

WorkQuest

FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LVIII

December 2022

Work Services Corporation: Changing lives one job at a time



Oscar Holbrook maintains the cleanliness of the facilities at the Eastland County Eastbound Safety Rest Area

Work Services Corporation (WSC) is a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) with the Texas State Use *WorksWonders* Program. The nonprofit organization is proud to provide meaningful employment opportunities to people with disabilities who are then able to provide for themselves and their families.

Originally founded in 1954, WSC now focuses on vocational training for people with disabilities and holds state and federal contracts with organizations that employ people with disabilities. WSC is dedicated to empowering these individuals to achieve personal growth and independence and to improve their lives through training and employment.

Damon Berryman, Project Manager at Work Services Corporation, says his employees take pride in their jobs and have a strong work ethic that leads them to accomplish great things. “The employees I manage are very faithful and dependable,” said Berryman. “It’s hard to find people like that these days.”

WSC envisions a community where people with disabilities are independent and enriched with social, economic and vocational equality. Ben Ezell, vice president of operations at WSC, says their employees and leadership team embody the company’s mission to empower the individuals they serve through training and employment opportunities. “Over the years people with a passion for serving people with disabilities have gravitated to the organization and those people pour their heart out when doing their job,” said Ezzell.

Through WSC and its partnership with the *WorksWonders* program, employees like Oscar Holbrook are connected to meaningful employment. Holbrook works at the Eastland County Eastbound Safety Rest Area, a flagship operation of Work Services Corporation, where he is admired by his colleagues for his excellent work ethic and willingness to go out of his way to help others. Some of Holbrook’s duties include setting up cleaning supplies, grounds maintenance and leading the information service desk.

Holbrook says that his job has given him the opportunity to provide for himself by working at a place that he truly loves. “I love getting to help other people through my job,” Holbrook said. “This job is literally my life and the people I work with are like my family.”

As for Work Services Corporation, they are grateful that their partnership with WorkQuest has allowed them to fulfill their mission.

“WSC serves any person in the community who has a disability and wants to work,” David Toogood, president and CEO of WSC, said. “We aim to build a strong team of leaders, align and motivate all members of the organization to achieve our goals and serve people in a manner that helps move toward our vision of social, economic, and vocational equality for people with disabilities.”



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

We are grateful for an amazing year full of successful events including WorkQuest's annual compliance and safety seminars, the 15th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner, and the 34th annual Products and Services Expo.

The growth of the *WorksWonders* Program is all thanks to our community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and their employees, the customers who purchase products, services and temporary employment services through the Program, and everyone who has supported the program in any way throughout the year.

I am pleased to report that over the last year nearly 6,400 individuals with disabilities were employed through the Program. Reported total wages and benefits to those individuals, as well as hourly wages paid to those working within the Program, also increased over the year. WorkQuest will continue to work alongside Program CRPs and the Texas Workforce Commission to ensure that opportunities for employment are available to individuals with disabilities across the state.

We look forward to next year with the start of the 88th Texas Legislative Session – beginning in January – when WorkQuest will monitor for legislation that could affect the *WorksWonders* Program.

On behalf of everyone at WorkQuest, I would like to wish you all a safe holiday season and a happy and successful new year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'F. Weber, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.
President and CEO

Austin Lighthouse Celebrates Disability Employment Awareness with New Accessible Certification Testing Center, White Cane Day March

October was Disability Employment Awareness month, and this year Travis Association for the Blind – the Austin Lighthouse, a community rehabilitation program (CRP) participating in the Texas State Use *WorksWonders* Program, marked the occasion by opening their accessible certification testing center, sponsored by Microsoft.

More than 80 guests from across the country attended the grand opening ceremony, including representatives from tech giants Microsoft and Google as well as local and state leaders. WorkQuest President and CEO, Fred Weber, Jr., and additional representatives from the organization were also present.



Austin Lighthouse celebrates the grand opening of the Certification Testing Center with a ribbon-cutting. L-R: Al Perales, Austin Lighthouse Vice President of Business Innovation; Marjorie Thibodaux, Google Program Manager; Leif Hemstad, Microsoft Consulting Practice Leader; Vanessa Fuentes, City of Austin District 2 Council Member; Jim Meehan, Austin Lighthouse President & CEO; Bobbi Dangerfield, Austin Lighthouse Board of Directors Chairwoman; Ed Serna, Texas Workforce Commission Executive Director; and Ryan Ulwelling, Pearson Vue Vice President of Global Channels.

During the event, attendees toured Austin Lighthouse headquarters and explored the testing room where those seeking certifications in IT and credentialed programs can take exams with the JAWS screen reader program – that allows blind and visually impaired individuals to read a computer screen – or ZoomText magnification software – a fully integrated magnification and reading program tailored for low-vision users.

“The Austin Lighthouse is the only non-Pearson-owned testing center with JAWS permanently installed,” said Pearson VUE Vice President of Global Channels Ryan Ulwelling. Pearson VUE is the world’s leading education and computer-based testing program.

Angelic Hall, senior manager of training & employment services at the Austin Lighthouse, will serve as a certified proctor for the exams. Hall has over 27 years of experience serving the disability community and is certified in American Sign Language. Justin Bushland, orientation & mobility specialist at the Austin Lighthouse, will also serve as a proctor.

Hall also lent a hand in Austin’s 20th Anniversary White Cane Day (WCD) celebration, another event falling during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. She and the Lighthouse WCD committee, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, led the Travis Association for the Blind White Cane Day March in Downtown Austin.

“It’s a day I get to help support and educate the world that the blind and visually impaired can integrate into society, except in a different way,” Hall said. “The march acknowledges their many accomplishments and contributions to Austin.”

Lighthouse employees, their families, and the community marched the 12-block route from Austin City Hall to the Texas State Capitol. Afterward, attendees boarded buses provided by Austin’s Metro Access to attend the White Cane Day Celebration hosted by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Jim Meehan, president and CEO of the Lighthouse, was a guest speaker at the event.

WorkQuest is happy to support the Austin Lighthouse, and all *WorksWonders* Program CRPs, as they continue to expand the employment opportunities available to individuals with disabilities across the state.

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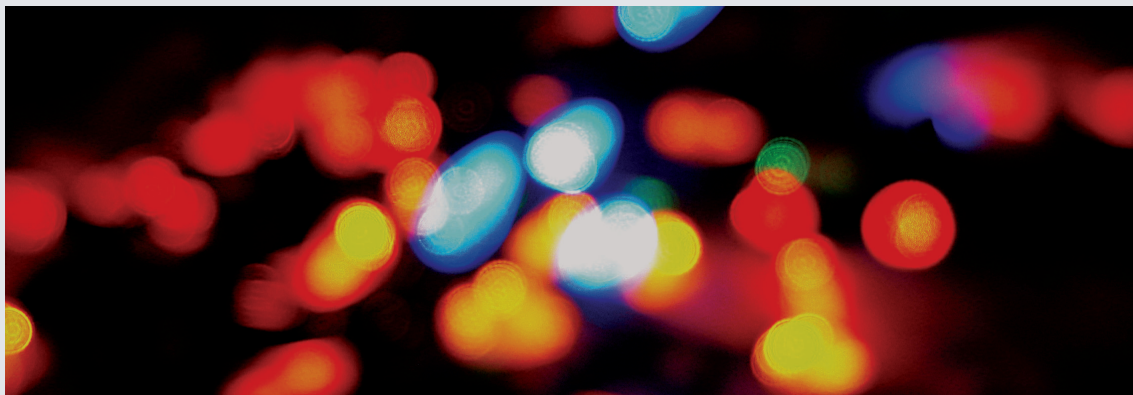
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**WorkQuest wishes you a joyful
holiday season and a Happy New Year.**



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