

# GCE·Xpress

HELPING PEOPLE THROUGHOUT LIFE'S JOURNEY

## Government and community relations

The past year was a busy one for GCE and other nonprofit agencies in the AbilityOne program. GCE helped to create the Alliance for Expanding America's Workforce (AEAW), serving as one of five nonprofit organizations that form this alliance. Our official launch was in September. As of the end of 2023, we have five additional nonprofit organizations who have joined us as new members. AEAW was formed to help maximize employment opportunities and increase economic stability across the country for people with disabilities. Some interesting facts include:

Up to 1 in 4 adults (26 percent) in the United States have some type of disability. In 2022, 21.3 percent of persons with a disability were employed compared to 65.4 percent of persons without a disability.

The core of our work is advocating for our team members and letting our congressional leaders know that more needs to be done for people with disabilities. Policies from decades ago need to be changed to better reflect the needs of people who have a significant disability. From Social Security benefits to employment policies, we work with all parties – Democrats, Republicans, and Independents – to advocate for our team members throughout the year. You too can advocate for yourself and your team and have your voices heard. Stepping out of your comfort zone and speaking up, not only for yourself but also your teammates, can move mountains. You can contact your local, state, and federal officials and voice your concerns on policies that impact you directly. If you want to learn more about how to contact the mayor's office, state and federal congressional offices, reach out to Lori Kain for assistance at [lori.kain@gce.org](mailto:lori.kain@gce.org).

When GCE and our team advocate, it's important to remember that: **"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."**

– Lou Holtz, former American football player, coach and analyst

## A note from Dwight

*I hope all of you had a great holiday season and were able to enjoy rest and relaxation with your friends and families. As we head into the New Year, there are several things*

*to celebrate. First, I would again like to congratulate Hayli Gourley from Joint Base Lewis-McChord food services for being our Team Member of the Year! She will come to Pensacola to be honored this February*



*Dwight Davis  
GCE President*

*during our annual leadership conference and represent GCE as an advocate during the annual SourceAmerica Grassroots Conference in Washington, D.C. next summer.*

*Speaking of the New Year and new things, LifeView Group and GCE have officially launched our new team member recognition program. In addition to an annual award, we will now also recognize a Team Member of the Quarter. Any team member in any role may nominate a fellow team member. The nominee must demonstrate our values while going above and beyond to assist someone – at work or in the community. Quarterly winners will automatically be considered for our annual Team Member of the Year award. Your leaders can point you to the nomination forms.*

*As we look to the New Year, we have some exciting growth to celebrate. The MacDill Air Force Base food services contract started in December, and Maxwell Air Force Base custodial contract will start in April, adding more team members to the GCE family. We anticipate the U.S. Army's Patient Access Services contract for military service animals to begin soon, and we will soon share details about this unique opportunity for GCE. Great things ahead!*

## Contract site promotion news

### ***U.S. Army, Fort Knox, Kentucky custodial services team - Amy Hogan***

Amy was hired as a custodian I in April 2023. In August, she was promoted to shift lead I. GCE Fort Knox site management noted, "Amy had always wanted to be a team lead since she started working with GCE, and when the opportunity arose, she jumped on it. She has shown exceptional dedication, commitment to her work and strong leadership skills in a short time. Her bubbly personality and positive attitude are infectious."



### ***Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida food services team - Keron Williams***

Keron began her career at GCE as a shift leader at the Navy Seabees base in Gulfport, Mississippi, on the food services contract in January 2023. The following July, she moved to Pensacola to become an assistant project manager on the food services contract at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida. She was highly recommended by site management from the Navy Seabees contract site. Based on her experience in food service, management of a team, willingness to learn, and ability to motivate others, she was the perfect candidate for the position. Dawn Rupert, GCE project manager at NAS Pensacola noted: "Keron presents herself in a professional manner and has proven to be an asset to the team at NAS since joining us."



### ***LifeView Group, Pensacola, Florida custodial services team - Larry Flintroy***

Larry was hired in May of 2009 as a floor technician, and in October 2023, he was promoted to floor tech supervisor. He has worked at several GCE custodial contract sites over many years, from Baptist Hospital to Baptist Medical Park to Naval Air Station Pensacola, to the Children's Medical Services building and LifeView Group. His varied skill set includes Microsoft Word and Excel, plus the ability to manage more than 30 team members. He also has exceptional people skills, according to Kim Harris, the GCE project manager of the custodial contract on the LifeView Group campus.



### ***LifeView Group, Pensacola, Florida Facilities Maintenance team - Richard Slack***

Richard was promoted from a mechanic II to a mechanic III in October 2023. He started his career with GCE in February 2013. Prior to GCE, as early as 2005, he was with the maintenance department of Lakeview Center. Bryan Camacho the GCE project manager of this contract site notes: "Richard continues to train our team on key and lock replacement as well as door replacement and hardware. Richard's carpentry skills and willingness to train new team members is a huge asset to our team."



### ***David Inglett***

David was promoted from mechanic II to supervisor in October 2023. David started at GCE in February 2023. He brings a wealth of management and electrical experience from his prior military career and the civilian marketplace, and he currently is working on completing his bachelor's degree in management.



### ***Robert Smucker***

Robert was promoted from a mechanic II to a mechanic III October 2023. He began his career at GCE in March 2013. Prior to GCE, Robert worked in the maintenance department of Lakeview Center, having started in October 2000. Robert has been instrumental in training the GCE maintenance team on electrical repairs and generator maintenance, according to Bryan Camacho, GCE project manager of this site contract. Bryan also said, "Robert's expertise and attention to detail gave him the opportunity for this promotion on the team."



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### MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida food services team - Miguel Negron

Miguel started his work journey with GCE as a shift leader on the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater food service contract in July 2012, where he led a team of 20. He was promoted to assistant project manager in February 2016 and project manager in February 2020. In October of this year, Miguel was promoted to manage a much larger custodial contract at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. He oversees the daily operations of a larger, more complex contract with more than 100 team members, providing services to 187 buildings with more than 2.5 million square feet of cleanable space.



Mercy Miller, GCE operations director, noted, "Miguel has a strong work ethic. I appreciate his strong dedication to his work and his team. He takes ownership of the work performed by the team. He is dependable, accountable and maintains a cheerful outlook. Miguel takes pride in his work. He consistently meets organizational goals. I look forward to and am excited about what he will add to continue the success at MacDill."

## Recognition highlights

### Fort Knox

Fort Knox custodial team members received recognition from U.S. Army Sergeant Major Garcia Jr.! The U.S. Army Command Assessment Program 25 (CAP25) is one of the most prestigious events held at Fort Knox. During this annual event, thousands of candidates participate in the program. GCE team members take on additional cleaning needs for all the barracks on the military base from summer to fall.



Photo (left to right): Clay Settle, Wanda Ortiz, Amy Hogan, Ronabeth Fey, and Joey Renfrow.

Congratulations to team members working at GCE Fort Knox: Jana Thompson, Ariel Murray and Joseph Heckinger. All three individuals received the Commander's Coin from John Gavin, senior education and training tech JROTC Operations, at Building 1468, for their hard work in his building. He thanked each team member for their unwavering commitment to excellence and for consistently going above and beyond in their work in his building.



Photo (left to right): Jana Thompson, Ariel Murray, and Joseph Heckinger

### Eglin Air Force Base

Korey McHenry, GCE IT at Eglin Air Force, Fort Walton Beach, Florida, was recently recognized by Major Ivy Ramirez with the military health system's 96th test wing emergency department. Korey's dedication and expertise were highlighted in the letter he received.



Photo (left to right): Chris Washack, GCE Program Manager, and Korey McHenry, GCE Help Desk/PC Tech.

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## Naval Air Station Pensacola

Congratulations to our Naval Air Station Pensacola food services team on their recent selection by the state of Florida as one of the 2023 Florida Exceptional Employer winners for hiring individuals with disabilities. The award was presented in Tallahassee, Florida, to Dawn Rupert, GCE project manager at NAS Pensacola. Patrick Reed, GCE team member at NAS Corry Station food services, was also recognized during this event. Florida Vocational Services - Division of the Blind in Northwest Florida nominated GCE for this award. Betty Geren, GCE senior director of operations food services, joined Dawn and Patrick at the event.



Photo (left to right): Betty Geren, Dawn Rupert, and Patrick Reed

## Armed Forces Retirement Home

Recognizing the hard work and commitment of our team members is extra special when expressed by others. Recently, a resident at the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Washington, D.C., presented GCE leaders a handwritten letter that specifically mentioned some of our food services team members. GCE helps to provide a living environment for the residents so that they feel supported and well cared for year-round.



## Proper trash handling

Handling trash continues to be a major source of injury at GCE. It is a daily task performed many times across most of our business lines. Injuries related to handling trash include:

- Back injuries from lifting
- Extremity strains from lifting, such as shoulder, arm, elbow, etc.
- Lacerations from improper handling, such as carrying the trash over the shoulder, against the body, or pushing down on trash with hands

**To prevent injury, remember to follow these basic rules:**

- Always test the load before attempting to lift. If it is too heavy, request a coworker assist in lifting.
- Always practice the proper lifting technique. Even when the item is not heavy, always lift with the legs, and never bend at the waist to lift.
- Avoid overextending yourself. This may require leaning a trash can over to remove the bag instead of lifting it high in the air to clear the can.
- Avoid throwing trash into dumpsters alone. Ask a coworker for assistance to get the trash over the edge of the dumpster.
- Never push down on trash with your hands. Trash bags may contain hidden objects that can cause lacerations or punctures.
- Never carry trash over the shoulder or bouncing against the body. Items in the bag can puncture/tear through the bag and cause injury in the form of lacerations and punctures.



**Jonathan Broussard**  
Safety professional

## TENS team update

The GCE Targeted Employment Navigation Services (TENS) team recently implemented significant changes to the team's structure and roles assigned. This change was made to enhance and expand the team's support for the continuing recruiting and compliance needs of GCE's AbilityOne program.



**Lisa Bloodworth**  
GCE director of transition and support services

Effective September 1, a Recruiting and Outreach team as well as an Eligibility and Compliance team was established. The Recruiting and Outreach team is solely responsible for recruiting, sourcing, and screening individuals with disabilities to fulfill AbilityOne (AB1) related vacancies for GCE. This team focuses on finding the best possible candidates for GCE vacancies. They participate in proactive recruitment and actively engage with the disability services and partners in the communities we serve. They utilize online/virtual resources, job boards, social media, etc. This team works together to take advantage of the boots-on-the-ground approach, when and where needed, to resolve current and future applicant/candidate issues. As part of the restructure, GCE added three new team members to help support recruiting and outreach efforts.

The Eligibility and Compliance team solely focuses on ensuring GCE applicants/team members meet compliance with AB1 guidelines. They assist in securing appropriate disability documentation and completing initial and annual assessments/evaluations to document AB1 eligibility and recommend workplace accommodations/supports.

We are very excited about the new direction this team is taking. Team metrics have been identified to help track and trend the effectiveness and efficiency of the new program design. The team will use this data to adjust and adapt as needed.

Please feel free to contact Lisa Bloodworth at [lisa.bloodworth@gce.org](mailto:lisa.bloodworth@gce.org) or 850-281-3331 if you would like more information about this recent change.

## Accommodations help workers with hearing loss

The theme for this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month is "Advancing Access and Equity." The theme focuses on inclusive employment policies and practices that benefit all employees. For instance, Global Connections to Employment (GCE) provides accommodations to assist those who are deaf/Deaf Deafblind Hard of Hearing and Deaf (d/DdBHHD+).

GCE has two full-time sign language interpreters on staff to help team members starting from the recruiting process and all along their employment journey. Kendra Keller and Page Green work closely with team members to facilitate a work environment that is accessible and inclusive.

*"As an interpreter, it's my job to support the connection between people who don't share the same language," said Kendra. "Great joy comes from seeing that relationship and trust develop into teamwork, communication equity, growth and success for everyone."*

Page shares a similar sentiment for being an interpreter. "What drew me to GCE is the same thing that keeps me here, the dedication and commitment of its leaders to the mission of helping people through life's journey. Every day I see this played out in the lives of our Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees, and it's a great privilege and honor to be a part of this great organization and the work that they're doing."

Vincent Stowbunenko is a GCE team member who is deaf. He credits much of his work success to effective communication with his team, hearing and deaf, when working on tasks and projects.



*"Interpreting services are not just words; they are bridges to independence, job success, and full participation. They empower us to communicate, collaborate, and contribute our unique talents to the workforce, breaking down barriers and building a more inclusive world."*

There are two tips that anyone can use when working with colleagues with hearing loss.

1. Ask how the team member prefers to communicate (i.e. interpreter, writing, sign language, text). Then, seek out and use the appropriate accommodation.
2. When using an interpreter, allow time before a meeting for the interpreter and team member(s) with hearing loss to work through necessary logistics and set up to ensure a productive meeting.

Kendra and Page are certified by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID.org). Communication assistance between everyone is one of many ways GCE is committed to workplace inclusion. For more information about this accommodation with GCE, please reach out to Lisa Bloodworth at [lisa.bloodworth@gce.org](mailto:lisa.bloodworth@gce.org).

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

GCE kicked off celebrations of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) with a proclamation from Pensacola City Council and the Escambia County Board of Commissioners.

This year's NDEAM theme was "Advancing Access and Equity." NDEAM is a time to pause and recognize the contributions of America's workers with disabilities to ensure a diverse and inclusive American workforce. The essential roles that people with disabilities are filling is creating a high demand for their skills and talent.



### Living our values (value coin recognition)

**Ownership:** accountable, engaged, stewardship, responsive, committed

**Integrity:** honest, principled, trustworthy, transparent

**Compassion:** empathetic, merciful, sensitive, kind, giving, forgiving, hopeful

**Excellence:** safety, quality, distinguished, learning, improving

**Service:** welcoming, attentive, humble, respectful, exceeds expectations, collaborative



GCE Value coins are given out by managers and supervisors to recognize team members for consistently living one of our Values every day. When a team member earns all five Value coins he or she will receive a Value pin, coin holder and plaque with certificate.

### Five Coin Recipient Value Plaques (September • October • November 2023)

**Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, WA – Food Services:** Cecilia Boatner, Isabella Hays

**LifeView Group, Pensacola, FL, Facilities Maintenance:** Richard Slack

**Note:** the new recognition program has been officially launched by our parent company, LifeView Group. The GCE Value Coin recognition program will officially end by March 2024.

Keep up with GCE stories and recognition by following us on Facebook , LinkedIn, and Instagram.

