commission

Volume 5, No. 1 • October 2015
AbilityOne® Program Magazine is a joint publication under the AbilityOne Program between the U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica®. Address corrections or additions should be emailed to customerservice@abilityone.org. Please put "address" in the subject line, and provide both incorrect and corrected address in the body of the message.

U.S. ABILITYONE COMMISSION

1401 S. Clark Street
Suite 715
Arlington, VA 22202
703-603-7740 • AbilityOne.gov

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tina Ballard

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kimberly Zeich

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS

Nancy Myrick

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

George Selby

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Stephanie Lesko

NATIONAL INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

1310 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-310-0500 • NIB.org

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kevin A. Lynch

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER

Angela Hartley

VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

Laura Reimers

COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Mike Johnson

COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT MANAGER

Vonnetta Cornish

SOURCEAMERICA

8401 Old Courthouse Road
Vienna, VA 22182
571-226-4660 • SourceAmerica.org

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Steve Soroka

VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Nancyellen Gentile

DIRECTOR, MARKETING

Carri Nelsen

MANAGING EDITOR

Jennifer Kuper

ART DIRECTION

Alliant Studios

Please direct all correspondence about *AbilityOne Program Magazine* to the following: customerservice@abilityone.org.

Printed in the USA

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, American Community Survey 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

October 2015
Vol. 5, No. 1

FEATURES



Keith Watkins, ServiceSource, works on a total facilities management (TFM) contract at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia. Learn more about TFM and other AbilityOne services on Page 24.

- 4 Hooah! Outfitting the Nation's Military
- 10 AbilityOne Provides Uniform Items to U.S. Forest Service
- 14 Contract Successes Put AbilityOne on the Map
- 18 Ready to Launch
- 20 Reciprocal Purchasing: The Power of Give and Take
- 24 AbilityOne Service Lines Showcase
- 30 EITS Pilot Provides High-Skill Jobs for People with Significant Disabilities
- 31 Fits Like a Glove
- 32 A Hand Up, Not a Handout

FACES & PLACES

- 9 AbilityOne Program Success Stories
- 12 AbilityOne Program Success Stories
- 23 AbilityOne Program Success Stories
- 40 Employee Awards
- 44 Federal Awards
- 46 Central Nonprofit Agency Federal Awards
- 48 Special Awards and Recognition

About the cover:
Main photo by Spc. Chenee Brooks (www.army.mil)

Irvin Keen, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, sews the MOLLE 4000.

Iris Payne, Phoenix, sews interment flags for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Michael Carchedi, Human Technologies, performs final inspections and packages orders for Forest Service uniforms.

PROGRAM UPDATE

- 2 Commission Elects New Leadership
- 34 AbilityOne Program Structure
- 34 AbilityOne to Launch New Representations and Certifications Reporting Process
- 36 AbilityOne Procurement List Addition Process
- 38 AbilityOne by the Numbers
- 38 Frequently Asked Questions
- 39 Product Distribution: From AbilityOne Nonprofits to Federal Customers

COMMISSION ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP

James M. Kesteloot, Private Citizen, and Lisa M. Wilusz, Department of Agriculture (USDA), were elected to their respective positions as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® at the Commission's July 2015 meeting.

CHAIRPERSON: JAMES M. KESTELOOT



Kesteloot has served as Vice Chairperson since July 2011, and is the Chair of the Employment Growth Subcommittee. Appointed to the Commission by President Barack H. Obama in September 2010, he is a private citizen representative who provides expertise on obstacles to the employment of persons who are blind. A long-time national advocate for employment of people who are blind, he retired as Executive Director and President of the Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired after a 40-year career with the 109-year-old agency. Under his leadership, the Lighthouse was transformed into a nationally acclaimed social service organization that is widely respected as being among the most comprehensive in the nation. He has consulted for many organizations and has served on numerous councils, including appointments by Illinois Governors James R. Thompson and Jim Edgar to the state Blind Services Planning Council, and an appointment by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley to his Task Force for the Employment of People with Disabilities.

"I envision a strong team going forward as we work to find new and innovative ways to increase employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities," said Kesteloot.

VICE CHAIRPERSON: LISA M. WILUSZ



Appointed to the Commission by President Obama in November 2011, she is the USDA representative. Wilusz currently serves as the Chair of the Customer and Employee Satisfaction Subcommittee. A member of the Senior Executive Service, she serves as the Director of the Office of Procurement and Property Management for USDA. In this capacity, she is responsible for providing leadership, oversight and policy in the areas of procurement, property management, environmental stewardship and employee safety. Wilusz began her Federal career as a contract specialist in 1995 with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service; and later she worked as a procurement analyst with the Department of Transportation's Research and Special Programs Administration. There she worked on issues involving procurement policy, small business programs and the implementation of an automated procurement system. She returned to the USDA in 2002 and has managed two enterprise systems in addition to working on various procurement related matters.

OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON J. ANTHONY POLEO TO CONTINUE SERVICE

Poleo served as Chairperson from July 2011 to July 2015. Poleo was appointed to the Commission by President George W. Bush in February 2007 and has served as the Department of Defense (DoD) representative for eight years. He will continue to serve on the Commission.

"It was an honor and a privilege to serve in this role for the past four years. When I took this position, I committed to you all that I would give it my best shot," said Poleo. "I look forward to continuing to be an active member of the Commission in my role as the DoD representative. The Commission is in great hands with the new officers, so the transition will be seamless." ★

capability accountability dependability



Put our **abilities** to work for you.

No matter what your Federal contract needs are, AbilityOne® can meet your high performance standards for products and services.

Services

- Administrative
- Commissary
- Contact Center
- Contract Management Support
- Custodial
- Fleet Management
- Food Services
- Grounds Maintenance
- Healthcare Environmental
- Hospitality
- Laundry
- Recycling
- Secure Document Destruction

- Secure Mail and Digital Document
- Supply Chain Management
- Total Facilities Management

Products

- Aircraft and Vehicular Equipment and Supplies
- Clothing, Textiles and Individual Equipment
- Custom Manufacturing, Development and Fulfillment
- Food Processing, Packaging and Distribution
- Medical and Dental Products
- Office Products and Furnishings

AbilityOne enables you to create employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.



AbilityOne.gov

HOOAH!

OUTFITTING THE NATION'S MILITARY

BY CHRISTINE MCLAUGHLIN



ABILITYONE NONPROFITS MANUFACTURE MILITARY UNIFORMS, INCLUDING THE NEW ARMY OPERATIONAL CAMOUFLAGE PATTERN.

About the photo: U.S. Army photo by SPC Joshua Ballenger (www.army.mil) — creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode

The U.S. Army service uniform is as old as the Revolutionary War. But the current uniform looks nothing like it did at its origin. Back then, it resembled the tight-fitting redcoat British soldier uniform but in blue. Over the decades and centuries, however, the uniform changed in shape and function to better and more purposefully equip the soldiers. Its color went from shades of blue to grey and then to olive drab in WWI and khaki and then back to olive drab in WWII. In the 1960s, it transitioned to olive green. Then at the start of Vietnam War, the Army officially adopted camouflage to help soldiers better blend into the jungle environment. More recent uniforms included the Battle Dress Uniform, Desert Camouflage Uniform and, currently, the Army Combat Uniform (ACU). As combat zones and corresponding terrain continued shifting, the color and pattern of the camouflage has kept apace.

Now the ACU is shifting yet again.

On July 1, 2015, the Army started rolling out a new camouflage pattern called Operational Camouflage Pattern (OCP) for its ACU, which is not to be confused with the Universal Camouflage Pattern (UCP) currently worn by our soldiers, but will eventually phase out of use by September 2019. The new uniform looks similar to the previous version but presents a darker color palette and the camouflage is slightly larger in scale. (Operation Enduring Freedom Camouflage Pattern (OEF-CP) will continue to be made and worn only by soldiers in the Middle East or traveling there.)

The Army sought the change after realizing the grey-green UCP didn't perform well in Afghanistan. So in 2009, it began testing multiple patterns in a variety of operational environments. Several improvements are featured on the new uniforms, including a redesigned collar and shoulder pockets. Considered to have better concealment ability, the new OCP will be used in all combatant commands—not just Afghanistan—and worn in garrison. The objective is to have every soldier outfitted with the OCP by October 1, 2019.

Men and women who are blind or have significant disabilities have cut and sewn uniforms at AbilityOne® authorized providers across the country for many years. AbilityOne network member Goodwill Industries of South Florida, Inc., based in Miami, began producing Army Combat Uniform trousers in 1993. In May 2014, the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center awarded Goodwill Industries of South Florida contracts for ACUs in the OEF-CP pattern. Transition to the new ACU OCP pattern started in June 2015.

Since receiving the contracts, Goodwill employees with significant developmental, physical and mental disabilities have helped produce nearly 150,000 Army Combat Pants, 100,000 of the Flame Resistant Army Combat Uniform (FRACU) Trousers, and more than 150,000 Army Combat Shirts—all in OEF-CP. And by the end of July 2016, it's expected that more than 102,000 non-FRACU Trousers,



Donald Hill, born blind, turns visors for the Army Patrol Cap at SEKRI. Hill has been employed at SEKRI since 2006. In addition to turning the visors, Hill also trims the threads and aligns the fabric with near perfect accuracy before passing them down the sewing line.

more than 96,000 FRACU Trousers and several thousand Army Combat Shirts will be made in the new OCP.

“We helped the Army by manufacturing a variety of garments used in field testing so they could select which camo pattern performed the best for them,” adds Sherri Scyphers Hungate, vice president of Goodwill Industries of South Florida, Inc.

HUNDREDS HARD AT WORK

At Goodwill, more than 900 employees are involved in cutting, sewing, packaging, inspecting, repairing equipment and supervising the production of the uniforms. It is a true team effort.

Further west in El Paso, Texas, another AbilityOne-participating nonprofit – ReadyOne Industries – is currently producing the ACU coat in the new OCP from its 350,000 square feet facility. About 300 employees are working on roughly 96,000 units of the OCP-FR (flame resistant) Coats and about 50,000 units of the OCP non-FR Coats.

This work provides both full- and part- time jobs for ReadyOne employees. Some employees are visually impaired or blind and sew through the use of sewing guides, which are basically safety templates that help employees find the stitches. Also, they use hand controls rather than foot controls on the sewing machines. This adaptation requires the hand to be away from the sewing mechanism to activate it.

ReadyOne employees have a lot of support through an in-house machine repair shop, a robust engineering department and in-house vocational counselors who match the person's disability and capabilities to the existing positions.

Similarly, at Mount Rogers Industrial & Developmental Center (IDC) in Wytheville, Virginia, about 150 employees with disabilities are creating the Army Combat Shirt and helmet covers. At present, they're working with the OEF-CP, but will transition to the OCP in the coming months.



Irvin Keen, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, works on the MOLLE 4000.

Manufacturing technology has changed a lot since Mount Rogers IDC started making products for the government in 1987. “We now use a lot of adaptive jigs and fixtures. And we have machines with programmable stitch mechanisms,” says Frank Dowell, director of Mount Rogers IDC. “Ten years ago, a lot of our employees probably would have been afraid to sew at a machine. But today [because of these adaptations], they’re very efficient at doing some really skilled jobs.”

EVOLVING MATERIALS AND DESIGN

Much like the changing technology used to make the uniforms, the uniforms themselves have constantly evolved to be lighter weight and more breathable. “If soldiers are carrying 60 to 80 pounds of weaponry and protective equipment in the desert and it’s 110 degrees, the weight of it becomes a really important issue,” says Norm Bradley, executive director of SEKRI, Inc., an AbilityOne-participating nonprofit, headquartered in Corbin, Kentucky.

SEKRI is manufacturing the Army Patrol Cap in OCP. The Army Sun Hat, the Army Combat Shirt and Generation II

Improved First Aid Kit (IFAK) (see sidebar) are currently produced in OEF-CP but will soon transition to OCP. These contracts help employ 120 SEKRI employees with significant disabilities.

At Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, an AbilityOne-participating nonprofit in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, nearly 60 people who are blind or visually impaired produce the Modular Lightweight Load-carrying Equipment, or MOLLE 4000 (previously known as the Airborne Rucksack) 1000-denier in OEF-CP. The contract started in February 2015 and is in the manufacturing and development (M&D) phase. This backpack can connect to the soldier and the parachute; it also allows soldiers to release it, if necessary, when jumping out of planes.

Likewise, Peckham, Inc., an AbilityOne-participating nonprofit based in Lansing, Michigan is producing the MOLLE 4000 500-denier version for the Army in OEF-CP (expected to transition to OCP in the coming months). Peckham is currently in the M&D phase. Full production starts in June. The 500-denier version is about two pounds



Monica Earhart, Mount Rogers IDC, sews Army Combat Shirts.

PROUDLY MAKING FIRST AID KITS FOR THE MILITARY

Time is of the essence on the front lines of any war. When injuries happen, wounded soldiers need treatment as fast as possible to prevent compounding injury—before the medics arrive. Today, as part of our standard level of military preparedness, every U.S. Army soldier deployed into a combat zone receives his or her own Generation II Improved First Aid Kit (GEN II IFAK). This cloth kit, made from heavy duty camouflage fabric, is worn by soldiers and can be attached to various MOLLE systems.

Each field kit includes about a dozen items designed to take emergency measures until help arrives, such as create an airway, stem blood loss or prevent infection. Specific items include tourniquets, gauze, bandages and antibacterial ointments.

Employees with disabilities from SEKRI, an AbilityOne network member, based in Corbin, Kentucky, manufacture the cloth kit as well as assemble the supplies inside IFAK for the Army. Since the nonprofit agency started making IFAKs in 2004 (the Generation I), more than one million kits have been produced to date. The IFAK cloth changes with new uniform designs, so it's also moving to the new Operational Camouflage Pattern this year.

But IFAKs aren't just for the Army. First aid kits are also produced by employees who are blind or have significant disabilities in support of the Marine Corps and Air Force. As with the Army IFAKs, these first aid kits are manufactured, and then stocked with critical lifesaving items. The IFAKs are produced in colors or patterns consistent with the uniform being worn by the branch of service.

lighter than the 1000-denier version, says Cheryl Wright, senior strategic business development manager at Peckham. Every ounce counts.

LAYERING SYSTEMS AND BELTS

While weight is always important, fire-resistance has become a significant issue in worldwide conflicts. Peckham also produces three layers of the FREE system (Fire Resistant Environmental Ensemble): the base layer (top and bottom) the mid-weight pants and the fleece liner. (SEKRI also makes the boxer brief of the FREE system.)

Another layering system that Peckham produces under the AbilityOne Program is the Generation III Extended Cold Weather Clothing System (ECWCS), a seven-layer system. Peckham makes the base layer (top and bottom), the mid-weight pants, and the fleece liner. Peckham's layered garments are solid in color and in the process of moving from Desert Sand to "Tan 499" in support of the Army's transition to OCP.

-Christine McLaughlin



Juan Pulgarin, Goodwill Industries of South Florida, sews Army Combat Uniform trousers.

All told, about 40 employees with significant disabilities work at Peckham producing the MOLLE 4000 with an expected 4,572 units produced under the M&D effort. More than 300 people with significant disabilities manufacture the FREE System and the Gen III ECWCS. Peckham annually produces an average of 30,000 FREE system components and approximately 180,000 components of the GEN III system.

No military outfit is considered complete without a proper belt. Since 1949, employees who are blind or visually impaired from AbilityOne-participating nonprofit Travis Association for the Blind (also known as Austin Lighthouse for the Blind) based in Austin, Texas, have been producing cotton trouser belts—used off the battlefield—for all the armed services. And in 2000, they started making the rigger belt, which is a nylon belt and worn with the ACU. The rigger belt is in the Desert Sand color and will be moving to Tan 499 in the coming months via OCP. Each year, about 15 Lighthouse employees make roughly 700,000 cotton trouser belts and about 700,000 rigger belts.

ABILITYONE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Whether it's belts, hats, helmets, shirts, coats or pants, people who are blind or have significant disabilities are the heart of AbilityOne's success with the military uniform program. Their skills and experience, coupled with an overwhelmingly positive outlook, dependability and strong work ethic have helped provide several million uniforms for our troops since the manufacturing started in 1989.

At Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, the employee attitudes are contagious. "I have never seen a more committed and inspired group of people," says Christopher Wall, quality assurance manager, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind.

By supporting M&D efforts such as the MOLLE 4000, Peckham employees noticeably "feel a sense of pride and involvement in making a difference in a warfighter's day," adds Cheryl Wright.

Norm Bradley agrees and sums it up. "At the end of the day, it's really all about our customers and people with disabilities who work hard every day and do everything they can to the best of their abilities when they're here... I often hear them say they know they're making products for our soldiers and want to do it right!"

Hooah! ★

ABILITYONE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Jude Lucien



Jude Lucien, pictured here at VisionCorps, left the agency in February 2015 for a contract specialist position with the U.S. Army.

In March 2011, Jude Lucien, who lost his eyesight as a result of Best's disease, landed a job as a contract closeout specialist at AbilityOne®-participating nonprofit agency **VisionCorps in Lancaster, Pennsylvania**, after successfully completing training through the AbilityOne Contract Management Support (CMS) program.

"It was the second most life altering event in my life," said Lucien, admitting he didn't realize it at the time.

After graduating from Florida State with a master's degree in communications and marketing, Lucien spent three months looking for a job in New York City.

Lucien's life changed dramatically when a CMS program representative from National Industries for the Blind called him about a job opening at VisionCorps. Lucien landed a job with the agency as a contract closeout specialist. Lucien advanced in the program every year, eventually becoming a contract closeout supervisor at the Defense Logistics Agency in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania – and one of the CMS program's biggest advocates.

"I have seen participants get off disability insurance, become homeowners and start families," said Lucien, who was able to discontinue receiving Social Security benefits and start living independently. "I'm a contributor to society now. I have financial security. The program is a blessing."

In 2015, Lucien left the CMS program for a contract specialist position with the U.S. Army, where he is on a career track to become a GS-9. Lucien calls his move bittersweet; he loved his time at VisionCorps, but knows the Federal role is a wonderful opportunity.

It was also bittersweet for Shelley Sanders, VisionCorps' vice president and chief operating officer who hired Lucien. "We are so proud of Jude and we know he will do a great job for the Army, but he will be missed," said Sanders. ★

Ronald Turner



Ronald Turner, Calidad, a chief journeyman electrician at Camp Parks, designed and conducted electrical training for colleagues.

Chief journeyman electrician Ronald Turner is not only a leader to the six to eight AbilityOne® general maintenance workers and laborers at Camp Parks, but a role model as well. He takes great pride in his own work and even more pride in helping his coworkers at **Calidad, Oakland, California**, become more successful.

An Army vet, Turner's focus and discipline throughout the work day rubs off on everyone around him. He models effective behavior – from appropriate dress to safety to self-discipline – and is not afraid to speak up if he spots an opportunity for improvement. His helpful demeanor and high personal standards have made him a mentor for his colleagues.

So what does his job mean to him? "Calidad and AbilityOne mean freedom – the freedom to learn and accomplish things in a non-judgmental, supportive setting that really sees you as a professional first, rather than a person with disabilities," he says.

Always looking for a way to contribute, Turner decided that there might be a better use of the inevitable downtime that occurs during the day. He asked for permission to design and hold an electrical training series for interested workers. Once approved, he pulled together training materials from his electrical schooling and various continuing education courses he had taken and created an in-house program. He then conducted hands-on, one-on-one training with each of the employees. "It is an impressive training program," says Cheryl Sudduth, senior director, contracts and compliance, Calidad.

Explaining why he feels so strongly about training, Turner says, "When I'm teaching a skill, I'm actually learning and getting better at it, too. I had people help me along the way, except I didn't have the type of skilled mentors I'm trying to provide these guys. That's why AbilityOne is so important." ★



Mike Peterson, Human Technologies, fulfills uniform orders for U.S. Forest Service employees.



Sandy Shade, Human Technologies, sews a patch on a Forest Service uniform.

AbilityOne Provides UNIFORM ITEMS TO U.S. FOREST SERVICE

BY JENNIFER BROZIC

AbilityOne® participating nonprofit agency Human Technologies of Utica, New York supplies field, dress, law enforcement and volunteer uniforms to 18,000 U.S. Forest Service workers each year.

Under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Forest Service manages and protects 154 national forests and 20 grasslands in 44 states and Puerto Rico, encompassing 193 million acres. The agency motto is “Caring for the land and serving people.” Human Technologies provides 139 uniform items to employees in the National Forest System and Law Enforcement and Investigations divisions of the agency. The program is designed to give workers a consistent appearance throughout all geographic regions of the Forest Service, making it easy for the public to identify agency employees.

To provide an easy ordering experience, Human Technologies created an online store and accounts for all employees, allowing them to order items over a secure internet portal. The website tracks and displays the balance of their annual

uniform allowance, keeping a running total of purchases and returns, to help them manage their accounts. The online store is integrated with Human Technologies’ Warehouse Management System, so orders are automatically sent to the distribution center for picking, processing and shipping.

Human Technologies works closely with the Forest Service to provide items its employees need to perform their jobs effectively. When the agency elects to add an item to the uniform program, Human Technologies researches and sources it for them.

“The Forest Service has a wide variety of uniform requirements from office apparel to back-country clothing, and we can only procure material and products from a short



Human Technologies supplies all of the uniforms, engraved nameplates and badges worn by the Forest Service employees shown here with Smokey Bear.

list of approved countries, which makes the sourcing more challenging. They appreciate our apparel expertise, as well as our supply chain management capabilities,” said Greg Frank, chief operating officer, Human Technologies.

The uniform program is always evolving. Human Technologies implements product enhancements and introduces new products to the program as the Forest Service’s needs change. The number of items Human Technologies provides has increased by 10 percent since the contract was awarded in 2007; and the uniform offering was significantly overhauled in 2012, with modifications to features, colors and materials.

“The Forest Service leans on Human Technologies to be their eyes and ears in the apparel industry. . . It’s up to Human Technologies to go out and find the actual product—or design and develop it—that will meet [the Forest Service’s specifications],” said Gary Poindexter, senior project manager, SourceAmerica®.

Human Technologies employs 16 people on the Forest Service contract, 13 of whom have significant disabilities. Employees work in customer service, warehouse operations,

shipping and receiving, sewing, embroidery, screen printing, tailoring, kitting and order fulfillment.

Every customer order is picked, personalized, kitted and sent directly to the employee. Human Technologies is required to ship orders within three business days. In 2014, the nonprofit agency shipped more than 16,500 orders, which included 80,300 individual items. The average time to ship was 1.29 days, with a picking accuracy of 99.91 percent and an overall product quality of 99.89 percent, a testament to the skills and abilities of employees.

“[The Forest Service] is very happy that they can contact one source to take care of all of their needs. Our employees take great pride in their work and go the extra mile to ensure the Forest Service employees have what they need, when they need it,” Frank said.

The success of this program has led to other large uniform management and apparel contracts, among them the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Air Force and several U.S. Department of Agriculture bureaus as well as commercial contracts with the Texas A&M and Florida Forest Services. ★

ABILITYONE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Timothy Edwers



U.S. Army veteran Timothy Edwers is a general maintenance worker for Professional Contract Services, Inc. at the Warrior Transition Battalion barracks.

Veteran Timothy Edwers served in Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Desert Fox, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom during his 23 years in the Army. However, Rheumatoid Arthritis, severe depression and anxiety prevented him from continuing his military career. He retired and soon thereafter was diagnosed with cancer, which is now in remission.

Edwers joined AbilityOne®-participating nonprofit agency **Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PCSI), Austin, Texas**, in 2011 and, as a general maintenance worker, has “dedicated himself to maintaining the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) barracks in top condition for our soldiers,” says Janet Smith, program manager, PCSI.

The leadership skills he gained in the military have served him well in his current position. Described as soft spoken, Edwers leads by example. He is quiet and uses his well-developed listening skills to forge strong relationships with other veterans, service members, senior leadership and his co-workers.

“I like the cohesiveness with my teammates, and being able to interact with the soldiers who are going through what I went through,” says Edwers. “Serving them makes me feel like I am still serving my country.”

Aside from his work duties, he takes a sincere interest in the fellow veterans in the WTB. He shares his struggles and his successes in order to encourage other veterans facing similar challenges. According to Edwers, “If it wasn’t for the AbilityOne Program, I wouldn’t be here. It kind of saved my life.”

“Tim is a true example of what it means to persevere and succeed because of the opportunity the AbilityOne Program has provided to veterans,” says Smith. ★

Tanya Jones



Tanya Jones, senior sales manager at one of San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind's AbilityOne BSCs, interacts with customers.

Tanya Jones, an AbilityOne® Base Supply Center (BSC) senior sales manager, served in the U.S. Army for nine years before degenerative vision forced her to retire from a career she had overcome many odds to establish. Those odds included enduring the hardship of inner city violence and becoming a teenage mother.

Jones, who works at the BSC as an employee of **San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in San Antonio, Texas**, was determined to create a better life, working two jobs during high school. After graduation, Jones enlisted in the U.S. Army and rose to staff sergeant within three years.

In 2003, during an Army Expert Medical Field Badge exercise, Jones had to perform night land navigation. The task was a very difficult and frightening experience because of changes she had started experiencing with her vision. Jones was diagnosed with night blindness soon after the exercise. Jones continued to serve in the Army for three more years as her vision deteriorated.

Having to end her military career was a devastating blow to Jones, who went through a period of denial followed by severe depression. However, Jones knew she had to persevere because she was now married with two daughters. Jones heard from a friend who worked at a Veterans Affairs location about an internship with NIB. With her husband's encouragement, she applied and was selected as one of the 2008 NIB fellows.

“The NIB Fellowship and the AbilityOne Program inspired me to live again and be all that I can be in my new found capacity,” said Jones, who completed the NIB Fellows Program and was selected as a Presidential Management Fellow in 2013. Her goal is to advance to the executive level.

“Tanya's openness in telling her story of overcoming incredible difficulties and love for the program makes a difference every day,” said Johnette Lee, vice president of sales and marketing, and Jones' supervisor. ★

Trust him to make high-tech combat gear for your son or daughter.

Our armed forces already do.

SourceAmerica 

An AbilityOne® authorized enterprise.



At SourceAmerica® (formerly NISH), we provide a highly qualified workforce for Federal customers: people with significant disabilities. Dedication and work quality define them, from food prep to electronic health records management. The AbilityOne® Program enables us to partner with you and offer our expertise, from budget to contracts and beyond.



SourceAmerica.org



CONTRACT SUCCESSES PUT ABILITYONE ON THE MAP

From Kansas to New York City, AbilityOne nonprofits deliver value and exceptional service to Federal customers

BY SUZANNE ROBITAILLE

America is committed to providing job opportunities for people with disabilities, powered in part by new federal policy targeted to Federal contractors and successful, longstanding programs like AbilityOne® that encourage the Federal Government to buy products and services produced by people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The AbilityOne Program serves Federal agency customers and the American people. In fiscal year 2014, the program employed more than 46,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including approximately 3,000 veterans and wounded warriors.

More than 550 community-based nonprofit agencies (NPAs) across the United States partner with AbilityOne to employ individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities and by providing quality products and services to the Federal Government at fair market prices. Established in 1938, this marks AbilityOne as one of the oldest and largest providers of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

As an independent Federal agency, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® works with two central nonprofit agencies (CNAs) to administer the program: SourceAmerica® and National Industries for the Blind. Both CNAs have seen tremendous success over the years, with new contracts being awarded in the last year to nonprofits across the country with numerous Federal departments and agencies, including the Department of Defense.

A FRESH START IN NEW YORK CITY

No place in America has more visitors each year than New York City. Tourists who come to see New York City's many landmark sites, like the Statue of Liberty and Empire State Building, can appreciate their historical beauty as well as how clean they are kept.

New York City's Fedcap employs many individuals—all of whom have disabilities—whose job it is to clean and maintain many well-known buildings and sites in the Big Apple, such as the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

In August 2014, Fedcap began work on a General Services Administration (GSA) contract to provide mechanic maintenance and elevator services at 225 and 271 Cadman Plaza East in downtown Brooklyn, the sites of two well-known New York City courthouses. The project incorporates services at the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York—which was renamed the Theodore Roosevelt Federal Courthouse in 2008—and the Conrad B. Duberstein United States Bankruptcy Courthouse.

The Theodore Roosevelt courthouse is an architectural delight. Argentine-American César Pelli, who designed the 15-story building, also built the Petronas Twin Towers of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and the World Financial Center complex in downtown Manhattan.

Since Fedcap already provided custodial services at both locations, GSA modified the original contract to incorporate the new mechanic maintenance and elevator services project—marking the first time that GSA has consolidated two AbilityOne service contracts into a single contract in New York City.

The 10-year consolidated contract is helping the Federal Government cut annual costs by \$100,000 annually for a savings of \$1 million over the life of the contract, while providing up to 13 full-time jobs for people with significant disabilities. It also eliminates repetitive services and adds other efficiencies, says Steven Coons, vice president of Fedcap Facilities Management.

“The consolidation of mechanical maintenance services with the current custodial services is a win-win for people with disabilities and for the GSA,” says Coons. “It’s a great socially responsible business model that benefits American taxpayers, and supports the training and hiring of people with significant disabilities by Fedcap.”



Elijah Harrington, Brevard Achievement Center, stocks shelves at Langley Air Force Base.

AIR FORCE'S SHOW OF SUPPORT

The Department of Defense's support of the AbilityOne Program is underscored through contracts awarded to NPAs at several Air Force bases around the country. The Air Force provided nearly nine percent of AbilityOne Program sales in 2014.

Brevard Achievement Center (BAC) has expert knowledge and experience serving Air Force bases. Headquartered in Rockledge, Florida, on the central Florida coast, BAC currently provides services to 11 Federal sites in Florida and Puerto Rico, employing more than 500 people with disabilities.



Eduardo Johnson, Skookum, provides grounds maintenance services at Fort Riley in Kansas.

More recently, BAC added Virginia to its mix of states where it has a presence. It was designated to provide all commissary operations for Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

The contract started June 1, 2015, and Brevard is responsible for overseeing all commissary operations for the base. For the 34 full-time employees who comprise the Langley team, duties include warehousing, shelf stocking and custodial services for more than 97,000 square feet of facilities.

“Our reputation for quality service at the four other commissaries we operate is what propelled us to the top,” says Carl Stephens, director of operations for Brevard Achievement Center. “We continuously look for opportunities to employ people with disabilities and Langley is yet one more opportunity for us to do that.”

PUTTING KANSAS ON THE MAP

The site of another new contract is Fort Riley in North Central Kansas, home of the 1st Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. Fort Riley’s proud history goes back more than 150 years, when it served as a staging area for protecting America’s expanding frontier. Troops escorted mail trains and guarded travel routes moving west across the Great Plains.

Stretching across 100,000 acres in the Flint Hills region, Fort Riley earned the nickname “The Big Red One” during World War I for its red numerical shoulder patch. Fort Riley is home to around 15,000 enlisted military members and their families. It has a standing population of 25,000 spread among more than 1,100 buildings, excluding housing.

Such a large installation requires an enormous amount of upkeep, and SourceAmerica NPA Skookum Contract Services, Bremerton, Washington is up to the job. Specifically, Fort Riley awarded Skookum a contract in early 2015 to provide grounds maintenance services with an actual contract launch date of April 2015.

The phase-in of the project commenced with employee interviews, equipment and tool procurement, safety training and orientation. The scope of work includes mowing lawns at the child-care facilities, teen centers, dormitories, the airfield, military marina and the perimeter fence line. Additionally, Skookum is tasked with pruning trees and shrubs, watering trees, fertilizer and pesticide application, leaf removal, sprinkler system management and, in the winter, snow removal.

There are 12 full-time employees, including six veterans, who keep Fort Riley’s grounds clean and trimmed.

Hiring veterans for the Fort Riley contract was important, because Fort Riley is known for nurturing a partnership with the many military communities that comprise the Central Flint Hills Region of Kansas, says Robert Cordell, general manager, Skookum Contract Services. Skookum worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs to fill the roles, as well as with a local agency, Junction City Workforce Center, which partners with Kansas’ vocational rehabilitation services department to employ people with disabilities.

The U.S. Army provided nearly 20 percent of AbilityOne Program sales in FY 2014. The Fort Riley ground maintenance contract is the second contract at Fort Riley for Skookum, which also provides General Services Administration (GSA) fleet maintenance services. “I believe Skookum impressed Fort Riley again because we really have a passion for providing quality and service in a safe way,” Cordell says.

WHERE MONEY IS MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE



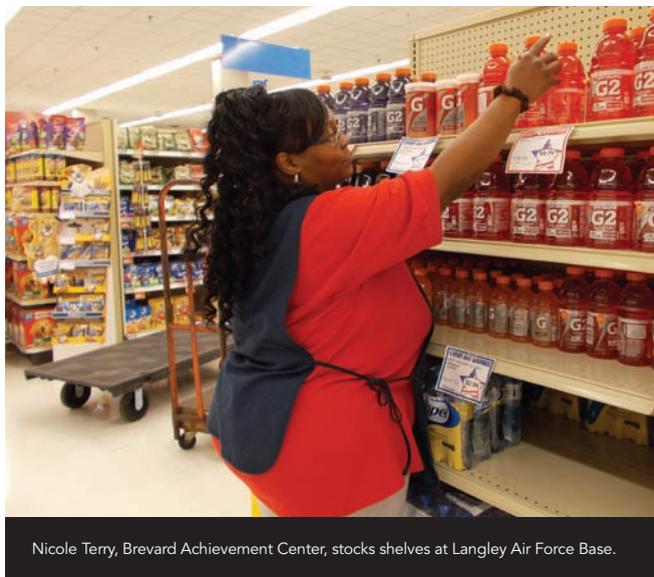
In 1990, the Treasury Department began currency production at the Bureau of Printing and Engraving’s (BEP) Western Currency Facility (WCF) in Fort Worth, Texas, one of only two locations in the United States that prints money (Washington, D.C. is the other). Printing currency is a 24/7 operation at this contingency facility.

PRIDE Industries, headquartered in Roseville, California, provides operation and maintenance at BEP’s Western Currency Facility. The contract, which began March 1, 2015, provides 33 full-time jobs to people with significant disabilities.

The scope of work includes operation and maintenance services such as preventive maintenance, management, supervision, labor materials, supplies, repair parts, tools, equipment, and performing minor remodeling or modifications within the building as needed. PRIDE also supports BEP operations by providing operation and maintenance services for the plant including all mechanical, electrical, utility and environmental systems 24 hours a day 365 days per year.

“The PRIDE team has been very collaborative from the get-go. The team is a great group of workers and always willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, including working 30 to 40 hours a week in three shifts,” says Lynly Schroeder, business development manager for SourceAmerica. “It’s a big job to keep the facility running smoothly around the clock.”

These latest contract successes clearly illustrate how the AbilityOne Program can work, though it’s worth noting that the nearly \$3 billion in AbilityOne Program sales to the Federal Government still accounts for a tiny percentage of all Federal procurement dollars spent.



Nicole Terry, Brevard Achievement Center, stocks shelves at Langley Air Force Base.

Through their day-to-day work and purchase of AbilityOne products and services, Federal procurement officials employ more and more people with disabilities while providing best value to the government. ★

RSA and AbilityOne Pledge Cooperation

On July 1, leaders of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pledging to work cooperatively on issues of mutual interest. The MOU resulted from discussions that began two years ago in an effort to find common ground on the major concerns that divide the AbilityOne and Randolph-Sheppard programs, including differences on troop dining and application of RSA priority. The MOU represents a major step forward in the relationship between Randolph-Sheppard and AbilityOne and provides a framework for future discussions. Through the MOU, RSA and AbilityOne aim to:

- Develop and disseminate non-regulatory guidance
- Exchange information about best practices
- Invite each other to national training conferences
- Provide technical assistance to entities as needed ★



RSA Commissioner Janet LaBreck and Commission Executive Director Tina Ballard sign a historic Memorandum of Agreement between the two Federal agencies to promote their respective missions of employment for people who are blind or who have significant disabilities.

READY TO LAUNCH

National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and its associated nonprofit agencies continue to launch new products to meet Federal customers' needs, including a variety of SKILCRAFT® office products and cleaning supplies produced by people who are blind. These new products produced by NIB associated agencies are now available to Federal Government customers through the AbilityOne® Program.

CABLE AND LOCK KITS



Alphapointe in Kansas City, Missouri, produces cable and lock kits with carbon strengthened steel cables for greater cut resistance and the Kensington ClickSafe®

feature for effortless protection of computers and important business data. The **SKILCRAFT Combination Laptop Lock – Master Coded** attaches to laptops via the Kensington Security Slot found in 99 percent of computers and accepts 10,000 possible combination codes. The tamper-proof, disc-style **SKILCRAFT Keyed Laptop Lock – Master Keyed** attaches to the thinnest computers and delivers the strongest security available in a cable lock.

Both are available in one gallon bottles; Power Green Cleaner/Degreaser, a heavy-duty multi-surface liquid cleaner/degreaser, is also available in a 22 ounce spray bottle.

RECHARGEABLE WORK LAMPS



Produced by Industries for the Blind, Milwaukee, these lamps come with UL® listed wall chargers, automobile chargers and Li-Ion rechargeable batteries.

Lamp offerings include: **SKILCRAFT 2 in 1 Extendable Torch Style Rechargeable Work Lamp**, **SKILCRAFT Baton Style Rechargeable Work Lamp** and **SKILCRAFT Aluminum Frame Rechargeable Floor Work Lamp**.

PAPER SHREDDERS



LC Industries of Durham, North Carolina produces shredders that have hardened steel cutters to ensure a lasting, precise cut, and motors thermally protected against overheating even under

prolonged use. Two shredders are available -- the **SKILCRAFT Level 3 Personal Size Paper Shredder** and the **SKILCRAFT Level 6 High Security Paper Shredder**.

SKILCRAFT Combo Ballpoint Pen and Stylus



Produced by Industries of the Blind, Greensboro, North Carolina, and designed after SKILCRAFT's popular U.S. government pen, this touchscreen-compatible

combination stylus and ballpoint pen makes it easy to work on your tablet or smartphone. Made for performance and comfort, the retractable ballpoint pen feature provides easy writing on paper when needed. It is designed for use with iPhones, iPads, Android devices and tablets.

FOAM HANDWASHES AND SANITIZERS



Produced by Travis Association for the Blind in Austin, Texas, these USDA-certified, bio-based products are tough on germs but gentle on skin. Hand sanitizers are available in 1200

ml refill bottles and washes are available in 1250 ml refill bottles – all with patented controlled collapse technology to maintain shape longer. Varieties include: GOJO®-SKILCRAFT® Citrus Ginger Foam Hand & Showerwash, GOJO®-SKILCRAFT® Antibacterial Plum Foam Handwash, PURELL®-SKILCRAFT® Advanced Green Certified Instant Hand Sanitizer Foam and PURELL®-SKILCRAFT® Advanced Skin Nourishing Instant Hand Sanitizer Foam.

BIOBASED CLEANING PRODUCTS



Produced by the Lighthouse for the Blind, St. Louis, SKILCRAFT Liquid Hand Soap and SKILCRAFT Power Green Cleaner/Degreaser are USDA certified bio-based cleaners.



Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Easels

Presentations stand out on these easels, flipcharts and whiteboards produced by The Lighthouse for the Blind, Seattle, Washington. Available in multiple varieties, including:

- Standard Presentation Easel, Whiteboard/Flipchart
- Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Dual-Sided, Melamine Presentation Easel
- Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Dual-Sided, Total Erase® Presentation Easel
- Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Dry-Erase Steel Easel, Four Legs
- Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Euro™ Magnetic Presentation Easel, Whiteboard/Flipchart
- Quartet®/SKILCRAFT® Futura™ Dry Erase Presentation Easel/Flipchart ★



VALUE

THAT WORKS

Quality products and services that create U.S.-based jobs for Americans who are blind.

**You have a requirement.
NIB has a solution.**

LEARN MORE AT
www.NIB.org/value

Contact Centers | Contract Closeouts | Supply Chain | Textiles | Office Supplies | Cleaning Products | Tools and more



SKILCRAFT® is a registered trademark of National Industries for the Blind, the nation's largest employment resource for people who are blind.



LEFT: Edward Carrion of TRDI performs grounds maintenance services for Lighthouse for the Blind.
RIGHT: San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind employees Jeff Olivarez (left) and Joshua Sund assemble products.

RECIPROCAL PURCHASING: THE POWER OF GIVE AND TAKE

BY SUZANNE ROBITAILLE

Comedic icon Milton Berle once said, “If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” That’s just what the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® set out to do when it formalized a Reciprocal Purchasing Program two years ago.

The Commission was looking for an opportunity to help AbilityOne®-participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs) replace lost income and save jobs during government cutbacks. Federal agencies were purchasing fewer products and services, and sources estimate that around 1,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities either lost their jobs or had their work hours cut due to sequestration.

The reciprocal purchasing initiative encourages National Industries for the Blind (NIB)- and SourceAmerica®-associated NPAs to purchase products and services from one another to supplement the income received from Federal contracts. Newly elected Commission chairperson James Kesteloot, who championed the program while serving as the Commission vice chairperson, kicked off the reciprocal purchasing initiative in an August 2013 memo.

“We expect the Federal Government to buy our products and services. We should also stimulate our own more than 550 agencies to buy each other’s products and services, especially in times of fiscal austerity,” Kesteloot said.

PAST AND PRESENT

While the concept of reciprocal purchasing isn’t new, it hasn’t always been easy to achieve. Prior to the 2000s, AbilityOne products were mainly sold through government supply channels, and special authorization was required for a contractor to use them.

Today, AbilityOne products are available through hundreds of distributors, including dozens of janitorial supply companies. The Commission authorizes additional distributors on a weekly basis, and web-based ordering systems are prevalent. AbilityOne also partners with industry leaders including 3M, Johnson Diversity, GOJO, Acco and other companies to develop quality products.

“Our business environment is much more favorable for reciprocal purchasing today,” says Commission Deputy Executive Director Kimberly Zeich.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The program has shown tremendous potential over the past year. Across the country, AbilityOne affiliated nonprofit agencies have engaged in scores of reciprocal purchasing initiatives, buying products such as office and cleaning supplies, and contracting for services such as grounds maintenance and custodial support.

These purchases don't involve the government and are made between private NPAs. "This collaborative initiative is aimed at getting NPAs to sell to each other as a way to positively affect the employment of people who are blind or have significant disabilities," says Commission Director of Business Operations Barry Lineback.

Michael Gilliam, president and CEO of San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind in San Antonio, Texas, and a member of the reciprocal purchasing task force, has done much to advance the program. Under his leadership, the San Antonio Lighthouse outsourced its lawn services to TRDI Inc. and custodial services for its four locations to Equip Inc. and WTS Facility Solutions, all SourceAmerica-affiliated agencies participating in the AbilityOne Program.

GENERATING NEW JOBS

Lighthouse's reciprocal efforts have generated more than \$100,000 annually in new contracts and 10 new jobs. In addition, four of the SourceAmerica nonprofit agencies are buying the San Antonio Lighthouse's office products at an estimated annual pace of \$10,000, says Gilliam.

Another successful example is SourceAmerica-affiliated NPA Mount Rogers Industrial & Developmental Center. The Wytheville, Virginia-based agency has an Advanced Combat Shirt manufacturing contract with the Natick Contracting Division of the Natick Soldier Systems Center located outside of Boston.

The contract provides 90 full-time equivalent jobs for people with significant disabilities, and what's even more impressive is how Mount Rogers engages in reciprocal purchasing. The AbilityOne-participating NPA has partnered with another AbilityOne-participating NPA, Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, whose employees provide cut material parts for the manufacturing operation. Together, the two nonprofit agencies produce 125,000 to 144,000 shirts annually.

"The Advanced Combat Shirt has provided uninterrupted employment to individuals with disabilities in our five-county region over the last five years. This has been an outstanding program that has benefitted both our individuals and the war-fighter," said Frank Dowell, director of Mount Rogers' Industrial & Developmental Centers.

HEEDING THE CALL

The Arc of Cumberland & Perry Counties (CPARC), a SourceAmerica-associated NPA that participates in the AbilityOne Program and is located in Mechanicsburg, Penn., also listened to AbilityOne's message for reciprocation.

CPARC prepares twice-weekly meal kits for individuals detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under a contract that started in July 2013. The contract provides jobs to four individuals with disabilities who work in the food service program.

Under the reciprocal purchasing initiative, CPARC began purchasing bottled water for the meal kits from an NIB associated agency that participates in the AbilityOne Program as well. Blind Industries and Services of Maryland manufactures the bottled water for the ICE meal kits as well as for all of CPARC's food-service catering and state and Federal projects. Additionally, CPARC purchases napkins and garbage bags from NIB-associated NPA Envision Industries, which is also a participant in the AbilityOne Program and is located in Wichita, Kansas.

A PERSONAL MISSION

Lighthouse's Gilliam says he and others decided to personally take on reciprocal purchasing two years ago and make it successful. "We knew we needed to do what we could internally to generate jobs. Naturally, buying from each other was identified as a promising initiative," he said.

While he lauds the efforts of NPA leaders who have engaged in reciprocation, Gilliam says NPAs can do more, like increasing the awareness of available products and services and adopting new business practices—whether that means stocking different supplies or manufacturing their products differently to fit the sister agency's needs.

Then AbilityOne Chairperson J. Anthony Poleo awarded Gilliam with the Chairperson's Award for Leadership in 2013, partly for his work in reciprocal purchasing and employing people who are blind.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Initially, AbilityOne agencies engaging in mutual purchasing was voluntary. "You shouldn't have to force people to do the right thing," Kesteloot said. Though it's too early to report results, some NPAs involved in the program report brisk business and the Commission plans to send a survey in the fall to get a baseline measure of fiscal year 2015 sales under the program.

To build support for reciprocal purchasing, the Commission recommended incentives for nonprofit agencies and has already recognized several exemplary leaders with awards including formal recognition of those who have done an outstanding job of supporting this initiative.

OTHER SUCCESSFUL RECIPROCAL PURCHASING CONTRACTS

- Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) contracts with Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries for custodial services at CABVI's headquarters and with Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley for periodic floor care services at the CABVI-operated Base Supply Center store at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. In turn, Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley purchases office supplies from CABVI as well as their chemicals and trash liners for use on custodial contracts.
- NIB-affiliated NPA Outlook Nebraska contracts with SourceAmerica-affiliated Goodwill Omaha for grounds maintenance and snow removal, a line item with an annual budget of \$26,000.
- Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) bought \$50,000 worth of products and services from SourceAmerica agencies in their region. GIB now contracts its lawn maintenance work to Goodwill Industries – Big Bend, Inc. and buys products from Georgia Enterprises.

LOOKING AHEAD

Reciprocal purchasing has tremendous growth potential. Federal and state budgets are likely to be uncertain for the foreseeable future, so business opportunities among nonprofit agencies can help sustain the AbilityOne employment mission.

Many leaders see opportunities for agencies to get creative and offer non-traditional professional services as well, which would generate more jobs for people with disabilities. The Commission has promised to help make it easier for NPAs to identify, purchase and receive products or services from fellow agencies.

“If we achieve 10 jobs as a result of reciprocal purchasing in every major city that has multiple AbilityOne nonprofit agencies, we will soon create or sustain hundreds of jobs,” said Zeich. ★

ANNOUNCEMENT

The management and staff of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Department of Education, are pleased to announce the historic signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between RSA and the U.S. AbilityOne Commission. We look forward to working together in helping to accomplish our respective organizational missions, and improving employment and training opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.



Janet L. LaBreck, Commissioner
Rehabilitation Services Administration

ABILITYONE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Iris Patricia Payne



Iris Payne, Phoenix, sews interment flags for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Iris is the most skilled sewing machine operator in the Phoenix plant," says Bryan Dodson, CEO of AbilityOne®-participating nonprofit agency **Phoenix of Huntsville, Alabama**. "She now serves as one of our lead instructors for sewing machine training because of her skills and abilities."

"Iris" is Iris Patricia Payne, a standout at the Phoenix plant, where interment flags are sewn for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and who is known not only for her superior skills, but also for her unmatched productivity and inspirational attitude. Payne was born deaf, with a partially-formed skull, in a non-English-speaking country. Her family immigrated to the U.S. so she could receive necessary medical treatment.

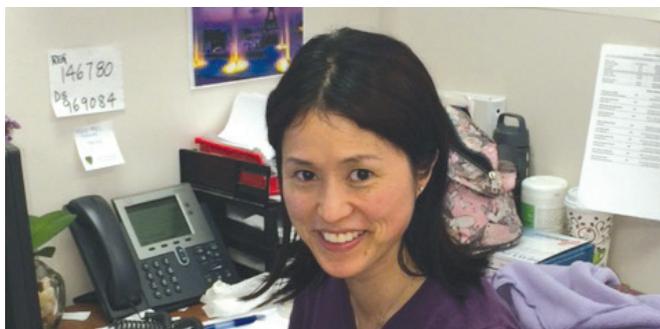
When Payne came to work at the Phoenix plant more than 18 years ago, she didn't speak English and had never used an industrial sewing machine. After one-on-one instruction and plenty of practice, she got more than just the hang of it. Today, she teaches and demonstrates proper sewing techniques to trainees.

Through her more than 10 surgeries to help construct missing parts of her jaw and skull, and then chemotherapy and radiation for breast cancer, Payne remained positive, engaged and encouraging of others. "Her positive attitude infects everyone around her, including facility visitors," says Dodson.

"Phoenix has provided me with work, which has made me self-sufficient and able to buy things I both want and need," said Payne. "I am so grateful for the things Phoenix has allowed me to do and for the wonderful people I have met."

Payne received SourceAmerica's 2013 South Region William M. Usdane Award, which recognizes an employee with a significant disability who has exhibited outstanding achievement and exceptional character. ★

Betty Lau



Betty Lau manages receiving and special requests, and works with customers at Beyond Vision's AbilityOne BSC at the San Francisco VA Hospital.

Betty Lau, who is visually impaired, was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States with her family in 1977. Lau graduated from San Francisco State University with a bachelor's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences in May 1999.

In 2002, Lau began a full-time role as a customer service specialist at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital AbilityOne Base Supply Center (BSC), operated by **Beyond Vision**, an AbilityOne®-participating nonprofit agency in **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**, where she works today.

Lau starts her day at the BSC at 8:30 a.m. She is responsible for managing the receiving department, special requests and working with customers.

"I feel happy and grateful to be part to be part of the AbilityOne Program. First of all, its mission instilled me with confidence, courage and hope," said Lau. "Secondly, it promotes job opportunity and job security, which is important to me and others...."

Despite the challenges of working at a busy BSC, Lau is recognized for her outstanding performance, dedication to excellence and commitment to serving her customers.

"I have only had the pleasure of knowing and working with Betty for a little over a year, since transferring to California," said Melinda Rupp, Lau's manager. "From the first time I met Betty, she has been an absolute joy to be around and to work with."

The San Francisco VA Hospital services eight other San Francisco Bay area clinics in addition to its own staff and campus. The BSC's customers know Lau, and she knows each customer by name and account number. When Lau is not available to receive a phone call or process an order, customers often prefer to call back later to speak with her directly. ★



ABILITYONE SERVICE LINES SHOWCASE

BY MARCIA LAYTON TURNER

What kinds of services does your department or unit use on a daily basis? Tech support? Mail delivery? Online resources? Whatever it is, it's likely AbilityOne® has a line of business well-equipped to serve you.

MAKING AND RECEIVING IMPORTANT CUSTOMER AND CLIENT PHONE CALLS

Organizations in need of contact center services, such as telephone switchboard support, inbound or outbound calling, email customer service or technical support have in recent years outsourced operations to lower-cost countries like India and the Philippines. However, as costs have risen and end-user satisfaction declined, work is shifting back to the United States.

That creates an opportunity for AbilityOne's 550-plus participating nonprofit agencies, approximately 40 of which perform contact center work, says Christopher Seventko, director, technology services, for SourceAmerica.

Within those nonprofit partners, 1,200+ employees handle communications. These employees are very well-trained, perform as well or better than traditional employees, and are blind or have a significant disability. "In our partner centers, one might never know anyone there had a disability," says Seventko. "That's how skilled they are."

They are also award-winning. "One of our partner's employees won a service award from the International Customer Management Institute, a leader in the contact services industry, that's the level of quality we provide," says Seventko. Other nonprofit partner centers have also been recognized with industry awards.



Jenessa Demps, Peckham, provides contact center services.

Perhaps the biggest benefit clients find when handing over communications to one of AbilityOne's contact center partners is the lower long-term operational cost.

"Up to 80 percent of contact center costs are comprised by the workforce," says Seventko, with employee turnover being a key driver. Although call centers have one of the highest turnover levels of any industry – at least 30 percent is typical – the employee turnover rate in AbilityOne contact center services is just 14 percent.

Not only are the highly-skilled workers more likely to stay, but they are grateful for the opportunity to work, says Seventko. "These employees have more efficient transactions, achieve a higher level of customer satisfaction, and require fewer customer call-backs, which all translates to cost savings," says Seventko.

RECLAIMING THE GOVERNMENT'S MONEY

It is exactly those superior skills and work ethic that have also made AbilityOne's Contract Management Support Services (CMS) program such a success.

AbilityOne launched the CMS program in 2010 to prepare people who are blind or have significant disabilities for upwardly mobile careers. At the same time, the Department

of Defense (DoD) had an urgent need for contract closeout specialists. The solution was to create a program that would train and employ people who are blind or have significant disabilities to close out DoD contracts through the inaugural CMS contract, a five-year indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract with National Industries for the Blind (NIB).

Five years later, demand for these skilled professionals continues to grow.

Since 2010, AbilityOne contract closeout specialists have closed out nearly 220,000 of 323,470 contracts received and more than \$830 million of de-obligated funds have been reclaimed. Perhaps most importantly, all of this work has been completed with a 99 percent quality rating.

Today, the AbilityOne CMS program employs 134 people, 114 of whom are blind or have significant disabilities, including 32 wounded warriors or service-disabled veterans, according to Karen Burns, NIB service manager for the CMS program. To be eligible for the program, contract closeout specialists must have a four-year college degree or related experience, strong computer skills and high proficiency at using adaptive technology. Fifteen AbilityOne-authorized providers across the country participate in the CMS program.



Raymond Locke, WORK, Inc., works on a total facilities management contract at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Washington, D.C. Photo: iStockphoto.com

During the past five years, 29 employees who are blind or have significant disabilities have been hired full-time by the Federal Government.

AbilityOne contract closeout specialists and clerks review open Federal contracts; verify government receipt and acceptance; identify any funds that should be de-obligated; scan and index contract documents; and deliver “ready-to-close” contracts back to Federal agencies.

The program’s growth has been slow but steady. The skillset required for the contract closeout specialist position and time-consuming security clearance procedures have made staffing sometimes challenging, but the need is there, says Burns.

While the program has certainly helped save the Federal Government money, it has done something far more valuable for program participants: help them find jobs that offer financial security and career growth.

MAKING WEBPAGES AND DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBLE

Ensuring that individuals with diminished vision or vision loss are able to access information on the web and in documents is Federally mandated by the Section 508 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. But, wanting to make online information accessible and having it be accessible are two very different things. Fortunately, AbilityOne’s Section 508 Assurance service is doing just that. This line of business helps Federal, state and government contractors understand how to make information that is typically read visually, accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The use of assistive technologies, such as screen readers and screen magnifiers, help by reading words on the page aloud or magnifying them to make them legible. However, assistive technologies only work when given the proper input.

That’s where 508 Assurance Services can help, by showing organizations how to aid online users who are blind.

Its consulting services are provided through 25 nonprofit agencies, which employ 50+ assurance professionals who work in teams of four or more on client projects. The consultants start by conducting a scan of a client’s website using automated tools that flag potential violations and point out questionable website layouts, explains Doug Goist, accessible technology manager at NIB. Other assurance firms do nothing more than run automated test, but Goist explains that that is not enough. “Even the best automated tools catch just 30 percent of the problems,” he says.

The teams of blind and low-vision consultants methodically go through the report and suggest usability improvements based on their own hands-on testing of the site or the documents in question. The suggestions could include, for example, adding text to accompany feature images or recommending alternate button colors to make them visible to people who are color blind.

While the 508 Assurance Services team primarily performs website and document remediation, their goal is to be called in to make recommendations before sites are completed or documents uploaded, says Goist. “It doesn’t affect the look of the site, but it’s so much simpler to do up front. Remediating a site takes a lot of work.”

The team is currently working on breaking into the local government market and expanding more deeply into the commercial market. The workload is huge and growing, says Goist, and even when websites have been remediated and made accessible, updates can wipe out previous work. “There is new content coming online all the time that needs to be looked at,” he says.



Slavojka Sabo, Peckham, works in a contact center.

SKILLED EMPLOYEES SAVES CLIENTS MONEY

For nearly 20 years, AbilityOne has managed all kinds of facilities and total facilities management (TFM) is now the program's second largest line of business. The TFM group handles everything from small facilities projects requiring as few as six employees, to turnkey facility operations and maintenance functions requiring several hundred workers. The network of AbilityOne nonprofit agencies routinely manages contracts ranging from facilities operation and maintenance, to heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system operations, road and grounds maintenance, custodial services, mail center operations, food services, equipment maintenance and anything else the facility or installation requires.

TFM employs more than 2,000 people with significant disabilities, approximately 20 percent of whom are veterans. TFM is now a \$350 million annual business, supporting 58 contracts at 46 locations nationwide. And yet, says Alonso Curry, TFM senior program manager for SourceAmerica, "Our biggest challenge is convincing Federal agencies that people with disabilities can do this work." They can, and they do it well.

Part of the reason for the quality workmanship has to do with the training workers receive. AbilityOne's nonprofit network works closely with each employee, carefully assessing their capabilities and interests and then providing individualized training. "We work hard to understand their particular abilities and then place them in an area where they will thrive," says Curry.

Employees also become specialists. Using tactics like job carving, where tasks are divided based on the skills required, higher cost specialist employees are used more judiciously, which helps maximize cost savings for clients and keep employees engaged. Thanks to the custom training, supplemented with ongoing coaching and mentoring, TFM employees are long-term hires.

With lower turnover comes reduced training costs, higher-than-average productivity, and conscientious, motivated employees. "Clients like to have a partner with a vested interest in their facility. A partner that will be there for the long-term. That's one of the benefits of the AbilityOne Program," says Curry.

Another advantage of partnering with AbilityOne is the reduced procurement work. Contracts are bid once and then put on the Procurement List in perpetuity, explains Curry, which eliminates the need to rebid facilities-related contracts every five years.

The quality of TFM employees is so high that many are being hired away into commercial positions, and that's good news.

SETTING THE STANDARD FOR SERVICE



"Exceptional." "Deeply committed." "Go above and beyond." These are typical words used to describe the attentive, customer-service-oriented staff members at the 152 Federal AbilityOne Base Supply Centers in the United States. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the AbilityOne Base Supply Center (BSC) Program. Today, at bases in Texas, Mississippi, Maryland, Michigan, as well as in dozens of other states, BSCs provide the products military base communities and government departments require.

In fact, BSCs are a very important channel for AbilityOne products, which include 3,000 SKILCRAFT® brand items. The AbilityOne Program also stocks more than 500 other competitively priced items that bases need. From office supplies, including computer accessories, paper products,



Eric Northern, Virginia Industries for the Blind, shows off SKILCRAFT® office products at a base supply center.



Michael Thompson, CW Resources, provides total facilities management services at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

file folders, pens and pencils, to shipping supplies, custodial products, food service supplies and deployment gear, BSCs are there to support their base communities.

“Everything we could ever want is at our fingertips in the store,” commented one customer. And if a needed item is not currently in stock, staff members are happy to place a special order.

Since 1995, the BSCs have served every branch of the armed forces and many Federal Government agencies, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Census Bureau, NASA, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Justice, Transportation, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs. Each BSC tailors its inventory for the particular needs of its community.

Customers on location have a variety of options for placing an order with their local BSC. They can shop in person, as well as call, fax or order online via a BSC’s website (for those that have a web presence). Orders placed are filled in a timely manner and then available for pick-up, shipping or same-day delivery at many locations.

To learn more about the award-winning AbilityOne lines of business, please visit the AbilityOne website at abilityone.gov. ★



***THE VALUE OF
DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION.***

We know that when many perspectives come together it creates an environment where the most innovative products and services are created. Northrop Grumman enthusiastically promotes diversity and inclusion because we want the best workforce working on the programs that keep our nation safe.

THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCE.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN

www.northropgrumman.com

EITS Pilot Provides HIGH-SKILL JOBS

for People with Significant Disabilities

BY GWEN MORAN



Cliff Cummings, Gulf Coast Enterprises, performs IT services through the pilot program.



Arjan Dhillon is employed through the Enterprise Information Technology Services contract awarded to Gulf Coast Enterprises.

When Arjan Dhillon applied for jobs in the past, he was often faced with a litany of questions having nothing to do with the work he would be expected to perform.

“It’s hard to explain what you can do for the company when all they are asking is, ‘How would you attend offsite meetings? Do you drive? If there is an evacuation and you are on the fifth floor how would you go out?’” he says.

Today, Dhillon is successfully employed as a project manager leading the implementation of a new program and portfolio management system at the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), which manages personnel, training, financial and other data for the U.S. Department of Defense. Dhillon is working on a five-year Enterprise Information Technology Services (EITS) contract awarded to Gulf Coast Enterprises (GCE) under the AbilityOne® Program.

“The pilot program has the potential to employ up to 100 people with disabilities in a wide range of high-skill, well-paying IT jobs in an integrated environment alongside people who do not have disabilities,” says Dan Woods, senior operations executive, IT Services, GCE.

GCE employs 1,600 people and is northwest Florida’s largest private employer of people with disabilities. GCE

made several low-cost, one-time accommodations for Dhillon, who uses a wheelchair for mobility, including adjusting his printer box and desk height, and providing him with text reader software.

GCE also has a keen interest in employing wounded warriors through the EITS program.

Retired U.S. Army Sgt. Clifford Cummings sustained a gunshot wound to his head during his military service that resulted in partial paralysis on his left side. Cummings had been searching for a job for eight months, interviewing at large commercial IT companies to no avail. Today, Cummings not only has steady, rewarding employment through the GCE pilot program, but also has his sights set on growing his IT knowledge base along with his level of responsibility, income and independence. In other words, he wants to build a real career.

GCE has established its own IT training program that will ensure EITS staff members have the industry recognized IT training needed to be successful in their jobs, Woods says. Ultimately, GCE hopes the program can be replicated by other AbilityOne nonprofit agencies and provide new opportunities for employing people with significant disabilities in well-paying, career-focused IT jobs. ★

FITS LIKE A GLOVE



The AbilityOne® Program offers more than 3,000 products that are on the Procurement List (PL) and mandated for purchase by Federal agencies through AbilityOne as required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (Subpart 8.7), the Wagner-O'Day Act of 1938 and its update, the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act of 1971. Among this vast array of products are certain types of gloves with different purposes, features and characteristics.

Fifteen types of gloves in multiple sizes and with distinct features are available on the PL through AbilityOne. This unique arrangement benefits all parties. AbilityOne employees who are blind or have significant disabilities working on government contracts at nonprofit agencies nationwide perform the work for glove products to meet our customers' needs at military and civilian agencies. Employees' wide range of work includes counting, sorting, boxing, labeling and shipping, inventory maintenance and quality control.

The gloves are available from National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and GSA Advantage. Federal buyers may order using approved government purchase cards or purchase orders.

For more information on all types of gloves available from AbilityOne or to place an order for gloves, go to: www.abilityone.com or www.GSAadvantage.gov.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Bosma Enterprises is a leader in AbilityOne glove products and has been successfully fulfilling Federal glove requirements to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for 16 years.

Bosma Enterprises, an authorized AbilityOne provider, ships approximately 450,000 cases of gloves each year. This includes 300,000 cases of examination gloves and 150,000 cases of surgical gloves. The gloves are categorized as medical and health supplies.

- Surgical gloves on the PL represent approximately 450 National Stock Numbers (or NSNs) and are manufactured by four nonprofit agencies.
- Thirty-nine individual NSNs on the PL apply to exam gloves made from or with nitrile coating, aloe, latex with powder, latex without powder, or no latex for individuals who are sensitive to natural rubber protein latex.
- This contract provides jobs for more than 120 people who are blind or visually impaired.

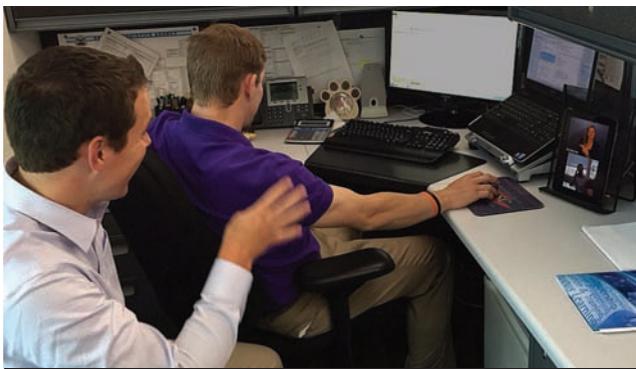
Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been providing the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) with gloves for 10 years and counting.

- Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) has helped keep the United States safe by packaging and distributing blue nitrile exam gloves since 2004.
- CABVI provides the blue nitrile exam gloves to 50,000 TSA employees who screen over 1.8 million passengers a day at the nation's 450 airports.
- CABVI has packaged 622,387 cases of gloves at its Kent Street factory location over the past five years. ★

A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT

BY SARA MOORE,
DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is one of the largest customers supporting the AbilityOne Program and the employment of people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Recently, with the support of former U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson and DLA Finance Director Tony Poleo, DLA implemented a tablet- and desktop-based remote interpretive service for employees who are deaf. The article below appeared in DLA's newsletter in May 2015.



John Slone (left) and Jon Mowl of DLA Finance use the virtual remote interpreting service via tablet. The service is being tested at DLA Headquarters as a tool to improve communication for deaf employees. Photo by Debra Simpson

When she wanted to level the playing field for her deaf employees, Debra Simpson was surprised to find “there’s an app for that.”

Simpson, the program analysis master planning branch chief for Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Energy, is leading the effort to implement a tablet- and desktop-based remote interpretive service for deaf employees. The service, which is in testing at DLA Headquarters, functions as an application and launches at the touch of a button, bringing up a sign language interpreter for a live video chat.

“There aren’t many things you can do in your career that make an incredible difference, but just the absolute joy, if you will, when my employees got to test this application; they were so ecstatic,” Simpson said. “I was able to give them opportunities to go places with me that they were never able to before.”

The idea to use this service, called virtual remote interpreting (VRI), came when Simpson was branch chief in DLA Finance and had three deaf employees. These employees were fantastic, she said, but communication was becoming a barrier to their success and advancement.

“My communication skills were lacking to help them,” she said. “I found that in what I would consider a pretty fast-paced, difficult job, I wasn’t giving them the guidance that they needed, because I would have to spend hours writing emails.

To avoid having to use email as a primary form of communication and to allow for impromptu meetings when physical interpreters might not be available, Simpson looked for a solution. She found it in VRI, an on-demand sign language interpreting service that gives employees the flexibility to communicate throughout the workplace.

“The minute I saw this thing, I said we have to get this tool,” Simpson said. “We have to have this for our employees; not just for them, but for me as a supervisor, because it saves me an enormous amount of time to have the conversation, but also for their own careers.”

Simpson brought the idea to her supervisors, who suggested she take it to DLA Finance Director Tony Poleo for his endorsement and financial backing. She demonstrated VRI to Poleo, who was very impressed and immediately got on board to help bring it to DLA.

“My initial reaction was, ‘What a great idea, and why have we not already done this?’” said Poleo, who also serves as the Department of Defense representative to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission.

Poleo said his work with the Commission, which creates employment opportunities for people with disabilities through Federal contracts, has made him more aware of the barriers they face in the workplace.

“There’s a saying within that community that people with disabilities don’t want a handout, they just want a hand up,” Poleo said. “There’s a huge perception challenge that these folks face on top of their disability. So, when I see opportunities to change that perception, I take advantage of them and do just that.”

With Poleo’s backing, Simpson began working to get the service implemented at DLA. She worked with Richie Busigo in DLA Information Operations, the Equal Employment Opportunity office and DLA Acquisition to identify the right service provider and the way forward. Deputy Director of DLA Information Operations Robert Foster also endorsed the project, and he and Poleo helped solve any issues that arose and provided support to keep the process moving quickly.

After an initial estimate that was quite expensive, the team regrouped and discovered that there was a Federal video relay contract funded by Department of Defense that would be no cost to DLA, Simpson said. That trial has been ongoing for more than a month, with three employees in DLA Finance sharing a tablet, and the results have been overwhelmingly positive, she said.

“We were able to have an impromptu staff meeting, they were able to learn and get training, but more importantly, they were able to share their knowledge with the rest of us,” Simpson said of the employees testing the service. “It’s been fantastic. The system has worked so very well for them. I’m glad I had a part in it. To hear them tell me ‘Thank you,’ it didn’t matter that it took me 18 months to get it here; we’re getting it here.”

Jon Mowl, a business analyst in DLA Finance, is one of the employees testing the service. The biggest benefits he sees from having a sign language interpreter at his fingertips are the mobility and responsiveness he now has in the workplace, he said. A quick meeting with the team or discussion with his supervisor about a project are now no big deal, he noted, whereas before those things would require a request in advance for an interpreter, handwritten notes, email or some other time-consuming alternative.

“It’s just been unbelievable the number of meetings that happen in just one month’s testing and how much information is being at such a fast pace,” Mowl said through a VRI interpreter. “Even a simple meeting, 10 minutes or something at the end of the day, to do a quick chat about a report or something, it just makes a huge difference in my ability to do my job.”

Mowl noted that the VRI interpreters are very good with precise DLA-specific terminology and language, and having

them available throughout the day makes it easier for him to meet deadlines and get information to his fellow employees.

“This is a great tool for the deaf community to use,” he said. “It’s opening up doors for us, for the deaf people.”

Opening doors and providing opportunities for deaf employees is a key benefit of this service, both for the employees and the agency, Poleo said. Leaders, hiring managers and fellow employees who have never experienced life with a disability can easily confuse the disability with the intellect, he said, or can be nervous about the communication barriers that may arise when working with a deaf person.

“I think from a human resources standpoint, we’re shortchanging the agency on a lot of talent we could be hiring or retaining if we just provide what amounts to what I think is a pretty simple accommodation in the big scheme: we give somebody a tablet and pay for a service,” he said. “As accommodations go, that’s pretty straightforward.”

The long-term goal is to provide tablets to all deaf employees in DLA, who number about 120-140, Simpson said, and install a desktop-based application for those employees, their supervisors, teammates and all those they communicate with regularly. The service will ultimately provide savings to the agency, she said, because it is paid for per minute rather than in established time blocks like interpreters who work in DLA facilities. Even with all its advantages, this service is not going to replace those live interpreters, who serve an important function, she stressed. However, it will provide another tool for these employees, their supervisors and peers.

“This gives us the opportunity to make sure that we’re all on the same sheet of music,” she said. “That’s so important to me, especially as a supervisor. You want all your employees on the same train that you’re on and going the same direction. This made sure that we were able to do that quickly.”

Poleo said he is anxious to get VRI implemented throughout DLA, because he has already seen how it has benefitted the testing group, boosting their confidence and expanding their opportunities. He also noted that widespread use of the service might encourage deaf employees who are apprehensive about their disabilities to be more willing to seek out assistance.

“I just want everyone to have an opportunity to be successful,” Poleo said.

The effort to get VRI for employees across the agency is one example of how the agency is accomplishing Goal Area 2 of the DLA Strategic Plan, which aims to “hire, develop and retain a high-performing, valued, resilient and accountable workforce that delivers sustained mission excellence.” ★

AbilityOne PROGRAM STRUCTURE



Members of the Commission, following their May 2015 meeting.

Operating as the U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled is the independent Federal agency that administers the AbilityOne® Program. Members of the Commission are appointed by the President of the United States and oversee the AbilityOne Program in its mission to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the manufacture and delivery of products and services to the Federal Government.

At full complement, the Commission is composed of 15 members: 11 who represent Federal agencies and four who are private citizens knowledgeable about the employment challenges faced by people who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Commission is supported by an Arlington, Virginia-based full-time staff, led by a career Senior Executive Service employee. The Commission has designated two central nonprofit agencies (CNAs) to assist with program implementation: National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica®. Together, the Commission and the CNAs— along with a national network of more than 550 nonprofit agencies (NPAs)—create employment opportunities for more than 46,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities through the AbilityOne Program. ★

AbilityOne to Launch NEW REPRESENTATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS REPORTING PROCESS

In an effort to strengthen the AbilityOne Program's accountability and compliance, this fall, the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® is expanding the longstanding annual reporting and certification requirement for AbilityOne participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs). Drawn from the Federal Acquisition Regulation, the Representations and Certifications (Reps and Certs) reporting process introduces a well-established Federal practice to the AbilityOne Program.

The Commission has required participating NPAs to submit an annual certification, through their respective Central Nonprofit Agency (CNA), for more than 30 years. This certification has two purposes: to ensure NPAs

are complying with the Commission's regulations for maintaining qualification to participate in the AbilityOne Program; and to gather program level data that the Commission can use to analyze, report on and further grow the program. The Reps and Certs process being implemented is an expansion of the current process to more closely match the Commission's regulatory requirements and gather additional information on non-AbilityOne NPA activities that could impact a nonprofit agency's eligibility to hold AbilityOne contracts.

Fifty-nine NPAs took part in a Reps and Certs pilot in April 2015 and provided valuable feedback that will be reflected in the full rollout this October. ★



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.

Learn more at lockheedmartin.com/suppliers

LOCKHEED MARTIN
We never forget who we're working for®



AbilityOne Procurement List Addition Process



PARTIES INVOLVED

1	2	3	4
<p>CA</p> <p>U.S. AbilityOne Commission®</p> <p>CNA</p> <p>NPA</p>	<p>CA</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>CNA</p> <p>NPA</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>CNA</p> <p>NPA</p>

Requirement, funds and authority determined.

Identification of an AbilityOne® solution may be initiated by the Contracting Activity, the Commission, a CNA (either National Industries for the Blind (NIB) or SourceAmerica®), or a participating NPA.

Contact AbilityOne at 800-999-5963, or go to AbilityOne.gov to reach our technical experts and a network of 565 experienced contractors nationwide.

The AbilityOne solution is documented in the acquisition strategy in accordance with the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement and Procedures, Guidance and Information 207.105, Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 6.302-5(b)(2), and/or FAR 8.7. Contents of written acquisition plans consider an AbilityOne solution and document the acquisition strategy accordingly.

Customer and AbilityOne collaborate in the review and refinement of the requirement.

PRICE NEGOTIATION:

CNA assists NPA to negotiate terms, conditions and a price with the Contracting Activity.

Review a "no-obligation" price proposal from the CNA — NIB or SourceAmerica®.

ACRONYM KEY:

CA – Contracting Activity
CNA – Central Nonprofit Agency
NPA – Nonprofit Agency

NIB – National Industries for the Blind
PL – Procurement List



PARTIES INVOLVED

5	6	7
<p>CNA</p> <p>U.S. AbilityOne Commission</p>	<p>U.S. AbilityOne Commission</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>CNA</p> <p>NPA</p>

The CNA recommends an NPA to perform the work and the negotiated price to the Commission. The Commission then determines the fair market price for the Procurement List (PL) addition.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW: Commission staff reviews and documents the suitability of the NPA and the project, analyzes impact on the current contractor and evaluates the recommended price.

INITIAL PUBLICATION IN FEDERAL REGISTER: Upon completion, in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, the initial 30-day notice and comment rulemaking period begins.

DECISION: Consistent with the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act and its implementing regulations, the Presidential appointees make a decision on addition of the item to the Procurement List.

FINAL PUBLICATION IN FEDERAL REGISTER: When the Commission approves the PL addition, it issues a notice to the Contracting Activity. Upon Commission approval of the PL addition and expiration of the 30-day final notice period, the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act may be used as the authority to award the contract as other than full and open competition and the contract performance may begin.

AbilityOne by the Numbers

In the U.S., where nearly **70** percent of people who are blind or have significant disabilities do not have jobs, AbilityOne® Program data for FY 2014 show:



- More than **46,000** Americans are employed through AbilityOne, **3,000** of whom are veterans and wounded warriors
- Nonprofit agency members of the AbilityOne network operate at nearly **1,000** locations representing **40** government agencies nationally, including operation of more than **150** base supply centers
- The program is facilitated through a network of **565** community-based nonprofit agencies
- AbilityOne nonprofit agencies deliver nearly **\$3** billion of products and services purchased by the Federal Government

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Procurement List? The list of products and services that Federal agencies must purchase at prices established by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® under FAR 8.002, Subpart 8.7. It is found at abilityone.gov/procurement_list.

How are prices set? Federal agencies and the designated nonprofit agencies, with support from National Industries for the Blind (NIB) or SourceAmerica®, negotiate in good faith and agree upon a price that is evaluated by U.S. AbilityOne Commission® (Commission) staff to determine if it is a fair market price. A formal decision by the Commission establishes the fair market price at the time a product or service is added to the Procurement List. Learn more at www.abilityone.gov/laws_regulations_and_policy/policy_memos_pricing.html.

How can I find employment through AbilityOne? Visit http://www.abilityone.gov/abilityone_network/employment.html to find participating nonprofits near you. Or, contact NIB (if you are blind or visually impaired) at info@nib.org or SourceAmerica (if you have a significant disability) at info@sourceamerica.org for assistance. If you apply and are hired, you will need to provide medical documentation and undergo a pre-employment evaluation.

Does AbilityOne support Small Business? Yes. A recent survey found that out of nearly half of the program's largest agencies, 25 percent of subcontract dollars (\$217 million) were awarded to small businesses. Additionally, more than 600 small businesses are part of AbilityOne's commercial distribution network.

How does a vendor become an AbilityOne authorized distributor? Go to www.abilityone.gov/distributors/potential.html, review the authorization criteria and submit the completed application. Following a review, vendors will be notified in writing when their authorization is final. The Commission charges no fee for authorization.

How do I put AbilityOne to work for my Federal agency? To learn how AbilityOne can support your requirements, call 800-999-5963 or email info@abilityone.gov.★

PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION: From AbilityOne Nonprofits to Federal Customers

BY CHRISTINE MCLAUGHLIN

Every day across America, hardworking employees at authorized AbilityOne® nonprofit agencies make products that Federal customers use in all aspects of their businesses. In fact, office supplies, custodial products and hardware are among the most popular choices among Federal customers in the AbilityOne Program.

Getting AbilityOne products from the manufacturing floor through distribution channels, and then to the Federal end user is a complex process. Eric Beale, program liaison, U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, provides guidance to the nearly 700 AbilityOne authorized distributors nationwide.

MOVING GOODS TO WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED

“AbilityOne contractor employees who are blind or have significant disabilities are involved in everything from packaging a product to the assembly of its components, and even in the manufacturing from raw materials,” explained Beale. Some of the office items they make include writing instruments, paperclips, binders and folders. The custodial items produced include mops, brooms, cleaners and trash can liners, while the hardware items they create are what one would find in a typical hardware store like hammers and paint.

Once the products are completed, a wholesaler brings them into its inventory and often delivers the products to the end Federal customer on behalf of the commercial distributors. Distributors include businesses both large and small. Sometimes the distributor will order what’s called a “drop shipment” directly to the Federal customer from the nonprofit agency that manufactures the item.



Virginia Industries for the Blind Truck used as part of AbilityOne Program product distribution.

But, it’s important to emphasize that these products are not on the shelves of all the big office supply stores or available through all commercial distributors – they are sold in a separate government ordering system like the General Services Administration’s (GSA) phone ordering system or through GSA Advantage, accessible only to Federal customers. Additionally, the products are sold on AbilityOne.com, by AbilityOne Base Supply Centers and SERVMARTs, as well as the Department of Defense’s E-Mall, by companies or nonprofit agencies authorized by the Commission.

CHALLENGES IN DISTRIBUTION

Monitoring the activities of hundreds of distributors requires constant attention. By law, AbilityOne products are mandatory purchases for Federal customers and the distributors must be AbilityOne authorized. Due to that designation, they are not permitted to sell any commercial items that are equivalent to AbilityOne products to Federal customers. Ensuring compliance involves both education and monitoring.

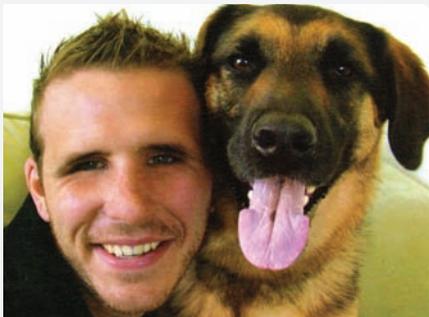
“AbilityOne Federal customers can assist the Commission and the authorized distributors by checking the Procurement List and/or only ordering AbilityOne products to meet their requirements. It’s important for customers to let us know if they don’t receive AbilityOne products as ordered,” says Beale. With so many distributors to oversee, personnel from National Industries for the Blind and SourceAmerica® assist him in reviewing distributor compliance as well as educating Federal customers on this AbilityOne requirement.

What is the norm is being able to deliver hundreds of high-quality products throughout the country, proudly made by people who are blind or have a significant disability at fair market prices. ★

EMPLOYEE AWARDS

National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica celebrate outstanding employees of AbilityOne authorized nonprofit agencies.

NIB Awards



Peter J. Salmon Award

The Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year Award honors employees who excel in their positions at National Industries for the Blind (NIB) associated agencies. Dr. Salmon was instrumental in the passage of the Wagner-^ODay Act in 1938 and the formation of NIB.

RANDY GEORGE

VisionCorps, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Randy George is a highly-skilled JAWS user who produces superior contract research results as a member of the contract management services (CMS) group of VisionCorps in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. George consistently delivers a combination of high productivity and an exceptionally low error rate.

Prior to joining VisionCorps, George served as a civilian contractor at Travis Air Force Base, providing world-class service in extremely stressful and time-sensitive environments, including logistical and communications support to White House staff in transit. Prior to his role with Travis Air Force Base he worked in the hospitality industry with Hilton Hotels in California and gained valuable experience in sales, customer service and management with Trinity Home Medical, a national medical supply company.

George, who has been totally blind since birth, is a recognized JAWS expert. He worked directly with the software developer and is skilled at building compatibility between JAWS and other software programs. He recently led an initiative petitioning the Philadelphia Street Commission to make important safety changes to a busy intersection near VisionCorps. As a result, an audible crosswalk system is now in place.



Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award

The Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award is given to individuals who demonstrate career advancement at an NIB associated agency or in the private sector. Samuelson championed upward mobility and placement programs for people who are blind.

LUIS NARIMATSU

Georgia Industries for the Blind, Bainbridge, Georgia

Luis Narimatsu was born and raised in Panama, Central America. His father, a veteran, worked as a civilian for the Department of Defense (DoD) in the Panama Canal Zone, so Narimatsu and his siblings attended Canal Zone and DoD schools. When he began having severe headaches and vision problems while attending Panama Canal College, doctors diagnosed juvenile acute glaucoma. Despite medication, damage to the optic nerve was so severe that Narimatsu eventually lost all of his vision.

Narimatsu learned to read braille, developed independent living skills, and became proficient with access technology, landing a job with the 106th Signal Brigade, 56th Battalion, 94th Signal Company in the Canal Zone as a tactical switchboard 911 operator.

When the Panama Canal was turned over to the Republic of Panama in 1999, Narimatsu relocated to the United States in pursuit of career opportunities. His long job search led him to Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB). Narimatsu was part of the first graduating class of NIB's Business Management Training and a member of the first class of NIB's Advocates for Leadership and Employment. Narimatsu currently works as GIB's public relations coordinator. His major responsibilities are recruitment and public policy.

SourceAmerica Awards



Yolanda Richardson, Job Options, Inc. (center) with Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair (left), and Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO (right). (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

William M. Usdane Award

The William M. Usdane Award recognizes an individual with a significant disability who has exhibited outstanding achievement and exceptional character.

YOLANDA RICHARDSON

Job Options, Inc., San Diego, California

Yolanda Richardson began her career with Job Options in 2010 at the Naval Medical Center, where she is a floor technician. Richardson has earned the nickname “The Mayor of Building 26” because of her pleasant demeanor and the care she shows the wounded warriors. Most of the men and women in the building she services have severe injuries and depression. She’s become a trusted confidant to many of them because she sees them regularly and knows what it’s like to live with severe depression. She attributes her success to her desire to serve and honor those who have made immeasurable sacrifices for our freedom. Richardson is reliable, takes pride in her work and exudes a passion for helping others succeed, evidenced by the many letters of praise and appreciation she has received from supervisors, managers and Federal Government customers.



Jeff Carver, InspiriTec, Inc. (second from right) with Dave Dubinsky, executive director, SourceAmerica Pacific West Region (left), Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair (second from left) and Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO (right). (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

Evelyne Villines Award

The Evelyne Villines Award recognizes an individual with a significant disability who has advanced from work on an AbilityOne contract into private/government sector employment or management within the nonprofit agency.

JEFF CARVER

InspiriTec, Inc., Fort Knox, Kentucky

After leaving the U.S. Army with service-related spine and neck injuries, Jeff Carver spent five months unemployed and submitted over 200 job applications before joining InspiriTec, Inc. in September 2011. As a customer care representative (CCR) for the U.S. Army’s Human Resources Service Center (HRSC), Carver uses his military experience to assist callers with military benefits related questions. He was quickly promoted to lead CCR, then to program manager of the HRSC and later to personnel security assurance program manager. Promoted again to Defense Manpower Data Center program manager and later deputy program director, he is currently responsible for 140 employees who answer 40,000 calls monthly. It is estimated he will soon oversee 250 employees answering more than 100,000 calls monthly. Carver has an associate’s degree in general studies and is currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree in human resources. Despite his increasing work and educational responsibilities, he always makes time to provide career guidance and support for other wounded warriors.



Carlos Powell, Skookum (second from left) with Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair (far left), Shay Assad, U.S. Department of Defense, director of defense pricing (second from right) and Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO (far right). (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

AbilityOne Honor Roll for Veterans with Disabilities Award

The AbilityOne® Honor Roll for Veterans with Disabilities Award recognizes a service-disabled veteran who has exhibited outstanding achievement in his/her work life.

CARLOS POWELL

Skookum, Fort Meade, Maryland

Carlos Powell served 22 years in the U.S. Army in various military occupational specialties, including cannon crewmember, infantryman, military policeman and unit supply specialist. During his third tour in Iraq, Powell was shot by a sniper in the hand and back, paralyzing him from the waist down. He spent eight months at Walter Reed Medical Center in physical therapy, regained the use of his legs and was discharged from the Army. He then faced his next challenge, finding a job. Powell joined Skookum in July 2011 as a laborer and was quickly promoted to Transportation Motor-Pool Dispatcher. His knowledge and understanding of Army policies and procedures in the transportation field coupled with his positive attitude made for a seamless transition. He creates a friendly, focused and efficient environment for the 115 customers, 2,300 licensed drivers and 362 vehicles the Transportation Motor-Pool team supports. Powell coaches football for the Boy's Club, works with baseball coaches and volunteers at the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).



Ernest Tubbs, Vocational Guidance Services (center) with Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair (left), and Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO (right). (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

President's Award

The President's Award recognizes a non-AbilityOne Program employee with a significant disability who has exhibited outstanding leadership and exceptional character.

ERNEST TUBBS

Vocational Guidance Services, Cleveland, Ohio

In 1984, Ernest "Ernie" Tubbs began working at VGS in the wood shop, building bulletin boards for the U.S. Postal Service. In 1987, he became the supervisor for one of VGS' largest contracts, producing Dobie scouring pads. For 15 years, he successfully oversaw a department of 50+ employees, who produced on average one million scouring pads each month. Since 2002, Tubbs has held a unique position at VGS, where he serves both sides of the agency's work-vocational rehabilitation and social enterprise. He oversees the contract shop as well as order fulfillment and shipping, and continues his work with VGS' Work Adjustment Program, training individuals in business operations and teaching job-readiness skills. Tubbs' visual impairment and physical disabilities do not limit him. He is a dependable employee and, for over 30 years, he has led by example and dedicated himself to the mission. His adaptability and leadership have inspired many individuals with disabilities and colleagues throughout his accomplished career.



John Lemus, Skils'kin (center) with Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair (left) and Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO (right). (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

Tom Miller Award for Advocacy

The Tom Miller Award for Advocacy recognizes an employee with a significant disability who has demonstrated outstanding achievement and remarkable passion for self-advocacy on a local and/or national level.

JOHN LEMUS

SKILS'KIN, Spokane, Washington

John Lemus has been advancing rights, opportunities and training for people with disabilities since he was in high school. Over the past seven years, Lemus served on multiple councils and groups related to decision-making and empowerment for people with disabilities, and authored Policy 116, which focuses on the rights and supports of parents who have developmental disabilities. He has personally met and formed relationships with local, state and congressional leaders in the State of Washington. When the state government faced deep budget cuts, Lemus lobbied his legislators about service funds and was able to protect current funding levels. He achieved this by educating them on the importance of services and employment for individuals with disabilities. Lemus is a great role model for people with disabilities who want to work, and says, "I don't want to be treated differently. I want to be held accountable to the duties of my role. I also want to be supported." ★



On September 27, 2014, Colorado Springs-based Vectrus began operations as a publicly traded global government services company. Vectrus brings significant experience in deploying resources rapidly and with precision to support the mission success of our customers.

Now, as a newly independent company, we deliver large-scale information technology, logistics, and infrastructure services to our customers in the world's toughest environments in 18 countries and on four continents.

AT VECTRUS, our more than 70-year legacy as part of ITT and Exelis demonstrates there is no task we can't tackle, no terrain we won't harness, and no mission we can't fulfill.

We are **TRUE TO YOUR MISSION**.

FEDERAL AWARDS

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission recognizes 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

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 Dick Alley, who gave 25 years of dedicated service to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission® as its Deputy Executive Director.



MS. VICKI TAFT
Section Chief, Base Support Section, Tinker Air Force Base Department of the Air Force

For more than 25 years, Vicki Taft has worked to procure service contracts that employ people with disabilities at Tinker Air Force

Base in Oklahoma. She has also actively worked to promote base purchasing of SKILCRAFT® products. As a result of her efforts, more than 350 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including service-disabled veterans, obtained meaningful employment at Tinker. She is the driving force behind the expansion of AbilityOne services at Tinker and other bases across the country, whose commanders she has helped educate about the program. She invited AbilityOne representatives to attend the March 2014 Tinker "Industry Day" to further encourage procurement of AbilityOne products and services. Taft has been instrumental in creating jobs for several lines of business at numerous locations, and involving both NIB and SourceAmerica® nonprofits and the people they serve.

FDR AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

This award recognizes sustained, extraordinary accomplishment related to the agency and the AbilityOne Program. This award honors an outstanding leader who consistently demonstrates integrity and a relentless commitment to public service. The award is given sparingly, and may be presented to a current or former member of the Commission or staff.



MR. E. ROBERT CHAMBERLIN (REAR ADMIRAL, RET.)
President and CEO (Ret.), SourceAmerica

Among Bob Chamberlin's notable achievements, as

Rear Admiral and Principal Deputy Director of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), he served as the Department of Defense Commission member from 1998 to 1999. During his time on the Commission, he encouraged DLA to market AbilityOne and SKILCRAFT products, and provided a high level of support for educational and promotional AbilityOne events, small business fairs, and other procurement conferences. He became President and CEO of SourceAmerica in 2000 and encouraged the development of two new brands (AbilityOne and SourceAmerica), a new program website, national advertising campaigns and grassroots advocacy conferences. Under his leadership, SourceAmerica also focused on developing strategic business lines and fostering customer partnerships in areas such as secure document destruction, warehouse and distribution, fleet management, total facilities management, secure mail and laundry services. He retired from SourceAmerica in January 2015 after 15 years of service.

Left photo: E.R. "Dick" Alley Career Achievement Award recipient Vicki Taft.

Right photo: Former U.S. AbilityOne Commission Chairperson J. Anthony Poleo (right) and current Chairperson James M. Kesteloot (left) presented the FDR Award for Service and Leadership to recipient E. Robert Chamberlin (center).

CHAIRPERSON'S AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP

This award recognizes leaders who consistently meet or surpass the Commission's statutory and regulatory requirements, fulfill its guiding principles for a Quality Work Environment (QWE), and exhibit business acumen that leads to increased employment opportunities for the AbilityOne constituency.



MR. BILLY SPARKMAN
Executive Director
(Ret.), Alabama
Industries for
the Blind

Billy Sparkman has provided vocational rehabilitation services and job opportunities to people who are blind for more than 40 years, including the last 20 years in his role as executive director of Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB). Among his notable achievements, AIB has become a \$30 million retail and manufacturing organization, employing 320 staff and production employees, including 210 who are legally blind. Under his leadership, AIB expanded into several new lines of business, such as manufacturing toner cartridges. Furthermore, he has been innovative in leading the development of service-related jobs for people who are blind; AIB now performs mailroom operations, operates base supply centers at three bases, and participates in a manufacturing and development contract for the U.S. Army's Research, Development and Engineering Command. Sparkman also actively participates in the QWE Steering Group.



MS. JANET SAMUELSON
President and CEO,
ServiceSource

Under Janet Samuelson's leadership, ServiceSource has grown from employing 300 individuals with disabilities in 1993 to 1,500 in 2014. The organization also expanded to include affiliation with four other nonprofit organizations, offering products and services in nine states and the District of Columbia. Among its progressive practices, ServiceSource has a Warrior Bridge program, which provides a range of support for wounded veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life. Since its inception, the program has employed over 200 veterans across the organization, 124 of them with significant disabilities, and served over 220 additional veterans through rehabilitation programs. Samuelson has ensured that ServiceSource has a wide range of work settings, both facility and community based. An AbilityOne authorized provider since 1981, ServiceSource now provides services to more than 30 Federal Government agencies, including all branches of the U.S. military. Samuelson has actively participated in the Commission's CEO Forums and QWE initiative.

Top photo: Former Chairperson J. Anthony Poleo (right) and current Chairperson James A. Kesteloot (left) with recipient Billy Sparkman (center).

Bottom photo: Kesteloot (left) and Executive Director and CEO Tina Ballard with recipient Janet Samuelson (center).

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS AWARD

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



MR. DENNIS LOCKARD
General Counsel
(Ret.), U.S. AbilityOne
Commission

Among Dennis Lockard's notable achievements, he was a member of the Commission staff's Executive Leadership team since joining the Commission in September 2007 as general counsel. He played a major role in the AbilityOne brand development, regulatory agenda and legislative initiatives, Freedom of Information Act adherence, and improved litigation practices and records management. He also shepherded the Commission in several groundbreaking legal areas, including the first AbilityOne trademark agreement and implementation of new agency policy. He retired from the Commission staff in February 2015.

MOST VALUABLE LIAISON AWARD

The Most Valuable Liaison Award recognizes Federal employees, who in their roles as liaisons, demonstrate effort in creating employment opportunities on Federal contracts for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities under the AbilityOne Program.



MR. WILLIAM G. SPROULE
Senior Procurement
Analyst, Deputy
Assistant, Secretary
of the Air Force
(Contracting),
Department of the
Air Force

A proactive supporter of the AbilityOne Program, Bill Sproule has served for four years as the AbilityOne Liaison to the Air Force Commission member. In addition to representing the Air Force at all Commission meetings and at National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica conferences, he works with senior NIB and SourceAmerica representatives to identify new AbilityOne opportunities. Through his preparation of annual spend analyses to determine Air Force needs, he regularly identifies opportunities for growth within the AbilityOne Program, including AbilityOne contract closeout work. ★

Top photo: Poleo (right) presented Outstanding Contributions Award to recipient Dennis Lockard (left).

Bottom photo: Poleo (left) and Ballard (right) present Most Valuable Liaison Award to William Sproule.

NIB AND SourceAmerica

Each year, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and SourceAmerica recognize Federal

NIB Awards



Officer's Sword

Ensign Seth Wartak received the Officer's Sword for superb academic performance at the Navy Supply Corps School's Supply Officer Basic Qualification Course (BQC) graduation. NIB Assistant Vice President for Operations Support Charles Froemke presented the award to Wartak, the BQC 1st Battalion Honor Graduate. Wartak completed the course with a 98.7 percent overall grade point average. The sword, presented to the valedictorian at each BQC graduation, is a recurring gift to the Navy Supply Corps officer community and a symbol of NIB's long and successful partnership.



Federal Customer Award

NIB Recognizes DeCA for Product List Additions
NIB president and CEO Kevin Lynch presented the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) with the NIB Outstanding Performance Award for its efforts supporting the AbilityOne® Program. The award, presented at DeCA Headquarters in Fort Lee, Virginia, recognizes exceptional efforts by DeCA personnel in promoting SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne products and services during FY 2014. Their efforts led to 39 new product additions to the AbilityOne Procurement List. Joseph Jeu, DeCA director and CEO, accepted the award on behalf of DeCA staff.

SourceAmerica Awards



Government Award for Services: Military

This award recognizes a military organization that has provided outstanding support to the AbilityOne Program for services.

45TH SPACE WING CONTRACT OFFICE

Rockledge, Florida

The 45th Space Wing Contract Office has supported employment of people with significant disabilities at Brevard Achievement Center (BAC) since 1994. There are currently 135 people with disabilities from BAC providing a variety of services at Patrick Air Force Base and the Cape Canaveral Air Station, including commissary, contact center, food, ball-field maintenance and custodial. The 45th Space Wing Contract Office recently advocated to keep AbilityOne on a custodial contract at a new 500,000 square foot building that required employee security clearances. Because of its support, six adults with disabilities were able to keep their jobs. In recent years, SourceAmerica has provided disability awareness training to contractors at the 45th Space Wing to raise awareness about the capabilities of adults with disabilities among the base population.

Top left photo:
NIB Assistant Vice President for Operations Support Charles Froemke presents the Officer's Sword to Ensign Seth Wartak at the Navy Supply Corps School's Supply Officer Basic Qualification Course graduation.

Bottom left photo:
From left to right: Anne Marie Wallace, NIB Military Resale Program director; Pete Murphy, S&K National Sales manager; Rogers Campbell, executive director, Sales Marketing and Policy Group; Stuart M. Allison, CMSgt, USAF - senior enlisted advisor; Kevin Lynch, NIB president and CEO; Joseph H. Jeu, DeCA director and CEO; James R Taylor, supervisory category manager, Pets and Household; Tracie L. Russ, director of Sales; Mary Ann Finlon, S&K NIB account manager.

FEDERAL AWARDS

customers for their efforts to employ people who are blind or have significant disabilities.



Presenting the award from left to right are the following WORK Inc. staff: front row Lucio Ferraz, Leon Ray, James Cassetta, WORK Inc. President and CEO, Barry Kenyon and Robert Paterson. Back row: Bill Walters, Alphonso Long, Paul Brennan, Franzy Desrosiers, Joe McCarthy, and Ray Garcia. Receiving the award are John F. Kennedy Presidential Museum and Library staff: front row, Norm Beland, Facilities Manager and Tom Putnam, Library Director.

Government Award for Services: Civilian

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

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Dorchester, Massachusetts

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has been a champion for the AbilityOne Program and WORK, Inc. for more than a decade. The initial contract included custodial, heating/venting and air conditioning services for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. Because of WORK's outstanding service, it was expanded to a total facilities management contract that also includes snow removal, landscaping and event set-up and breakdown services. The current contract provides employment for 24 individuals with disabilities. The positive working relationship between WORK and NARA has resulted in additional contracts at the Barnes Building in Boston and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, a 68,000-square-foot facility, adjacent to the JFK library. NARA has praised its partnership with WORK at more than 40 conferences and seminars, urging other organizations to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities.



Left to right: Paul Atkinson, SourceAmerica Board chair, Steve Soroka, SourceAmerica president and CEO, Mark Marchioli, contracting officer, U.S. Army Contracting Command, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Natick Contracting Division, and Shay Assad, U.S. Department of Defense, director of defense pricing. (Photo by Ian McSpadden)

Government Award for Products

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

NATICK CONTRACTING DIVISION

Milford, Massachusetts

A long-time supporter of SourceAmerica and the AbilityOne Program, Natick Contracting Division is committed to creating employment opportunities for wounded warriors and other individuals with significant disabilities. In 2014, Natick's support came at a critical time when it matched transitioning gap requirements to capabilities of AbilityOne producers. Natick provided 636 jobs for people with significant disabilities across multiple SourceAmerica nonprofit agencies, working on products including: the individual first aid kit; the Army combat shirt and pants; and the flame-resistant Army combat uniform coat and trousers. "Our partnership with Natick Contracting has been invaluable to the success and growth of our products producing nonprofit agencies. Their trust in our capabilities and support for 636 AbilityOne jobs was critical to our success in 2014," said Jill Johnson, regional director, SourceAmerica Products. ★

SPECIAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITION



Georgia Industries for the Blind Employee Receives Georgia Enterprises for Products and Services Working Wonders Award

Luis Narimatsu, public relations coordinator at Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB), was named one of five recipients of the 2015 Georgia Enterprises for Products and Services Working Wonders Award. The Working Wonders Award honors employees with disabilities who have made valuable contributions to their employers and community. Luis, who has worked at GIB for 14 years, has achieved notable accomplishments in the areas of public policy, public relations and recruitment. He has also held leadership positions within organizations that support people who are blind.



NIB Presents NASA Center Operations, Kennedy Space Center with Award

NIB representatives Jack Glasscock, director, Federal Agency/Multiple Award Schedule Channel Management, and Joyce Rey, senior large account specialist, presented Nancy Bray, director, NASA Center Operations, with a plaque to thank her for the agency's ongoing support for the AbilityOne Program. The increase in AbilityOne spending was driven by Metro Office Products, an Authorized AbilityOne dealer, Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative awardee and outstanding distributor.



Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind Receives American Package Design Award for Staples Packaging

Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind was recognized for its SKILCRAFT® Staples packaging created by the firm Fifth Letter. This photo, which was posted to Fifth Letter's Facebook page and shared with Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, shows the award certificate and a box of SKILCRAFT Staples.



NewView Oklahoma's Older Blind Vision Rehabilitation Program Recognized as Program of the Year

NewView Oklahoma's Older Blind Vision Rehabilitation Program was recognized as Program of the Year by Oklahoma's Department of Human Services Aging Services. The program provides low vision examinations, occupational therapy, safe travel, exercise and other therapies that empower older adults who are blind with the tools and training needed to accomplish normal daily tasks and live safely and independently.



Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) Syracuse Industries Officially Opens for Business

CABVI of Utica, New York, cut the ribbon on a facility that provides employment for people who are blind in the Syracuse, New York area. The operation, known as CABVI Syracuse Industries, opened Feb. 2, 2015, with eight full-time employees, six of whom are legally blind. The operation is now 12 employees strong and growing. Ten of the 12 employees are legally blind. CABVI expanded to Syracuse because the greater Syracuse area did not provide an industries program for people who are blind.



Alphapointe Celebrates Grand Opening of New Contact Services Center

Alphapointe celebrated the opening of a new, state-of-the-art contact services call center in Kansas City, Missouri in October 2014. The new accessible call center will provide jobs for up to 60 people who are blind or visually impaired on the organization's Kansas City campus. Alphapointe employees already provide telephone switchboard and contact services to a variety of business, government, nonprofit and academic organizations, including about 30 colleges and universities. The new call center will allow Alphapointe to expand its call center services and create more jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired.



California State University Wins SourceAmerica College Design Challenge

California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), placed first in the SourceAmerica College Design Challenge, a national engineering competition for high school and college students to design workplace technology for people with disabilities. CSULA's multidisciplinary team was recognized for its innovative device, Straight to the Punch, which improves the assembly processes for two kinds of hole-punchers. The team partnered with FVO Solutions, Inc. (FVO), a nonprofit agency that employs

people with disabilities, to develop the solution. The team's improvements were implemented into FVO's work processes, and have resulted in improved safety, ergonomics, productivity and production time for FVO's employees with disabilities. Ohio University, Athens, and United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, won second and third place, respectively.



AccessAbility, Inc. Receives Prestigious USDA Award

AccessAbility, Inc. received the overall 2015 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) AbilityOne Contractor of the Year Award. USDA conducts the annual Small Business and AbilityOne Program Awards to recognize the outstanding work achieved by its community. During the June 11 ceremony, USDA honored small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, HUBZone, service disabled veteran-owned and AbilityOne businesses that have provided exemplary services to the Department, as well as USDA employees who have excelled in their work with these businesses. The U.S. Forest Service nominated AccessAbility for the award in recognition of its exceptional

customer service providing printing, collating and mailing services. AccessAbility also performs scanning, indexing and sorting of pilot code maps for field staff, and document destruction services for the U.S. Forest Service.



Richmond ARC Receives DoD Site Excellence Award

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) honored Greater Richmond ARC with a Department of Defense Site Excellence Award. Presented by Patrick Wright, staff director, Security and Emergency Services, DLA Installation Support, on June 4, the award recognizes Greater Richmond ARC for its work on the Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification System (RAPIDS). The five-member ARC team utilizes RAPIDS to process and issue permanent government identification cards to civilian employees, contractors and active duty, reserve and retired military personnel and their dependents. Additionally, they screen visitors who need temporary access to the base and issue

appropriate passes. From left to right: Greg Govan, DLA Security & Emergency Services Physical Security program manager; Lt. Col. Ray Hedrick, deputy chief of police, Defense Supply Center Richmond (DSCR); Debra Chaney, contracting officer technical representative; Patricia Atkins, team leader, Greater Richmond ARC; Patrick Wright, staff director, Security and Emergency Services, DLA Installation Support; and Matt O'Connell, vice president, Employment Services, Greater Richmond ARC. ★

**My disability
is one part of
who I am.**

At work, it's what people
can do that matters.

**National Disability Employment
Awareness Month —
Celebrating 70 Years!**



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

dol.gov/odep

**FLEXIBLE.
COMPLIANT.
GUARANTEED.**



*To read this code,
download a free QR
reader app on your
smartphone and scan.*

Your Mission. Your Way.

GSA Global Supply™

You have a mission. You don't always have the people, the equipment or the budget to do it easily, but you always have that mission.

We understand. GSA Global Supply is a wholesale supply source, fully integrated into the National Supply System. We manage 50,000 National Stock Numbers (NSNs) and over 350,000 Part Numbers from office products to tool kits and shipping supplies. We're a proud partner of the AbilityOne community and offer thousands of its varied products daily. Use your Government Purchase Card or DoDAAC. Place an easy requisition for guaranteed compliance with federal regulations. Get delivery anywhere in the world. Our mission is to help you focus on yours.

For more information, visit www.GSAGlobalsupply.gsa.gov or call **1.800.525.8027**.



We Accept GSA SmartPay® 2

Status updates, billing, and information available 24/5 (Sunday, 9P EST – Friday, 9:30P EST) at **1.800.488.3111**



U.S. General Services Administration