

“Creating Jobs, Changing Lives”

That is the daily goal at West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind (WTLB). Since 1963, WTLB, a Texas Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), has served as a lifeline to the blind community of San Angelo and 29 surround-

ing West Texas counties. A lighthouse is a facility providing employment for the blind and the visually impaired. In the case of WTLB, it is pen manufacturing.

At WTLB, one immediately notices a friendly atmosphere and a true sense of camaraderie. For example, every two weeks on payday, WTLB cooks for all of the employees and hosts a big celebration if sales goals are met. Because of sustained employment growth, WTLB was ranked sixth out of the 88 member agencies of the National Industries for the Blind (NIB). At the national sales conference in Orlando, Florida, WTLB was recognized as the top lighthouse in the small category and was awarded \$17,000.

With only 36 employees, WTLB is one of the smallest lighthouses in the nation. However, that has not prevented it from being one of the most innovative. WTLB was the first lighthouse to accept credit cards and the first to operate its own Web site. Each workstation has two to three people working on a differ-

ent writing instrument. The craftsmanship at WTLB is impeccable and can rival any current pen manufacturer on the market.

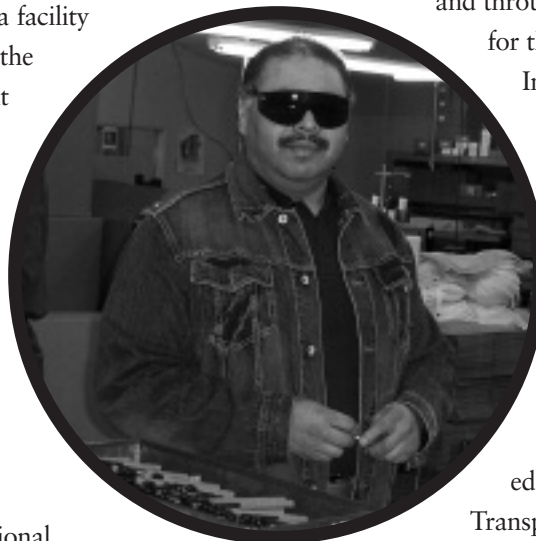
In addition, WTLB invented the Bend EZ pen, which has a barrel made of flexible tubing to prevent inmates from using it as a weapon. Many prisons and mental institutions in Texas and throughout the United States purchase this pen for the safety of the guards and other inmates. In 2006, over 700,000 Bend EZ pens were shipped all over the country.

For more than 20 years, WTLB has primarily been known for the high-quality pens it has supplied to several state agencies. In recent years, WTLB has expanded its services to include packaging compressed air, work gloves, toilet tissue and beverage mixes. As a result of the support provided by the Texas Department of

Transportation (TXDOT) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, work gloves have quickly become one of the best sellers at WTLB, accounting for roughly 10 to 15 percent of total sales.

WTLB also produces soil-sample bags for TXDOT, laundry bags for the U.S. Navy, and reusable, canvas shopping bags for consumer use. WTLB has also begun to manufacture a line

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Felix Reyes is WTLB's 2007 Employee of the Year. He enjoys the camaraderie he feels with his coworkers.

Spotlight on the City of Austin

For more than 18 years, the City of Austin has been an active participant in the State Use Program, utilizing various temporary employment and service contracts. Under the direction of Purchasing Officer Byron Johnson, that isn't set to change any time soon.

Even though the City has used State Use products and services for years, Johnson's support of the program allowed the contractual investment to grow to more than \$2 million. He attributes this amount to the mutually beneficial relationship they have with their Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).

"I was excited when I came to work at the City of Austin, as it was already a good supporter of TIBH," Johnson said. "We're dedicated to TIBH's *Works Wonders* program because TIBH is committed to providing useful, high-quality products and services that we genuinely need. We try to develop contracts through TIBH employment whenever possible."

"With their employees with disabilities, we know our relationship is worth more than just money in their pockets. They value their contributions and their independence, so we try and find ways to keep them working," Johnson said.

As a result of the temporary employment contracts, *Works Wonders* employees fulfill various clerical positions in the city offices. In fact, the City recently awarded another temporary services contract estimated at \$732,678 for 36 months. Temp service agencies in Austin include Goodwill and Peak Performers.

Service contracts help keep the city beautiful through regular maintenance, including the upkeep of the South Congress Bridge—a well-known tourist attraction and home of the famous Austin bats. The City currently holds 14 contracts

with TIBH, a \$2.6 million partnership that employs 101 persons with disabilities. For example, what started out in 1989 as a \$10,000 maintenance contract between the Stormwater Management Department of the City of Austin and Easter Seals-Central Texas, a local CRP, to provide vegetation control at Woodhollow Dam, is now a \$1.7 million contract that includes the maintenance of 450 ponds and 65 miles of creeks. Easter Seals employs 40+ persons with disabilities for this contract alone.

The City of Austin is a Top 10 purchaser of services in Texas, and has been for many years. Other City of Austin departments that utilize the service contracts TIBH offers include Austin Police Department, Austin Fire Department, Watershed Protection & Development, Financial Administration, Parks & Recreation and Public Access Television. The other CRP involved in these contracts is Austin Task, Inc.

"Every mayor in Austin since Mayor Cooksey has actively participated in this program and supported the employment of persons with disabilities through the *Works Wonders* program," Ron Bartels, TIBH State Marketing Manager, said. "I would say I'm amazed, but the truth is that the leadership in Austin, including city managers, head purchasers, and especially Mayor Frank

Cooksey, Mayor Lee Cooke, Mayor Bruce Todd, Mayor Kirk Watson, Mayor Gus Garcia and Mayor Will Wynn, has shown for the last 18 years an incomparable level of support for our products and services, and that support continues today."

"I have utilized the program for the past 20 years through every position I've ever held in purchasing," Johnson said. "I don't foresee any changes to the nature of our relationship in the near future and I couldn't be happier about that."



Byron Johnson, Purchasing Officer for the City of Austin, has been an avid supporter of TIBH for 20 years.

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of workplace-security items, including retractable identification reels, neck lanyards and identification badge and credit-card holders.

Texas is by far WTLB's biggest customer, resulting in 40 percent of total sales. Sales to other states account for about 30 percent of business, while the federal government weighs in at about 20 percent and commercial entities at 10 percent.

In September 2007, WTLB made the world's largest canvas shopping bag, which was eight feet tall and six feet wide, to help educate Texans about the environmental benefits of using canvas shopping bags instead of traditional plastic bags. At the unveiling, volunteers from WTLB and other concerned groups exchanged canned goods for reusable shopping bags to support the local food bank. A total of 4,026 pounds of food, or 16,000 meals, were collected in a 24-hour period. The mayor of San Angelo, J.W. Lown, and Rep. Drew Darby were present to certify the bag's dimensions for the Guinness Book of World Records. (www.texasearthbag.com)

WTLB, primarily a manufacturer of writing instruments, has introduced several new lines of pens. One of the latest pens, now available to state customers as well as Office Depot consumers, is the Hi-Grip. This pen introduced a new oil-based gel ink to the market. The pen combines the smooth flow of a gel pen with the consistent write-out of a ballpoint pen. The popularity of the Hi-Grip has led WTLB to introduce a retractable version.



WTLB employee Dena Brown enjoys assembling pens because it challenges her.

As a distributor for Zebra Pen Company, WTLB has recently introduced several other high-quality pens including a gel pen known as the Great-8, a mini-retractable pen and a compact stick pen. Soon, it will be introducing a retractable ballpoint pen that has an anti-microbial barrel, which kills germs on contact.

WTLB is not just a pen manufacturer; it offers the visually-impaired community a pleasant workplace and a better quality of life. Michael Jaquet, 51, has been legally blind his whole life. Jaquet has been working at WTLB since 1975. It is the only job he has ever had, and he enjoys the financial independence a full-time position offers.

"It doesn't matter what I work on-I like it all," Jaquet said. "I look forward to coming to work. I live alone, so I enjoy the interaction with others."

Felix Reyes, Jr., 47, enjoys working at WTLB because he can talk to others who understand what he is going through and who can help him cope. Reyes was a truck driver who had seen many parts of the country. However, four years ago he underwent a massive stroke that damaged his retinas. Felix was named 2007 employee of the year and went to Chicago last November to be honored at the NIB conference.

"There's comfort in being in a place where we can all stick together," Reyes said. "After I lost my vision, I thought it was the end. I have a different outlook now-it is not

as lonely."

Dena Brown, 34, and her husband, Robert, both work at WTLB. They met at a camp for the blind seven years ago and fell in love. Brown says she likes assembling pens because it still challenges her. She was born two months early and has never been able to see, but she does not consider her blindness a disability.

"It means a lot to me to be able to work," Dena Brown said. "I don't want to sit at home and have people do everything for me. The world doesn't cater to you."

"It truly is a humbling experience to visit any of the lighthouses across the country," Nonie Knight said. "Without TIBH and all of the state agencies that support this program, many of these individuals would not have jobs with full benefits. Lighthouses give persons with disabilities purpose and direction in their lives."

"We would like to thank you all for your support. All orders, large or small, help keep our vision alive," Knight said.

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TIBH 19th Annual Products and Services Expo

On Thursday, October 4, 2007, TIBH hosted the annual products and services expo to raise awareness for the State Use *Works Wonders* Program, which helps to employ Texans with disabilities. The event featured more than 28 exhibitors from across the state.

CRPs from across the state set-up booths to display a sampling of products, services and temporary employment services, including office and school supplies; automotive supplies; bed and bath supplies; furniture items; medical supplies; food supplies; storage supplies; janitorial supplies; safety supplies; landscape services; parks/grounds maintenance; litter pick-up; vehicle washing; window cleaning; accounting and clerical support; engineering information; and technology data entry.

Additionally, more than 500 purchasers from state, city, county, school district, university, hospital and political organization attended the event, where they had the opportunity to view the diverse products, services and temporary employment services created and offered by Texans with disabilities through the Texas State Use *Works Wonders* Program. Thank you to those who made the expo such a success by attending or participating. Next year, TIBH is planning something bigger and better in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the expo—a true achievement for all the CRPs and customers in Texas as well as TIBH.



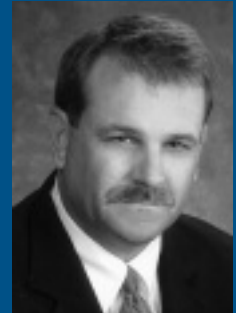
2007 Products and Services Expo Participants

ABG Fulfillment
Austin Task
Beacon Lighthouse
Camino Real Community MHMR Center
Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind
Expanco Inc
Fort Worth Lighthouse
Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
Goodwill Industries of El Paso
Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth
GTS Austin
Horizon Industries
Lending Helping Hands to Others
PCSI
Peak Performers
San Antonio Lighthouse
Screen Print Enterprise
Spindletop MHMR Services
Texas Association of Public Purchasers
Texas Correctional Industries
Texspice
The Lighthouse of Houston
TIBH Central Store
Travis Association for the Blind
VRC
West Texas Lighthouse
Woods Etc.



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

This year, TIBH celebrates its 30th anniversary, a truly great milestone for our organization. I'd like to begin with a heartfelt "thank you" to all of our customers and dedicated CRPs and employees. We have the privilege of working with some of the most extraordinary individuals in the state and I am grateful to be a part of this organization.



In the spirit of the New Year, there are a few changes on the horizon for this year. Beginning in February, TIBH will be holding regional award luncheons to recognize individuals who have earned the admiration of their member CRPs and respect of their colleagues. These individuals will be selected by nominations from their CRPs and honored not only at the luncheon, but also in a printed program that will be distributed across the state. If you should happen to receive a nomination form, we ask that you please take the time to share stories of the success of a particular individual at your facility.

Coupled with each of the regional award luncheons, we will also host a compliance seminar to inform all involved parties of related updates. The seminars will introduce the new disability-documentation forms. The CRP Disability Certification forms are a recent Council requirement created to verify that employees qualify for participation in the State Use Program. The Council will also review these forms when awarding State Use Contracts, so we stress the importance of being as accurate as possible when completing these forms.

We hope the regional seminars will provide a better understanding of the disability documentation forms and process, as well as be a time to ask any questions. In the meantime, I want to thank you all for your support. TIBH is looking forward to another great year in 2008. We hope you are as excited about the year ahead as we are and look forward to your participation in these events.

Sincerely,

Fred M. Weber, Jr.



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Mark your calendar for these important dates in 2008:

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| February 27 - Austin Compliance Seminar | June 27 - 8:30 am, Texas Council Certification Subcommittee Meeting |
| February 28 - Houston Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | June 27 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Meeting |
| March 7 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Pricing Subcommittee Meeting | September 5 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Pricing Subcommittee Meeting |
| March 12 - San Antonio Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | September 19 - 8:30 am, Texas Council Certification Subcommittee Meeting |
| March 13 - Corpus Christi Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | September 19 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Meeting |
| March 25 - Abilene Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | October 15 - TIBH 30th Anniversary Banquet |
| March 26 - Lubbock Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | October 16 - TIBH Products and Services Expo |
| March 28 - 8:30 am, Texas Council Certification Subcommittee Meeting | November 14 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Pricing Subcommittee Meeting |
| March 28 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Meeting | December 5 - 8:30 am, Texas Council Certification Subcommittee Meeting |
| April 2 - Tyler Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | December 5 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Meeting |
| April 3 - Metroplex Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | |
| April 9 - El Paso Compliance Seminar and Luncheon | |
| June 6 - 10:00 am, Texas Council Pricing Subcommittee Meeting | |

VISIT THE TIBH ONLINE CATALOG AT www.tibh.org