



Media Release

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Camden man regains sight, starts over, earns achievement award

Larry Randall of Camden was losing his eyesight and his job. It took determination and “a million dollar phone call” he said to turn his life around.

“I was on the brink of losing my eyesight. For 20 years I drove a truck, then glaucoma set in. My eyes hurt, my vision started blurring, and I saw stars. I got headaches. I also had rheumatoid arthritis. My doctor took me off the road. The combination of glaucoma and arthritis was taking a toll on my body. I had no money coming in during that time. I finally got on disability,” he said.

“I was lost. I didn’t know which way to turn. When they told me that I needed surgery for my sight, I didn’t know what to do, because I didn’t have the money. The only thing I could do was put up my hands and say ‘Lord, I put this in your hands.’ Then I went back to the doctor and he told me about DSB (the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind). I called and that was a million dollar phone call to me. It gave me my life back.”

After three surgeries, Randall was able to regain enough of his sight to become employed again, but not enough to pass a driver’s test and return to trucking. He earned a certificate as a mechanical technician and now works in the detail department of the Jim Golden Ford-Lincoln, LLC auto dealership in Camden.

Because of his determination to overcome adversity and succeed at work, Randall has been named as the area’s Consumer of the Year by DSB. “I am honored to recommend this outstanding individual,” said Tarrie Barnes, his DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, who nominated him for the award.

The award presentation will be made at the annual Distinguished Service Awards (DSA) banquet of the Camden Lions Club on October 15, at the Southern Arkansas University Tech Charles O. Ross Center, located at 746 California SW Street, Camden. Dinner service will start at 6 p.m. and the event will start at 6:45 p.m.

Fitzgerald Hill, Chancellor of Arkansas Baptist College and former Razorback coach, will be the celebrity guest speaker at the banquet. Tickets are still available at local banks and businesses or from Camden Lions Club members. For more information, people may contact Letitia Landers, program chair of the Camden Lions Club, at 870-836-3022.

The event falls during October's Blindness Awareness Month, as well as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Randall's employer, Jim Golden Ford-Lincoln, LLC, 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.

Randall is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was chosen from an area that includes Ouachita, Union, Columbia, Ashley, Calhoun, and Bradley counties. An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

"When your life begins to change, you look at life with a different insight," said Randall. "DSB put a new life in me, because the light I was looking at was dimming. It shines a lot better, brighter now." Because of his experiences, Randall said he is willing "to help others through their personal journey back to work or adjusting to blindness."

Randall has been married to his wife Sandra for five years. He serves his church and is a member of the Camden Community Brotherhood. He can no longer play basketball, but says he enjoys fishing when he has the opportunity.

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.