



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Little Rock man who's blind earns achievement award

Robert Fagan of Little Rock, who's been legally blind since birth, 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 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Debera Coleman nominated him for the achievement award because of his determination to overcome adversity and succeed at work. Fagan worked for 17 years as a dorm parent with Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI). After retiring from ASBVI, he now works as a machinist at Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind and is the chairman of the safety committee. He's been employed there six years.

He is family-oriented and community-minded. In 2010, Fagan was appointed by then Governor Mike Beebe to the Arkansas Independent Living Council, and he was re-appointed this year by Governor Asa Hutchinson. He became co-chair of the Council midway through his first term.

"The best job I have is being a husband to my wife Sherrie and a father to my son Cameron. That's my number one job," Fagan said. His son is a sophomore in high school. The Fagans have served for four years as foster parents to Arkansas children who are blind or visually impaired. They also hosted a young woman from Turkey while she was a senior at ASBVI.

Fagan is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was selected from the area serving south Pulaski County.

The award presentation was made May 27, at the noon meeting of the Little Rock Founders Lions Club. His employer, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, was recognized as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment.

Fagan said he was born with cataracts in both eyes and had surgery before he was a year old. “In 1969 there was no laser treatment, so I had scalpel surgery, which worked, but left a lot of scar tissue. I could ride a bike and do other things. I had several retina detachments because of the scar tissue.” He developed glaucoma, which slowly began taking his remaining vision. Fortunately, he said he’d learned Braille and how to use JAWS computer software while at ASBVI.

Fagan is the vice president of the Arkansas School for the Blind Alumni Association and is a member of the National Federation of the Blind Arkansas Chapter. Fagan completed three years of college, planning to major in Sociology. He and his wife are members of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock.

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.