

# TIBH FOCUS

ON JOBS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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## Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind Provides High-Quality Products, Allows Employees to Shine

Jessie Tran has a knack for detail and an unmistakable work ethic. Her knowledge of production—from developing eyeglass cases, markers, binders, sewing vests, trousers, and products for the military and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)—make her an expert in the field of manufacturing. What you won't know about Tran by looking at her resume is that she is also blind.

Tran has worked with the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind, a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), for 13 years. She began her career in one of its many production departments and has successfully worked her way through each of them as she furthers her knowledge and experience. Her blindness does not hold her back. In fact, it catalyzes her desire to do more, learn more and achieve more.

"I love it! I love the job," she said. "I love the opportunity to sew TxDOT clothing. It is

exciting to know that my work is used by the state workforce and seen by millions along the roadways every day. My disability is not what they see—instead, they see my capability."

More than 150,000 people with visual impairments live in the North Texas region alone—each with their own unique drives and desires to live independently and seek rewarding employment. With this kind of need, the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind's purpose is clear.

"Our mission is to create lucrative jobs for the visually impaired and to help them achieve the goal of independent living," Hugh McElroy, president and chief executive officer of the Dallas Lighthouse, said.

Since being founded in 1931, the Dallas Lighthouse has provided opportunity and assistance in North Texas to individuals affected by visual impairment. It is the third oldest Lighthouse program in existence today and has faithfully fulfilled its mission for the past 85 years.

"We're here to serve and enable the blind and visually impaired. That's the mission," McElroy said. "The quality of our employees, their work ethic and their motivation are some of the best I've seen in business considering what could hold them back. We train in multiple work disciplines—the use of technology, even in robotics, where jobs did not exist in the past. The Dallas Lighthouse creates a customized curriculum in textiles and contact management that allows our employees to develop and grow in their careers. We continue to be innovative in training and education to help expand our services and our ability to create more jobs."

In addition to providing jobs and job training, the Dallas Lighthouse also offers a variety of rehab services, including assistive technology training, job placement and critical support services for seniors, as well as community outreach.



Jessie Tran works at the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind, sewing vests, trousers, and other cloth materials for the military and the Texas Department of Transportation.

"You've got to look at a not-for-profit-operation as though it's a for-profit business," McElroy said. "In order to do that, you need lean processes, continuous production and an intense focus on the customer. You need to be competitive and always improving. When you look at what TIBH and the Dallas Lighthouse do when working together to create opportunities for Texans that are blind and visually impaired, the impact is incredible!"

Over the years, the Dallas Lighthouse has assisted hundreds of thousands of people. Still, McElroy is determined to do more. He has a keen desire to help people affected by visual impairment succeed and thrive in any workplace, believe in themselves and their capabilities, and know they are valuable contributors to their communities.

"It's not just about helping the blind find jobs and live independently. There's so much more to it," McElroy emphasizes. "Our approach and vision need broadening. We need to look beyond the immediacy of operations and to determine what our clients are capable of being and how we can maximize our impact in support of this critical mission. With our help, we don't lose workers to disability, we create a system that supports all people in their journey."



Jobs for People with Disabilities



# Texas Department of Public Safety Procurement and Contract Services Purchaser IV, Tim Laws, Commends TIBH and the Texas State Use Program



*Tim Laws is proud to support the Texas State Use Program in his purchasing position with the Texas Department of Public Safety.*

**T**im Laws, Purchaser IV for the Texas Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Procurement and Contract Services, processes requests for services from TIBH Industries, Inc. and the Texas State Use Program in order to ensure that all of the organization's needs are met.

Prior to his position with the Texas DPS, Laws worked in the private sector as a manufacturing engineer purchasing electrical commodities. Laws was first introduced to the State Use Program through his procurement training and the state purchasing website and policy. He has been with the Texas DPS for the past three

years, where he is responsible for the requisition of service-related contracts through TIBH.

Currently, Laws and his fellow employees purchase a number of services offered by the State Use Program through the Commodities and Services Branch of the Texas DPS, including lawn, janitorial and HVAC services.

"Texas DPS has a great working relationship with TIBH," Laws said. "Through TIBH we are able to obtain pricing quickly and purchase services within DPS's budget."

The Texas DPS Commodities and Services Branch often utilizes the website and catalog for procuring service requirements, and they have found the TIBH staff to be easily available when contacted for pricing via email as well.

"TIBH's employees are professional, and they make our job as DPS's procurement staff seamless," said Laws. "When utilizing the State Use Program, we obtain prices quickly and are always satisfied with the services we receive."

Laws and his colleagues are also pleased with TIBH's customer service and its ability to resolve issues quickly to their satisfaction.

Texas DPS procedures include requesting price quotes through the State Use Program without the necessity of competition. DPS's lawn, janitorial and shredding requirements are offered to TIBH first, and if TIBH is able to accommodate the request, DPS will award the service to them.

"Although purchasing services through the State Use Program is mandatory, we receive quality services and appreciate the great job opportunities it creates for individuals with disabilities," Laws said. "I am extremely proud to be part of this experience."



# TIBH IN THE COMMUNITY

## Gold Stirrup Horse Show



*Pictured above: The Marbridge Longhorns were one of several participants in this year's Gold Stirrup Horse Show. Congratulations to all of the 2016 Gold Stirrup Horse Show contestants.*

Continuing its long-standing partnership, TIBH supported Rodeo Austin during its 2016 season by donating award belt buckles to be given out during the Gold Stirrup Horse Show.

The event, which functions as a way to showcase the talents of riders with disabilities, promotes therapeutic riding as a tool through which rehabilitation and recreation positively impact people with special needs. Competitors had the opportunity to participate in three levels of showmanship this year, which included English and Western equitation, barrels and trail.

TIBH is proud to support the Gold Stirrup Horse Show and Rodeo Austin, and we look forward to continued participation in future events.



*Marie Richter, TIBH, presents a Gold Stirrup Horse Show contestant with an award belt buckle and participant ribbons.*

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



**T**IBH has been offering its regional compliance and safety seminars to community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) around the state. In an effort to equip our CRPs with the information necessary to operate safe and efficient working environments, TIBH staff members have been meeting with CRPs about workplace safety, which includes roadway, janitorial and chemical safety. These seminars also function as a way for CRP staff members to learn about State Use Wage Reports, Documentation of Disabilities forms, the process of recertification, and how to conduct price proposals for products and services. Please visit the TIBH website, [TIBH.org](http://TIBH.org), to determine when we will be hosting a seminar near you.

TIBH is looking forward to its upcoming 9th Annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and 28th Annual Products and Services Expo, with employees already planning the events. This year's dinner will take place Wednesday, September 21, and it will function as a way to honor and celebrate the many outstanding employees who are employed through the Texas State Use Program, as well as the agencies that purchase their products and services. The expo will take place the following Thursday morning (September 22), and it is designed to raise awareness of the State Use *WorksWonders* Program. It allows representatives from CRPs to interact with purchasers who utilize their products and services, demonstrate how certain products work, and introduce any new products or services that are available. You can make plans to attend both of these events by visiting the TIBH website or calling our office for more information.

As we look toward fall and the end of 2016, TIBH is in the process of preparing for the upcoming 2017 legislative session. In anticipation of next year's session, we will continue to monitor legislation that could affect the State Use Program in order to ensure further success of our mission to employ Texans with disabilities.

As always, we thank you for your support of the Texas State Use Program and your commitment to employing Texans with disabilities.

Best Regards,

Fred M. Weber, Jr.

