

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – OCT. 26, 2011

Richland Newhope Industries honors local businesses and employees

(Mansfield, OH) - Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. (RNI) is saluting 110 area employers during Disability Employment Awareness Month. Businesses that employ individuals with developmental disabilities from Richland Newhope's adult services program and those companies that contract with RNI were recognized during the annual Employer Recognition Breakfast held Wed., Oct. 26, 2011 at the Holiday Inn in Mansfield. The event attracted nearly 300 people.

For the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2011, more than 300 individuals earned paychecks for total wages of nearly \$302,000. Community Services provided employment services to more than 140 individuals who were interested in obtaining employment in the community. These services include job placement, Project SEARCH, the Early Childhood Internship and Training Program, job tryouts and assessments, driver's permit training, employability classes, and the Summer Training Employment Program (STEP). STEP is a six-week paid summer work program for youth who are transitioning into the world of employment. Participants this past summer worked at one of five different locations.

In Dec., 2010, Element of Art Studio/Gallery in downtown Mansfield celebrated its one-year anniversary. It currently has more than 80 contracted artists with wages from the sale of their art totaling over \$6,100 between September, 2010 and August, 2011.

In addition to employment, individuals at RNI volunteer in the community nearly 300 hours every quarter.

MedCentral Health System is the 2011 Community Employer of the Year. MedCentral was one of the first employer partners when Project SEARCH began in 2006. Since then, MedCentral has offered jobs to 18 of the 29 graduates. Sixteen accepted and 11 currently remain employed there. This is the second time MedCentral has been recognized as Community Employer of the Year. Two MedCentral employees have also been named recipients of Richland Newhope's annual Heroes with Heart award since 2008.

The industry-based 2011 Employer of the Year is MTD Products Inc. MTD provides many employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In the past year, the business relationship between MTD and RNI was expanded to include the packaging of over 70 different belts that are used on lawn care products. RNI employees also coil tubing and lawn motor starter ropes plus assemble gas caps and straps for MTD. In addition, RNI manufactures various sizes of pallets for MTD's Shelby Distribution Center and the Willard production facility.

The community-based 2011 Employee of the Year is Kelby Lunsford of Shiloh. In 2009, after obtaining all of his credits towards high school graduation, Lunsford chose to defer graduation for one year and attend Project SEARCH at the North Central State College/Ohio State University-Mansfield site. After successfully completing Project SEARCH, Lunsford was hired at Café on Main as a dishwasher. Lunsford will not hesitate to let people know that he loves his job, referring to it as "his happy place." He has been known to refuse family vacations so he can work.

Richland Newhope Industries' facility-based 2011 Employees of the Year are Pam Fetty and Luke Trieber, both of Mansfield. Fetty has been employed at RNI's Fourth St. location for one year, where her favorite jobs are coiling tubes and wrapping ropes. She is considered a meticulous, reliable employee who always volunteers when overtime hours are offered.

"I felt happy and better and excited," Fetty said when learning that she had been selected as a top employee. "I love working my job, and I want to keep it every year."

Trieber was selected as the Employee of the Year at RNI's Longview Ave. location. Trieber said he is "thrilled and proud" to receive the award and "loves" his job in the woodshop. Trieber says the memory of his mother, who passed away last year, keeps him motivated to be a good worker and to set a good example for others.

This year's featured speaker at the Employer Recognition Breakfast was Bill Hosket. Hosket was the Ohio High School Basketball Player of the Year in 1964 and went on to play at The Ohio State University where he was All-Big 10 and All-American, as well as Academic All-American. He was on the Gold Medal winning team for the United States at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Hosket played in the NBA and was on the 1970 New York Knicks World Championship team. A former vice-president of a large paper company, Hosket still serves as a consultant to the paper industry and is an insurance executive. He has also been a television analyst for Big Ten basketball for many years.

The theme for National Disability Employment Awareness Month is "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities." In addition to the breakfast, RNI, Inc. also displayed five billboards throughout the Mansfield area during October.

Established in 1963, Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. provides services and supports for community employment, industrial services at three production sites, personal and social services, recreational services, and options for seniors.

Richland Newhope (Richland County Board of Developmental Disabilities) currently supports about 1,300 individuals through early intervention, preschool, adult, residential, therapy, transportation and other family support programs.

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For more information, contact Amanda South, Director of Adult Services, at 419-774-4412, Liz Prather, Superintendent, at 419-774-4222, or Jane Imbody, Director of Community Relations, at 419-774-4215. Photos of the Employees of the Year are available.

2011 RNI Billboard and National Disability Employment Awareness Month Poster

