

WorkQuest FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LXIV
October 2025

Christopher Gates of Goodwill Industries of East Texas honored with the 2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award



2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award winner Christopher Gates, Goodwill industries of East Texas, pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (middle), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).

Christopher Gates of Goodwill Industries of East Texas was recognized by WorkQuest with the 2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award. The award honors an outstanding Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) employee for leadership, dedicated service and commitment to excellence.

Gates began his journey at Goodwill Industries of East Texas six years ago and now plays an integral role on a variety of contracts through the *Works Wonders* Program. His responsibilities include boxing wipes, assembling hardware and contributing to other projects throughout the facility as needed. His reliability and versatility have made him an invaluable part of the team.

Ron Ellis, production manager at Goodwill Industries of East Texas, sees Gates as more than just a hardworking employee—he's a source of joy and inspiration.

"Chris is inquisitive, he's attentive, and he always has a smile," Ellis said. "He's one of the kinds of people that when you see him, you feel better."

That positive energy extends throughout the workplace. Gates' upbeat attitude and eagerness to learn has made a lasting impression on both staff and fellow employees. His presence is felt in every room he walks into, whether he's asking thoughtful questions, sharing a story or encouraging his team. His growth since joining the organization has been notable, particularly in the ways he embraces new challenges.

"Chris has gone from being sheltered and shy about what he can do about his abilities to 'okay, let me try that,'" Ruth Davis, director at Goodwill Industries of East Texas, said. "Any new project that we give

him now he's willing to try, so I've definitely seen his confidence soar and his abilities increase as well."

Gates expressed what being part of Goodwill means to him. For him, it's not just a job, it's a place where he feels seen, valued and included.

"I want to feel included and want to do what everybody else does. Goodwill makes me feel that way," Gates said. "I feel like I can do what everyone else does, and I feel very included in all the jobs they have around here."

Gates' family—who made the journey with him to Austin to receive his award—shared how meaningful his work is to their lives. It's not just about the income, it's about the example he sets and the sense of purpose his job provides.

"Chris' job at Goodwill has been such a benefit to our family because he's contributing to our household and he's teaching our kids how to live with people that have special needs," Chris' sister Marie Leu, said.

Gates is not only respected for his strong work ethic and attitude but is admired for his ability to take on multiple tasks with focus and enthusiasm. His story represents what is possible when people are given the opportunity to thrive in a supportive and inclusive environment.

WorkQuest is proud to recognize Chris Gates and all nominees of the 2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award. Their stories are a reminder of the dignity and value that comes with meaningful employment and community support.

Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner recognizes outstanding WorksWonders Program employees and customers

On Sept. 22, 2025, WorkQuest hosted its 18th annual Artie Lee Hinds Awards Dinner in Austin to honor the individuals and organizations driving the success of the Texas State Use WorksWonders Program. The event spotlighted the achievements of Texans with disabilities employed through Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) across the state.



Most Inspirational Employee Award Winner Amber Gibson, Goodwill Industries of South Texas, pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (middle), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).

The celebration brought together award nominees and their families, CRP representatives, Texas Workforce Commission leaders, WorkQuest board members and staff, along with other guests and supporters. All attendees united to honor the accomplishments of Texans with disabilities and the ongoing commitment of WorkQuest and its CRP partners to the WorksWonders Program.

During the dinner, WorkQuest presented awards to Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) employees in recognition of their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm for their jobs. DuRhonda Crudup of Work Services Corporation received the Most Motivational Employee Award, while Amber Gibson of Goodwill Industries of South Texas was honored with the Most Inspirational Employee Award.



Most Motivational Employee Award Winner DuRhonda Crudup, Work Services Corporation, pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (middle), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).

The evening featured a dynamic keynote Q&A with Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback, entrepreneur and motivational speaker, moderated by Austin journalist and co-founder of ATX News, Judy Maggio. Flutie shared insights from his professional football career and his work supporting autism research by founding the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, inspired by his son.



2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award Keynote Q&A Speaker, Doug Flutie, addresses the crowd at the 18th annual Artie Lee Hinds Awards Dinner.

Following the Q&A, WorkQuest recognized a new customer and the Top 10 customers who purchase products, services and temporary employment services through the WorksWonders Program. These customers include:

- **New customer**
City of Umland
- **Top 10 Customers: For purchases of products, services, and temporary employment services**
Health and Human Services Commission
Texas Department of Public Safety

Continued on next page



City of Umland receiving the New Customer Award.



Texas Department of Public Safety receiving the Top 10 Customer Award.

- **Top 10 Customers: For purchases of products and services**
Texas Military Department
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
Texas Parks & Wildlife
- **Top 10 Customer: For purchases of services and temporary employment services**
Texas Workforce Commission
- **Top 10 Customer: For purchases of services**
City of San Marcos
- **Top 10 Customer: For purchases of temporary employment services**
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Event attendees got a peek into the everyday lives of the evening's award winners, including Crudup and Gibson, through short videos with their families, colleagues and supervisors. The highlight of the night was the presentation of the 2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award to Chris Gates of Goodwill Industries of East Texas. Gates was honored for his upbeat attitude, eagerness to learn and positive spirit in the workplace.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's celebration so meaningful. We look forward to welcoming you back in 2026!



Texas Military Department receiving the Top 10 Customer Award.



Texas Parks & Wildlife and Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts receiving the Top 10 Customer Award.

SPRIT OF STATE USE AWARD WINNERS

The prestigious Spirit of State Use Awards were presented to Manuel Perez of the Texas Military Department and Gerard MacCrossan of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts for their leadership in advancing employment access for individuals with disabilities.



2025 Spirit of State Use Award winner, Manuel Perez, Texas Military Department, pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).



2025 Spirit of State Use Award Winner, Gerard MacCrossan, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).

Scenes from the Awards Dinner





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



As we wrapped up September with the 18th Annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and 37th Annual Products and Services Expo, I would like to take a moment, on behalf of WorkQuest, to thank everyone who joined us to celebrate.

These annual gatherings continue to highlight the transformative impact the Program brings to our Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) partners and the meaningful employment it provides to Texans with disabilities. It's the unwavering commitment of these individuals employed through CRPs that make the Program exceptional.

We are especially grateful to the CRPs that brought their nominees and families to this year's awards dinner. While the evening shines a spotlight on a select group of individuals, it also honors the broader community of Texans with disabilities whose commitment and contributions make the *WorksWonders* Program what it is today.

Your partnership continues to be a cornerstone of WorkQuest's progress. We feel privileged by the opportunity to collaborate with partners who share a passion for our mission, and we look forward to strengthening those relationships and growing the Program to create even more meaningful employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'F. Weber', on a red background.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.
President/CEO

2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award Nominees

1. Martin Becerra, Austin Task Inc.
2. Robert Blakeney, South Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
3. Timothy Carter, David & Ivory Ministries
4. Cristoval Castillo, East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
5. Diane Coley, Rising Star Resource Development Corporation
6. Paulina Corral-Sanchez, Tejas Roadrunners
7. DuRhonda Crudup, Work Services Corporation
8. Brian Davis, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
9. Steven Deleon, MHID of Nueces County
10. Sergio Dorigo, On Our Own Services, Inc.
11. Ana Escobedo, The Lighthouse of Houston
12. Aston Forbes, Lending Helping Hands to Others
13. Steven Foster, Fresh Start of Monroe, Inc.
14. Rodolfo Garcia, RGR Industries
15. Valerie Garcia, EPSI
16. Aidan Gardea, Goodwill Industries of El Paso
17. Christopher Gates, Goodwill Industries of East Texas
18. Amber Gibson, Goodwill Industries of South Texas, Inc.
19. Bobby Gibson, Aldersgate Enrichment Center
20. Paloma Gomez, Xceed Resources
21. James Hardy, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
22. Diego Hernandez, Xceed Resources
23. Lennyn Holguin, Goodwill Industries of El Paso
24. Lacey Holleman, Center for Life Resources/Janie Clements Industries
25. Kevin Horrigan, New Hope Academy of Fort Worth
26. Daniel Hyman, U & I Spread the Light
27. James Jimenez, Fresh Start of Monroe, Inc.
28. Basil Kemevor, Relief Enterprise of Texas Inc.
29. Damien Marin, Camp County Service Industries
30. Lakreasha Marshall, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
31. Adrian Mendez, World Technical Services, Inc.
32. Katelyn Miller, Travis Association for the Blind
33. Brihanna Montague, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
34. Talisia Montague, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
35. Vicente Moreno, MHID of Nueces County
36. William Curtis Murphy, Beacon Lighthouse, Inc.
37. Justin Nard, A Lift for Life Outreach Center, Inc.
38. Thomas Nolan, Easterseals Central Texas
39. Terri Pinget, Relief Enterprise of Texas Inc.
40. David Reyna, EPSI
41. Maria Rios, Professional Contract Services Inc.
42. Jessica Roberts, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises, Inc.
43. Christopher Robertson, Marian Moss Enterprises
44. Brandon Robinson, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
45. Alicia Rodriguez, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
46. Zebadia Rodriguez, West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
47. Reginald Shepard, Endeavors Unlimited
48. Fernando Soto, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises, Inc.
49. David Timms, Amplify
50. Frank Torres, Peak Performers
51. Chuck Tubbs, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry
52. Paul Williams, Envision - Dallas Lighthouse for the Blind
53. Angela Yount, Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth

WorkQuest hosts 37th annual Products and Services Expo



On Sept. 23, 2025, WorkQuest hosted its 37th annual Products and Services Expo, connecting Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) partners with customers from across Texas. The event serves as a showcase for CRPs to display their products and highlight the services they offer through the State Use *WorksWonders* Program—a program that helps Texans with disabilities find meaningful employment opportunities.

With CRPs and customers operating across Texas, the Products and Services Expo stands out as a vital annual gathering point. For many CRPs, it's the one time each year they meet directly with customers, providing a valuable opportunity to promote their products and services and build relationships that can lead to future business.



“This expo remains an important once-a-year-event that allows many new purchasers to come and discover all the products and services,” Myles Wallace, disability inclusion partner at Peak Performers, said. “It’s a nice way to meet people who may be using staffing services and realize that they are making a real difference.”

Participation in the *WorksWonders* Program and inclusion in the WorkQuest catalog not only increases visibility for CRPs but also expands employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

“The expo provides us with an opportunity to touch base with different customers and all the different state agencies,” Scott Baker, vice president of sales and strategic partnerships at Envision Dallas, said. “It’s a super worthy opportunity for us to help put hundreds of people to work in our community.”



That sense of mission was echoed by others in attendance. Many CRP representatives expressed their appreciation for WorkQuest’s continued support, noting how instrumental the organization has been in helping them grow their business and fulfill their purpose.

“It’s so important to at least once a year be face to face with these folks,” Todd Potoczak, contract sales representative at Goodwill Industries of East Texas, said. “We benefit from our partnership with WorkQuest and with East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, and being together reminds us of the real impact this work has on people’s lives and the communities we serve.”

Attendees praised the convenience of the Expo and the opportunity it provides to discover new products and services that align with their organization’s needs. As CRPs and purchasers look ahead, the relationships and ideas sparked at the Expo will shape the future of meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Scenes from the Expo





2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award Nominees



Timothy Carter, David & Ivory Ministries



Cristoval Castillo, East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind



Diane Coley, Rising Star Resource Development Corporation



DuRhonda Crudup, Work Services Corporation



Brian Davis, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry



Steven Deleon, MHID of Nueces County



Sergio Dorigo, On Our Own Services, Inc.



Ana Escobedo, The Lighthouse of Houston



Steven Foster, Fresh Start of Monroe, Inc.

2025 Artie Lee Hinds Award nominees (holding awards) are pictured with Alberto Trevino III, Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest left), Doug Flutie, former NFL quarterback (left), John Luna, WorkQuest Board of Directors Chairman (middle), Joe Esparza, Chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (right), and Ed Serna, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission (furthest right).



Christopher Gates, Goodwill Industries of East Texas



Amber Gibson, Goodwill Industries of South Texas, Inc.



Bobby Gibson, Aldersgate Enrichment Center



Paloma Gomez, Xceed Resources



Diego Hernandez, Xceed Resources



Lacey Holleman, Center for Life Resources/Janie Clements Industries



Kevin Horrigan, New Hope Academy of Fort Worth



James Jimenez, Fresh Start of Monroe, Inc.



Basil Kemevor, Relief Enterprise of Texas Inc.

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Lakreesha Marshall, Liberty Proclaimed Ministry



Adrian Mendez, World Technical Services, Inc.



Katelyn Miller, Travis Association for the Blind



Vicente Moreno, MHID of Nueces County



Justin Nard, A Lift for Life Outreach Center, Inc.



Thomas Nolan, Easterseals Central Texas



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Jessica Roberts, E.Q.U.I.P. Enterprises, Inc.



Christopher Robertson, Marian Moss Enterprises



Alicia Rodríguez, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas



Zebadia Rodriguez, West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind



Paulina Corral Sanchez, Tejas Roadrunners



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*Congratulations
to all the 2025
Artie Lee Hinds
Award Nominees!*



STATE OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Throughout Texas history, people with disabilities have contributed to the larger story of our state. Through fighting in historic battles, shaping the culture of our state, building Texas into an economic powerhouse, or holding the highest offices, people with disabilities have left their mark on the Lone Star State and our nation. They exemplify the indomitable will that is synonymous with our state as they overcome their diverse challenges.

First established in 2011, Persons with Disabilities History and Awareness Month encourages increased public awareness of the many achievements of people with disabilities in public schools and state agencies while highlighting public understanding of the disability rights movement.

Each year, the month of October is dedicated to celebrating and honoring the accomplishments of people with disabilities. At this time, I encourage all Texans to learn more about their ongoing achievements, their contributions that affect our everyday lives, and the impacts they continue to make on our society. Let us ensure that all Texans, regardless of ability status, can help to build the Texas of Tomorrow.

Therefore, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, do hereby proclaim October 2025 to be

Persons with Disabilities History and Awareness Month



in Texas and urge all Texans to observe the occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto affixed my signature this the 12th day of September, 2025.

A handwritten signature of Greg Abbott in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Governor of Texas

Governor Abbott Recognizes October as Persons with Disabilities History and Awareness Month

WorkQuest

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**WorkQuest recognizes October
as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.**

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