

WorkQuest

FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LX

June 2023

West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind: Providing stability one job at a time



Mark Dudley works on multiple packaging production lines at the West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind in San Angelo, Texas.

The West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind in San Angelo, Texas is dedicated to providing life-changing job opportunities to blind and visually impaired individuals.

The Lighthouse, a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) in the *WorksWonders* Program, is a non-profit organization that offers on the job training, upward mobility and advocacy for blind and visually impaired individuals. Since 1963, its mission has been to assist people in building their independence through skills training, education and employment opportunities that encourage individuals to be involved in the community. Over 90% of the Lighthouse's direct employees are legally blind, and the Lighthouse is proud to not only provide opportunities to these individuals but provide meaningful employment that offers competitive pay and benefits.

Dave Wells, chief executive officer of the Lighthouse, is honored to lead the organization and change lives one job at a time. He recognizes that the Lighthouse makes a positive difference in his community and is grateful to have hard-working and dedicated employees.

"We are the only employer in all of West Texas that focuses on providing jobs to people that are blind or visually impaired, and a lot of our employees would not have jobs if it wasn't for us," said

Wells. "We have people that work very hard and we have very smart employees that raise all our intelligence levels and teach us things every day."

Mark Dudley has been employed by the Lighthouse for over seven years and says he is grateful that his job has given him the opportunity to provide for himself. "This job means independence and being self-sufficient," said Dudley. "I like knowing that I have a job every day and that I don't have to worry about financial restrictions."

Dudley feels fortunate to have a job at the Lighthouse and truly enjoys the work he does. "I do quality work because my work is not only a reflection of me, but also of the Lighthouse," said Dudley.

As for the Lighthouse, Wells is thankful for its partnership with WorkQuest and is glad to continue to provide meaningful job opportunities for blind and visually impaired individuals through the *WorksWonders* program.

"Our partnership with WorkQuest is very important to us," said Wells. "We are happy to be able to provide our employees with a way to be financially independent through meaningful jobs that are possible because of the *WorksWonders* program."



Message from President/CEO **Fred M. Weber, Jr.**

On Monday, May 29, 2023, the Texas Legislature ended the 140-day Regular Session. That evening, Governor Greg Abbott called a Special Session with the scope limited to property tax relief and border security. WorkQuest continued to monitor legislation that could have potentially affected the *WorksWonders* Program and its stakeholders. WorkQuest is happy to support our partners by keeping you up to date on any news surrounding the administration and operation of the Program.

This summer, WorkQuest will continue to offer its regional compliance and training seminars to CRPs around the state. These seminars serve to inform CRPs of any updates to *WorksWonders* Program rules and procedures. The training seminars will also inform CRPs of legislative, training and curriculum updates, such as best practices for competitive and integrated employment placements, that will help when contracting with government agencies through the Program.

The 16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and 35th annual Products and Services Expo will take place this September. The dinner will take place the evening of Monday, Sept. 25 and the Expo will take place the following morning on Tuesday, Sept. 26. The events serve as a way to celebrate the accomplishments of the hard-working *WorksWonders* Program CRP employees, as well as the customers that purchase their products and services.

To find out more about training seminars offered near you, or the 16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and 35th annual Products and Services Expo, please visit our website, www.workquest.com.

We hope to see you at one of our scheduled events.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.
President/CEO

2023 Products and Services Expo

For its 35th year, WorkQuest is excited to announce the 2023 Products and Services Expo.

This year's event will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 26, at the Doubletree Hotel Austin, located at 6505 N IH-35 in Austin, Texas, following the 16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner.

Designed as a way to bring together Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) representatives and purchasing customers to showcase the products, services and temporary employment services that are offered through the *WorksWonders* Program, the 2023 Products and Services Expo is a can't miss opportunity for Program CRPs and customers alike.



Products displayed at the 2022 Products and Services Expo

Over 25 *WorksWonders* Program CRPs will have representatives at the expo to connect with their current clients and get the opportunity to bring in new business, while customers will be able to explore existing and new product lines and ask questions about additional offerings available to them through the Program.

For more information and to sign up to join us at this year's event, please visit WorkQuest.com.

16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner

WorkQuest invites you to the 16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner, which will take place Monday, Sept. 25 at the Doubletree Hotel Austin, located at 6505 N IH-35 in Austin, Texas.



Jonathan Olgin makes his way to accept the 2022 Artie Lee Hinds Award

Join us for an evening of celebration as we recognize participants and supporters of the *WorksWonders* Program, including the individuals who provide outstanding services, temporary employment services and products through the Program.

With approximately 350 attendees, including over 40 *WorksWonders* Program employee nominees expected to be in attendance, the event will honor the pinnacle award recipient of the evening, the winner of the 2023 Artie Lee Hinds Award. Additional recognitions will include Most Motivational Employee, Most Inspirational Employee and the Spirit of State Use Awards.

WorkQuest is thrilled to come together with everyone who makes the *WorksWonders* Program possible and celebrate these outstanding individuals.

For more information and to stay up to date on this year's events, please visit WorkQuest.com.

WorkQuest 2023 CRP Compliance & Training Seminars

WorkQuest is excited to announce the 2023 Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Compliance and Training Seminars line up. These trainings provide CRPs with important information about participation in the *WorksWonders* Program, governmental contracting practices, and procurement procedures and laws. The seminars also provide an opportunity for CRPs to ask questions of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and WorkQuest staff. TWC and WorkQuest strongly encourage all certified CRPs to send a representative to attend a training seminar, or participate in the training webinar, so that they do not miss out on important information that is needed to complete TWC-required documents and other Program initiatives.

Each seminar will include a morning session that outlines the Program compliance requirements, reviews the Program rules and helps attendees better understand the process of contracting through the Program. WorkQuest staff will also provide instruction on necessary processes like performing person-centered planning and obtaining compliant disability documentation. After lunch, which will be provided by WorkQuest, there will be an afternoon session led by industry expert Betsy Furler, founder of For All Abilities, where she will provide valuable insights on transitioning employees into competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Seminar Agenda

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. - *State Use Compliance Training*

- TWC Staff Reviews of CRPs
- Disability Determination Documentation
- Employee-Centered Vocation Assessments
- Direct Labor Hour Exemption Process
- Product & Service Contracting
- Value Added Statements
- State Use Reporting Requirements
- Unemployment Insurance Requirements...and much more!

12:00–12:30 p.m. - *Lunch (provided)*

12:30–1:30 p.m. - *Transitioning Employees into CIE Opportunities*

- How to Identify Candidates for CIE
- Overview of CIE Opportunities
- Job Placement Ideas

Seminar Locations & Dates

July 14 – Tyler

Residence Inn
350 W. Heritage Drive
Tyler, TX 75703

July 20 – Austin

Holiday Inn Town Lake
20 N. Interstate Hwy 35
Austin, Texas 78701

August 1 – Abilene

MCM Elegante
4250 Ridgemont Dr.
Abilene, TX 79606

August 2 – Arlington

Holiday Inn Rangers Ballpark
1311 Wet N' Wild Way
Arlington, TX 76011

August 8 – San Antonio

DoubleTree Hotel
6909 North Loop 1604
San Antonio, TX 78249

August 16 – Houston

Hilton Houston Westchase
9999 Westheimer Rd.
Houston, TX 77042

August 17 – Corpus Christi

Holiday Inn Downtown Marina
707 North Shoreline Boulevard
Corpus Christi, TX 78401

August 31 – Webinar

To register to attend the webinar, please contact mfelfe@workquest.com

September 6 – El Paso

Hilton Garden Inn
6650 Gateway Blvd. East
El Paso, TX 79915

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16th Annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner

Monday, September 25, 2023

Doubletree Hotel Austin

6505 N IH-35

Austin, TX 78752

35th Annual Products & Services Expo

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

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