



The Lighthouse

Official publication of the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind

www.tylerlighthouse.org

Lighthouse names 2011 Employees of the Year

Olivia Abrams and Marilyn Petty were recognized as the Lighthouse 2011 Employees of the Year during the annual Christmas Banquet with over 200 employees and guests in attendance. Included in this recognition is a trip to the National Industries for the Blind training conference to be held in New Orleans October 4-8, during which they will meet with employees of the year from the 90 NIB agencies.

Olivia received the Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award which is given to the top blind indirect labor employee of the Lighthouse. She is currently the Seniors Program Coordinator for the Rehabilitative Services Division which opened in January of 2010. Since joining the company in November of 2007 she has worked in multiple production line positions prior to her promotion last year.

Marilyn was awarded the Peter J. Salmon Direct Labor Employee of the Year Award which is given annually to the top blind direct labor employee. Marilyn joined the Lighthouse and Horizon Industries in February of 2007 as a parts assembler. Currently she is a valuable member of the parachute cord line which shipped over 28,000 miles of cord last year.

To Olivia and Marilyn, Thanks for a Job Well Done!!



Olivia Abrams (left) and Marilyn Petty hold their Employee of the Year Award plaques presented to them by the Lighthouse at the Christmas banquet in December.

February is Low Vision Awareness Month

This month raises awareness for aged-related macular degeneration (AMD) and low vision. It is the most common cause of blindness and vision impairment in older Americans, affecting 1.75 million citizens. According to the National Eye Institute, by the year 2020 AMD will have increased over 50 percent affecting 2.95 million people.

Don't let vision loss stop you or a loved one from living a full life. For more information visit the National Eye Institute at www.nei.nih.gov or call 301-496-5248.

EMPOWERING BLIND AMERICANS

February marks the second publication of “The Lighthouse” and quite frankly after the December issue we weren’t quite sure there would be enough newsworthy events to fill up the issue. Not to fear, as our employees and associates were involved in everything from working with the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation to accepting out of state awards in Arkansas to power lifting in Las Vegas.

The most important ingredient of any company is not its products, or its building, or even its customer service. The most important part of any successful company is its employees who through their daily efforts give it a life, a culture, and the ability to become something unique. The most important thing we do as a company every December is the selection of our employees of the year. Each year we honor three individuals, two blind and one sighted, as representatives of our top tier of employees and their commitment to excellence. The criterion is tough and the requirements to be considered include good attendance, a satisfactory performance review and no corrective actions in the calendar year. Once the list is complete, the nominees met with one of two committees. The first committee selects the Blind Direct Labor and the Sighted employees of the year. This committee consists of two past employees of the year winners, a production supervisor, an employee of Rehabilitative Services, an employee from Lighthouse Graphics and an employee from Human Resources as the Chair. The Blind Indirect employee of the year is selected by a committee made up of senior managers.

During the employee interview the nominee is asked a series of questions designed to help the committee make their selection. The committee members individually rate the responses on a scale of 1-5 and Human Resources tallies the results to determine the winner. Since none of the committee members know how any of the other members voted the process is completely objective.

This year there was a lot of competition and a lot of deserving employees. The award, the number of nominees and the winners are as follows:

- Peter J. Salmon Award – Blind Direct Labor – 21 nominees – winner Marilyn Petty
- Milton J. Samuelson Award – Blind Indirect Labor – 12 nominees – winner Olivia Abrams
- Sighted Employee of the Year – 12 nominees – winner Jack Malone.

Congratulations to all the nominees and the winners!

David J. Huffman
President/CEO

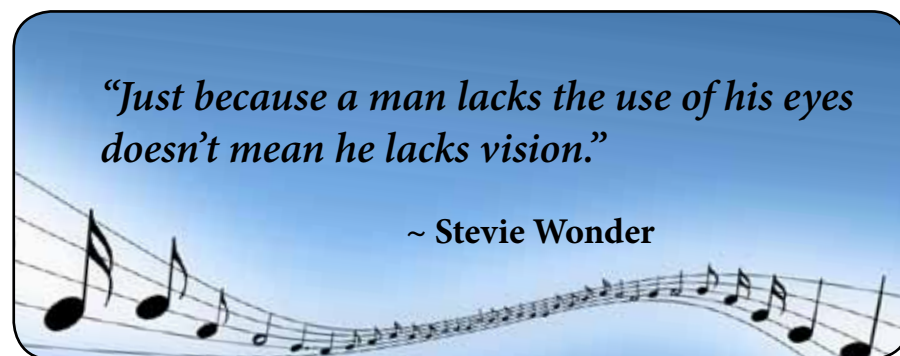
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*“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes
doesn’t mean he lacks vision.”*

~ Stevie Wonder



The Lighthouse is a quarterly publication of
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Vision Loss Seminar - Saturday, February 26, 2011

***Free to the public* Tyler Library - Taylor Auditorium**

Vision loss affecting you or a loved one? It doesn't have to. Lighthouse Rehabilitative Services has partnered with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to bring experts together to explain resources and programs available to help you adjust to vision loss. For more information call 903-593-3111.

10:00 a.m. - What is Vision Loss?

Dr. Justin Ward, Low Vision Specialist, will give an overview of eye conditions that cannot be corrected with glasses and offer options.

11:00 a.m. - Home Safety Tips

Susie Payne, Independent Living Coordinator, DARS, will offer tips and ideas to help perform daily tasks safely.

1:00 p.m. - Transportation Opportunities

Sue Barham, Transit Operations Coordinator, City of Tyler, will discuss ways the city meets transportation needs for the visually impaired.

2:00 p.m. - Cool Gadgets and Low Vision Aids

Roger Purdy, DARS and *Don Shaw*, ETLB, will demonstrate the latest equipment to assist a person with daily tasks and office work.

2011 Sighted Worker of the Year

The Lighthouse named Jack Malone the 2011 Sighted Worker of the Year at the Christmas Banquet this past December. The award recognizes outstanding performance among sighted employees. Jack began working for the Lighthouse 15 years ago as a machine operator. Managers discovered his knowledge of computers and he was quickly promoted to Quality Assurance. For the past 10 years he has served as Network Administrator.

Jack was legally blind for over half his life. He was born with dislocated eye lenses that continued to shift as he got older. At the age of 35 he had four surgeries to insert artificial lenses. The surgery was a success and at 36 he drove a vehicle for the first time.

“It was very nice to be able to drive myself around and to take my wife out to dinner. It felt really good. One day while driving out in the country I looked up and saw the stars for the first time. It was like, wow! It floored me. I'd never seen them like that before.”

Jack takes pride in helping employees improve their computer skills. He knows firsthand the challenges of being visually impaired and learning to use technology. Jack is a shining star and a valuable asset to the Lighthouse.



Jack Malone oversees information technology for the Lighthouse.

A Closer Look

Arkansas names Lighthouse employee Consumer of the Year



Lions Club District Governor Ricky Edwards presents Matt Hart with the Consumer of the Year award from the Arkansas Department of Human Services' Division of Services for the Blind.

A phone call is all it takes to make a routine day go from ordinary to extraordinary. Matt Hart was busy at work when the good news came this past September.

He received a call from the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) informing him that he had been chosen for the 2010 Consumer of the Year Award for outstanding career achievements. The award recognizes individuals who have managed their rehabilitation plans, gained marketable skills, secured good jobs, and become a role model for others.

“It was pretty humbling that someone thought that highly of me. It was an honor. I am grateful for being nominated and even more so for winning the award.”

Matt grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. At age 10 he was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease. The genetic eye disease causes macular degeneration. From the time of his diagnosis DSB has worked with Matt providing him counseling, visual aids, and various services.

After graduating from the University of Central Arkansas, Matt moved to Tyler in 2010. He began working for the Lighthouse as the Human Resources Administrator for Rehabilitative Services and Lighthouse Graphics.

Matt traveled to Arkansas to receive his award at a meeting of the Pine Bluff Downtown Lions Club at the Pine Bluff Country Club. The Lions Club and DSB share common goals and partnered together in recognizing Matt.

Lighthouse receives recognition from Arkansas Dept. of Human Services



The Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind recognized the Lighthouse as an outstanding business partner in 2010 for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairments. Both organizations share common goals of rehabilitation and employment for people who are blind.

In The News

Employees donate toys in December to Marine Toys for Tots Foundation



Marine Toys for Tots Foundation attended The Lighthouse's annual Christmas banquet. From left to right: Staff Sergeant Brandon Laird, Larry Adkins, Toys for Tots; and Lighthouse employees Geneva White-mon and Larry Reed.

This past December the Lighthouse employees opened their hearts to the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. An employee toy drive during the month of December yielded over 150 toys and 35 bikes for children ages 2-13. Academy Sports and Outdoors in Tyler donated a \$100 gift card to the toy drive.

Lighthouse employees presented the toys and bikes to the foundation during the annual Christmas banquet. The U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting office of Tyler presented colors during the National Anthem and Larry Adkins, local community organization contact for Toys for Tots, accepted the donation.

"It shows that these people have kind and giving hearts. A lot of times they put other's needs before their own. Their generosity and caring for man...that's kind of hard to beat," said Larry Adkins.

Lighthouse receives NIB award for Achievements in Employment Program

The Lighthouse received the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) Employment Award for its success and commitment to increasing employment and economic opportunities for people who are blind. Each year NIB awards agencies for their efforts to increase employment retention, growth, and upward mobility. In 2010 the Lighthouse promoted two employees to supervisory positions and three employees to higher skilled positions.

"We are proud to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind," said Pat Spenla, Director of Human Resources. "Our team members who are blind represent a qualified, dedicated, and loyal workforce. Our employees play an integral role in providing quality products and services to the federal government."

The Lighthouse was among 25 agencies of 90 to receive the employment award in 2010. The winners receive cash payments from a special fund created to recognize and encourage NIB associated agencies that grow or sustain employment for people who are blind. Emphasis is also placed on efforts to increase upward mobility in the workplace and job placements. The Lighthouse has received the employment award every year since 2007.





Low Vision Aids Store

The Low Vision Aids Store, located in the Rehabilitative Services building, offers a variety of talking and tactile devices such as clocks, medical equipment, tape measures, computer software, kitchen aids, and enhancement eyewear. A wide range of magnifiers, big print books, and games are available. In addition, white canes and Braille materials are available. Come check out the latest technology in document scanners/readers and closed circuit televisions. The store is located at 727 East Front Street - 903-593-3111. Hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.



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WINNER TAKES ALL

People handle pressure in different ways, but for Roger McMichael it's as easy as flexing a muscle. He has a real passion for lifting weights and competing in power lifting competitions. What's so remarkable about this former Lighthouse employee is the fact he doesn't let a visual impairment stand in his way.

Roger was born with the genetic eye disease Retinitis Pigmentosa which causes slow, but progressive vision loss. When he was 13 years old, Roger was told that he would lose all his sight by age 16. Fortunately, that did not happen.

This past November Roger competed in the 2010 World Association of Benchers and Deadlifters World Championship held in Las Vegas. The WABDL is an association of lifters who compete in the single-lift bench press and deadlift. In the men's class, Roger placed first in bench press, lifting a total of 413 pounds. He took second place in the men's class deadlifting competition with 530 pounds. He also placed second in the men's disabled class deadlifting 530 pounds.

“Getting ready for competition is a lot of work and dedication. Going to the gym is not just a hobby, I consider it a job.”

Roger is in the gym every week working out and training with his coach who is deaf and blind. They both compete in many of the same competitions .

“I find inspiration just knowing I can do something without vision. My wife, friends, and coach give me a lot of support. They know I can do this.”

When Roger is not in the gym he enjoys following basketball, football, and going to car shows. He says he'll eventually give the Strong Man Competition a try but for now he is working on becoming a certified personal trainer.

Roger will be attending the Benchers and Deadlifters World Championship this year in Reno, Nevada. He automatically qualifies because of his first place wins in the 2010 competition.

“All I have to worry about is breaking my record and having a good time. Until then, I'll be working out as hard as I can and pushing myself to the limit.”



Roger McMichael visits the Lighthouse sharing his story and plans for the future.



East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
500 N. Bois D' Arc
Tyler, TX 75702

Empowering blind Americans through rehabilitation, education, training and employment

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb. 21- Tea & Talk Support Group at Rehabilitative Services - 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- Feb. 26 - Vision Loss Seminar at the Tyler Public Library - 10:00-3:00 p.m.
- March 5 - MacD Support Group at Rosewood Estates - 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- March 14-17 - Washington D. C. Public Policy Forum
- March 22 - Disability Support Group at ETCIL - 12-1 p.m.
- March 31 - Seniors Celebrating Life Expo at Harvey Hall - 9:00-2:00 p.m.

Come visit Rehabilitative Services at the Seniors Celebrating Life Expo

Harvey Convention Center
Thursday, March 31, 2011
8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The Seniors Expo is an annual event that includes fun, educational, and interactive presentations that help seniors be more active and informed. Vendor booths will provide information on goods and services available to senior adults in the Tyler area.

ETLB Rehabilitative Services will be there sharing information about our Independent Living training and services. Stop by to meet our staff and find out more information.

Call Rehabilitative Services for more information at 903-593-3111.

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