

# WorkQuest FOCUS

## on Jobs for People with Disabilities

**WorkQuest Newsletter LI**  
November 2020

### **Nichole Nobles** of Travis Association for the Blind recognized with 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award



*2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award winner, Nichole Nobles, is presented with her certificate of recognition by Mr. Jim Meehan, president of the Travis Association for the Blind.*

On Sept. 23, Nichole Nobles of the Travis Association for the Blind was honored by WorkQuest with the 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award during its virtual celebration. The award recognizes an outstanding employee of a community rehabilitation program (CRP) for their leadership, dedicated service and commitment to excellence.

During her eight years with the Travis Association for the Blind, Nobles has continuously demonstrated her leadership ability, natural sense of responsibility and caring personality. She often uses her expertise to help guide newer co-workers and jumps at the opportunity to support her peers in any way she can.

Nobles works in the skin care department on the GOJO contract, where she is responsible for core duties, such as palletizing, weighing cases on the line, inspecting boxes and ensuring items are labeled correctly, as well as any additional tasks that come up.

"Nichole is one of the best workers," Arabeli Olmos, Nobles' supervisor, said. "She can memorize anything and everything, fast and accurately."

While in college, Nobles' goal was to join the military after graduating. However, after realizing that life had other plans, she found the Travis Association for the Blind, where she is serving her community in a whole new way.

"If you're in a positive mood, it makes the day go by faster," Nobles said. "It's fulfilling knowing that we're contributing to society and helping in some way."

Nobles also practices jiu jitsu, a martial art she was introduced to while working at the Travis Association for the Blind. Recognizing that the opportunity to learn self-defense is often overlooked in the blind community, Nichole began teaching classes to provide other individuals with this invaluable skill. This practice has built Nobles' confidence in herself and her abilities, and it has helped her recognize that each person has something to contribute.

Congratulations to Nichole Nobles and to all of the 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award nominees for their hard work, perseverance and enthusiasm.





2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award nominees photographed at remote locations during the virtual awards event on Sept. 23, 2020.

## Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration recognizes WorksWonders Program employees and customers during virtual event

During its first-ever virtual event, WorkQuest welcomed participants to its 13th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration, which was streamed over Zoom and YouTube Live, on Sept. 23. The online event recognized supporters of the State Use WorksWonders Program, which provides employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities—an effort that has been especially crucial since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attendees, which included award nominees and their families, WorkQuest board members and employees, community rehabilitation program (CRP) representatives and purchasing entity representatives, logged on to celebrate

the accomplishments of Texas employees with disabilities, as well as the dedication of WorkQuest and its partner CRPs that make it all possible.

As in previous years, WorkQuest honored several CRP employees during the event. Van Bui of Endeavors Unlimited was recognized as the Most Motivational Employee, and Leroy Lacey of Goodwill Industries of East Texas was honored as the Most Inspirational Employee.

Attendees were treated to video messages from special guest speakers, including several representatives from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)—Chairman Bryan Daniel, commissioner representing the public; Ed Serna, executive director; and Michael Hooks, director of the office of disability employment strategies. TWC has served as a valuable partner in aiding employment growth for Texans with disabilities.

Later in the event, WorkQuest recognized the Top 10 customers who purchase products, services and temporary employment services through the WorksWonders Program. These customers include multiple state, city and county agencies

and organizations. Agencies new to this year's lists were the Texas Juvenile Justice Department for its purchase of services, and the Texas General Land Office and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services for purchasing temporary employment services.

Throughout the event, attendees were reminded of how important award nominees, and all employees in the WorksWonders Program, are to keeping the Texas economy strong during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program featured videos showcasing the standout employees recognized throughout, including Bui and Lacey, as well as the winner of the event's namesake award, the 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award, which was presented to Nichole Nobles of the Travis Association for the Blind. Nobles was honored for her leadership, dedicated service and commitment to excellence.

Thank you to all who tuned in for this year's celebration. We're glad we were able to recognize and honor our CRP partners and their employees in a safe, virtual way. We hope to have the opportunity to celebrate together in person next year!

## 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award Nominees

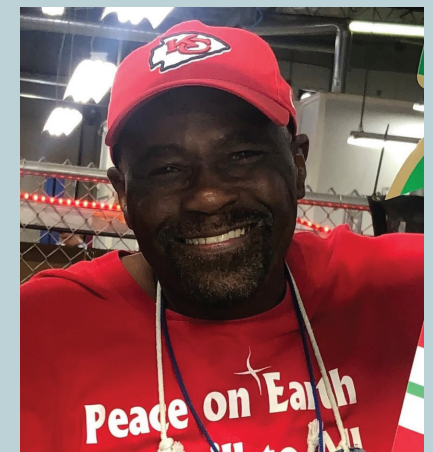
- Christopher Burist, A Lift for Life Outreach Center
- Kolton Eastep, Aldersgate Enrichment Center
- Nichole Nobles, Travis Association for the Blind
- Guillermo Martinez, Border TM Industries, Inc., dba Xceed Resources
- Richard Gutierrez, Border TM Industries, Inc., dba Xceed Resources
- Hortencia Patricia Villarreal, Camino Real Community Services
- Destiny Kinney, Center for Recovery and Wellness Resources
- Cass Sellers, David & Ivory Ministries
- Rosalie Vondrak, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises Inc.
- Jason Toole, East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
- Oscar Crenshaw, Easter Seals Central Texas
- Van Bui, Endeavors Unlimited
- Trilon Lias, Envision – Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind
- Jesus Aguilera, EXPANCO, Inc.
- Leroy Lacy, Goodwill Industries of East Texas
- James Bucher, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Texas
- Solomon Peah, The Lighthouse of Houston
- Robert Logan, Lending Helping Hands to Others
- Brandon Hull, Center for Life Resources/ Janie Clements Industries
- Mauro Ramirez, Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth
- Christopher Hernandez, Nueces County Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities
- John Reyes, Nueces County Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities
- Kevin Horrigan, New Hope Academy of Fort Worth
- Robert Dunn, On Our Own Services
- Virginia Healer, Peak Performers
- Bill Paige, Precious Gems Services, Inc.
- Mary Medel, Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PSCI)
- Bishop Johnson, Rising Star Resource Development Corporation
- Maria Moreno, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind
- Leonor Huerta, South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
- Jesse Glenn, West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
- Jonathan Teague, WorkQuest
- Durhonda Minor-Crudup, Work Services Corporation



**Artie Lee Hinds Award Winner**  
Nichole Nobles,  
Travis Association for the Blind



**Most Motivational Employee**  
Van Bui,  
Endeavors Unlimited



**Most Inspirational Employee**  
Leroy Lacy,  
Goodwill Industries of East Texas





Christopher Burist, A Lift for Life Outreach Center



Hortencia Patricia Villarreal, Camino Real Community Services



Rosalie Vondrak, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises Inc.



Trilon Lias, Envision – Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind



Solomon Peah, The Lighthouse of Houston



Mauro Ramirez, Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth



Guillermo Martinez, Border TM Industries, Inc., dba Xceed Resources



Destiny Kinney, Center for Recovery and Wellness Resources



Jason Toole, East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind



Jesus Aguilera, EXPANCO, Inc.



Robert Logan, Lending Helping Hands to Others



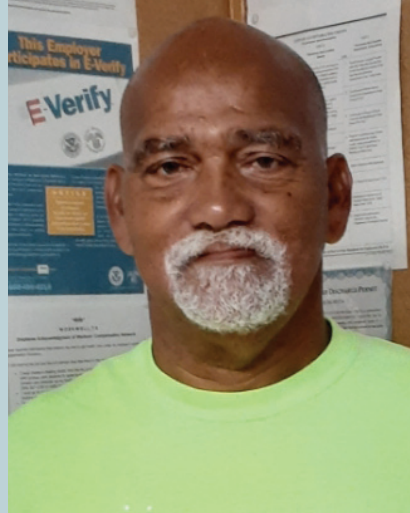
Kevin Horrigan, New Hope Academy of Fort Worth



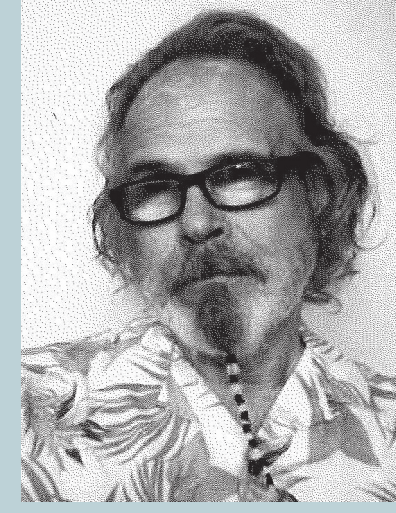
Richard Gutierrez, Border TM Industries, Inc., dba Xceed Resources



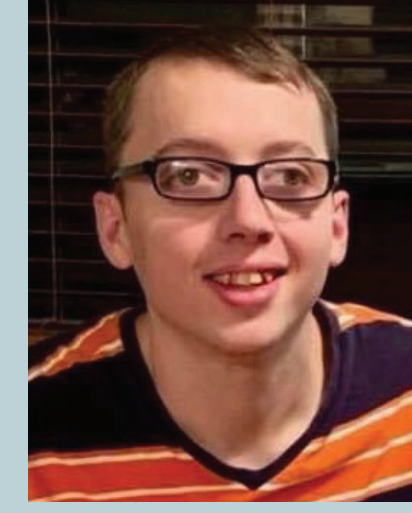
Cass Sellers, David & Ivory Ministries



Oscar Crenshaw, Easter Seals Central Texas



James Bucher, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Texas



Brandon Hull, Center for Life Resources/ Janie Clements Industries

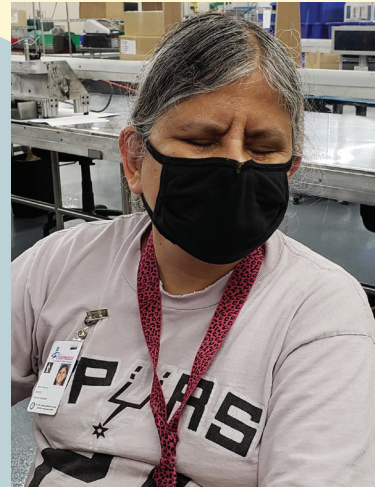


Robert Dunn, On Our Own Services





Virginia Healer, Peak Performers



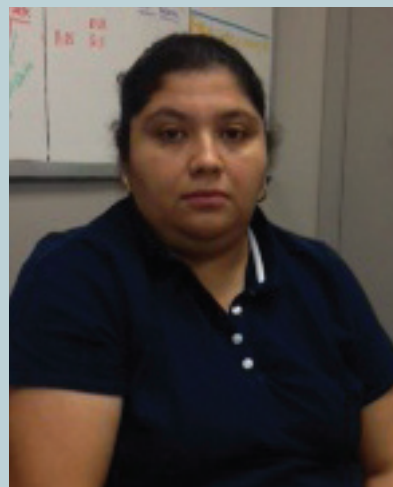
Maria Moreno, San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind



Jonathan Teague, WorkQuest



Mary Medel, Professional Contract Services, Inc. (PSCI)



Leonor Huerta, South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind



Durhonda Minor-Crudup, Work Services Corporation



Bishop Johnson, Rising Star Resource Development Corporation



Jesse Glenn, West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind

2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award Nominees not pictured:

Kolton Eastep, Aldersgate Enrichment Center

Christopher Hernandez, Nueces County Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

John Reyes, Nueces County Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities

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



This year's Artie Lee Hinds Award celebration—our first-ever virtual version of this annual event—was a wonderful success, thanks in large part to all of our outstanding community rehabilitation program (CRP) partners and employees. They, once again, demonstrated the benefits that the *WorksWonders* Program provides not only to the state of Texas, but also to the individuals with disabilities whom it employs. As we continue to adapt to life during an unprecedented pandemic, these individuals have stepped up and worked incredibly hard to sustain the provision of essential products and services to our Texas state agency customers.

I would like to congratulate Nichole Nobles from the Travis Association for the Blind for winning the 2020 Artie Lee Hinds Award, as well as Van Bui of Endeavors Unlimited and Leroy Lacey of Goodwill Industries, who were named the Most Motivational Employee and Most Inspirational Employee respectively. I would also like to thank those of you who tuned in virtually to celebrate with us.

Although this year has looked different due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our valued CRP partners have gone above and beyond to meet the emerging demands in order to ensure individuals with disabilities have consistent employment opportunities. We applaud all of the Texas purchasing entities for their continued recognition of the value of the *WorksWonders* Program and their commitment to purchasing products, services and temporary employment services from our CRPs.

Thank you all for your support of the *WorksWonders* Program this year. You have secured meaningful and gainful employment for individuals with disabilities in a time when so many other things are unsure—and for that, we are immensely proud to have you as partners.

We wish you each a happy and healthy holiday season, and we look forward to working alongside you all as we grow the Program to new heights in 2021.

Sincerely,

Fred M. Weber, Jr.  
President and CEO



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## 2020 Disability Employment Awareness Month

Increasing Access and Opportunity

### *We See Things Differently* by Dinah Rodriguez

Dinah describes herself as an observant child who loved to draw, color, and paint. She struggled with different health challenges throughout her life, including vision and hearing loss. It wasn't until much later—in her 40s—that she was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and General Anxiety. Dinah experienced a major turn of events in 2018 after visiting a family doctor and mentioning her blurry vision. She was referred to an eye doctor and diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, which in turn led to a diagnosis of Usher syndrome—a rare genetic disease that causes hearing and vision loss. According to Dinah, art has helped her find peace and happiness since a very young age.

Dinah says, "Even though we may have a disability and see things differently, we are still useful and capable of producing work. We just need to have faith that we are valuable—being different doesn't mean we can't provide for ourselves! We love what we are gifted to do, and there is no stopping us from succeeding. We appreciate everyone who has looked at us in this way." She goes on to add, "With the knowledge of professional people around me during these years—from my fourth grade teacher to my family doctor to my therapist—I have begun to flourish."



Today Dinah is a successful artist with legal blindness who continues to grow her knowledge and creativity as she produces work in digital and fine art. She publishes her artwork to different sites where she adds them to products like mugs, t-shirts, journals, and much more! She created a children's book and three coloring books, all of which can be found online and in book stores in McAllen.

Learn about hiring Texans with disabilities at  
[twc.texas.gov/texashireability](http://twc.texas.gov/texashireability)



[gov.texas.gov/disabilities](http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities)



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In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, WorkQuest would like to celebrate the dedicated employees participating in the WorksWonders Program and the contributions they make towards the advancement of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

View the WorkQuest catalog online at [WorkQuest.com](http://WorkQuest.com)