

Media Release

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For Immediate Release

June 19, 2014

Little Rock lawyer who is blind earns achievement award



Lucas Harder of Little Rock has been named as an area Consumer of the Year by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). Harder, who is totally blind, is an attorney with the Arkansas School Boards Association.

Harder serves as Assistant Director of Model Policy Services for public and charter school boards. He uses existing rules and regulations to create policies that association members can modify to fit their needs. “I take what the government puts out and try to make it user friendly.” The association also sponsors training for school board members from across the state.

Because of his determination to overcome adversity, serve others, and succeed at work, DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Dwight Turner nominated him for the achievement award.

“Lucas completed high school, college, a master’s degree and law school, and he did it with very good grades and in a timely manner. He was focused on his education,” said Turner. “His commitment (to become an attorney) was strong.”

Harder, who grew up in Van Buren County, became blind at age 14 and decided he wanted to become an attorney when he was 17. He started taking high school classes such as logic and philosophy “to prepare for different arguments.” His school also offered a course called Street Law, which “covered broad, simple legal matters.” He received the President’s Volunteer Service Gold Award “at least once” for doing 100-200 hours of volunteer service in a year. He volunteered with 4-H Clubs for 13 years. He also attended DSB’s Jump Start career development program for high school

students who are blind or visually impaired. The program prepares students to transition from high school to employment or post-secondary education.

“I was always preparing,” Harder said. “I took the law school admission test when I was a junior in college. I attended UALR Bowen Law School’s open house for potential students. I got approved to attend Bowen. I finished my thesis in the fall.” That allowed him to take electives in his last semester that he thought would be beneficial to his legal career: voice articulation and stage movement in the theatre department and the philosophy class Ethics in Society. Harder began an internship in September 2013 with the association and then was hired in January.

Harder said he appreciated the services provided by DSB. The agency paid for the part of his tuition and books at Hendrix College that wasn’t covered by scholarships. DSB also paid for his tuition and books at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law and a bar exam preparation course. DSB purchased assistive technology, such as an electronic Braille note-taker and screen reading software that makes computers accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. A DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher taught him independent living skills. He didn’t start learning Braille until 2004, and in 2006, DSB paid for training at World Services for the Blind to assist Harder in improving his Braille skills.

Harder is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive this award and was chosen from an area that includes Faulkner, Conway, Pope, Perry, Van Buren, and part of Pulaski counties. Harder’s employer also received an award as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment. The award presentation was made at the noon meeting of the Little Rock Founders Lions Club, held at World Services for the Blind on June 18.

This is the seventh 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. An overall state winner will be selected at the end of the year.

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

Photo caption:

From the left are Little Rock Founders Lions Club President and CEO of Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind Bill Johnson, attorney Lucas Harder of Little Rock, and his father Ron Harder, who accepted an outstanding business partner award on behalf of the Arkansas School Boards Association, where he also is employed. Lucas Harder received the area's outstanding Consumer of the Year achievement award from the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind.

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