



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Stuttgart man overcomes adversity, wins award

Jessie Reeves of Stuttgart had been a heavy equipment operator for eight years when his vision began to fail. His work load had “decreased to almost none.”

Because of his low vision, he feared he would lose his job. Over the next several years as he continued to work, his vision was steadily deteriorating until one day he noticed just how bad it had gotten. He said he “couldn’t even see out of (his) left eye.” He was diagnosed with primary open angle glaucoma, and the doctor told him that he was in imminent danger of losing his eyesight. He was told he needed surgery, but he said there were unexpected complications and he ended up needing three operations.

Because of his determination to overcome adversity and keep his job, Reeves has been named as the area’s Consumer of the Year by the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). He was chosen from an area including Arkansas, Chicot, Cleveland, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Jefferson, and Lincoln counties. He is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award. An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

The award presentation will be made at the noon meeting of the Stuttgart Lions Club on November 2, at the Stuttgart Country Club. His employer, Scott Manufacturing, will be recognized as the area Employer of the Year by DSB.

Reeves said he wasn’t aware of the services DSB provided and didn’t know what he was going to do, because he didn’t have insurance, and he certainly couldn’t afford the cost himself. He informed the physician’s nurse of his situation and was referred to DSB.

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Without the help of DSB's services, Reeves would have totally lost his sight and his job, which he said was "very important to (his) survival". Reeves said "They did a good job. They stood by me. I sure appreciate it."

"I can't believe how wonderful I can see now. I was without good vision for so long that it felt normal to be able to see little to nothing at times." Now he is back on his feet and working 40 hours per week.

"Mr. Reeves has always been a hard worker. He has been employed with Scott Manufacturing for eight years," said Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Audrey Veasey, who nominated him. She said he was very responsible and receptive in following the instructions of his doctor and his counselor. He was determined to keep his job.

Reeves likes driving forklifts and heavy equipment at work. In his leisure time, he enjoys riding motorcycles and is a member of a local motorcycle club. He said it's "a little dangerous", but he enjoys machinery. Reeves has two sons, who live in Michigan.

This is the fourth 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. At the end of the year, the DSB Board will select an overall state winner from the area winners who were nominated. The announcement will be made at the board meeting Dec. 9, and will be followed by a reception.

DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals 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, call 1-800-960-9270 or 501-682-5463 or visit the DSB website at <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dsb/Pages/default.aspx>.