

Media Release

Contact:

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

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From the left, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Tina Shores presents Paul Tankersley with an area Consumer of the Year achievement award from the Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind.

Tankersley is a self-employed dog breeder who is visually impaired. His wife, Paula Tankersley, is on the far right.

with the U.S. Forest Service, but had to retire 10 years earlier than planned due to vision problems. He began his dog breeding business as a means to supplement his family's income and find self-fulfillment.

Because of his determination to overcome adversity and succeed at having his own business, Tankersley 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).

Oden businessman who's visually impaired to receive achievement award

"When you do work you enjoy, it does not seem like work," according to Paul V. Tankersley, a self-employed dog breeder who's visually impaired and lives in Oden in Montgomery County. He also raises Boer goats and

enjoys working around his farm.

"Life is full of different crossroads. I've tried a lot of things through the years, and this is a good fit for me."

Tankersley was a Wildlife Biologist

Tankersley is one of only 13 people in Arkansas who will receive an area award and was chosen from an area that includes Sebastian, Montgomery, Scott, Polk, Logan, Johnson, Yell, Crawford, and Franklin counties. An overall state winner will be named at the end of the year.

“Mr. Tankersley has been a pleasure to work with. His work ethics are superior. He takes pride in the services he provides to his customers and the care of his animals. You couldn’t find a better role model or mentor,” said Tina Shores, his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, who nominated him for the award. “I wish I had more consumers like Mr. Tankersley.”

Tankersley said his career in range management and wildlife management has helped in his breeding of dogs. “I’ve always had dogs since I was a young adult, but it was my daughter who got me into breeding Golden Retrievers.” They had raised other animals through 4-H Club. “It’s hard to breed dogs or other livestock without improving it. Golden Retrievers are a good all-around dog.” He tries to balance his dogs’ beauty and intelligence with their hunting skills, so they can be good as pets or field dogs. “It’s been fun.” His daughter helps maintain a website, which is 90% of his marketing and has enabled him to sell puppies to buyers from all over the United States. “A lot of it is word of mouth,” he said. “There are a lot of business aspects to this. You’ve got to keep records.”

He communicates with perspective buyers through emails and sending photos of his dogs. He keeps a data base of the “different things that need to be done regularly” like shots and worming schedules. He is proud that “the dogs aren’t just penned up. They have a half acre to run in, and each one gets my personal time.”

“My relationship to the Lord is critical. I have a hope that’s beyond discouragement. It gives me a leg up to try new things where others may not have had that hope,” Tankersley said. “Scripture says we are more than conquerors – not that there aren’t challenges.”

Tankersley said his vision loss was from retinal damage. He said his distance vision was able to be improved with the use of a Galilean Telescope (telescopic glasses) that DSB purchased to help him remain independent and be able to maintain his farm.

He also requested DSB assistance to expand his business by converting his barn and upgrading and enlarging the existing kennels. This enabled him to increase his breeding stock and raise his income. Tankersley made the arrangements for the work to be done. DSB purchased a larger computer monitor and updated his work station to enable him to be more efficient in his business. Tankersley expressed his appreciation for the partnership he’s had with DSB and said, “You couldn’t ask for a better bunch (of people) to fall in with. They went the extra mile.”

He and his wife Paula have three grown children, including the daughter who helps him with the Internet side of his business.

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 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, 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.