

WorkQuest FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LXII
December 2023

Liberty Proclaimed Ministry - Making a difference in the community



Liberty Proclaimed Ministry employee, Allon Hill, provides roadside litter pick up services as a crew manager, servicing the Fort Worth Metroplex.

The Griffin family began teaching life skills courses nearly 20 years ago in the Fort Worth area after they saw the need for that kind of education in their community. As time progressed, they began to realize that many of their fellow community members were struggling to find a job. They soon got in touch with WorkQuest to become a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) called Liberty Proclaimed Ministry (LPM). They hoped to help others find meaningful employment opportunities.

“We saw the need in our community and got in touch with WorkQuest to help us provide jobs for those who have had challenges finding employment, including people with disabilities,” said RJ Griffin, chief operations officer at LPM. “We are now proud to say that we are able to provide jobs to over 70 people in our community.”

After word got around the Fort Worth Metroplex that LPM was helping people change their lives by helping them get meaningful jobs, many parents began bringing their family members to LPM asking if they could give them a chance, too.

Allon Hill is one of the many people who were greatly impacted by LPM. He began working at LPM eight years ago as a member of the litter pickup crew and has since worked his way up to crew manager.

“My job has taught me so much, and it has allowed me to build great relationships and friendships,” said Hill. “I’ve come a long way since I started here, and I know that the people at LPM really want what is best for me.”

Hill is a testament to the dedication that LPM has to make a difference in the Fort Worth community. “Allon is one of the many success stories we have, and it is proof that once you take a chance and truly invest in someone, it can lead them to great progress and success,” said Griffin.

The City of Weatherford currently has a litter pickup contract with LPM through the *Works Wonders* Program with WorkQuest. Matt Leppla, operations superintendent of the City of Weatherford, says they have experienced firsthand the great work and impact of LPM and are glad for their partnership. “As a growing city, our needs are growing by the day,” said Leppla. “Helping Texans with disabilities have jobs through our contract is a wonderful benefit to the great service we receive.”

LPM is dedicated to continuing to make a difference in their community by providing jobs for people with disabilities and investing in their employees to allow them to succeed.

Message from President/CEO

Fred M. Weber, Jr.



Year after year, WorkQuest is reminded of the unwavering dedication of the community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) participating in the WorksWonders Program and the loyalty and work ethic from the employees that are responsible for making the Program successful.

Beginning with the completion of the 88th Texas Legislative Session in May, continuing with the annual compliance and safety seminars provided by WorkQuest over the summer, and concluding with the 16th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and 35th annual Products and Services Expo, 2023 was filled with successful events benefiting individuals with disabilities employed through the Program.

Alongside our partnerships with Program CRPs and their employees, I would also like to recognize our partnerships with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the customers who purchase these products, services, and temporary employment services – without whom, none of the accomplishments and growth WorkQuest and the Program achieved throughout the year would have been possible.

More than 6,400 individuals with disabilities were employed through the WorksWonders Program in 2023. Of those individuals, 1,085 – almost 17% – were employed on Program contracts that were determined to be competitive integrated employment (CIE) by TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services. WorkQuest and its partnering CRPs are dedicated to increasing that number in the future, in order to bolster TWC initiatives to increase CIE opportunities in the workplace.

On behalf of WorkQuest, I would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy holiday season. We look forward to working with everyone in the New Year.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'F. Weber'.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.

President/CEO

Envision Dallas expands call center services to accommodate Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Division Program

Through a partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division, Envision Dallas (formerly the Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind) began providing call center services in July to offer assistance under the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) Program. OIB is a VR Program that is dedicated to assisting individuals 55 and older dealing with blindness or visual impairment.

Envision Dallas, a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) participating in the *WorksWonders* Program, announced its intent to expand its facilities in early 2023 to accommodate the need for additional call center services in North Texas. Originally implemented to provide services for the City of Dallas, Envision Dallas soon expanded its operations to meet the needs of the OIB Program through a contract under the *WorksWonders* Program.

Through this partnership, individuals 55 and older experiencing late-onset visual impairment and blindness are encouraged to utilize the call center to open cases that are recorded, cataloged and forwarded to TWC. Once TWC's VR caseworkers take over a case request, the individuals requiring assistance are provided with the information, resources, and training opportunities to help them better understand how to live and thrive with their visual impairment.

As a result of Envision Dallas' expansion, cases submitted through the OIB Program are processed quickly to help individuals with visual impairments receive the help they need sooner.

WorkQuest is proud of its longstanding partnership with Envision Dallas. We look forward to supporting the development and expansion of all CRPs participating in the *WorksWonders* Program, which will help continue to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities across the state.

Aaron Demerson, TWC Commissioner Representing Employers, Leaves Texas Workforce Commission for New Role

Commissioner Representing Employers Aaron Demerson announced his appointment to serve as the new President and CEO of Texas Economic Development Corporation, this fall. His service to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) concluded on November 3, 2023.

"It has been an incredible privilege to work with employers, local communities, and partners across the state to develop workforce solutions that ensure the Texas economy stays on top," Demerson said.

Originally appointed in 2019 by Governor Greg Abbott, Commissioner Demerson spent his time as Commissioner representing the interests of and advocating for employers and small businesses in Texas.

"Commissioner Demerson is instrumental in supporting Texas employers through education and skills training programs that improve career pathways for workers," TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Alberto Treviño III said. "His continued service for the State of Texas will benefit not only business interests, but the entire Lone Star State."

WorkQuest thanks Commissioner Demerson for his service to the state of Texas and for the role he played in helping to create greater employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

WorkQuest

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**WorkQuest wishes you a joyful holiday season
and a Happy New Year!**

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