



# Lighthouse shows the way

*More than 2 million Boeing parts each year come from community manufacturing partnerships*

By Rebecca Crichton and Robin McBride  
Photos by Marian Lockhart

Five days a week, Kevin Jones and his guide dog, Arley, start their day at 4 a.m., taking the hourlong ferry ride across Puget Sound from the Kitsap Peninsula to Seattle then switching to a bus bound for the Lighthouse for the Blind facility just south of the city.

His 24-year association with Boeing is a matter of pride for Jones, who works as a machine setup person. "I started working on parts for Boeing on Labor Day in 1986. I like my work," said Jones, one of more than 70 blind and deaf-blind machinists at Lighthouse who work on Boeing parts. "They give me a job, then they leave me to do it. They trust me."

Lighthouse is one of 10 organizations that participate in the Community Manufacturing Partnership, which provides

Boeing with services for millions of airplane parts annually—and provides people who have various physical and cognitive disabilities with employment that increases their independence and productivity.

Community Manufacturing Partnership began as Boeing's Sheltered Workshop Program in 1952. Then there were just two suppliers performing about 10,000 hours of work per year, providing products for Boeing and meaningful work for members of the community. Today, Commercial Airplanes has 30 contracts with these suppliers in the Northwest U.S. region—through the Community Manufacturing Partnership and others—for an estimated 689,000 work hours annually.

Known for high-quality work as well as responsive and flexible support, the

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— Steve Dewater of Supplier Management, Boeing Commercial Airplanes



program's suppliers annually cut more than 2.4 million feet (731,500 meters) of wire bundles and produce more than 2.6 million parts and assemblies for the company.

The work of these partners measures up to the best done by any Boeing supplier, according to Steve Dewater of Commercial Airplanes Supplier Management, who has helped manage the program for 10 years. "Their quality, delivery and performance are phenomenal," Dewater said. "They are competitive. Their standards are high enough to compete with anybody."

Ross Bogue, Boeing Fabrication vice president and general manager, believes the partnership demonstrates "the value we bring to our program partners as well as for the communities in which Boeing has business units."

"We gain tremendous value from these small businesses and we provide people who have significant challenges with meaning, purpose and empowerment in their lives," he said.

The increased use of manufacturing technology is a boon for Lighthouse mechanics, according to Kirk Adams, the agency's president and CEO of the Lighthouse for the Blind. In the past, most manual machines needed a sighted person to set up many of the functions, but now calipers and other machines incorporate computers, enabling blind or deaf-blind machinists to run them.

"Technology is our friend," Adams said. "As the machining world becomes more

technology-driven, there are more opportunities for blind and deaf-blind people."

Boeing's relationship with the Lighthouse for the Blind dates from the 1950s. From the beginning, both organizations recognized the mutual benefits of their alliance. Adams knows how important Boeing has been to the blind and deaf-blind community.

"Seven out of 10 blind adults are not working, and many of those who have work feel underemployed," Adams said. "The work we do for Boeing has allowed us to provide high-quality, long-term career opportunities for blind people."

After more than five decades of partnership, thousands of people have been helped by the relationship, enabling them to buy homes and raise families and achieve goals.

Bogue noted that the benefits to Boeing go beyond the parts manufactured by people with disabilities.

"These people have huge challenges they overcome every day, and the joy they bring to the work they do is immeasurable," he said. "They don't take anything for granted. We can all learn from that." ■

*rebecca.j.crichton@boeing.com*

**PHOTOS: (Left)** Lighthouse for the Blind machinist Kevin Jones and his guide dog, Arley, navigate the ferry terminal on Seattle's waterfront as they go to and from work each day. **(Above)** Jones demonstrates how he uses voice-synthesized calipers to measure a part prior to milling.

## Suppliers contribute throughout the enterprise

Lighthouse for the Blind in the Puget Sound area is part of a nationwide network of similar agencies in an organization called AbilityOne. Boeing contracts with more than a dozen AbilityOne agencies on various programs at different sites. For example, the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind produces insulation blankets for a Boeing Defense, Space & Security program that upgrades U.S. Air Force KC-135s. In April, the San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind was named a Boeing Supplier of the Year. And in 2009, the U.S. Defense Department honored Boeing with an award for the company's many partnerships with AbilityOne suppliers.

- AbilityOne suppliers include:
- ATWORK, Issaquah, Wash.
  - BRIDGEWAYS, Everett, Wash.
  - CAMBRIA COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND, Johnstown, Pa.
  - CENTER INDUSTRIES CORP., Wichita, Kan.
  - CHINOOK ENTERPRISES INC., Mt. Vernon, Wash.
  - DIVERSIFIED INC., Mukilteo, Wash.
  - FIRLAND SHELTERED WORKSHOP FOUNDATION, Shoreline, Wash.
  - GOODWILL INDUSTRIES EASTER SEAL SOCIETY, Wichita, Kan.
  - KITSAP APPLIED TECHNOLOGIES, Bremerton, Wash.
  - LICKING/KNOX GOODWILL INDUSTRIES INC., Newark, Ohio
  - LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND INC., Seattle, Wash.
  - METAL MOTION, Seattle, Wash.
  - ORION INDUSTRIES, Federal Way, Wash.
  - PIONEER INDUSTRIES, Seattle, Wash.
  - PROVAIL, Seattle, Wash.
  - SAN ANTONIO LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND, San Antonio
  - SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SERVICES, Lake Stevens, Wash.
  - SKILLS INC., Seattle, Wash.
  - VETERANS INDEPENDENT ENTERPRISES OF WASHINGTON, Fife, Wash.
  - WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER, Mukilteo, Wash.
  - WORK OPPORTUNITIES INC., Lynnwood, Wash.