



WINTER 2022

IMPACT

Building life-changing opportunities for people who are blind.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

SHANNON SATTERFIELD



Shannon Satterfield knows what it's like to be well educated and highly qualified, yet still struggle to find work. For many blind and visually impaired individuals all across the country — his current employees, included — it's a story that's all too familiar.

Born with achromatopsia, Satterfield experiences severe light sensitivity resulting in day-blindness, a condition that has left him unable to drive. Though lacking a license may not be a huge issue in big cities, where transportation services are more readily available, it often felt debilitating in Satterfield's small town of Asheboro, North Carolina, with a population of just over 25,000.

After being laid off from his job at a local Ford dealership in 2008, Satterfield suddenly found himself faced with a staggering reality: an

unemployment rate of 70% among the blind and visually impaired community.

"Without a drivers' license, it was hard to get another job," he said, "especially in the car business. [In Asheboro], we don't have Uber. We don't have public transportation. But my wife and kids are here. My mom and dad are here. I'm not going to move."

Instead, Satterfield went back to school, earning a bachelor's degree in marketing, then a master of business administration. "I thought: 'I'm never going to struggle finding a job with an MBA.' But in a small town, not being able to drive, I still did," he said. "I went to interview after interview — for entry level positions, positions I was way overqualified for — and I'd be honest with people about my condition. The answer was always no."

After a year-and-a-half-long job search, Satterfield landed a remote role at IFB Solutions. Six years later, he now manages a whole team of blind and visually impaired employees working remotely across the country.

"It's so awesome to work for a company where you're not looked down on because you can't see well," he said. "And my role is to give other people like myself opportunities. I've had instances where I've offered someone a job, and they cried. When you're in your 30s or 40s and you've never had a job — or you haven't had one in a long time — and suddenly one is offered to you, it brings up a lot of emotions for people."

Satterfield manages IFB's Workforce Services division, which operates as a staffing agency, connecting government entities and commercial businesses with a skilled, flexible workforce for customer service, data collection and analysis, sales and more. His team currently comprises around 30 employees working from 17 different states, each contracted out to work for other companies or agencies across the country.

While many of the jobs are for quality assurance or customer service-type call center work, other contracts have sought clinical interviewers with specialized education or higher level degrees. Some of the newer contracts, especially, have the potential for upward mobility, Satterfield said.

"IFB's entire mission is to help the blind or visually impaired," he explained. "And that's what our division is all about: creating opportunities. One of the biggest obstacles we face is access to transportation, [and Workforce Services] eliminates that barrier. Instead of riding the bus for an hour and a half before your day even starts, you just log in on your computer and log off at the end of the day."

Business partners contracting IFB employees through Workforce Services not only help provide jobs for blind and visually impaired workers across the country, they also gain dedicated personnel who regularly surpass standards for their specific lines of work. With turnover rates far below the industry average (6-7% as opposed to 30-45%), IFB's Workforce Services agents are both committed and qualified — reflecting a culture of community found throughout the organization.

Satterfield said he hopes that Workforce Services will only continue to grow, especially under the leadership of incoming CEO Dan Kelly, who helped create the division more than a decade ago and is the first person who is blind to hold the organization's top role. The more people IFB can help through remote work, the fewer are stuck in the unemployment cycle.

"My team, they're not employees. We're a family," Satterfield said. "I know their struggles, because I've lived them too. We might be on opposite sides of the country, but we're all connected. We're providing that support. That's what we're here for."

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UPWARD MOBILITY

JASON MOSER, CFO



In 2022, IFB Solutions promoted Jason Moser — twice. Joining the team in 2018 as the director of financial planning and analysis, Moser was, earlier this year, named vice president of finance for the Winston-Salem facility. Six months later, in August, he became the organization's chief financial officer.

Previously in corporate finance at BB&T, Moser came to IFB to find more meaning in his work.

"The mission and the sense of purpose is what drove me to IFB," he explained. "I came in and immediately felt an energy. You could just feel the positive momentum and team atmosphere."

Now, having moved up the ladder himself, he's interested in helping blind and visually impaired employees do the same. In fact, just in the years since Moser joined the organization, many of IFB's white collar or office jobs have been filled by existing employees who are visually impaired or blind.

Upward mobility for employees across all departments is imperative to the mission at IFB, Moser said. "The biggest thing is to provide that opportunity, to let folks show what they can do."

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Moser said that, currently, his department is seeking a financial analyst — and he'd love to give the opportunity to someone who is blind or visually impaired. When positions like these open up, it's important to not only let all staff at IFB know, but to also encourage more people to develop existing interests, train on new technology, if needed, and apply.

"We have folks out in the plant that we know have business backgrounds," Moser said. "It all just comes down to taking that step to reach out and apply."

In his role as CFO, Moser works closely with blind and visually impaired employees in other corporate departments, including newly announced incoming CEO Dan Kelly — who he said he feels very fortunate to work alongside.

"He's brilliant and a strong leader," Moser said. "IFB wants to be led by the best person for the job, and Dan Kelly is absolutely the best person for the job — it just so happens that he's blind."

He said he hopes that this announcement, as well as the increase in IFB employees transitioning from blue to white collar jobs, will inspire more to do the same.

"That's what we do," he said. "That's our mission and that's our goal: to provide employment to people who are blind or visually impaired. Having that upward mobility is an integral part of this organization." Just like in any other workplace, "it's important to give people a path forward."





Jessica Abrahams and her beloved Kelly blue terriers

JESSICA ABRAHAMS & CHRIS FLEMING

Fiona's Freedom and Independence Fund

Jessica Abrahams and Chris Fleming love their dogs – and it's safe to say they love yours, too.

A Washington D.C.-based government contracts lawyer with Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath, Jessica has worked with nonprofit agencies for the blind, including IFB Solutions, for nearly 30 years. And, as a passionate advocate for her clients, she's no stranger to the community (or to its four-legged friends).

"When I visit IFB, one of my first thoughts is: Where are the dogs? Can I sit next to the dogs?" she said, laughing. "I know I can't talk to them or distract them, because they're working — but I am just so amazed by them and what they can do. True service animals are just incredible."

Of course, she continued, because they're tasked with such important jobs, these loyal companions deserve some extra pampering. That's why, after the couple lost their beloved 16-year-old Kerry blue terrier, Fiona, in 2020, Jessica and Chris helped create a fund, in Fiona's name, for guide dogs of IFB employees.

"No matter how many dogs you've had, when you lose one, you never really get over it," she

explained. "And I always like to do different things to honor their memories. When [incoming CEO Dan Kelly] mentioned he was looking for support to provide different services to employees' guide dogs, I thought: What a great way to honor my Fiona! So that's what I decided to do."

Fiona's Freedom and Independence Fund, made possible by the couple's \$40,000 founding donation, ensures each guide dog in the IFB family has access to excellent care, allowing Fiona's new pack to enthusiastically support their handlers' independent adventures.

"Many people who are blind at IFB have guide dogs, and this fund supports things relating to their care — everything from certain types of vet checkups to grooming, extra training and more," she said. "Ultimately, the goal is to grow it into a full-service kind of fund for individuals and their dogs, so that no one ever has to worry about getting their animals the care they need."

Through Fiona's Fund, IFB Solutions will be able to enhance its grooming and wellness programs for guide dogs, offer a peer network support group and educational opportunities

for the guide dogs' handlers. IFB Solutions will further invest in improving and beautifying outdoor spaces at all three of its main facilities in Winston-Salem, Asheville and Little Rock to ensure safe, healthy, and stress-free environments for guide dogs and their owners.

Though Fiona herself wasn't trained as a guide dog, Jessica said the fund is a fitting tribute to her late furry friend, a hilarious and happy "guardian angel" who was "wise beyond her years." While she was "just" a pet, Fiona and Jessica shared an inseparable bond, and their closeness gave her an even deeper appreciation for working dogs, who are relied on for more than just companionship.

"From the time I was very small, my mother told my siblings and I that we should do a mitzvah, a good deed, at least once a day. Sometimes it's as small as holding a door for someone or giving up your seat on the bus. Sometimes, it's more significant," she explained. "These dogs are really important to the people who use them, and if I can provide support that gives them what they need, so that they can have happy, healthy lives, then I'm all in."



7730 North Point Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27106



Guide dogs help IFB Solutions employees navigate the Winston-Salem campus.

Jane & John Smith
0000 Main Street
Anytown, NC 00000



"Hayden has not only been a faithful helper in my daily activities, but she has also been an incredible presence in the lives of our Student Enrichment Experience Program kids as they learn about guide dogs. We want our kids to learn early: you take care of the dog, the dog takes care of you."

– Chris Flynt with guide dog Hayden and S.E.E. Programs participant Zaire

"IFB lives its mission to employ the largest amount of blind and visually impaired people. I love working for IFB because they are family-oriented, and they went above and beyond to support me during the hiring process and after employment. IFB Solutions makes working for them worthwhile because they build connections with all their employees and they provide strength to make sure I succeed as an employee. Thank you, IFB Solutions."

– Mary Anderson, IFB Solutions Workforce Services employee, El Paso, TX

