

## **Arizona Industries for the Blind Employee Spotlight: Norma Rice**

Norma Rice joined the Base Supply Center (BSC) team in July 2021 as a Customer Service Specialist at Davis Monthan AFB. On a daily basis, Norma is responsible for performing inventory cycle counts, stocking shelves, engaging with customers, and assisting the Airmen at the register.



With more than thirty (30) years in the retail industry, Norma has always enjoyed helping customers and meeting new people. Her extensive retail background includes training new employees in over 30 stores in Tucson and southern Arizona. "I grew and learned so much by working with and meeting people. We were able to create a great support network," said Norma.

Norma was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a group of genetic disorders that affect the retina's ability to

respond to light which causes a slow loss of vision. She states, "it is important to me that my family knows that life doesn't stop. You have to be creative and still enjoy achieving your dreams."

Norma received Vocational Rehabilitation training in Tucson, which included orientation and mobility training, assistive technology, independent living skills and career services. While in training, Norma learned about an open position within the Davis Monthan AFB store and "felt it was a great opportunity to work in a field that I love," said Norma.

Prior to joining the AIB team, Norma found that potential employers were "uneasy" when she walked in with a white cane. "At the DM store, I'm surrounded by experienced and knowledgeable co-workers who want to see me succeed," said Norma. "Norma is the first totally blind Customer Service Specialist within the AIB Base Supply Centers. We needed to work together to find a solution that would enable Norma to re-stock product on the shelves," said Store Manager Carol Oldham. With the use of an App on a smartphone and a portable "all-in-one" talking bar code scanner that identifies items via the product's bar code or UPC, Norma is able to complete her daily assigned tasks.

Norma's philosophy is "not to be mad at the world, love life and be positive!" This mindset extends to her favorite pastime, buying plants and getting excited when they actually survive. Norma states, "I love being with family, especially with my grandchildren."