



Media Release

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Pocahontas woman with visual impairment earns achievement award

Pocahontas resident Carol Carroll has been named the area's Department of Human Service's Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Consumer of the Year.

"I've always taken pride in contributing to my community," said Carol Carroll of Pocahontas, who is visually impaired and has a history of service.

She is the owner and operator of Carroll's Variety Store. "Having a store here doesn't just help me. It's a big contribution to downtown Pocahontas, and since I opened, three others have opened."

Carroll, who's now in her early 70's, served 20 years in the Army Reserve. In 1995, her declining vision caused her to retire from the military and the Veteran's Administration, where she served at locations across the United States as Associate Chief of Education for Nursing. "It got to the point where I could hardly (see to) do anything."

"I had histoplasmosis," Carroll said. "Histoplasmosis scars the lungs and for some people affects the eyes. I had it in both eyes." In later years the scars thin and the tissues leak fluid and cause blindness. She said her eye condition was complicated by diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. She went through 12 surgeries to stop leakage and improve her condition.

Because of her determination to overcome adversity, serve others, and succeed at work, Carroll has been named as one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award. She was chosen from the area that includes Independence, Izard, Stone, Cleburne, Randolph, White, and Sharp Counties. An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

Carroll will be recognized at the noon meeting of the Rotary Club of Pocahontas on December 4, at Beverly's Downtown Catering.

“I greatly admire Ms. Carroll’s ongoing dedication and commitment to fulfill her dream of (owning) a small business,” said her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Darline Tucker, who nominated her for the award. “She was very motivated. As a matter of fact, Ms. Carroll had already began the remodeling on her store building prior to her case being opened with DSB and had invested a large sum of money out of her own pocket for the structural and renovation changes that were needed to bring it up to code. She was very determined and willing to invest not only her own money, but also much of her time and effort doing whatever was needed to make sure her business was a success.”

Carroll also tries to help the local economy by featuring Arkansas-made products, such as art, quilts, crafts, fudge, jams, relishes, syrups, goat’s milk soaps, and carved Indian flutes. “People say it’s not the run of the mill stuff sold in big box stores.” Variety is the keyword. Military insignia, holiday centerpieces, and deer and cow skulls share space with vodka jiggers from the Kremlin, Royal Doulton china, and antique furniture. “I’ve even sold five armadillo tails.”

The University of Arkansas Medical Sciences Low Vision Clinic assessed Carroll and approved her as a candidate for bioptic driving. Carroll said the military paid a quarter of the cost for special bioptic telescopic lens and DSB paid the remaining majority. DSB also paid the costs for her stay in Little Rock during her bioptic driver training and her transportation back and forth to Pocahontas. During this time, she also “went to the DHS DSB Tech Lab for computer training.”

“Thanks to DSB services, I can now drive safely and own a business. I’ve been in business since May 1, 2012,” Carroll said. “DSB was very helpful financially in starting my business. They provided my initial inventory, advertising, a computer, and a cash register.” The cash register is unique in that it talks, enabling Carroll to hear the required information, and has an extra-large monitor that measures 18 by 24 inches. DSB also provided a hand-held calculator that talks and computer software that magnifies text.

Carroll said she learned about DSB after seeing some information at her eye doctor’s office. “DSB is not advertised or even known in this area. The average person is not aware of DSB services.”

Carroll has a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and a Master’s degree in Health Education.

This is the sixth year that DSB has given Consumer of the Year awards to recognize individuals who have managed their rehabilitation plans, gained marketable skills, secured good jobs, and become role models for others.

DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to adults 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, visit the DSB website at

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dsb/Pages/default.aspx> or call 1-800-960-9270, 501-682-5463, or TDD 501-682-0093.