

# Media Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Chidester man regains vision and earns achievement award**

David Gothard of Chidester, near Camden, has been named the area's outstanding Consumer of the Year by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB).

He has been employed as an assembler with Aerojet Rocketdyne in Camden for two years, building rocket motors and other items destined for space. "A lot of it is confidential," Gothard said.

His employer was recognized as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment. Aerojet Rocketdyne is an aerospace and defense manufacturer headquartered in California.

The awards presentation was made at the annual Distinguished Service Awards banquet sponsored by the Camden Lions Club on November 2, at the Southern Arkansas University Tech Charles O. Ross Center in Camden.

Gothard is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was selected from the area that includes Ouachita, Union, Columbia, Ashley, Calhoun, Chicot, and Bradley Counties.



**At podium, Tarrie Barnes, left, vocational rehabilitation counselor, presents David Gothard with the area Consumer of the Year award from the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind. Gothard's employer, AerojetRocketdyne of Camden, was also recognized as an outstanding business partner for hiring people with visual impairments.**

DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Tarrie Barnes nominated him for the achievement award because of his determination to overcome adversity and succeed at work. “Mr. Gothard was very much ready to return to work. However, he had not been able to see well enough to fill out job applications.”

Gothard said he became unemployed, because of his declining eyesight. Driving during the day was difficult, and he couldn’t drive at all at night. He was diagnosed with severe cataracts in both eyes. He was concerned, because he had no insurance and couldn’t afford the necessary eye surgeries. The eye doctor thought he was in imminent danger of losing his vision and referred him to DSB.

DSB paid for surgeries and medical treatment that restored his eyesight. Later DSB provided vocational counseling and job placement services, which led to employment. “I was very appreciative,” Gothard said.

Gothard was able to get a job driving a truck for Schwan’s Food Service and was later referred for an interview with Aerojet Rocketdyne. He said he had to pass Department of Transportation tests to get the Schwan’s job, and both of the companies required physical exams.

Originally from Alabama, Gothard has an associate degree in computer science and a Bachelor’s degree in business from Huntingdon College in Montgomery, AL.

He enjoys fishing, woodworking, and being married to his wife DeJon.

This is the eighth 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.