



123 State Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118 * www.lhb.org

Lighthouse Employment Services works

Jobs equate to dignity, self-confidence and independence. Director of Lighthouse Employment Services, Freida Holland, says simply, "Employment works." The Lighthouse Employment Services Department places people with disabilities in jobs throughout the metropolitan area, from Covington to Morgan City, but primarily in New Orleans. Such employment efforts are referred to as competitive placement as the clients are competing for jobs in the marketplace.

Director Holland describes the multi-faceted work that she and her nine-person staff perform. With hands in constant motion and blue eyes sparking, she says that job developers and job coaches handle caseloads from 10 to 20 clients at a time. Even in this difficult economy, the Lighthouse team has been placing an average of five people each month.

The people served by Lighthouse Employment Services (LES) can have any type of physical, cognitive or mental health disability. Once a client is referred to LES, the first step is a vocational assessment of a person's work history, living situation, education, transportation needs and family support to determine if he or she is work ready. Next, a contract is drawn up outlining the type of job the person desires and the performance

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SPOTLIGHT

KEVIN BRIGHT

Each year the Lighthouse selects a legally blind Employee of the Year. The candidate must work in production at the Lighthouse, have high job performance ratings, and engage in positive activities at work and in the community. The Lighthouse is proud to recognize Kevin Bright as its 2010 Employee of the Year.

In the fall, Kevin will travel to the National Industries for the Blind's (NIB) annual conference where he will compete with employees from other affiliated blind agencies for the title of National Employee of the Year.

Kevin is the oldest of nine siblings. His father died when he was twelve, and Kevin became

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By the time this newsletter gets to our readers we will have moved some of our operations into two new warehouse facilities. I realize that “warehouse” and “excitement” don’t generally go together, but adding 23,000 feet of space to our manufacturing operation is a big deal for us. Let me explain why.

Our business with the Federal Government has grown tremendously over the last five years and has stressed our existing plant. This year the New Orleans facility will receive over 390 truckloads of finished goods. In addition, we will have shipped over 480 full truckloads of product to customers. In our business model, the vast majority of our products are shipped to the Federal Government. This works well because the government business has proven to be reliable, and payments come quickly. While we have a pretty good idea of what our orders will look like on an annual basis, it is almost impossible to predict when orders will come, and we don’t know week by week what we will be asked to ship.

Until the new warehouse space was completed, we often had to cut back on necessary raw materials and hold off on producing product for lack of storage space. Recently, we had to send seven truckloads of finished goods to our facility in Gulfport



Bill Price,
Lighthouse
President

for storage because we were simply out of room here. The new warehouse increases our storage and preparation capacity and allows us to be more flexible and rapidly respond to unanticipated demands.

The smaller of the new warehouses will be used to store recyclable paper and raw materials. The larger one will contain finished goods, some raw materials and will have office space for order processing, shipping and inventory control. These functions have been housed in a trailer, and I’ll be glad to see that so-called temporary trailer go.

The new space is functional, organized and will improve the appearance of our facility. The configuration helps move truck traffic in and out more efficiently with less impact on the neighborhood. Supplying the government with goods under contracts through the Government Services Administration and the Department of Defense has proven to be a solid business model, and the warehouse

MISSION STATEMENT: The Lighthouse for the Blind serves people in the region who are blind or visually impaired by providing job training, competitive employment and services. Our goal is to promote individual independence and self-reliance. We are committed to the proactive development of quality products and services. The Lighthouse works in cooperation and partnership with private, public and nonprofit entities.

The Lighthouse for the Blind is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

additions will allow us to expand that business. I am proud that we are the supplier of two essential products for our men and women in uniform, the five-compartment mess tray and the tan paper cup.

The Lighthouse does many things very well. First among them is providing good jobs and benefits to over 180 individuals, most of whom are blind or visually impaired. Our mission is to be the best possible place for people with disabilities to work. Our new warehouse space is a vital piece of the whole picture that makes ours a 21st century manufacturing center and an economic driver for New Orleans.

This new addition to the New Orleans facility would not have been possible without the tremendous backing of our donors and the



A view from inside the new warehouse

support we received from our state legislators. We thank all of you who helped make this growth possible.

— Bill Price

Bright

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the man of the family. He was determined to stay on the right path to be an example for his brothers and sisters. Now 24 years old, he has set that example through his many accomplishments.

Kevin was born with Retinitis Pigmentosa. Retinitis pigmentosa (RP) causes retinal degeneration and a gradual decline in vision. Today, Kevin is completely blind in his left eye and has very little vision in his right. Even though Kevin had a disability he refused to let his environment mold him into something he was not. He knew that he had to stay focused to achieve his goals.

He started receiving services from the Lighthouse's Supported Employment Department in 2005. Through these services, Kevin was able to gain employment in the community. He later applied for a position at the Lighthouse and was hired in March 2007 to work in the Paper Plate department. Kevin acquired the nickname "Quick" from his co-workers because he moves fast on the assembly line in our Mess Tray and Paper Plate departments.

As a young person Kevin dreamed of becoming a homeowner. Although it was hard



Kevin Bright

to save money, Kevin persevered and was able to accumulate enough to purchase a home through Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat requires a down payment and 350 "sweat equity" hours. Kevin has accomplished both. He completed his hours by working on other Habitat participants' homes and his own. He has also successfully completed a home buyers and budgeting class. Kevin says that partnering with Habitat for Humanity has taught him how to be a more

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A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY

On a November morning in Bay St. Louis, MS, Lighthouse representatives visited with Lee Seal, son of the late Leo Seal, Jr. who passed away in November 2008 from a rare blood disorder. For many years the Lighthouse has been the recipient of gifts from the Leo Seal Family Foundation as well as from Mr. Seal personally, and we wanted to know how he learned about the Lighthouse and its mission. The generosity he extended to the Lighthouse turned out to be but one of many organizations he supported.

The younger Seal spoke with emotion about his father and his outlook on business and life. His father was devoted to his work and took extreme pride in the communities where his business prospered. He believed that it was only right to give back to those who had helped him become successful.

As president of Hancock Bank for approximately 45 years, Mr. Seal, Jr. handled business matters much as he did everything else in his life, with thoughts toward the future and what was best for his family, customers and community. He rarely thought of himself. In fact, as President of Hancock Bank, Mr. Seal was one of the lowest paid top executives of any bank in the state. He felt that by keeping his salary low he would be able to hire more sharp executives and train them to be good business leaders. And that is exactly what he did.

The Lighthouse learned that the late Seal's father, Mr. Leo Seal, Sr., was President of Hancock Bank during the Great Depression. In 1932, when Leo Jr. was eight years old, his father returned from work one day and told him something that made a life-long impression and served as the foundation for his business and personal philosophy. His father tearfully told him that he had had to take Leo's savings to keep the bank and the people in the community afloat until times were better. The elder Seal promised his son that if they made it out of the Depression he would pay him back. He was true to his word.



Leo W. Seal, Jr.

Hancock Bank survived the Great Depression when 162 other banks failed. Through both Seals' leadership it went on to become one of the largest banks in the Gulf South.

After Hurricane Katrina, Mr. Seal, Jr. made many attempts to visit the severely damage area of Bay St. Louis and inspect his home. He found over two feet of mud and significant debris around his home. At 80 years old, Mr. Seal was found by his son, Lee, with a shovel and wheelbarrow. When Lee asked his father why he was shoveling the mud around his house when someone with a backhoe could clean it out in a few hours, Mr. Seal responded with, "Well, I will just keep working on it until they show up!" He shoveled approximately 200 wheelbarrows full of mud that week.

Leo Seal, Jr.'s generosity went well beyond the communities where his branches were located, and many churches and service organizations were recipients of Mr. Seal's generosity. He formed the Leo Seal Jr. Family Foundation in 1997. Through this foundation, he supported over 400 organizations and anonymously provided the financial backing that allowed a number of needy students to attend college. He and Hancock Bank were

on the front line in providing support for the rebuilding and revitalization of the Gulf South after Hurricane Katrina. This tradition of community support is being continued by his sons, Leo III and Lee who manage the foundation created by their father.

Mr. Seal's legacy lives on, not only in his family and friends, but also in the organizations that he believed in enough to provide support. His son, Lee, explained that before Mr. Seal donated to an organization, he always did some research on it. He wanted to be confident that his assistance would be used to support the organization's mission and not line an executive's pocket. Lee said, "He had confidence in the Lighthouse."

The man described by his son was intelligent, successful, and yet very humble. He was confident that the support he provided to the Lighthouse produced results that were in line with his high standards, and that makes us feel both proud and grateful.

Bright

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responsible person. It has also taught him how to take care of a home.

He attributes the push of pursuing home-ownership to some of his co-workers at the Lighthouse. He is sincerely grateful for the relationship he shares with them. David Green, co-worker and friend, shared his thoughts about Kevin. "Kevin is a go-getter, which is rare to find in someone so young these days. There were many times that he was tired at the end of the work week, and finding enough energy to go and work on the hours he needed for Habitat was difficult. We talked about setting goals and establishing a good foundation so that he could be successful. He always went to work on Saturdays and kept working towards that goal."

Kevin's indomitable spirit, his work ethic, and his caring for others make him an outstanding candidate for National Employee of the Year 2010.

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Lighthouse classes offer needed inspiration

For Shanie Cognevich, the Lighthouse was not always an option to help her overcome her difficulties in dealing with her vision loss. In 1998 Shanie was involved in an automobile accident where the airbag in her car struck her face and severely damaged her right eye, leaving her completely blind in that eye and with partial sight in her left. But the injury also caused a condition known as keratoconus. Keratoconus is a degenerative disorder of the eye in which structural changes within the cornea cause it to thin and change to a more conical shape than its normal gradual curve.

At the time of her accident Shanie was a successful dental office assistant, a career she had thoroughly enjoyed for 16 years. And while she tried to maintain her job following her accident, the transition with her blindness became too difficult for her to continue. For several years Shanie secluded herself at home. Her fear of the unknown and her anger over her condition were more compelling than understanding her changed world. She felt an overwhelming sense of helplessness, thinking she would never be able to live well again.

Through a suggestion from her doctor and attempts from her mother, Shanie finally agreed to accept help and signed up for the Daily Living Skills classes at the Lighthouse in 2006. In the classes she met other individuals struggling with daily challenges. Each class taught her more effective and efficient ways of performing her daily tasks. A friendship with another class participant inspired her to help him as much as she was helping herself.

Shanie successfully completed the six week Daily Living Skills course and went on to enroll



Shanie Cognevich

in the Next Step program. During the program she was introduced to the art of Bonsai. Gardening had been a passion of Shanie's, but after losing her vision her hobby was put on hold. So when Bonsai was introduced to the class, Shanie was so delighted that she took it a step further, she attended the local Bonsai Society's annual meeting. That group was excited to meet her and have her join.

To Shanie, attending the programs offered at the Lighthouse was a life-altering experience. She doesn't restrict her activities now, except driving, which she considers to be the hardest adjustment of all. She is a full-time mother and wife who volunteers at her children's schools. And she is the team mom for both of her sons' sports teams. She stated that there are still times when she feels anxious, especially in new places, but the Lighthouse has given her inspiration to know that she can do anything she wants. "Anything is possible. I truly believe that!"

Seniors camp planned for Summer

The Lighthouse is in the beginning stages of planning a new summer camp program for seniors. Participants who have graduated from the Next Step Program, a 12 week course in advanced daily living skills which includes community integration, mobility and development of leisure skills, will be invited to enjoy a four-day activity rich summer camp to be held at the Lighthouse. Approximately 20 participants will enjoy activities such as swimming, music, yoga, cooking and field trips. Enrollment will be on a first-come first-served basis. More details will be provided once the planning is complete.

Employment works

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expectations the Lighthouse has of the client.

Now a job developer begins searching for that perfect job. She may search the internet, newspaper ads, go to job fairs with the client, look for hiring signs or even “sculpt” a job for a client. Holland recalls sculpting a job at a pizza shop for an autistic client. She watched the operation for a while and realized the need for someone to fold delivery boxes. The shop agreed and hired her client.

What the job developer wants is a placement that is appropriate to the client’s expectations and a supportive, positive work environment. Recent placements included office and stock clerks, cashiers, food preparers, baggers, wait staff, door greeters, and landscapers.

A job coach must find creative solutions to make everything work for both the client and the employer. Before the client goes to the job interview, he or she gets coaching about appropriate dress, punctuality, work ethic and participates in a mock interview. Once the client is hired, the job coach makes sure the necessary paperwork is completed and that such things as uniforms or job essential equipment are purchased. The coach may need to provide transportation training to the newly hired person. The coach’s involvement continues until the client is completely comfortable in the job and performing up to the employer’s expectations.

A recent transformative placement involved Michael, a 20-something athlete who suffered a massive heart attack that left him with severe mobility, vision and speech deficits. Michael was despondent and apathetic when Holland first met him, and she spent hours convincing him that a job could be found. “Trust is important, and I had to show Michael that we could get it right.” She found a job in a medical office where he is a sign-in clerk for patients. Today Michael is a self-



Employment Services staff at holiday party

confident and accepted member of the staff. When asked how she was able to place a client with so many disabilities Holland said, “I’m selling what a person can do, not what they can’t do. I’m promoting dedicated people who really want to work.”

Under Holland The Lighthouse Employment Services Department has developed a reputation for being a top quality operation. Lighthouse President Bill Price remarked that Holland was named the number one job developer in the state for 2007. “Freida has so much respect throughout Louisiana, and that brings respect to the entire operation.”

Holland herself gives full credit to her staff. “They are hard working, caring professionals. I couldn’t do this without them, and I want to make sure they get the recognition they deserve.” At Holland’s request the names and business locations of her staff are given below. If you know of a business that would be interested in hiring a Lighthouse Employment Services client, please call Freida Holland at (504) 899-4501, Ext. 239.

- ***Aeisha Kelly – Work Readiness Coordinator (New Orleans)***
- ***Amanda McCary – Job Coach (New Orleans)***
- ***Cassia Malicote – Job Developer (New Orleans)***
- ***Gerrie Gough – Job Developer/Job Coach (North Shore)***
- ***Matthew McAllister – Job Developer (Houma)***
- ***Sharon Foret – Job Coach/Office Manager (Houma)***
- ***Veronica Stevenson – Job Developer (New Orleans)***
- ***Winifred Morgan-Epps – Job Developer (New Orleans)***
- ***Zola Brown – Vocational Assessor/Job Coach (New Orleans)***

Local Foundation helps secure additional forklift

The Lighthouse is pleased to recognize the Eugenie and Joseph Jones Family Foundation. Through their generous support, the Lighthouse was able to purchase a new forklift for its warehouse operations and retire an existing one that was approximately 20 years old.



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Correction to Fall 2009 Newsletter

In the fall 2009 newsletter, Katie Wintz's last name was misspelled. We apologize for the error.