



# The Connect



## Employee of the Year

Volume  
11

February  
2013

Making VIB a better workplace to improve career opportunities for blind employees is a goal that Robert (Shannon) Wilder strongly believes in. He not only believes in creating career opportunities through increased skill training, he is actively working as part of the VIB team dedicated to make it happen.

Robert (Shannon) Wilder was diagnosed in 2007 with Retinitis Pigmentosa. Although he had a long history of constricted vision problems, Shannon had enjoyed a successful career in the construction industry and had been a Project Manager for ten years. This diagnosis would change everything. Due to the severe limitations of his peripheral vision, it was deemed dan-

gerous for him to operate machinery, drive automobiles or even safely navigate the construction jobsites.

In 2009 Shannon applied to work at VA Industries for The Blind in Charlottesville. He was initially hired as a mattress assembler. He worked to become proficient in all aspects of mattress production, from sewing ticks to final assembly, to packing and labeling, for college, correctional and navy shipboard mattresses.

Shannon was then moved to another production section where he quickly learned new duties. The quality of his work and productivity is always excellent; and using his project manager background, he often devises more efficient ways of handling production. Shannon is always willing to work wherever needed and works to develop the capability of operating

all the equipment needed for production, packing and shipping.

Shannon's attitude and work habits make him a Major Contributor to VIB's success. He demonstrates leadership skills, and initiative in completing job duties. He regularly exceeds job requirements and assists other blind employees in his work area to help his team meet their goals. Shannon is a team player and is a well respected by other employees.

Shannon was chosen as one of the first participants in the Mentoring Program at VIB-Charlottesville. As a part of the mentoring program, Shannon is being trained as an internal ISO auditor for the Charlottesville facility. He has participated in several audits since completing his initial training and will continue to be an auditor to help maintain ISO certification.

He is currently working on the Quality Work Environment (QWE) project as a part of the new VIB Strategic Plan. The goal of the QWE is to improve the work environments in VIB by developing employees' skills for career advancement.



Shannon puts VDOT logos on Highway Safety vests



Getting VDOT vests ready for shipping



## Employee of the Year (cont'd)

After attending the Strategic Plan conference, Shannon was chosen to be an Employment Practical Implementation Committee (EPIC) member. One of his goals is to master adaptive computer technologies so he can help other blind employees improve their computer skills.

Outside of work, Shannon is a leader as well. He has helped to improve his community by actively volunteering in a variety of positions. He is currently a Youth Sports Manager/Coach for Basketball and Baseball teams; a volunteer activity he has enjoyed since 1999.

He became a board member in 2005 and has been



Shannon performs one of his many tasks. He is spraying down a mattress for the renovate program.



president of the Lane Babe Ruth League of Charlottesville since 2006. This organization provides recreational baseball for youths aged 13 to 19. The accomplishment he is most proud of, except for his wife Laurel and his two sons, is when he managed the 16 to 19 year old All-Star baseball team in 2012- and they won the State Championship!

In 2012 he was the recipient of the "Paul Harris Fellow Award for Community Service" given by The Rotary Club International.

Shannon and his wife Laurel have been married for 24 years. They have two sons the youngest 19 and a sophomore at Christopher Newport University and the other 21 years old, is a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University.

## VIB Richmond Plant Safety Record



Safety is priority number one at the VIB Richmond plant

VIB – Richmond Finishes 2012 with no Workers Compensation Injuries

-submitted by Van McPherson

The Richmond VIB Plant had no recordable OSHA injuries during the entire year for 2012. There were only two incidents in the entire plant,

but both were listed as minor and were non-recordable. When asked to what he attributed this outstanding record, Paul Thomas, plant production and purchasing supervisor said "Everyone worked hard to keep the plant clean and organized. All of our employees keep safety as their number 1 priority."



## VIB Richmond Acquires New Product Line

By: Van N. McPherson

Virginia Industries for the Blind in Richmond has reached agreement with Wizard Wall to package, distribute, and sell their products.

Wizard Wall is a new company producing a line of retail items based on a film which adheres to walls leaving no residue and is used during meetings and conferences where white boards are not available.

Imagine a heavy duty plastic wrap in a longer package with a slide cutter rather than a serrated metal cutter.



Additional uses include classrooms so teachers can allow children to write on it (it can be placed on the wall at a height comfortable for children), kitchen use for writing lists and messages, and even walls in children's room, allowing them a place to draw.

This product is safe and chemical free. It is environmentally friendly, reducing the need for paper, is recyclable, and is reusable when used with a dry erase marker. It comes in a variety of packaging options including one for home use.

VIB Richmond will be adding new storage shelves to accommodate the Wizard Wall product line

## New Contract Management Service Pod At Ft Belvoir

The mission of the Contract Management Support Services (CMS) Program is to provide the Department of Defense (DOD) contracting community with superior professional support while creating career opportunities and professional employment for people who have a visual impairment or a severe disability via the AbilityOne program.

The Ability One Team here at the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Headquarters currently works out of the Defense Contract Services Office (DCSO) under the direction of Mr. Leonard Nale, Ms. Joanne Battaglia and Ms. Catherine



DLA CMS team  
Ft Belvoir

Petroff. Our task is to initiate and execute contract closeout during the Post-Award process in an effort to support the mission of Audit Readiness by FY15.

Sarah Allan, Chris Cooper, and Davina DeBrau are the Contract Closeout Specialists that are exerting due diligence to close the contract files efficiently. The team is led by Contract Closeout Manager, Anna Ferguson and supported by General Clerk Peggy Jackson. AbilityOne will utilize electronic systems such as the Electronic Document Access System (EDA), Wide Area Work Flow (WAWF), Myinvoice, the Enterprise Business System (EBS), and the Computerized Accounts Payable System (CARS).

## VIB DLA employee runs Frosty Bear 5K



Davina De Braux after finishing her Frosty Bear 5K

1/31/2013  
Frosty Bear 5K race presents several challenges, weather not one of them  
By Amanda Neumann

This year's Frosty Bear 5K, a run/walk race held at the McNamara Headquarters Complex Jan. 30, was anything but frosty. With temperatures in the upper 60's, participants were decked out in a sea of shorts and tees, many emblazoned with logos from the military service branches.

As the race began, more than 325 registered runners and walkers started navigating the course, including Defense Logistics Agency Director Navy Vice Adm. Mark Harnitchek.

For Davina De Braux, an AbilityOne contractor with DLA's Contracting Services Office, the race was a challenge in more ways

than one. De Braux is legally blind.

"I wanted to do it just because I thought I couldn't," she said. "I was scared of the thought of actually going 5 kilometers. I'd never done it. But fear is not a reason to not do anything. So I signed up."

As De Braux started walking onto Fort Belvoir, she quickly realized the course was going to be more difficult than she expected.

"Going 5 kilometers on a sidewalk is hard for someone with a visual impairment," she said. "This was even more difficult because it was rough and uneven terrain almost the whole way. I kept thinking 'Oh my God,' because I have little to no depth perception. So certain things like parking lots, crossing streets, varying elevations, are things to be avoided. The whole time, I had to keep watching where

I stepped along the way."

With doubt starting to creep in, De Braux pushed ahead, keeping to a promise she made to herself.

"I had my mind made up that I wasn't going to turn back even though I was tired," she said. "I could really feel it after the third kilometer. For anyone that wants to do this, I would say prepare as well as you can, find out about the course, and plan for any obstacles as best you can in advance."

With a little help from passersby, De Braux finished the event, earning her personal best in terms of distance walked.

"I walked mostly by myself," she said. "On my way back, I asked about different signs to see where to go. Usually I can't see well unless I'm very close to a sign because everything is blurry. But it was a great accomplishment to finish, and I thank God I was able to do it with no injuries."



## Frosty Bear 5K (cont'd)

With her first 5K behind her, De Braux said she is eager to compete in another.

“Now that I’ve finished one, I definitely will participate in others,” she said. “To be able to do it was a big step. To do it again, to make it part of your regular life, is a good thing in and of itself. It’s a great experience.”

With plenty of newcomers to this year’s race, partly due to the unusually warm weather, it was a past participant that took top honors. Patrick Smith, international relations specialist at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, was the top male finisher with a time of 20 minutes, 20 seconds. A 10-year runner, Smith also won the race last year.

“I do a few races every year,” he said. “I didn’t beat my [last year’s] time because the course was different this year. This time we went through the woods so it was

hilly and slippery. And it was a little humid. I started to feel it at the end, but for a ‘Frosty 5K,’ you can’t really beat 70 degrees.”

The top female finisher, DTRA employee Diana Oquendo, quickly followed up with a time of 25 minutes, 24 seconds. For Fitness Center Director Nicholas Hendershot, the large turnout means more employees are getting the message to get out and get fit, in turn increasing enrollment in the center.

“These 5K events are always popular and bring notice to the Fitness Center and our offerings,” he said. “Participants have to walk through the Fitness Center to get to the course here, and I think some people will become members because of that.”

The race, sponsored by the McNamara Headquarters Complex Morale, Welfare and Recreation Office, also attracted those participating in the agency’s new wellness program.

Announced in December, the program allows employees to work out using agency facilities up to three hours per week. For Hendershot, the new initiative as well as leadership participation, is a huge encouragement to employees.

“It helps that our director is participating with us today,” he said. “Our leadership is taking the lead in health and fitness, so as a fitness professional, we can’t be more encouraged and truly appreciate that.”

With a new incentive to work out, many employees have taken a forward approach to getting back in shape. Vicki Ware, an information technology project manager in DLA Information Operations, is a first-time walker in the Frosty Bear 5K, joking that “women in my family aren’t built for running; we walk.”

Ware, who decided to join in the race as

part of her effort to lose weight, knew she needed to become more active when stairs became a problem.

“I needed to lose weight and get more physically fit,” she said. “Because when you have a problem walking up stairs and you’re winded, you have issues. So I started to watch what I eat. I try stay away from all the junk stuff, but every once in a while, you slip. But I don’t do it like I used to do. And I drink more water. I started walking, and I’ve lost about 15 pounds now.”

For Ware, the new wellness initiative harkens back to her days of working with the Navy, where physical training was a way of life.

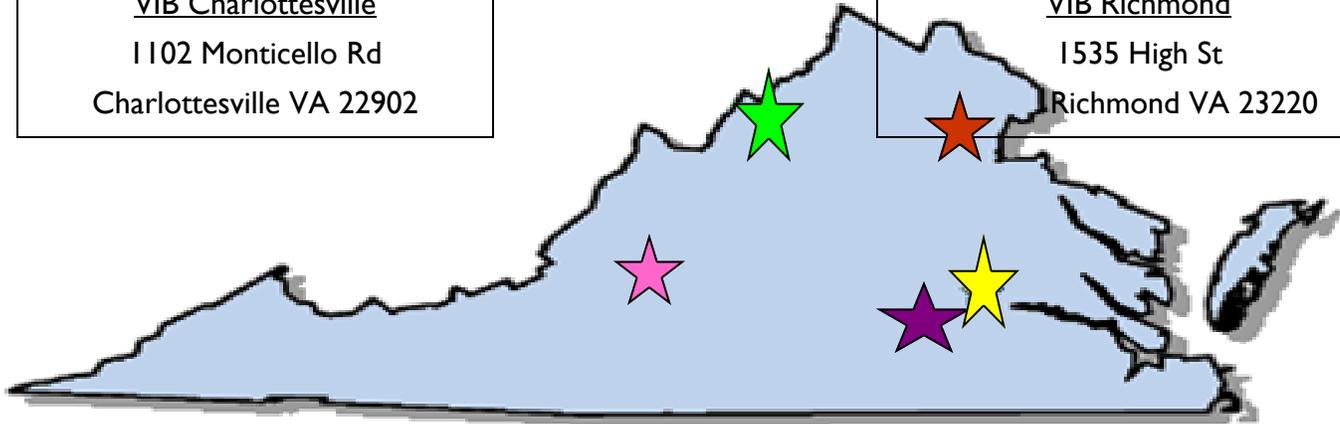
“I was happy to hear it about the three hours a week,” she said. “I worked for the Navy for the first 20 years of my civil service career, and I used to exercise with the Navy guys in Bahrain. I used to do PT with them. So it’s great they’re letting us do the same thing.”



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 Richmond VA 23220



**Manufacturing Division**

**Central Virginia**

Richmond – Writing instruments, gloves, spices, mop handles

**Western Virginia**

Charlottesville – Mattresses, mops, safety vests, pillow, others

**Retail Division**

**Central Virginia**

Petersburg, Fort Lee  
 Richmond, Defense Supply Center  
 Richmond, DLA – Aviation

**Northern Virginia**

Alexandria, Hoffman II  
 Alexandria, Fort Belvoir  
 Alexandria, Mark Center Federal Building  
 Arlington, Pentagon  
 Crystal City, Taylor Building  
 Falls Church, Defense Health Headquarters

**Tidewater**

Hampton, Langley Air Force Base  
 Newport News Fort Eustis  
 Virginia Beach, Oceana Naval Air Station

**Services Division**

**Central Virginia**

Petersburg – Stock Room support for the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA)  
 Richmond – Virginia Department of Taxation, Court Debt Collection Office  
 Richmond at the Richmond plant – Contract Management Service (CMS)  
 Richmond at the Richmond plant – Mail sorting / stuffing function for Virginia agencies

**Northern Virginia**

Alexandria – Fort Belvoir / DLA HQ – Contract Management Service (CMS)

**Tidewater**

Hampton – Langley Air Force Base - Postal Services for on-base residents  
 Norfolk – Naval Base - Retail support at the Super ServMart. Sub-contract providing employees  
 Virginia Beach – Kitting operation

**Western Virginia**

Salem – Switchboard operation for the Veterans Administration hospital.

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