



Media Release

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Blytheville woman who's visually impaired wins service award

Ethel Fowler of Blytheville "is thankful" that through surgeries her vision has been stabilized and she can continue working with children at the Equal Opportunity Commission.

"I love working with them. They make my day. They're a lot of fun to be with," Fowler said. She started as a substitute preschool teacher and is now a bus monitor for two EOC programs, one for migrant families and one for local children. She oversees the children while they are on the bus, makes sure they are buckled in, changes the diapers for the babies, and helps the students to class.

For her determination to overcome adversity, succeed in her career, and serve others, she has been named as an area Consumer of the Year (COY) by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB).

She is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award. She was chosen from an area that includes Crittenden, Mississippi, Cross, St. Francis, Lee, Phillips, and Monroe counties. The award presentation for Fowler will be made at the EOC bus shop on November 29, at 10 a.m.

The EOC will receive the area's Employer of the Year award, recognizing EOC as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment.

Fowler said she had severe diabetic retinopathy and was thankful DSB was able to help stabilize her vision, so she could remain independent in both the workplace and at home. Her determination saw her through the three years of laser surgeries, eye injections, and other medical care that her condition required.

When she is not at work, she still enjoys being surrounded by children. Fowler enjoys visiting family and cooking for their get-togethers. "I'm used to cooking a lot of food," said Fowler, who has

five grown children and 18 grandchildren. She especially enjoys baking pies and cakes, but “can’t eat them (herself) due to diabetes.”

“Mrs. Fowler is a great example of the kind of clients we have on our caseloads and are to be proud of as VR Counselors,” said DSB Area Supervisor Robert Lamb.

This is the fifth year that DSB has given Consumer of the Year awards to recognize individuals who have managed their vocational rehabilitation plans, gained marketable skills, secured good jobs, and become role models for others. At the end of the year, the DSB Board will select an overall state winner from the area winners who were nominated.

DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired and whose goal is successful employment. The division also serves youth and older blind individuals. For information about DSB’s programs and services, call 1-800-960-9270 or 501-682-5463 or visit the DSB website at <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dsb/Pages/default.aspx>.