3RD ANNUAL VETERANS DAY CONCERT SOARS

By ROB ENNAMORATO

BISM’s 3rd Annual Veterans Day Concert fundraiser took place November 9 at the Water’s Edge Events Center in Belcamp, MD and was a night to remember! A packed house of veterans, active military, supporters, and sponsors enjoyed a night of incredible performances, presentations, and honorees!

Last year’s MC and FOX-45 anchor Kai Jackson welcomed the crowd and then introduced this year’s MC, Air Force veteran Geno Harris.

The concert opened with a moving national anthem sung by attendees and a musical medley of all military branches’ anthems performed by the Maryland Conservatory of Music (MCM).

The star of the night was Andrews BSC associate Keith Tyson, who performed with the talented and inspirational First Baptist Church of Glenarden Male Chorus (over 100 members). Keith received an extended standing ovation for his rendition of “Amazing Grace.” MCM performed a variety of audience favorites, and the CreatiVets song “Stories” and blind poet Dave Steele added emotional depth to the program.

Honorees included a former WWII POW, a Vietnam Vet, and Operation Iraqi Freedom Vets. 2017 honoree Vernon Foster, now 101 years old, was in attendance and recognized, along with Ms. Veteran America Naviere Walkewicz.

We appreciate all of the 2019 Veterans Day Concert sponsors, including 5 Star sponsor HP, and thank attendees, performers, and volunteers for making this Veterans Day Concert a success!
SUN SHINES ON THE BISM GOLF CLASSIC

By STEPHEN POLACEK

BISM’s 2019 Pro-Invitational Golf Classic was blessed with wonderful weather on September 20. A total of 24 teams participated alongside PGA professionals, and enjoyed the well-maintained course at the Suburban Club in Pikesville, MD. The golfers participated in a unique competition, sponsored by Your Ears Rock, which measured the decibel level of players’ drives. With plenty of good food and drink available, everyone enjoyed a great, relaxing day of golf.

Congratulations to the Gross winners team of Joe, George, Rick, and Bill, and the Net winners team of Pat, John, Marc, Troy, and Wade. BISM’s largest fundraiser of the year netted over $40,000. Thank you to all of our sponsors for their generous contributions and to our volunteers for making the day a success!

20/20 FOR 2020

By FREDERICK J. PUENTE

As 2019 comes to a close, and we look back over the last year, it has been a challenge! Man plans and God smiles! We plan, study, test and decide. While I can assure you we have always done what we thought was right for the right reasons, we haven’t yet had the right results on all fronts. But I believe we are about to. The acquisition of Hagerstown did not go as planned for a number of reasons, some in our control and most not. I can tell you today that Hagerstown is improving daily and will contribute to our success in 2020. Our Cutting and Sewing operations are growing and contributing, while Paper and Jan-San remain steady contributors. The Base Supply Centers continue to exceed expectations and are expanding with the addition of the Naval Research Laboratory store. Hopefully Ft. Meade will be on board by this time next year.

As 2020 begins, we need to have 20/20 vision (vision doesn’t require eyesight) and laser focus on the things we can do to achieve the right results. We have been through similar situations in years past and we persisted. I believe we have the resources and, most importantly, the people to resolve any issue confronting us. We all have to commit to doing all we can to satisfy our customers both internally and externally. No one should think or feel that they don’t make a difference! We have the work going forward and we need to get it out as efficiently and effectively as we can. There will be plenty to look forward to in 2020! I know this because I know all of you. God has Blessed us with the BEST people anywhere. May 2020 exceed your needs and be filled with good health, comfort, peace, and love! I pray for All God’s Blessings, of which you are one!
HAGERSTOWN SAIL STUDENT WINS AWARD AT NFBMD CONVENTION

By CINDY HOLDEN

Congratulations to Hagerstown Seniors Achieving Independent Living (SAIL) student Wendy Ruth for winning the prestigious Anna Freysz Cable Award at the NFB of Maryland State Convention! BISM Rehabilitation department staff and students, along with BISM associates, attended the NFB Convention in Baltimore from November 8-10.

The award is presented to someone who became blind later in life and pursued braille reading and writing (just as Anna did). Wendy has excelled in braille to the point that she has become our braille mentor for students that need extra one-on-one training. Wendy is a prime example of what one can accomplish through hard work and perseverance!

REHAB MOCK BANQUET PREPARES STUDENTS FOR NFB CONVENTION

By LIAM LINDSAY

In the lead up to the NFB of Maryland Annual Convention, BISM CORE instructors offered a Mock Banquet presentation to CORE students. Rehab staff prepared and served a meal consisting of oven baked chicken breasts, seasoned rice, green beans, a mixed green salad, baguettes, iced tea, and dessert. The Mock Banquet facilitated table etiquette with regards to table conversation, utensil usage, sweetening beverages, when to eat, and how to pass food around the table. This presentation enhanced the skill sets being taught in the BISM Rehabilitation department and better prepared students for the NFB Banquet!

BISM PROVIDES WATER FOR AT-RISK YOUTH STARTUP

By JOHN WARD & ROB ENNAMORATO

BISM Beverage is excited to be taking part in helping a group of at-risk Baltimore teens succeed in their startup bottled water business. Korner Boyz Enterprises was started by a group of “squeegee kids,” in coordination with Maryland Institute College of Art’s (MICA) Kai Crosby-Singleton and other MICA staff. Squeegee kids are Baltimore teens who hustle for money by cleaning the windshields of cars stopped at red lights on busy city streets. This practice is controversial and unpopular with drivers. After Kai took some of the squeegee kids to the Baltimore Thinkathon, the ball got rolling on a different business venture: selling custom label bottled water on the street. After receiving a $5,000 grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kai approached BISM Beverage’s John Ward about doing a program with an attractive water bottle and label. With graphic designer Kelly Perez’ help, BISM assisted in the design and wording for the label and the project moved forward. Approval was given by MICA to place an initial order for 144 cases. BISM is proud to work with the community and we wish Korner Boyz Enterprises the best of luck!
JOHNS HOPKINS STUDENTS WORK ON PROJECT AT BISM

By ANICA ZLOTESCU

This fall, four senior mechanical engineering students from Johns Hopkins University started working with BISM to design a sensor for forklifts. The students are creating a device that can be placed on forklifts that will detect human obstacles within the driver’s path, much like existing technology featured on cars. The device is designed specifically for an industrial forklift and must be accurate, effective, and placed securely and unobtrusively. The sensor design involves sensing humans, computing that information, and alerting drivers to the obstacle.

To better understand BISM and blindness, the engineering students spent time in our Rehabilitation department, learning about nonvisual skills and alternative techniques. They also participated in a seminar with CORE staff and students that centered on communication and advocacy skills. Throughout the design process, the students spent time with forklift operators at our Baltimore and Hagerstown facilities to receive input and better understand an operator’s experience and needs. The students use a remote controlled model forklift to experiment with their device.

The students, Charlie, Lucas, Seena, and Colin, will finish up the fall semester with a sensor prototype. In the spring, they will focus on testing the device and making adjustments. We appreciate their dedication and enthusiasm in making BISM safer!

BISM TEXTILES FISCAL YEAR MID-TERM UPDATE

By TONY RODRIGUEZ

As we approach the end of the calendar year, let’s reflect on BISM Textile highlights. The plants in Baltimore, Salisbury, Cumberland, and Raleigh have all had their fair share of change in workload, process, and products.

The Baltimore team has grown to accommodate the transfer of the Flyer Kit Bag from the Raleigh plant, while ramping up the production of the Army Physical Fitness Uniform (APFU). Congratulations to the Baltimore team for a successful transfer and continued on-time delivery of a quality APFU.

Many thanks to our Cumberland associates for their flexibility and responsiveness during the past six months. They have successfully juggled the APFU, the Air Force Improved Physical Training Uniform (IPTU), and the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) subassemblies, and provided product sales and support to Raleigh.

The Salisbury team stepped up to absorb additional fabric cutting responsibilities from Baltimore and Raleigh. In August, the cutting team received a new Lectra cutting machine to replace aging equipment and allow for more capacity to produce product. The sewing operation has maintained a good level of performance in producing the APFU, GENIII Layer IV, and Kit Bags, while consistently building and delivering APFU subassembly kits to support the final assembly in Baltimore, Cumberland, and Salisbury.

The Raleigh and Butner plants have the responsibility for our largest sewn product. The ACU is currently produced at a rate of about 30,000 units per month. Both teams have come a very long way to achieve the current rates and are committed to continue that improvement going forward.

The BISM Textile group is focused on continuing to improve our planning, processes, and productivity. Each of the textile site teams has demonstrated their resilience, flexibility, and responsiveness, along with a record of supporting each other. The second half of FY20 can only get better!
BISM HOSTS DIGNITARIES FOR TOURS

BISM was proud to host numerous dignitaries, business partners, and state and federal agencies for tours of our Baltimore headquarters. BISM President Fred Puente served as tour guide for all of our guests.

BISM was honored to have blind poet Dave Steele (right) tour BISM on November 12. Mr. Steele, author of the poetry collection “Stand By Me RP,” also spoke to BISM associates and recited poems about his blindness. Mr. Steele was a featured guest at our Veterans Day Concert event.

BISM Baltimore was honored to welcome three distinguished guests to tour our training and manufacturing divisions on November 21 (left): Gloria Dent, AbilityOne Directorate of Veterans Employment and Initiatives (DVEI); Don Rose, AbilityOne DVEI Veteran Policy Analyst; and Phillip Selleh, Center for Business Acceleration.

On November 26, members of the Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability and Integrity panel toured BISM (right). Our visitors were able to witness firsthand BISM’s dedication to blind and low vision employment in all aspects of our organization.

BISM ASSOCIATES GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

The holidays always bring out the best in BISM associates! All locations participate in some sort of holiday festivities, and many help provide a happy holiday season for people less fortunate.

On November 20, BISM Baltimore Rehabilitation Department staff and students prepared a tasty feast for a Friendsgiving Day celebration (left). Rehab staff served the meal to CORE and senior students, as well as BISM office staff. It was a great afternoon of camaraderie and gratitude!

BISM’s Fort Knox AbilityOne Base Supply Center participated in the annual Fort Knox Holiday Card contest (right) and earned over 80 “Likes” in the Facebook People’s Choice Award.

CORE staff and students picked out a Christmas tree at Pine Valley Farms on December 4 (left). Students took turns cutting down the tree, assisted by woodshop instructor Liz. Staff and students decorated the Christmas tree, and it is prominently displayed in the CORE dining room during the holiday season.
JBAB BSC HOSTS OPEN HOUSE FOR NRL EMPLOYEES
By QUYNH BUDZYNSKI & ROB ENNAMORATO

BISM’s Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) AbilityOne Base Supply Center (BSC) hosted an Open House on October 30 for Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) staff. The attendees had a chance to check out office products, uniforms, and office furniture sold at the JBAB BSC, enjoy a tasty snack, and speak with BSC associates. BISM plans on opening a new BSC at the NRL in 2020 and the Open House was a great opportunity for NRL staff to discover all that our BSCs have to offer. The event was well-attended and a big success!

BISM PARTNERS WITH NOSWEAT
By ROB ENNAMORATO

BISM is excited to announce our new partnership with NoSweat, a market pioneer and creator of patented sweat-absorbing, disposable performance liners for hats, helmets, hard hats, and visors! BISM will package and distribute NoSweat liners to sectors of the federal government and Maryland state agencies.

“NoSweat is excited to work with BISM to help provide jobs to the blind community as well as bring our patented technology to the military industry, national park services, and other sectors of the federal government and state agencies of Maryland,” said NoSweat President Jared Robins.

CONGRATULATIONS TO REHAB PROGRAM GRADUATE
By AMY CROUSE

Congratulations to Anita Godley for graduating from Salisbury’s Seniors Achieving Independent Living (SAIL) program in August. Anita had a lovely family and friend-filled graduation ceremony! All of the students, staff and family members created prayers of blessings for Anita on her graduation day that were placed in a lovely decorated glass container. Anita was presented with a lighthouse and certificate of completion from the SAIL program. She received flowers and balloons and we all enjoyed a tasty lunch of salads and pound cake for dessert. Anita continues to stay connected to BISM through our monthly senior support group and the local NFB chapter.
BISM INTERN REFLECTS ON HER EXPERIENCE

By KARIZA GONCALVES

As part of my Bachelor of Science studies in Human Services at Stevenson University, I had the pleasure of interning at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland. My experience at BISM this semester has made a great impact in my life and has given me the opportunity to gain a positive perspective on blindness, build great relationships, and learn more about myself.

Growing up legally blind has been challenging for me because I've always focused on "what can blind people do?" Going through a three-week immersion training program at BISM, attending the NFB of Maryland State Convention, and observing the progress of CORE and SAIL students has helped me realize that blindness doesn't stop us from what we are capable of doing. It's all about confidence building and transferring skills into non-visual skills.

Each relationship I've made at BISM is significant in its own way because each person has taught me something different. New relationships have also helped me build my social skills and learn more about the blindness field.

The great thing about internships is that you get to learn more about yourself. My experience at BISM has helped me learn that I adapt well in different situations and that I am a personable individual, which adds value to my work ethic.

I am grateful for my time spent at BISM. Everything that I have learned will assist me in my future career in the Human Services profession. Although my internship at BISM has come to an end, my goal is to remain connected to this outstanding organization.

REHAB OFFERS BLIND VETERANS TRAINING WORKSHOP

By SHIRLEY RIFFLE

BISM’s CORE and SAIL programs hosted a Blind Veterans Administration Support Group Workshop at our Baltimore location on September 11. Eleven attendees were greeted by BISM staff and provided with a continental breakfast. BISM President Fred Puente kicked off the day with an introduction to the veterans, followed by an informative tour, and then a “Build Your Own Lunch” Independent Living presentation. While the veterans ate lunch, presentations and testimonials were offered by BISM staff and featured information on the CORE and SAIL programs, production and jobs, and the Senior Support Group. The day ended on a fun, high energy note with a Jeopardy-style game show with prizes, hosted by Rehab Director Andy McIver. The workshop was well received by our guests from the Veterans Administration and we were happy to provide it!
CATCHING UP

BISM Rehab Travel Instructor Earns NOMC Certification
BISM CORE program travel Instructor Antonio Williams earned his National Orientation and Mobility Certification in September. Congratulations, Antonio!

BISM BSCs Announce New Facebook Page
The BISM AbilityOne Base Supply Centers (BSC) are excited to announce our new Facebook page! We have consolidated our six BSC Facebook pages into the “AbilityOne Base Supply Center – BISM” Facebook page. “Like” the new page to keep up-to-date with our BSC products, events, special sales, and associate profiles.

SKILCRAFT Brand Introduces New Logo and Branding
The AbilityOne SKILCRAFT brand is rolling out a new logo and packaging. SKILCRAFT products are produced by blind and disabled individuals, and BISM’s Base Supply Centers and ShopBISM.com are proud to sell thousands of SKILCRAFT office and cleaning products.

MTA BISM Tours Continue To Educate
Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) drivers, supervisors, and management toured BISM Baltimore on September 25, October 2, October 16, and October 31. Over the past few years, hundreds of MTA staff have toured BISM and learned about our training programs and employment, in an effort to better communicate with blind passengers.

Lennar Builds Woodshop Storage Room At BISM
BISM Baltimore’s Woodshop got a facelift in October when Lennar Homes generously donated materials and labor and built a spacious storage room. Lennar’s team worked at BISM to install shelving, cabinets, countertops, as well as electrical work. BISM appreciates all that Lennar does for our Rehabilitation department!

Holiday Themed Open Mic Night at BISM Baltimore
On December 7, BISM associates, families, and friends came out in large numbers for BISM’s 5th Open Mic Night at our Baltimore location. The theme was Holiday Music and featured a wide variety of outstanding performances. Hosted by IT’s Dan Woytowitz, this was the largest Open Mic Night crowd to date. Thank you to all of the attendees and student and staff volunteers for making this event such a success!