

WorkQuest FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter XLV
May 2019

Achieve: Creating a growth environment for those with disabilities



Alfonso Hernandez of Achieve prepares for his job washing TxDOT fleet vehicles.

Achieve's tagline is "a place to grow" for good reason.

The Dallas-area nonprofit dedicated to serving adults with disabilities is a *WorksWonders* community rehabilitation program (CRP) whose employees—called Achievers—work on contracts facilitated by WorkQuest. A passionate staff encourages their growth, both personally and professionally.

As the executive director of Achieve, Tim Allen wears many hats, but none are more important than his role as an advocate for his Achievers.

Like the rest of his nonprofit staff, Allen knows that Achievers are capable, as long as they're provided with the proper education, training and opportunities.

"Our main mission is to position Achieve to make the biggest impact on our Achievers," Allen said. "What they learn here will help and stick with them for the rest of their lives."

Alfonso Hernandez, who has worked at the organization since 2015, is one of the Achievers who washes fleet vehicles in the Dallas district of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). He says the job has helped him gain confidence.

"Working here has helped me grow," Hernandez said. "I've made new friendships, learned new skills and become more self-sufficient."

Achieve's partnership with WorkQuest has enabled staff members who work closely with the Achievers to focus on training and growth opportunities without having to worry about securing their own contracts through the *WorksWonders* Program.

"Everything is made that much easier," Josh Cornelison, TxDOT's shop coordinator who works with the Achieve account, said. "People with disabilities want to work as much as anyone else. Through our WorkQuest contracts, we're able to offer our Achievers more work opportunities."

In addition to the TxDOT Dallas district vehicle-washing contract, Achievers assemble and pack products, such as pens, fiber optic cables, and nuts and bolts. These contracts, facilitated through WorkQuest, accommodate a variety of skill sets, so each Achiever is matched with a job that's personally challenging, fulfilling and meaningful.

"We push our Achievers to do the best they can while still maintaining product quality," Allen said. "We want them to feel confident and have the proper support system while building new resume skills. We're better able to do this thanks to our partnership with WorkQuest."

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



In January of this year, the Texas Legislature began its 87th legislative session. As part of its duties, WorkQuest has been monitoring all legislation that could potentially impact the *WorksWonders* Program and its stakeholders. We will continue to follow those proceedings until the session's completion in an effort to keep you up to date on all news surrounding the administration and operation of the Program.

WorkQuest will begin hosting its annual Compliance and Training Seminars as a way to teach Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) how to operate within the *WorkWonders* Program, as well as how to utilize the resources the program has to offer. The Compliance and Information Seminars will focus on a variety of topics, including:

- 1.) Requirements needed to participate in the *WorksWonders* Program
- 2.) Staff development and career counseling training
- 3.) Information about contracting with government agencies
- 4.) Procurement procedures and law
- 5.) Competitive integrated employment curriculum and initiatives

Please monitor the WorkQuest website, WorkQuestTX.com, to see when and where we will be offering a seminar near you.

This September, WorkQuest will host its 12th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award dinner and 31st annual Products and Services Expo. The dinner will take place on Monday, Sept. 16, and it will honor the outstanding *WorksWonders* Program employees and customers whose support has contributed to the continued success of the Program. The following Tuesday morning, Sept. 17, the 31st annual Products and Services Expo will feature the products, services and temporary employment services provided for purchase through the Program. We hope that you can attend these events and learn about the quality products and services provided through the *WorksWonders* Program, as well as meet the outstanding individuals who work with such dedication to provide them. You can visit our website or call our office for more information about either of these events. We look forward to seeing you.

As always, we thank you for your continued partnership and support of the *WorksWonders* Program, and we look forward to another successful year.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, likely belonging to Fred M. Weber, Jr. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large 'F'.

Expanding Customer Outreach

As part of WorkQuest's increased commitment to customer satisfaction, the organization has implemented numerous informational and technological enhancements through a variety of internal and external platforms to increase efficiency for customers when connecting with WorkQuest and the *WorksWonders* Program.

The most prominent update is the WorkQuest Customer Service Portal on the WorkQuest website, WorkQuestTX.com.

The Customer Service Portal was designed to streamline the communication process between *WorkWonders* Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and the customers who use the products and services provided through the Program. The portal has been customized to accommodate a number of inquiries—ranging from general questions about products or services, including quote requests, to more specific questions about freight and shipping costs. When accessing the portal, customers are able to quickly communicate their needs to a WorkQuest customer service employee, who in turn can facilitate a timely resolution between the purchasing customer and the CRP providing the product or service in question, all while having the ability to track the progress of any case through to its completion. It is our hope that, as time goes on and the portal becomes a more widely used tool, WorkQuest will be able to predict and avoid many of the customer service inquiries that may otherwise arise.

WorkQuest is also expanding access to customer and CRP training programs.

Not only does WorkQuest provide one-on-one, on-site training sessions with state agencies and other purchasing entities—allowing customers to experience the benefit of employing individuals with disabilities, as well as learn how to access and best utilize the *WorksWonders* Program—but CRP representatives are also trained in compliance guidelines in order to continue providing customers with products and services of the highest quality.

WorkQuest also offers training sessions on topics such as best practices, safety, staff development and career counseling training. Agency and purchaser trainings cover a variety of topics and are designed to allow customers and vendors to take full advantage of the Program. Customers can learn about appropriate purchasing procedures and practices, as well as the laws and statutes that govern their *WorksWonders* Program participation, while CRPs are trained in procurement procedures, government contracting and numerous other requirements they must follow in order to participate in the Program.

You can find the trainings offered to CRPs, as well as informative materials, such as the *WorksWonders* Program Purchaser's Guide, on the "Documents and Links" page of the WorkQuest website. If you are interested in scheduling a training session for your staff, please contact WorkQuest.

WorkQuest strives to continually expand its customer outreach by updating and implementing all available tools for communication in an effort to create a lasting relationship between the *WorksWonders* Program and the customers who use it.

WorkQuest in the Community

This March, WorkQuest had the privilege of participating in and contributing to United Partners – Pflugerville's (UP-Pf) annual fundraising banquet.

UP-Pf is an Austin-area organization that enables people of all abilities to pursue their goals and reach their full potential by providing meaningful opportunities and services to people with disabilities within the local community.

The event raised more than \$27,000. The money will go toward upgrading the organization's building to ensure it is compliant with the rules and regulations outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). WorkQuest sponsored a table for the event, which included a silent auction, contributing to the evening's fundraising goal.

WorkQuest is dedicated to its continued partnership with UP-Pf, as well as the organization's mission to encourage and empower the abilities of all.



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12th Annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner

Monday, September 16, 2019

Doubletree Hotel Austin

6505 IH-35

Austin, Texas 78752

31st Annual Products and Services Expo

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Doubletree Hotel Austin

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Austin, Texas 78752

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online at WorkQuestTX.com**