

Agnes O'Neal Celebrates More than 20 Years of Dedicated Employment at the Austin Lighthouse

At age 95, Agnes O'Neal has built an impressive career. She started out working at the Austin Lighthouse in 1934, then left in 1937 to begin a long career with the State of Texas. After retiring from the state nearly 50 years later, in 1986, she returned to the Austin Lighthouse for another 20-year run.

While employed by the state, O'Neal launched and operated snack bars in state buildings and trained staff members.

This position was part of the state of Texas' Supported Employment initiative, dating back more than 50 years. It is designed to transition workers with disabilities into gainful employment positions.

"I am a restaurateur," O'Neal, who is legally blind, said. "I was the first lady with a cafeteria like that."

Jerry Mayfield, executive director of the Austin Lighthouse, said, "She's one of the people in the state who brought that industry to gainful employment."

O'Neal's family came to Austin from Waco in a covered wagon in the early 1900s so that she could attend the Texas School for the Blind.

"In 1935, when she was 18 and had just graduated from the Texas School for the Blind, she came to the Austin Lighthouse and began making potholders and rugs, and weaving," Mayfield said. "She probably had something to do with most of the products."

"I wanted to work all my life," O'Neal said. "I just want to be able enough to sit down and do a job that long; I really do enjoy giving back. I can label and stack, I can count; I've done every job here that I'm able to do."

While at the Austin Lighthouse, O'Neal worked on many State Use and Federal Government contracts such as three-ring binders, liquid soap, rigger belts, martial arts belts, chin straps and trouser belts.

"I would make 600 belts a day," O'Neal said.

Through the Texas State Use *Works Wonders* Program, the Austin Lighthouse also sells sheet lifters for binders, notepad holders, award plaques, sunscreen, hand sanitizers, soap/sanitizer dispensers and Correct Pac cleaning products. These State Use products also are sold at the TIBH store.

Friends and colleagues say O'Neal is not only an extremely independent worker, but also a competitive one.

"Some of them work fast, some work slow," O'Neal said of her colleagues "I don't know and don't care, just so they're working."

The Austin Lighthouse honored O'Neal with an Austin Lighthouse Career Achievement Award in 2001. Glenda Leal, Mayfield's administrative assistant and an Austin Lighthouse employee since 2001, said, "Agnes has always been really proud of the work she does here. She likes to get things done on time and to keep her numbers up."

"If someone else is doing more, she'll take a shorter break then get after it," Mayfield added. "Agnes is filled with pride."

While staff members at the Austin Lighthouse are grateful for O'Neal's lifelong contributions, O'Neal is equally as thankful for the opportunity to work despite being legally blind.

"It's wonderful, because so many places don't have anything like this," O'Neal said. "It allows me to stay up and going."



Agnes O'Neal has worked at the Austin Lighthouse for more than 20 years.

City of Lubbock Recognizes Victor Reta, State Use Program



On July 8, 2009 the city of Lubbock approved a resolution supporting new areas of business endeavors with TIBH (Photo courtesy of the City of Lubbock)

Victor Reta works as a custodian at the Texas Department of Transportation through Goodwill Industries of Lubbock Inc. Despite suffering a brain hemorrhage when he was a teenager, leaving him partially paralyzed, he works full time and actively participates in the Special Olympics.

On July 8, Lubbock Mayor Tom Martin and the City Council—Mayor Pro Tem Jim Gilbreath along with Linda DeLeon, Floyd Price, Todd R. Klein, Paul R. Beane and John W. Leonard III—recognized Reta for receiving the 2008 Artie Lee Hinds Award as *Works Wonders* Employee of the Year. Reta was selected from among 7,000 Texans with disabilities who are part of 122 Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).

The City Council not only highlighted Reta's achievements but also approved a resolution "supporting new areas of business endeavors with TIBH for the purpose of determining how to best utilize the products and services of exceptional Texans who are blind and/or severely disabled."

Meg Pfluger, a member and former chair of the Texas Council on Purchasing from People with Disabilities from Lubbock, also was on hand to honor Reta, as well as Anna Braye and Michelle Barrientez of Goodwill Industries of Lubbock Contract Services; Mike McDaniel and Nathan Grassie of Marion Moss Enterprises; Mario Pena of Abilities Shirt Design; Fred Weber, Jr., Ron Bartels, Marie Richter, and Larry Sargee of TIBH.

City leaders believe creation of the State Use Program has paved the way for business initiatives that provide

employment opportunities for Texans with an array of disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, mental illness and chemical disorders, learning disabilities, visual impairment, physical impairment, hearing impairment and brain injury.

Victor Kilman, Director of Purchasing and Contract Management for the City of Lubbock and a member of the Texas Council on Purchasing from People with Disabilities, said, "Our City Council is supportive of the program, and they play a pivotal role in increasing employment opportunities for citizens with disabilities. Hopefully, the resolution will inspire other cities to follow suit."

According to the City of Lubbock, TIBH and the Texas Council on Purchasing from People with Disabilities produce more than \$783,000 in annual wages for 140 Lubbock residents with disabilities, and contribute to the self-esteem and sense of accomplishment of the program's participants.

"I'm an advocate of exploring contracting and employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities because I just feel, professionally, it's the right thing to do," Kilman said.

The following day, the City of Lubbock hosted a presentation designed to inform department heads and city buyers about the State Use Program, which allows municipalities and other government entities to negotiate specifications and prices for a variety of goods and services without the timely process and expense of soliciting competitive bids.

Currently, 122 CRPs across the state contract with TIBH to provide employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities. In Lubbock, CRPs include Goodwill of Lubbock, Concho Resource Center, Lubbock Regional MHMR, Marian Moss Enterprises and Mosaic.

Gov. Rick Perry Reappoints John W. Luna, Wanda W. Stovall, and Victor Kilman, to Texas Council on Purchasing From People with Disabilities

We would like to congratulate John Luna, Wanda Stovall and Victor Kilman on being reappointed by Gov. Rick Perry to the Texas Council on Purchasing from People with Disabilities. The council is designed to help Texans with disabilities gain personal independence through productive employment opportunities.



John W. Luna of Euless is director of public affairs for Metrocare Services. He also is a member of the American Association of Mental Retardation and Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and a board member of the Irving Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he is a past member of the Irving Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Luna attended Stephen F. Austin State University and the University of Texas Southwestern at Dallas. He will continue as chair of the council.



Wanda W. Stovall of Fort Worth is a retired speech pathologist and small business owner. She is a member of the American Speech and Hearing Association, Key School Board of Directors and Broadway Baptist Church Library Guild. She also is a volunteer docent at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and Kimbell Art Museum, and a volunteer at the

Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth and Child Advocates of Tarrant County. Stovall received a bachelor's degree and master's degree in speech pathology from Texas Christian University. She will continue as vice chair of the council.



Victor Kilman of Lubbock is director of purchasing and contract management for the City of Lubbock. He also is a member of the National Institute of Government Purchasing and Texas Public Purchasing Association, and past president of the Texas Purchasing Management Association. Kilman attended McMahan College and Texas Tech University.

Their terms will expire Jan. 31, 2015.

Other members of the Texas Council include:

Chuck Brewton
Scott Burford
Les Butler
Michael Daugherty
Kevin Jackson
Meg Pfluger
Kelvin Moore, Program Administrator

THE COUNCIL IS
DESIGNED TO HELP
TEXANS WITH
DISABILITIES GAIN
PERSONAL
INDEPENDENCE
THROUGH PRODUCTIVE
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES.

Nolan Glass, Texas Department of Criminal Justice Work With TIBH to Employ Texans With Disabilities and Stock State Commissaries

Every two weeks, inmates are allowed to purchase items at Texas prison unit commissaries and buy everything from soap to salsa.

Many of the products sold at the commissaries are manufactured by employees with disabilities through the State Use *Works Wonders* program.

This commissary connection is the result of a longstanding relationship between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), TIBH and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).

The program operates under state law set by the Texas Council on Purchasing from People with Disabilities (TCPPD). TCPPD encourages employment for Texans with disabilities through the State Use *Works Wonders* Program. Under this program, state agencies and other political subdivisions give purchasing preference to goods and services offered by CRPs that employ Texans with disabilities.

Nolan Glass, who manages the commissary and trust fund, has been with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for nearly 25 years. Glass began his career with TDCJ in Food



Nolan Glass

Service, where he remembers purchasing spices from TIBH and Tex-Spice. He took that partnership with him when he went on to work at the commissary.

Recently, Glass was able to tour the West Texas Lighthouse in San Angelo, which gave him a look at how TDCJ's partnership with TIBH benefits people with disabilities.

"We got to tour the Lighthouse in San Angelo and saw, firsthand, how these employees are working," Nolan Glass, for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, said. "These are people who appreciate work. Then when we entered into an additional bar soap contract with Houston Lighthouse, I learned that we put 23 people to work through packaging the soap."

Aside from soap, products produced by employees with disabilities and sold in the state prison commissaries include salsa, pens, pencils, coffee, snacks, toothbrushes and office supplies.

Glass says some of the benefits of purchasing through the State Use *Works Wonders* Program include fair prices, ease of ordering and timely delivery.

He says it's rewarding to be able to help disabled employees while providing a steady flow of products for the inmates. There are about 170 commissaries on the 110 TDCJ units.

TIBH IN THE COMMUNITY

TIBH and Justin Boots, with help from East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind helped sponsor Rodeo Austin's first-ever Gold Stirrup Horse Show on March 17, 2009, in Austin. The Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo hosted the event, which was presented by Carino's Italian Grill.

The invitational horse show is designed for mentally, physically and emotionally challenged people. Star of Texas teamed up with Marbridge, Ride On Center for Kids (ROCK), Equibloom, Spirit Reins and Thoughtful House Equestrians to recruit participants.



Riding is not only therapeutic for people with various disabilities, it's also an effective rehabilitation tool and an outlet for recreation. Riding therapy, known as "hippotherapy," helps strengthen muscles, improve balance,

boost concentration and build self-confidence.

Each participant received a certificate for a free pair of boots from TIBH and Justin Boots.

On March 17, 2009, TIBH and Justin Boots helped sponsor Rodeo Austin's first-ever Gold Stirrup Horse Show.

Health and Human Services Commission Vendor Fair

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Vendor Fair was held May 8, 2009, in Austin. The fair allows HHSC buyers to visit with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and see, firsthand, the items those programs and their employees with disabilities develop and distribute through the State Use *Works Wonders* Program. It also allows CRPs to showcase new products and promote new services, with the goal of maintaining and expanding current contracts.



The Lubbock Regional MHMR Center displays custom screen-printed clocks and T-shirts.



Expanco, Inc. hands out samples of a mini-fiberboard case storage box (with a marshmallow crispy treat)!



Marvin Davis displays office supplies available at the TIBH Central Store.

A Message from President and CEO Fred M. Weber, Jr.

We have so much to celebrate—and even more to look forward to in the future with you, our partners, who help make our work so rewarding and our program so successful!



With 30 years of experience behind us, we look forward to moving ahead and growing the program even more so that we may continue to increase the great employment opportunities that are offered to people with disabilities through the Texas State Use *Works Wonders* Program.

Additionally, we are proud of Victor Reta, winner of the first-ever Artie Lee Hinds Award, who still is receiving recognition. It was a pleasure to attend the Lubbock city council meeting in July, where Victor was presented with a resolution congratulating him on his exceptional work. We are also pleased that TIBH will continue to honor an exceptional employee with the Artie Lee Hinds Award in 2009.

With the training that employees with disabilities receive through the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), many of the employees are able to transition to employment in the community. Some employees also are hired as full-time staff members at the various state agencies and cities that they began working for through temporary employment services offered through the program.

As a purchaser, you can help increase training and employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities by making sure your organization purchases the products and services that you need through TIBH. The 21st annual TIBH Trade Expo is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28. We hope you will attend so you can see, firsthand, the quality products that are sold and hear about the array of services offered through *Works Wonders*.

As always, I want to sincerely thank each of you for the role you take in supporting Texans with disabilities and helping them become self-sufficient citizens of our great state.

Sincerely,

Fred M. Weber, Jr.



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Mark your calendar for these important dates in 2009

- TCPPD Certification Subcommittee Quarterly Meeting
Friday, September 18, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TCPPD Quarterly Meeting
Friday, September 18, 2009
Austin, Texas
- CRP Dinner
Tuesday, October 27, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TPASS Purchaser Training
Wednesday, October 28, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TIBH Industries, Inc.
21st Annual Products and Services Expo
Wednesday, October 28, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TCPPD Pricing Subcommittee Quarterly Meeting
Friday, November 13, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TCPPD Certification Subcommittee Quarterly Meeting
Friday, December 4, 2009
Austin, Texas
- TCPPD Quarterly Meeting
Friday, December 4, 2009
Austin, Texas

VISIT THE TIBH ONLINE CATALOG AT www.tibh.org