



IMPACT

WINTER 2023

Life-changing opportunities for people who are blind.



MEET TODAY'S IFB SOLUTIONS

IFB Solutions started with a vision that goes beyond physical sight: to provide employment opportunities for the nearly 70% of working-age Americans who are blind and not employed.

Since its founding more than 85 years ago in a North Carolina church, IFB has grown into the nation's largest employer of people who are blind or visually impaired – creating thousands of jobs that empower and provide independence to people with visual impairments all across the country.

Originally operating under the name Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, the organization's 2016 rebrand emphasizes not only its expanded footprint, but also its

unwavering dedication to providing forward-thinking employment solutions for people who are blind.

Today, as the nonprofit organization continues to grow, its mission remains the same: to provide employment opportunities, training and support services to people who are blind or visually impaired.

IFB could not build life-changing employment opportunities, training and community vision and other services without the support of our generous donors. Thank you!

FOR TODAY'S VISUALLY
IMPAIRED JOB SEEKERS
DID YOU KNOW?



IFB produces textiles, office supplies and combat gear for the U.S. Armed Forces



IFB's Workforce Services allows people who are blind to work remotely, eliminating transportation as a barrier to employment



IFB's eight divisions create employment, training and advancement opportunities for people who are blind

Letter from the Editor



Hello! My name is Anastasia Powell, and I'm IFB Solutions' manager of communications and the editor of this Impact newsletter. In this edition, as we focus on introducing (or reintroducing) our readers to today's IFB Solutions, I thought I'd continue the theme with an introduction, myself.

I was 13 years old when I began to lose my sight and, in my 20s, lost my vision completely. I started at IFB in 2005 as a sewing machine operator in T-shirts. At that time, I had no employment history or experience, but IFB gave me an opportunity to gain back my independence – and I happily accepted.

Shortly after joining the team, I became involved in support groups, skill-building workshops, and other extracurricular activities offered to employees, all of which led me to our programs department, where I learned even more about the business. In 2020, I joined the organization's communications team.

From unemployment to an office of my own, IFB laid the foundation for me to succeed – and I know I'm not alone. Every day, this organization provides life-changing opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired. Today, editing the Impact newsletter is one small part of my job, but I love that I get to help spread the word about our organization, share stories about our amazing employees and tell others about all the great work that we do.

“From unemployment to an office of my own, IFB laid the foundation for me to succeed – and I know I'm not alone.”

Donor Profile DAN BRANDON

Since being introduced to the organization a little over two years ago, Dan Brandon has been a constant supporter of IFB Solutions and its work, generously donating to the S.E.E. Summer Camps program for children and to the nonprofit's general mission of providing employment opportunities to people who are blind.

“When I look at myself and my family, I realize we've been very blessed with good health,” said Dan, a recently retired father of two adult children. “But that's not the case for everybody. I can't help but think: What would happen to me if I lost my eyesight tomorrow? That would be traumatic, and I'm sure many of the people that IFB helps are in that very situation. It could happen to anybody.”

Currently living in Charlotte, North Carolina, but originally from Winston-Salem, Dan and his wife, Kim, are always looking for ways to contribute and give back to their community, and IFB felt like a natural fit for their generosity.

“I just really feel like this is an organization that truly does give back to the people,” he explained. “To give people an opportunity to work, to be independent, and to train them for new opportunities – this money goes directly to helping people help themselves.”

And, “at the risk of sounding like an old curmudgeon,” he said with a laugh, “I would encourage younger people to be more inclined to give too. As older people like me move on into their twilight years, it's important to keep it going. Each generation has a responsibility to give back to their communities. When you've been blessed, you've got a duty to pay it forward.”





SAYING YES

IFB Solutions is dedicated to meeting job-seekers where they are, creating sustainable career opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired regardless of a person’s prior employment history, education, current skill level or physical location.

Spanning multiple fields, experience and ability levels, each of the IFB’s various divisions provide on-the-job training to eliminate barriers to employment – whether a person is entering the workforce for the very first time, switching careers after becoming visually impaired or looking for a more supportive work environment.

For those seeking entry-level employment, IFB’s manufacturing facilities in Winston-Salem and Asheville, North Carolina, are a perfect start. Here, employees produce office supplies, combat gear and textiles for the U.S. Armed Forces and federal government, among other goods – with additional competitive career opportunities available in advanced textile manufacturing.

At IFB’s Base Supply Center stores, located on military bases and federal agencies in 8 states and U.S. territories, employees work in a retail environment, stocking and selling tactical gear, office supplies and other necessities as part of the AbilityOne program.

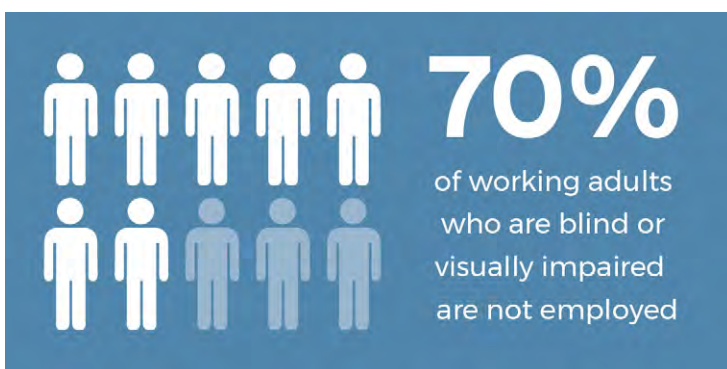
The organization’s ambitious Workforce Services division expands IFB’s reach even further, offering upwardly mobile work-at-home careers in customer

service, data collection and analysis, sales and more. These remote positions provide people with the opportunity to support themselves and their families through fulfilling careers – all without the need for transportation, which is one of the top barriers to employment for people who are blind or visually impaired.

To help employees thrive and create their own success, IFB frequently offers additional training opportunities, skills workshops and business courses to employees, turning entry-level positions into lasting careers in manufacturing or administration.

Above all, IFB Solutions is proud to say “yes” to individuals who have heard “no” time and time again – showing the world that people with visual impairments are capable of anything, just like anyone else.

“It should not be a struggle to get a job, that’s why we eliminate barriers to employment,” said, Dan Kelly, IFB Solutions CEO. “We create the opportunities and employees create their own growth path.”



If you know someone who is visually impaired and struggling to find a job, please contact IFB’s human resources team at hr@ifbsolutions.org or ifbsolutions.org/careers.



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The Power of a Second Chance

IFB'S WORKFORCE SERVICES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kevin Fowler suddenly found himself unemployed. With an extensive career in both IT and customer service, he assumed he'd be back in the workforce in no time.

But "boy, was I wrong," he said. "After disclosing that I was blind and needed special accommodations, the process always fell flat, and I was never contacted again. Three years of searching, and it seemed like rejection after rejection and disappointment."

Then, in 2023, Kevin heard about the remote work opportunities available through IFB Solutions' Workforce Services division, which offers customer service roles to blind or visually impaired individuals all over the country. He was connected with division manager Shannon Satterfield, and after some incremental technology training, was ready for work.

"Shannon saw something in me, especially with my resume and work background, so he gave me the second chance I had been hoping for," Kevin explained. "IFB Solutions has been a godsend to be able to start working again to provide for my family. Thank you IFB, and thank you Shannon for the support to be able to finally start working again!"

