

Our Report to the Community – FY 2018 The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.

From Jigsaw Puzzles to Jet Airplanes – A Century of The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.

Photo with caption: Lighthouse facility on the Seattle waterfront in 1925.

Photo with caption: A Lighthouse employee in the early days of machining parts. Photo with caption: Senior Aerospace Production Worker Rachel Talley.

For most of us, the words “You’re hired,” mark the beginning of a long journey — a career with a gently sloping line that charts increasing responsibility and the wages that come with it. But for people who are blind or DeafBlind, the beginning of that journey can feel more like scaling a mountain. At the Lighthouse, we’re empowering people so they can earn a paycheck, acquire independence, and join a community of people who rely on them from day one. We see those impacts every day: a head carried a little higher, a smile that comes a little quicker, a stride that’s a little bit faster. These things say: I am contributing. I am needed here, today.

When a handful of local women incorporated The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. in 1918, they couldn’t have imagined the thousands of lives they would touch. One of several independent organizations founded in major American cities at the turn of the century, Seattle’s outpost was established to help soldiers returning from The Great War. As these young veterans struggled with the new limitations created by their injuries, the Lighthouse was there, teaching them how to make brooms, mops, and jigsaw puzzles to be sold to the people of Seattle.

What started as a small, local effort took a giant leap in 1938, when the Javits-Wagner O’Day Act first encouraged organizations like the

Lighthouse to compete for government manufacturing contracts. Since then, our employees have made compression sacks, collapsible shovels, and hydration systems for the military. In 1951, we began an enduring relationship with The Boeing Company, starting with simple machining and assembly work and gradually increasing our manufacturing capabilities as the aerospace industry evolved. With the signing of our most recent contract in 2018, our employees have begun manufacturing 5,000 modern, nylon-aluminum stretchers for the Army. That project brings our story full circle — from giving purpose to wounded veterans back in 1918 to saving injured soldiers on an entirely different battleground.

Since then, we haven't stopped looking for ways to expand our product lines and offer new opportunities for our employees. We opened the doors of our first Base Supply Center in 1999 in Ft. Lewis, WA, and today we are operating seven BSCs along the West Coast. In 2008, the Lighthouse opened a new facility in Spokane, Washington, manufacturing whiteboards and easels in partnership with ACCO, employing 60 people who are blind. In 2009 and 2010 we expanded into Service Businesses, launching a Contact Center in Seattle and Contract Management Services in San Diego, CA. And in 2016, we opened a facility in Summerville, South Carolina, to serve our longtime client Boeing; with 14 employees, the site quickly became the state's largest employer of people who are blind. Our relationship with the world's premier airplane manufacturer may have begun as a charitable cause, but today our employees are considered part of Boeing's workforce: "We look at the Lighthouse not only as a value to our community, and the great social mission they perform, but as an extension of our own factory," says Jack Meehan, Emergent & Manufacturing Services Leader for The Boeing Company.

We're enormously proud of the Lighthouse's ability to support our community for 100 years. But our work isn't done. Seven of ten adults who are blind are unemployed, and that number is even higher for those who are DeafBlind or blind with other disabilities.

We're determined to change that by offering classes in braille, by teaching new software skills, and by training our employees on how to use cutting-edge manufacturing equipment. In the next few years, the Lighthouse aims to expand our capabilities and geographic reach while showing our sister agencies how technological advances can open new doors for people who are blind. People like Samantha Porter, who moved from Wisconsin to Seattle to work at the Lighthouse seven years ago, and Paul Ducharme, who learned of the Lighthouse at our annual DeafBlind retreat and now shares our message with new audiences through pro-tactile American Sign Language (ASL). Turn the page to read their stories, and to see how you've paved the way for more stories just like theirs.

Timeline of Lighthouse Milestone Achievements

1918 – Articles of incorporation for The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. signed in Seattle, Washington

1925 - Lighthouse Facility on the Seattle waterfront opens

1951 - Contract with The Boeing Company

1964 - Lighthouse merges with Handcrest, Inc.

1967 - Relocation to current Seattle facility in Rainier Valley

1972 - First DeafBlind employee hired

1999 – First Base Supply Center (BSC) opens

2008 – First Lighthouse facility opens in Spokane, Washington

2010 – Contract Management Services open in San Diego, CA and Contact Center established in Seattle, WA

2013 – Spokane Facility Expansion Groundbreaking

2016 – Third manufacturing facility opens in Summerville, South Carolina

2018 – 100th Anniversary of The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.

**Samantha Porter
2018 Employee of the Year**

Photo with caption: Production Lead Aerospace and Indirect Employee of the Year, Samantha Porter, at her workstation at the Seattle facility.

Samantha Porter is a resilient young woman with a bright future. Originally from Wisconsin, Samantha first heard about The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. in 2011 when she attended the DeafBlind Retreat on Hood Canal in Seabeck, WA, and moved to Seattle to begin working at the Lighthouse one year later. “The retreat is full of DeafBlind people from all over the world and it was an amazing experience for me,” she says. “I promised myself that someday I would live in Seattle because the community and weather were perfect for me and my vision condition.”

Once at the Lighthouse, she moved quickly from working in the packaging department to Production Lead Aerospace, where she has been for six years now. Samantha was voted by her peers as the 2018 Indirect Employee of the Year. She’s driven to succeed and has learned lessons about how to be a leader.

“Working at the Lighthouse has taught me how to be professional, how to be sensitive to others, and how to be flexible and strict at the same time,” she says. Samantha is going through the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee’s (AJAC) Industrial Manufacturing Technician apprenticeship program to learn critical

industrial manufacturing skills in safety, industrial manufacturing basics, production processes, machine maintenance, shop math and communications. After she completes the apprenticeship, Samantha will be able to teach employees who are blind and DeafBlind about aerospace manufacturing.

Samantha has faced adversity in her life. When she was 14 years old, she learned that she had Usher Syndrome, which causes partial or total hearing loss and vision loss that worsens over time. It took time for her to adjust to the news, and to find her path forward. “It took me three years to adjust, and I finally learned to accept my identity. I am proud to be DeafBlind.”

Like many others who learn pro-tactile American Sign Language (ASL), she has realized the benefits of it. “I am starting to use pro-tactile ASL a lot, even though I can still see well. I just completely fell in love with it. It’s hard to describe, but for you to experience it, you have to have an open mind and open heart, and you can experience life with the people around you.” As for her future, Samantha plans to keep learning and growing.

“It’s frustrating because there’s no prediction on how changes to my sight will occur, or when it will happen. You just have to embrace your life and keep going. That’s what I am doing now. I am grabbing my time to travel the world as much as I can, so I can embrace the memories that I have in my head as my imagination.”

“Honestly, I wouldn’t trade it for anything, to restore my vision. I do have bad days, but it doesn’t mean that I have to give up. If I gave up, I wouldn’t be here to tell this story.”

What We've Made

Photo with caption: CNC Specialist Mike King

3,918,338 is the number of manufactured office products, defense products, and machined parts made by Lighthouse employees who are blind and DeafBlind.

This includes over one million AbilityOne Government and Military products, almost 200,000 AbilityOne Office Products, and more than 2.5 million Aerospace Machining products.

Who We Are

The Lighthouse is the largest employer of people who are blind West of the Mississippi and is the largest employer of individuals who are DeafBlind in the United States. Our employees who are blind work in every department of the organization, from production and manufacturing work to management and leadership.

Hiring and Upward Mobility

39 - Number of new employees hired who are blind, DeafBlind, or blind with other disabilities

9 - Number of employees promoted who are blind, DeafBlind, or blind with other disabilities

Employee Breakdown

485 Total Employees

218 Employees who are blind

30 Employees who are DeafBlind

25 Employees who are blind with other disabilities

Employees Who Are Blind by Department

Pictured: A vertically stacked graph with colored bars showing the percentage of total Lighthouse employees, along with the number of employees in each department.

3.5% - 9 employees - Employee & Community Services

7.5% - 21 employees – Service Businesses, Base Supply Centers

10% - 28 employees – Admin/HR, Accounting, Communications, Production Support

29% - 81 employees – Aerospace

50% - 134 employees – Defense & Office Products

Quote: “I am back to doing what I love: interacting with customers daily. The difference between the customer service jobs I had previously to now is that today I have the privilege to work for an organization that puts accessibility first and that makes all the difference.”

— Meka White, Contact Center Representative, Seattle, WA

Photo with caption: Lighthouse Contact Center Representatives Meka White, Robert Studebaker, and Ramon Rodriguez

Paul Ducharme

2018 Employee of the Year

Photo with caption: Machine Operator Aerospace and Direct Employee of the Year, Paul Ducharme, at his workstation in the Seattle facility.

Paul Ducharme’s upbeat personality and sense of humor comes through the moment you meet him. Originally from Connecticut, Paul moved from Boston to Seattle in 2008 to work for The

Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. Ten years later, Paul was elected by his peers as the 2018 Raymond. W. Haman Direct Employee of the Year recipient. He had the opportunity in April to attend the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) Conference in Virginia with other employees of the year from associated NIB agencies.

“The Lighthouse is a wonderful place, it’s a community. The level of accessibility can’t be beat, you can access lots of different services, have the opportunity to learn new skills, different machines, and cross-train. There’s also a lot of fun going on here!” he says.

Paul first became aware of the Lighthouse in the 90’s when he was at the annual DeafBlind Retreat on Hood Canal in Seabeck, WA. When he visited the Lighthouse on a day tour, he learned there were DeafBlind people running machines, and it left an impression on him.

“I grew up working; it’s part of my character,” Paul says. “I was used to doing office work, but when I lost my vision, office work lost its purpose for me.” Working at the Lighthouse was Paul’s first experience in a manufacturing setting. “I’m not much of a handyman; I wasn’t even very good at hammering in a nail,” he says. “But now I’m pretty good as a machinist.” Paul spends most of his time running the clicker press, which is used to cut felt. Initially he was a bit nervous running a machine, but once he was properly trained and realized it was safe, he got used to it. In the past three years, Paul has also become an everyday braille user by taking advantage of the braille literacy classes at the Lighthouse. Paul’s goal is to become a braille instructor in the future.

Along with braille, Paul uses pro-tactile American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. “People always think that being DeafBlind is a quiet experience, but once you connect through touch, it’s energizing.” It’s not a matter of faster communication, but more nuanced communication. Pro-tactile ASL uses techniques that give more information on your back or legs.

“When I’m presenting to a group, for example, there’s a pro-tactile interpreter who will stand behind me and give me visual or auditory information from the audience, and let me know whether they’re smiling or frowning or yawning. I am able to have a better rapport with the audience, and adjust my presentation accordingly. Before, I didn’t know what was going on with the audience at all.”

Though more and more people who are DeafBlind are familiar with the Lighthouse and encouraged to move to the Seattle area to join the DeafBlind community, Paul would love if the Lighthouse DeafBlind Program could exist in every state. “There are people who can’t pick up and move, and it would be great to see the Lighthouse model everywhere.”

Empowerment Through Employee & Community Services

Photo with caption: Lighthouse Production Worker Jolynn Page (left) introduces her guide dog during a School Tour.

In addition to providing employment opportunities, the Lighthouse offers a wide range of programs and services for employees who are blind and DeafBlind. Computer training classes, braille courses, our acclaimed DeafBlind Retreat, and DeafBlind Community Classes, as well as a program to educate elementary school students about blindness are just a few of the employee and community services we offer.

\$6,765 – Average cost of services per person per year

30,718 – Total hours of service delivered

400 – Total people served by ECS

People Served by ECS

Pictured: A vertically stacked graph with colored bars showing the percentage of total people served by ECS, and the number of each segmented group of people who received services.

- 58% - 233 Employees who are blind**
- 19% - 76 Community members who are DeafBlind**
- 10% - 39 Employees who are DeafBlind**
- 7% - 28 Employees who are sighted**
- 5% - 20 Community members who are blind**
- 1% - 4 Community members who are sighted**

Fy2018 Financial Information (Unaudited)

Revenue

Manufacturing

Aerospace: \$14,330,000

Defense: \$31,850,000

Business Office Products: \$12,560,000

Services

Base Supply Centers: \$24,850,000

Contract Management Services & Other: \$730,000

Manufacturing and Services Sales: \$84,320,000

ECS Contracts and Fees: \$260,000

Cash Contributions: \$1,150,000

Investment Returns: \$910,000

Expenses

Personnel: \$28,470,000

Manufacturing and Retail Materials: \$42,720,000

Facilities and Infrastructure: \$6,120,000

Administrative Expenses: \$3,630,000
Professional Services: \$1,870,000
Other (Income) and Expense: \$(1,150,000)
Employee and Community Services Expenses

Pictured: A vertically stacked graph with colored bars, labeled with the percentage of total ECS Expenses, as well as the dollar amount spent in each category.

20% - \$550,000 – Interpreting Services
19% - \$530,000 – ECS Administration
14% - \$390,000 – Accessibility
12% - \$330,000 – Orientation & Mobility
10% - \$280,000 – DeafBlind Retreat
9% - \$250,000 – Employee Support Services
9% - \$230,000 – Blind and DeafBlind Computer Training

Our Locations

Pictured: A map of the continental United States with numbers highlighting each facility or location per state.

Washington

- 1 - Seattle Facility, Seattle, WA**
- 2 - Lakewood Office, Lakewood, WA**
- 3 - Spokane Facility, Spokane, WA**
- 4 - JBLM–eXpress/Web Fulfillment, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA**
- 5 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, Joint-Base Lewis McChord, Ft. Lewis Main Post, WA**
- 6 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, Joint-Base Lewis McChord, McChord Field, WA**
- 7 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, Joint-Base Lewis McChord, North Ft. Lewis, WA**

California

8 - San Diego Facility, San Diego, CA

9 - AbilityOne Base Supply Store, Fleet Readiness Center, San Diego, CA

10 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, Naval Air Warfare Center, China Lake, CA

11 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA

12 - AbilityOne Base Supply Center, SPAWAR, Point Loma, CA

13 - Contract Management Services, SPAWAR/NAVSUP, San Diego, CA

Nevada

14 - AbilityOne Base SupplyCenter, Naval Airstation, Fallon, NV

South Carolina

15 - Summerville Facility

The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.

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www.LHBlind.org

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