

# WorkQuest

# FOCUS

## on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter L  
September 2020

### Congratulating our CRP partner: Austin Lighthouse for the Blind honored for employees' work



*Austin Lighthouse for the Blind employee Brandon Colvin works on the Purell skin care line.*

On Tuesday, May 12, the Austin Lighthouse for the Blind shipped its 3 millionth bottle of Purell since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This significant accomplishment was acknowledged with a surprise celebration for employees at the Austin Lighthouse's warehouse (maintaining strict social distancing and safety measures, of course). WorkQuest celebrated with the Austin Lighthouse as it was recognized for its good work by the National Industries for the Blind and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

"We may not be on the frontlines like the healthcare workers and other people, but what we do here helps them," Jim Meehan, CEO of the Austin Lighthouse, said. "We take an incredible amount of pride in being able to deliver the product that we deliver."

Michael Hooks, who serves as the director of the office of disability employment strategies at TWC, attended the celebration at the Austin Lighthouse facility, where he addressed the employees.

"TWC commends and congratulates the Austin Lighthouse employees for their dedication and hard work to supply essential workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 response with vital products and services," Hooks said. "We're proud of you and the front line workers who are working to make sure Texas families can obtain essential goods during this time of need."

The Austin Lighthouse has been serving the needs of the blind and visually impaired of Travis County and surrounding areas since

1934. To help it meet the employment needs of the blind and visually impaired community—and provide opportunities for economic and personal independence—WorkQuest facilitates product and service contracts with governmental purchasing agencies through the State Use *Works Wonders* Program. Austin Lighthouse employees manufacture a variety of products, including Purell, which has been increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WorkQuest is proud of the Austin Lighthouse for answering the call to combat COVID-19 by increasing production and shipping lines, tripling employee counts on those lines, hiring 20 additional temporary workers and investing more than \$100,000 in additional equipment at its facilities. This commitment to employee job security in a time of great uncertainty—and to using the tools they have to make a difference—is part of what makes the Austin Lighthouse a standout Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), partner and place of work.

"This is an incredible milestone for all Austin Lighthouse employees," Fred Weber, Jr., president and CEO of WorkQuest, said. "The Austin Lighthouse for the Blind has been one of our valued CRP partners for more than 40 years."

Congratulations to the Austin Lighthouse on this incredible milestone. WorkQuest is proud to assist in providing meaningful, gainful employment and increased independence to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

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

As we look toward a fall season still heavily influenced by the presence of COVID-19, WorkQuest strives to continue to meet the challenges that arise in order to safeguard the employment opportunities of individuals with disabilities across the state of Texas while providing essential products and services to our customers.

WorkQuest staff have continued to successfully work remotely, without interruption to business operations or the day-to-day functions of the *WorksWonders* Program, with designated employees practicing social distancing measures and following mask requirements whenever they are in the office. Through our dedicated partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) participating in the Program, we have been able to maintain, and in some instances grow and expand, the service, temporary employment service and product contracts provided to state governmental entities during this unprecedented time.

As the employment landscape has been changed to accommodate the health and safety protocols required by COVID-19, WorkQuest has been working to evolve not just our internal procedures and protocols, but also some of our annual events to meet these new health and safety needs. Key among these changes is the transition of the 13th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration to a virtual platform and the cancellation of the 2020 Products and Services Expo.

Scheduled to take place as a daytime event on Wednesday, Sept. 23, this year's Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration will be hosted virtually. While we will certainly miss seeing everyone in person, we are excited to be able to celebrate our dedicated *WorksWonders* Program employees, the CRPs that employ them and the purchasing entities that provide valuable employment opportunities across the state.

Additional details about this year's Artie Lee Hinds Award event are available at [WorkQuest.com](http://WorkQuest.com).

I'd like to recognize and thank everyone participating in the *WorksWonders* Program during this time—the individuals working on contracts, the CRPs facilitating their fulfillment and the purchasing entities that procure them. You all have gone above and beyond to meet emerging demands in order to ensure individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to continue working, and we are proud to call you our partners.

Sincerely,



Fred M. Weber, Jr.  
President and CEO



## Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration goes virtual

Each year, WorkQuest hosts its annual Artie Lee Hinds Award dinner to celebrate the exceptional work of its dedicated Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) employees, followed by the annual Products and Services Expo. These are hallmark events for our organization and our CRPs, and your participation is paramount to their success.

WorkQuest is excited to announce that the 13th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration will take place virtually as a daytime event on Wednesday, Sept. 23.



Due to the health and safety restrictions that have become a necessity since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WorkQuest made the decision to transition the Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration to a virtual event. Unfortunately, WorkQuest also made the very difficult decision to cancel this year's Products and Services Expo. While this is disappointing for many of *WorksWonders* Program CRPs and customers, their well-being is WorkQuest's top priority, and these changes were the most effective way to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

While certain aspects of this year's Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration are changing, the original intent and purpose of the event—honoring the outstanding *WorksWonders* Program employees and customers who support and contribute to the overwhelming success of the Program—remains steadfast. WorkQuest is dedicated to acknowledging the individuals who provide the services, temporary employment services and products that are available through the Program. In addition to recognizing the numerous Program employees who have been nominated for this year's event—and awarding two outstanding individuals with the Most Motivational Employee and Most Inspirational Employee awards—the Artie Lee Hinds Award will be presented to an employee who has shown great commitment and dedication throughout the past year while working on a *WorksWonders* Program contract.

You'll be able to register for the virtual event using the link found on our website. Once you're registered, you'll receive reminder emails and a link to access the event on Sept. 23.

For more information and to stay up to date about this year's event, please visit [WorkQuest.com](http://WorkQuest.com).

# WorkQuest welcomes new regional marketing managers

WorkQuest is excited to welcome Deidra Davis and Angel Kan as its two newest regional marketing managers!

Before coming to work for WorkQuest in April of this year, Davis worked closely with WorkQuest and the *Works Wonders* Program at two community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) as case manager, hourly supervisor and residential manager with the Home & Community Services program and later as the director of Burke Industries at Burke Center. She also served as the executive director of Oak Creek Center.

“WorkQuest is pleased to announce Deidra as our new regional marketing manager for

services in the East Texas region,” Roxy Van Loo, state sales director for WorkQuest, said. “Operating out of Lufkin, Texas, she will be responsible for the coordination of services provided to county, city and state agencies throughout Region 3. We are excited about the expertise and fresh perspective she will bring to this role given her unique experience working within the *Works Wonders* Program.”

Before joining WorkQuest, Kan worked in sales forecasting and managed logistics for several big-box retailers and has helped small businesses improve their online presence and increase audience outreach while developing her skills in business consulting, multi-media

content creation, and print, digital and social media marketing.

“We are excited to have Angel as our new regional marketing manager for products in the Houston/Southeast Texas region,” Ray Zaman, director of product management for WorkQuest, said. “We look forward to seeing how she will use the marketing experience she has acquired throughout multiple industries to help evolve and expand *Works Wonders* Program product offerings.”

WorkQuest is looking forward to further expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities with the addition of Davis and Kan to the WorkQuest team!

## WorkQuest celebrates anniversaries of Americans with Disabilities Act, Vocational Rehabilitation Program

This summer, WorkQuest recognized the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as the 100th anniversary of the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

Standing as the first comprehensive piece of civil rights law to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunication, the ADA has contributed greatly to the growth of the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities, as well as to the evolution of the *Works Wonders* Program.

“As we recognize this momentous occasion, we remember the foundational purpose behind the passing of the Americans with Disabilities

Act, to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities,” Fred Weber, president and CEO of WorkQuest, said. “Every individual involved in the *Works Wonders* Program—whether it be a community rehabilitation program (CRP) employee working on a contract or a state agency purchaser procuring landscaping services for a state building—works toward the goal of providing more employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the state, furthering the ADA’s primary objective.”

Similarly, TWC’s VR program was established to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, find or retain employment—as well as to help youth and students prepare for post-secondary education and competitive integrated employment opportunities—by offering

job exploration, counseling and work-based learning experiences and training.

By partnering with the VR program and implementing its initiatives such as job training, career counseling and competitive integrated employment curriculum into the *Works Wonders* Program, WorkQuest has been able to contribute to the creation of diverse new employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, as well as the processes and procedures that are developed to make employment more accessible and sustainable for those individuals.

WorkQuest looks forward to celebrating future milestones for both programs and is proud to be part of these influential pieces of history for individuals with disabilities across Texas and the United States.

## WorkQuest in the Community

WorkQuest would like to thank the *Works Wonders* community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that continue to work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to support the individuals providing these essential services within communities across the state, WorkQuest has facilitated the following initiatives:

- We began working alongside SourceAmerica, the federal AbilityOne Program, to facilitate the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to CRPs—such as protective masks,

gloves, hand sanitizers and soaps—in order to ensure that employees had direct and steady access to these protective materials.

- In an attempt to safeguard the health of CRP employees and the individuals at locations where janitorial services are provided, WorkQuest provided training by the International Sanitary Supply Association, an industry standard, quality cleaning program approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an effective prevention measure against the spread of

COVID-19, to any CRP that wished to become certified.

- In order to ensure that CRPs are able to continue their contracts and preserve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, organizations that were affected by COVID-19 due to reduced work hours and loss in revenues caused by reductions in contract work and other unforeseen circumstances are encouraged to apply for relief grants through WorkQuest.



# WorkQuest

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**Visit [WorkQuest.com](http://WorkQuest.com) to stay up to date about upcoming events.**

**Artie Lee Hinds Award Virtual Celebration**

**September 23, 2020**

**11 a.m.**

**Taking place via Zoom and YouTube Live**

**View the WorkQuest online catalog  
online at [WorkQuest.com](http://WorkQuest.com)**