



Media Release

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Newport woman regains vision, earns achievement award

Natasha Friar of Newport, a self-employed cosmetologist, has been named the area's outstanding Consumer of the Year by the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB).

DSB Area Field Supervisor Runar Jensen nominated her for the achievement award because of her determination to overcome adversity and succeed at work.

Friar is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was selected from the area that includes Clay, Craighead, Greene, Jackson, Lawrence, Poinsett, Randolph and Woodruff Counties.

Friar said she appreciated the services she received from DSB. In addition to paying for her surgery for a detached retina and related medical treatment, DSB paid the part of tuition that wasn't covered by her PELL grant to attend Searcy Beauty College. DSB also paid for several smocks (uniforms); three mannequins; transportation to and from school; fees to take the written and practical State Board exams; business cards; and an initial stock of beauty supplies. DSB provided counseling and job placement services.

After graduating from cosmetology school, Friar began working at Razor Cuts Hair Salon in Jonesboro, but said the commute from Newport became too difficult with her having young children. She decided to become self-employed and work near home.

"I am privileged to share in the recognition of a job well done, and trust that success will continue to follow this most-deserving individual, who has demonstrated that, with determination, vision impairment is not a barrier to competitive employment," Jensen said.

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.