

## Media Release

Contact:

**Kandy Cayce, DHS Division of Services for the Blind  
(501) 682-0332**

**For Immediate Release**

May 22, 2014

### **Little Rock woman regains eyesight, earns achievement award**



**From the left are Little Rock Founders Lions Club President and CEO of Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind Bill Johnson, Shana Thurmond of Little Rock, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Debera Coleman. Thurmond received the area's outstanding Consumer of the Year award from the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind. She also accepted an outstanding business partner award on behalf of her employer, Guardsmark Security.**

she can see using contact lenses and eyeglasses.

Thurmond is a security officer with Guardsmark Security. Thurmond's employer will receive an award as an outstanding business partner for its commitment to promoting the employment of persons with vision impairment.

The awards were presented at the noon meeting of the Little Rock Founders Lions Club held at World Services for the Blind on May 21.

Shana Thurmond of Little Rock 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 her for the award because of her determination to overcome adversity, serve others, and succeed at work.

Thurmond became visually impaired at age 23, when she was diagnosed with keratoconus, a degenerative eye condition that causes the cornea to thin and become cone-shaped, which distorts vision. She had a corneal transplant in 2009. Now she said

Prior to losing her vision, Thurmond worked in the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences (UAMS) Intensive Care Unit from 2001 to 2007. She then transferred to the UAMS Angel Call Center for high risk expectant mothers, where she answered the phones, scheduled appointments, did data entry, and mailed information packets to patients. Thurmond said that she “has always enjoyed jobs that involved helping others and loves meeting new people.”

Eventually, her vision declined to the point she couldn’t work. She spent “three stressful years without a job, not being able to drive, and not having insurance.”

Then someone told her about DSB and she found she could have eye surgery. She said that “was a big burden off of me. It was a major blessing when I really needed help.”

Thurmond said DSB paid for her corneal transplant surgery, eye doctor appointments, and eye medication. Her DSB counselor gave her listings of job openings, opportunities for job shadowing, and “encouragement that was so very important.” She also relied on her “faith in God, my family, and praying.”

She received her cornea from the Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory at UAMS. She expressed her gratitude to Arkansas Lions Clubs, who support the eye bank, and to the individuals or families who donate their corneas.

“She has always been committed to being employed. She has always demonstrated a determined and confident spirit,” said Coleman.

Even after her vision was restored, employers were afraid to hire her because she had been out of the workforce for three years. She said, “I had worked part-time for Guardsmark in the past, and they knew I was a dependable employee, so I applied there and I’m so thankful I was able to go back full time in 2013.”

Thurmond is a graduate of Hall High School and studied general business for three years at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. In June 2012, she completed a Bachelor’s Degree in Theology from G. Moore Theological Institute, based in Houston, TX; at the time the institute had a campus in Little Rock.

Thurmond is a minister and youth Sunday school teacher at Damascus Spiritual Church in North Little Rock. She is also a motivational speaker.

Thurmond is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was chosen from an area comprised of south Pulaski County. This is the seventh year that DSB has given

-more-

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.