



Media Release

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Corning woman serves others, regains vision, earns achievement award

Linda Masterson of Corning has a passion for volunteer work and her job as Cafeteria Manager for the Corning School District, but she became legally blind and was having difficulty continuing to do the things she loved.

Masterson volunteers for many community projects, including the Harvest Festival, the cancer walk, and Special Olympics fundraisers. "Anything anyone asks me to help with, I do."

Surgeries on her advanced cataracts restored her visual acuity to 20/20, and she's now in her ninth year with the school district.

Because of her determination to overcome adversity, succeed at work, and serve others, Masterson has been named as an area Consumer of the Year by the Arkansas 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 and was chosen from the area that includes are Clay, Craighead, Greene, Jackson, Lawrence, Poinsett, Randolph and Woodruff Counties. An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

Her employer, the Corning School District, has been named as an area Employer of the Year as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment.

Masterson and her employer will be recognized at the evening meeting of the Corning Lions Club on November 12, at Parkview Restaurant.

"Ms. Masterson was grateful and very excited for the assistance with her visual concerns," said her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Charlotte Evans, who nominated her for the award. "Ms.

Masterson was able to maintain her position due to her assistance from DSB. She was having extreme difficulty in doing her job as a manager. She can now do her job with ease and reassurance.”

“I was surprised (to be nominated). It should be (DSB) getting the award,” Masterson said. “I had no insurance and couldn’t afford the surgeries I needed. I thank my lucky stars my eye doctor got me through the right channels to get it done (by referring her to DSB). I had advanced cataracts on both eyes. I had my surgeries two weeks apart. I’m not sure whether my diabetes caused or contributed to my cataracts or not, but I’ve been on a steady keel since the surgeries.”

She said her vision started declining when she was in high school. “Everything looked kind of dark. It just happened gradually.” When she became an adult, she “kept putting it off” because she didn’t have any insurance. “I was really worried about losing my eyesight.”

“It was amazing how much better I could see immediately after my first surgery. I didn’t realize how blind I was until after I’d had surgery. If anybody truly needs it, they should contact DHS DSB. Don’t put it off. It easier to remove cataracts the smaller they are.”

She has served as a cafeteria manager at other schools in the Corning School District, but is now at Park Elementary School and has completed training to become registered and certified.

Masterson said contrary to the stereotype “we do get compliments on our food. Of course, you can’t please every child. We have a good school here.” She said people take pride in their work. “It’s kind of like family here. When something happens, people pull together.” She found this out first-hand when she returned from her surgeries and was on light duty. She said staff were quick to jump in to help her.

She and her husband Larry have a son Terry, a daughter Patti, five grandsons, and two great-grandchildren.

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.