

WORKPLACE



Stories from the Front

AbilityOne
employees tell
their stories

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data entry for Electronic Competitive Retail Marketing. "I have found my passion. I am moving forward... I enjoy speaking my life to inspire others," he said. Through his opportunities with AbilityOne David earned employment outside the Program.



Scott Owens

After finishing his enlistment in 2009, Owens was unable to find suitable work in the civilian world. He was unemployed for more than two years before he was referred to ServiceSource in Clearwater, FL.

In his speeches, Owens often describes his personal journey from unemployed and despondent wounded warrior to AbilityOne Program employee performing complex contract management support tasks for the Department of Defense.

During a long period of unemployment after leaving the U.S. Army, Owens was dismayed to discover that employers didn't know what to do with him. "I was lost," Owens admitted. "Just getting by was a struggle. I needed relief. I started thinking some dark thoughts." He came to realize he was facing the same barriers to employment that thousands of others struggled with after leaving the U.S. Armed Forces. "It is even harder to find gainful employment if you are a disabled vet," Owens added. "The AbilityOne Program is prepared to provide what the wounded vets need to succeed."

Owens recently moved on from AbilityOne employment and became a vocational rehabilitation specialist, job placement, for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He is working with veterans in the Reintegration Program at the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System.



John Packer

Former SFC John Packer served in the U.S. Army for 12 years, where he earned the Bronze Star and the Meritorious Service Medal. He served two tours in Iraq before being medically discharged. He struggled to find suitable employment for 10 months

before finding the right match with PCSI, an AbilityOne nonprofit agency in Austin, TX. Today, Packer works on a facilities maintenance contract at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state. He has three children and lives in Yelm, WA with his wife.



Brenda Sheaffer

Brenda Sheaffer is a custodian at the New Executive Office Building at the White House complex in Washington, DC. A severe learning disability made it difficult for her to compete in the job market and, in 1993, she joined Melwood, a nonprofit agency located in Upper Marlboro, MD. She worked as a custodian at the National Zoo and the Auditors Building before getting a security clearance to work at the White House complex.

"I have a supportive environment that includes me in the workforce," Sheaffer said. "I have a place to go in the morning. I have people who need me and my parents feel good about my future. I no longer accept government benefits. I am a tax payer instead of a tax user."

Sheaffer was invited to the White House and had the pleasure of meeting First Lady Laura Bush on Feb. 11, 2008. She has been featured in The Washington Post and in radio and TV ads for Melwood.



Kyle Sill

Sgt. Kyle Sill was deployed to Iraq in 2005 with the 46th Engineer Brigade and Afghanistan in 2008 with the Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. He suffered a traumatic brain injury from an improvised explosive

device, received a Purple Heart medal for his sacrifice and was placed on the Temporary Disability Retirement List. Once he came back to the United States, he received job training through an AbilityOne contract for spice packaging at Unistel, a subsidiary of CDS Monarch. Currently, Kyle spends much of his time taking care of his son. Pending an outcome from the VA, he has plans to pursue higher education or seek employment again in the near future.



Nathan Short

Nathan Short joined the National Guard in 1999 and went active duty in 2000. While serving in Iraq, he was severely injured in an accident with a Palletized Load System, or PLS Truck, while delivering supplies. He received medical

retirement from the Army in 2005. He worked on an AbilityOne contract at Tinker Air Force Base for two years before being promoted to Quality Assurance Manager