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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RESPECT of Florida & Lighthouse Works Team-Up with Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Ink Contract to Provide Contact Center Services for Reemployment Assistance

ORLANDO, Fla. (June 26, 2017)—Lighthouse Works and RESPECT of Florida are pleased to announce the signing of a contract agreement with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for improving contact center services aimed at helping Floridians who are currently unemployed apply for and file claims related to reemployment assistance.

RESPECT of Florida, which is the prime contractor on the agreement, is a non-profit organization designated by the state's Department of Management Services to administer Florida's State Use Program. This program encourages the development of job opportunities for individuals with disabilities and ensures that RESPECT's customers receive high-quality commodities and services.

Orlando-based social enterprise company, Lighthouse Works—which trains and employs individuals who live with blindness and vision loss—is the sub-contractor on the agreement and its 4Sight360 contact center will be responsible for handling a portion of the in-bound calls to DEO's Reemployment Assistance Service Center.

"This contact center is an exciting new opportunity for RESPECT of Florida and Lighthouse Works. We are eager to work with DEO in a new way," said Ryland Musick, Executive Director of RESPECT of Florida. "DEO's support of the RESPECT program helps Lighthouse Works employ more individuals who are blind or have low vision. In turn, the contact center employees will assist Floridians with reemployment questions and reduce workload of current DEO staff. This is a win-win situation."

According to DEO's website, unemployment assistance was rebranded with the name Reemployment Assistance to reflect the agency's comprehensive goal of helping Floridians find work during periods of unemployment by connecting jobseekers with available workforce training through Florida's CareerSource centers.

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The contract states that 4Sight360 agents will assist callers on the Reemployment Assistance service line with the goal of “first call resolution.” Agents, all of whom are visually impaired, will assist callers with tasks like applying for benefits and filing appeals. Agents will also handle calls from individuals with limited access or ability to self-enroll.

“DEO is proud to work with Lighthouse Works and RESPECT of Florida to accomplish our mission of helping all Floridians, with or without disabilities, find good jobs. Investing in our state’s workforce helps Florida families prosper,” said Cissy Proctor, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. “This partnership will assist individuals with visual impairments with employment opportunities, along with helping those Floridians receiving Reemployment Assistance benefits. Working together, we can make sure the Sunshine State remains a great place for everyone to earn a living and support a family.”

The contract agreement is scheduled for one year with the option to renew. Lighthouse Works will begin staffing the contract with four full-time agents with plans to grow that number to 10 agents within the first 180 days.

ABOUT LIGHTHOUSE WORKS

Lighthouse Works is a social enterprise non-profit, which means its businesses exist to forward and fund our mission of living, learning and earning with vision loss. Through our wide range of businesses, we provide job training, employment and career opportunities to help advance people who are visually impaired. Lighthouse Works operates as a subsidiary of Lighthouse Central Florida—Central Florida’s only private, non-profit agency offering a comprehensive range of services to people living with sight impairment in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. Established in 1976, Lighthouse Works has served generations of Floridians with comprehensive vision rehabilitation and employment services. Lighthouse Works is affiliated with the National Industries for the Blind, the nation’s largest employment resource for people who are blind.

Additionally, Lighthouse Works operates in partnership with the AbilityOne Program to secure quality products and services to the federal government at fair market prices. To learn more, please visit www.lighthouseworks.org.



ABOUT RESPECT OF FLORIDA

RESPECT of Florida is a priority purchasing program created by the Florida legislature to provide job opportunities to Floridians who are blind or have other severe disabilities. RESPECT works with more than 50 non-profit agencies around the state that employ about 1,200 people with disabilities who produce hundreds of commodities and provide services to local and state government entities. For more information about the RESPECT of Florida program, visit www.respectofflorida.org.