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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Workforce Solutions Borderplex Joins Broad Effort to Observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

**El Paso, Texas (October 17, 2018)** – This month, Workforce Solutions Borderplex has been celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness, which is an annual awareness campaign that educates community members about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities, with this year's theme being "America's Workforce: Empowering All".

Throughout the month, Workforce Solutions Borderplex and its partner, Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services, has engaged in a variety of activities to educate its employees, clients and stakeholders on disability employment issues and its commitment to an inclusive work culture.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, WSB hosted a special DisAbility Friendly Hiring Fair to connect job seekers with disabilities with some of the Borderplex region's best employers. Throughout the week of October 8<sup>th</sup>, UTEP hosted Ability Awareness Week with a series of fun, engaging activities to share information about programs and services available for people with disabilities. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services and its workforce partners celebrated White Cane Day, where supporters marched to promote awareness and understanding of people with vision loss and blindness, while celebrating their accomplishments and independence.

Another outreach component of Disability Employment Awareness Month is a vibrant window decal WSB developed to recognize employers who hire and/or employ people with disabilities. Partner employers of WSB who hire and/or employ job seekers with disabilities have been given the decal to proudly display in the entrance to their establishments to inspire and challenge fellow business owners and organizations to also hire people with disabilities. The decal emphasizes inclusion, diversity and demonstrates how easy it is to incorporate people with disabilities into workplaces. With the statement - "A DisAbled Person has Potential; Consider Unlocking the Opportunities" serving as the mantra and cornerstone of this outreach tool, each of the four icons on the decal represent an element in the hiring of job seekers with disabilities. The first icon represents people with disabilities; the check mark represents the positive bond between employer and job seekers with disabilities; the third icon represents how we are changing perceptions and increasing community awareness about employing people with disabilities; and finally, the open lock signifies how an employer is unlocking a significant opportunity for job seekers with disabilities.

The history of National Disability Employment Awareness Month traces back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

"Americans of all abilities must have access to good, safe jobs," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta. "Smart employers know that including different perspectives in problem-solving situations leads to better solutions. Hiring employees with diverse abilities strengthens their business, increases competition and drives innovation."

"Workforce Solutions Borderplex is proud to be a part of this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month," said Joyce Wilson, CEO of Workforce Solutions. "We want to spread the important message that we value all perspectives, including those of individuals with disabilities."

For more information about National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the ways in which local businesses can promote awareness throughout the year, or how to obtain a DisAbility Friendly Employer decal, please contact Anna Apodaca, Program Specialist for Workforce Solutions Borderplex, at 915-887-2224.

## **ABOUT WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS BORDERPLEX**

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is a non-profit organization that aligns and creates opportunities for skilled workers and employers by advancing education, employment, entrepreneurship and economic development prospects in support of global competitiveness and regional prosperity. The organization's service region encompasses Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties. For more information about Workforce Solutions Borderplex, please contact Romie Ruiz at (915) 887-2221 or visit [www.borderplexjobs.com](http://www.borderplexjobs.com).

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