

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2017 Honoree Videos

Password (if required): honor

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| Steven Shewry (4:39) | Ottumwa, Iowa | https://vimeo.com/237018598 |
| Animal Rescue League of Iowa (3:44) | Des Moines, Iowa | https://vimeo.com/237018135 |
| Tonya Millard (4:16) | Dubuque, Iowa | https://vimeo.com/237017645 |
| SSI Digital Print Services (3:22) | Des Moines, Iowa | https://vimeo.com/237017932 |

Winners Announced for 2017 Iowa Job Honor Awards

Initiative aims to *employ disadvantaged jobseekers by celebrating “A New Kind of Hero”*

DES MOINES, IA — The Iowa Job Honor Awards, an initiative aimed at recognizing Iowans who have overcome barriers to employment, has announced its top honorees for 2017.

Nominations were submitted via the organization's website and judged by a statewide panel. The awards were presented on Oct. 12 in Des Moines, during the annual conference of Iowa SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management). Hundreds of human resource professionals from across the state were in attendance along with the officials from several state agencies, as biographical videos recounted honoree efforts to win life-changing jobs.

“The shortage of qualified employees makes recruitment a growing challenge for Iowa employers,” said Sara Deich, SHRM State Council Director, “As a result, human resource professionals must creatively source new talent. The Iowa Job Honor Awards helps us engage our untapped workforce by shining a spotlight on success stories.”

One of this year's success stories is Steven W. Shewry of Ottumwa. Shewry's teen years were filled with alcohol and drug abuse, and a later venture into mixed martial arts fighting led to steroid abuse. “Steroids helped my life fall apart,” says Shewry, “They turned me into an animal.” Convicted of violent crimes, Shewry was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in Anamosa. There he met Tim Diesburg, Apprenticeship Coordinator for the Iowa Department of Corrections, who introduced him to an apprenticeship program in welding. Shewry excelled there, and along with his newfound faith in God he credits the apprenticeship program with transforming his life. Three weeks before his release he was hired by Winger Contracting in Ottumwa, where he now works as a journeyman welder. Recalling his experience in prison, Shewry says “When you're in there you think it's the end. But it's a new beginning.”

Sharing employee honors is Tonya L. Millard of Dubuque, who overcame ageism in her effort to reenter the workforce. After participating in several promising phone interviews, Millard was rejected after face-to-face interviews for reasons that were never made clear. “There was an elephant in the room,” says Millard, “and that elephant was my age.” James Sigwarth, Employment and Training Assistant at the IowaWORKS office in Dubuque, encouraged her to tackle the issue of age head-on in interviews. “When she embraced it and called it out, that was key” says Sigwarth. Millard's next interview was for an Executive Director of Social Services position at the Dubuque YMCA/YWCA, which she described as her “dream job.” She was quickly hired. Her duties include managing a victim services shelter for women — the only shelter of its kind in nearly a hundred-mile radius. “If businesses want the hard worker, the dedicated worker, says Millard, “they need to open their eyes to the experienced worker.”

In the employer category, Des Moines-based Animal Rescue League of Iowa and SSI Digital Print Services of Storm Lake were honored for their commitment to hire disadvantaged candidates, including people with developmental disabilities. Animal Rescue League partners with Candeo, a local disability employment services provider. “It's been a great thing for our staff to work alongside them and be a part of their lives, says Mick McAuliffe, **Animal** Services Manager. “Being able to help other people has really helped our people.” Jay Butterfield, president and owner of Storm Lake's SSI Digital Print Services, believes that people who overcome barriers often make exceptional employees. SSI partners with Genesis Development, a local organization that has provided them with several employees. “They are great people, great workers and it's wonderful to have them on board,” says Butterfield. Describing the exceptional attendance and punctuality of Genesis-provided employees, he adds “They set a good example for our other employees, and that's always a valuable thing.”

Lead sponsor of the Iowa Job Honor Awards is ManpowerGroup. Sponsors for the October 12 celebration included Iowa SHRM State Council and Central Iowa Works. Launched in Iowa in 2014, the awards are expanding nationally under the banner of America's Job Honor Awards.

“Our society celebrates lottery winners, movie stars and professional athletes,” notes founder Kyle Horn. “We rarely hear inspiring stories of individuals whose lives are transformed through the hard work and perseverance that leads to meaningful employment. It's time for a new kind of hero.”

About the Iowa Job Honor Awards:

The Iowa Job Honor Awards celebrates Iowans who overcome barriers to employment, and the employers who hire them. IA-JHA's mission is to rekindle hope and energize the work ethic across Iowa, through the celebration of a new kind of hero. www.JobHonor.org. Lead sponsor of the Awards is **ManpowerGroup**, world leader in innovative workforce solutions.

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