



Media Release

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Springdale Woman Who is Blind Earns Achievement Awards

Springdale resident Dalia Vega has been named the area's Department of Human Service's Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Consumer of the Year.

Vega, who is blind from Retinopathy of Prematurity, is employed as a Program Training Instructor with Pathfinders, Inc. in Bentonville and teaches people with disabilities. Vega has also spent her life volunteering and increasing her skills to help other people.

"I'm very overwhelmed," said Vega, explaining her surprise at being named both the area Consumer of the Year by DSB and the Employee of the Year by Pathfinders.

Vega is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was chosen from the area including two of Arkansas' most populous counties, Washington and Benton, said DSB Area Supervisor Tina Shelby, who nominated Vega for the award.

An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

Her employer, Pathfinders Inc., has been named as an area Employer of the Year as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment.

Pathfinders, Inc. provides pre-vocational and vocational skills training for adults with disabilities. Vega is teaching Braille and independent living skills to approximately 10 Pathfinders' clients who are visually impaired or totally blind, said Debbie Stripling, Director of Pathfinders Inc.

"I have wonderful students," said Vega. "They have multiple disabilities, so it's harder for them. They want to learn."

Vega and her employer will be recognized at the noon meeting of the Bentonville Lions Club on November 21, at Zary's Acropolis Greek Restaurant.

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Vega is enrolled at Northwest Arkansas Community College and is working toward an associate degree in early childhood education. She hopes to teach younger students who are blind. When Vega was in high school, she had a job working with first and second graders and also volunteered for a year at a child care center. “I love children, and that’s why I’m leaning toward that age group, but I do well with adults, too,” she said.

More recently, Vega volunteered a year at the Crisis Center in Springdale, sharing information about visual impairment and blindness and informing staff and patients about assistive technology and other products that are available.

This summer Vega plans to earn her National Certification of Literary Braille.

“There’s a lot of studying and pre-testing associated with it,” she said. “They test everything – your reading speed, your Braille accuracy.”

Vega expressed her thanks for the services and assistive technology equipment she received from DSB. She was given training in independent living and job search skills. Her counselor provided job placement services. She also attended Job Club classes offered by DSB and Sources for Community Independent Living Services Inc. (Sources Inc.) in Fayetteville to learn skills in filling out job applications, doing resumes, and job interviewing in order to become successfully employed.

“During her program with DSB, Ms. Vega was informed of Arkansas Information Reading Services, Talking Book Services, voter registration, and consumer organizations, like the National Federation of the Blind and the American Council of the Blind. She uses this information in her present job to inform her clients and their parents of these resources and their ability to access them,” said Shelby.

This is the sixth 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.

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.