

IMPACT

New
Beginnings

RAYMOND
BOND

Employee Stories

Building Opportunity,
One Career at a Time

More Than 30 Years
of Purpose



Following 90 Years

Ninety years ago, IFB Solutions began with a powerful belief: people who are blind deserve meaningful employment, independence, and opportunity. That mission continues to guide us today.

As we celebrate this milestone, we're proud to spotlight our Asheville facility. Since joining IFB in 1991, Asheville has provided lasting employment and opportunities for people who are blind in western North Carolina. Today, its employees continue producing essential products while building rewarding careers.

In this issue, you'll meet employees whose journeys reflect the impact of opportunity—from long-time team members who have built careers at IFB to those who found a new beginning later in life. You'll also hear from leaders whose dedication has helped strengthen our manufacturing operations.



FROM THE EDITOR

Every step forward is possible because of supporters like you. Thank you for walking alongside us for 90 years and helping create opportunities for generations to come.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anastasia Powell".

Anastasia Powell



At an age when many people begin thinking about retirement, Raymond “Ray” Bond found himself starting over. Blind since 1980 following a life-changing injury, Ray spent nearly four decades working as a diesel mechanic. For 39 years, one employer recognized his talent and determination, giving him the opportunity to build a successful career as a blind mechanic. It was a powerful example of what is possible when employers focus on ability rather than disability.

But when Ray was permanently laid off, his future suddenly became uncertain. At 65 years old, Ray found himself searching for work once again. Despite applying for more than 100 jobs, he struggled to find an employer willing to look beyond his blindness.

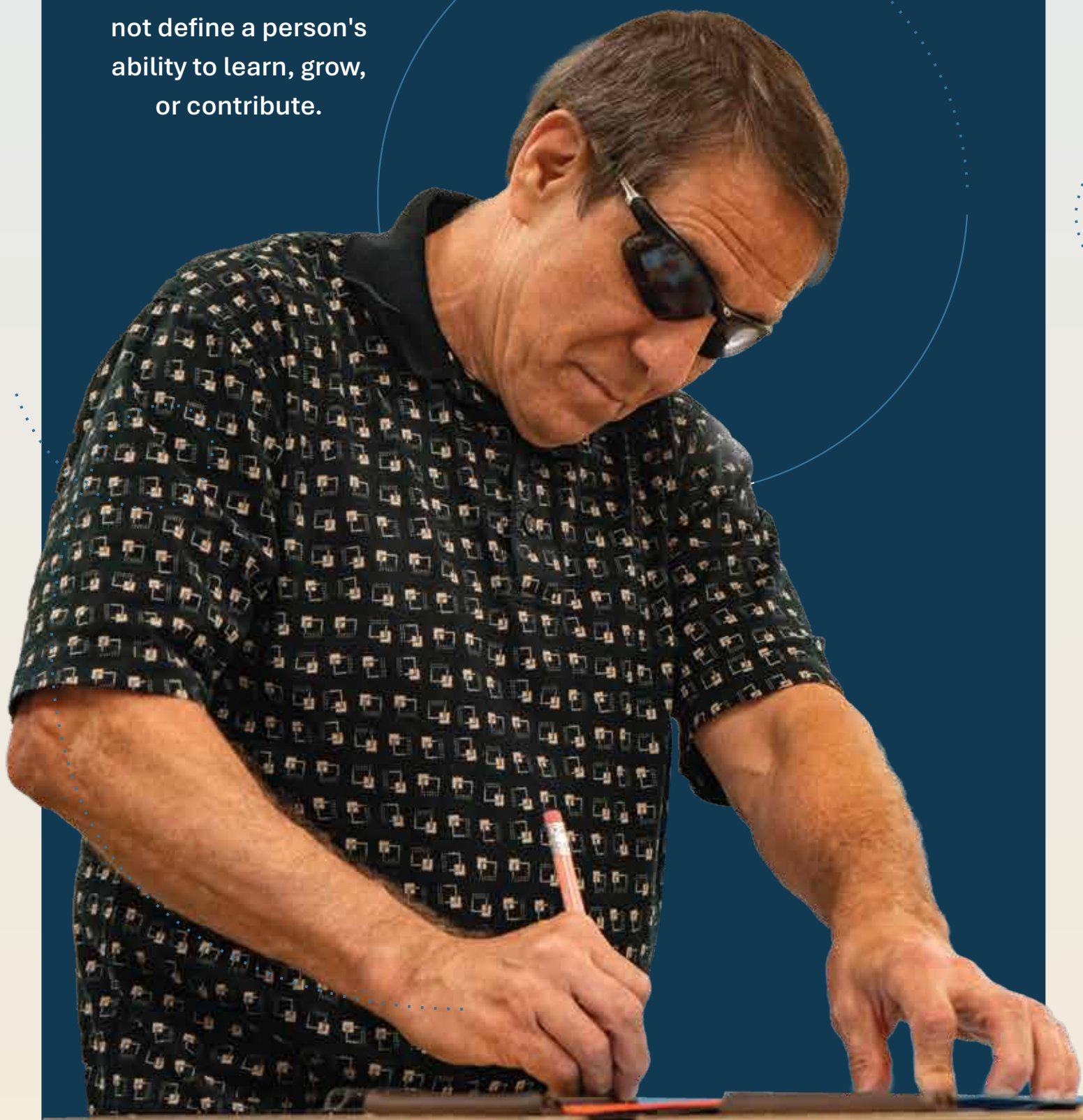
"I was anxious and frustrated," Ray recalls. Then, while searching online for employment opportunities for people who are blind, he discovered IFB Solutions.

New Beginnings

Raymond “Ray” Bond



Each day, Ray proves
that blindness does
not define a person's
ability to learn, grow,
or contribute.



After moving to Asheville in late 2025, Ray joined the Fuel Handler Suits department and began a completely new chapter, one he never imagined for himself. Before coming to IFB, Ray had never touched a sewing machine.

Today, he confidently threads needles, changes bobbins, sews drain holes into pockets, marks sleeves, and helps produce critical military products.

He has been trained on multiple processes within the department and looks forward to learning even more.

Each day, Ray proves that blindness does not define a person's ability to learn, grow, or contribute. Being part of the Asheville team has been life changing for Ray. "Working here has renewed my confidence and self-worth," he says. "Some people are born to work, and I'm one of those people."

Outside of work, Ray enjoys resistance training and staying active. His positive attitude, resilience, and willingness to embrace new challenges have made him an inspiration to coworkers throughout the Asheville facility. His advice is simple: "Never say, 'I can't'; say 'I'll try.'"

Ray's journey is both inspiring and sobering. Decades ago, an employer recognized his abilities and invested in his talents for nearly 40 years. Yet in today's job market, even with decades of experience and a proven work ethic, Ray struggled to find employment simply because he is blind. His story is a reminder that meaningful employment remains out of reach for far too many people who are blind.

At IFB Solutions, that reality is why our work continues. We remain committed to creating jobs, building careers, and ensuring that every person who is blind and who wants to work has the opportunity to do so. Thanks to the support of donors, people like Ray can find not just a job, but renewed confidence, purpose, and the chance for a new beginning.

RAY

Building Opportunity, One Career at a Time

Randy Buckner

For 34 years, Randy Buckner has helped shape more than manufacturing operations at IFB Solutions—he has helped create opportunity. As Vice President of Manufacturing Operations, Randy oversees manufacturing across all IFB locations, leading teams responsible for Quality, Engineering, Shipping & Receiving, and production operations. His leadership reaches every facility, including Asheville, where employees who are blind continue building meaningful careers while demonstrating what is possible in the workplace.

Several of Asheville's longest-serving employees began their careers before the facility joined IFB Solutions in 1991. Their decades of service reflect a mission that has remained constant: creating meaningful employment for people who are blind. Randy has had the privilege of leading through much of that journey, witnessing firsthand the organization's growth and evolution.



"The only real difference between a sighted person and a person who is blind is how they experience vision. Never underestimate or limit what someone who is blind can accomplish."



Randy first learned about IFB through a contract at the Employment Security Commission connection that became a lifelong career. "I'm not blind, but working at IFB has been a life-changing opportunity for me," Randy says. "I was impressed when I first met some of our employees who are blind 34 years ago, and I continue to be amazed by our employees today. I'm proud of what we accomplish working together."

Manufacturing has always been part of Randy's story. At just 13 years old, he learned to weld stove parts in his family's business, founded by his father, the inventor of the Buck Stove. Those early experiences instilled the discipline, craftsmanship, and work ethic that continue to shape his leadership.

One of the biggest milestones Randy has witnessed was the introduction of the Extreme Weather Outer Layer (EWOL) Jacket. The project introduced seam-sealing technology, launched IFB's partnership with W.L. Gore, and paved the way for the Fuel Handler Suit—one of IFB's most advanced military garments. Requiring approximately 260 manufacturing steps, the suit created opportunities for employees who are blind to master multiple operations and develop valuable technical skills.

Among Randy's proudest memories is relocating the Asheville facility to its current campus. The move expanded the operation from 42,000 to 72,000 square feet, created approximately 50 additional jobs, and was completed without interrupting customer production. "It was an incredible team effort," Randy recalls. "Everyone came together to make it happen without missing a beat."

For Randy, Asheville is more than a workplace. "It's where I was given the opportunity to join this incredible organization, build lasting relationships, grow as a leader, and be part of something much bigger than myself."

As IFB celebrates 90 years, Randy remains focused on the future. "The only real difference between a sighted person and a person who is blind is how they experience vision. Never underestimate or limit what someone who is blind can accomplish." His words—and his career—reflect what IFB has demonstrated for nine decades: when people are given opportunities, they achieve extraordinary things.

RANDY



More Than 30 Years of Purpose

James “Stanley” Mills

Some careers define a lifetime. For James “Stanley” Mills, IFB Solutions became exactly that. Born in Jackson County, North Carolina, Stanley faced challenges from the beginning. Following a perinatal stroke and weighing only two pounds at birth, he grew up visually impaired and partially paralyzed.

Yet in 1993, when he learned about employment opportunities through regional services for the blind, he found a path filled with possibility.

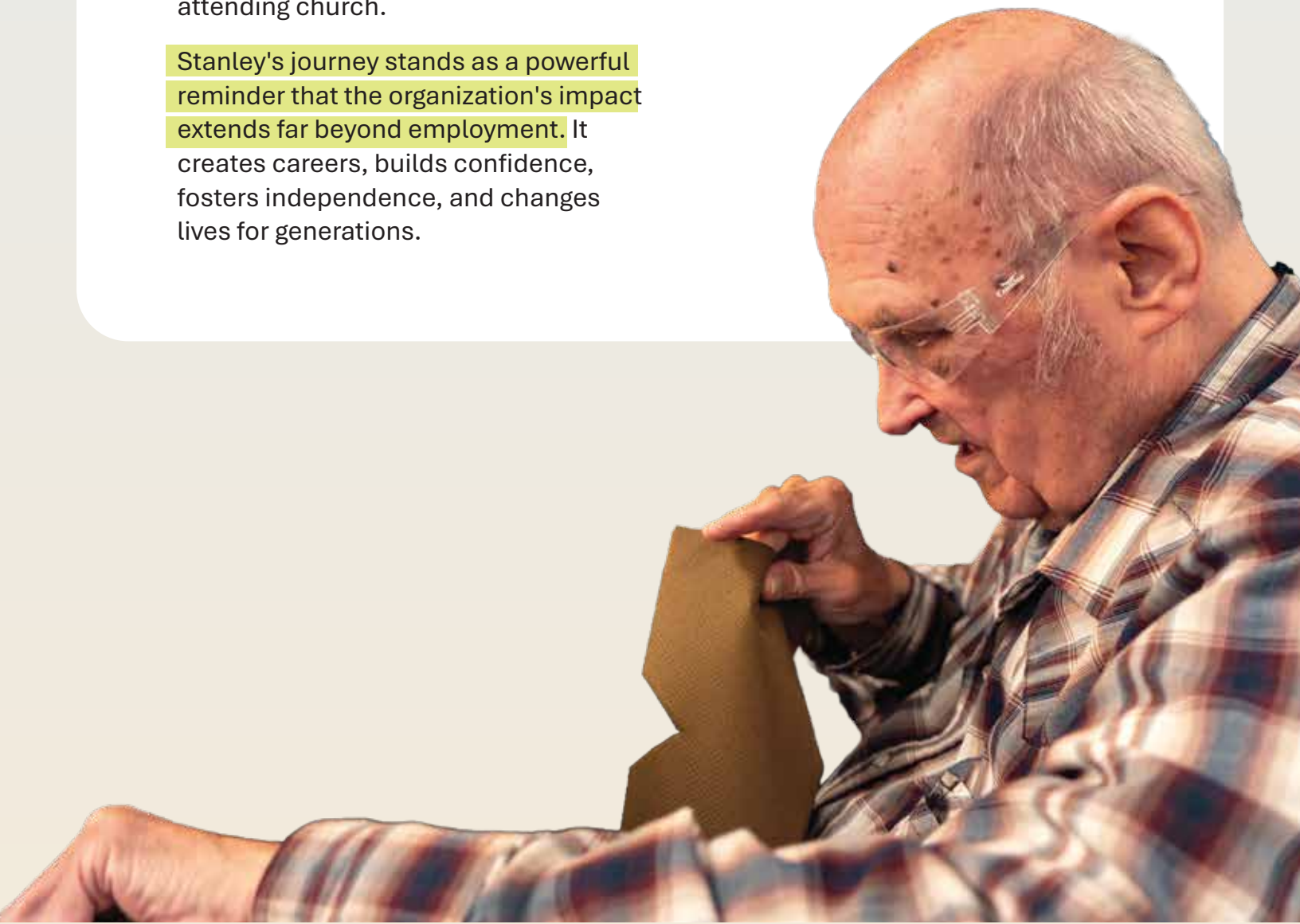
More than 30 years later, Stanley continues building that possibility every day. As a sewing machine operator in Asheville’s manufacturing facility, Stanley assembles Fuel Handler Suit jackets for the U.S. military—a role requiring precision, consistency, and skill. Throughout his career, he has worked across multiple departments and product lines, always eager to learn something new.

STANLEY

Known for his reliability and quality workmanship, Stanley approaches each day with pride and positivity, which earned him the 2026 overall Employee of the Year. Though nearing retirement age, he says he hopes to remain at IFB as long as possible because the work provides purpose, connection, and fulfillment, and that sense of purpose is something IFB Solutions has provided to people who are blind for 90 years.

Across generations, employees like Stanley have demonstrated that meaningful employment creates hope and independence. Outside of work, Stanley enjoys bowling, fishing, boating with his brother, collecting movies, listening to a variety of music, and attending church.

Stanley's journey stands as a powerful reminder that the organization's impact extends far beyond employment. It creates careers, builds confidence, fosters independence, and changes lives for generations.



YOUR IMPACT

Every Footstep Tells a Story

For almost a century, IFB Solutions has created pathways to independence. Some footsteps represent decades of leadership and service. Others represent new beginnings. Together, they tell the story of a mission that continues moving forward—one employee, one job, and one opportunity at a time.



"IFB gave me more than a job. It gave me stability and the chance to build a career I could be proud of."

— STANLEY MILLS





"Opportunity changes lives. My hope is that years from now, someone else's story begins the same way mine did—with a chance to prove what they're capable of."

— RAY BOND



"I've watched IFB grow and evolve over the years, but one thing has never changed—the belief that people who are blind can do exceptional work when given the opportunity."

— RANDY BUCKNER



IN ACTION



Celebrating

90 YEARS

For 90 years, every footprint has led to another opportunity. From our beginnings to today, the stories of Randy, Stanley, Ray and hundreds of other employees are possible because of supporters like you.

Your generosity helps provide training, employment, workplace accommodations, and programs that empower people who are blind to build independent and fulfilling lives. Thank you!



90TH ANNIVERSARY SPONSOR



Let's Connect

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