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From the Dallas Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/dallas/news/2017/06/21/dallas-lighthouse-for-the-blind-hugh-mcelroy.html>

## Dallas manufacturing facility that employs blind workers is in growth mode

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Jun 21, 2017, 12:25pm CDT

When pitching potential clients to manufacture their products in his facility, [Hugh McElroy](#) is betting altruism matters.

"Anybody who says altruism does not enter into the decision is probably ill-informed," said the president and CEO of Dallas [Lighthouse for the Blind](#). "Some people are more apt to look at that than others. Some are totally bottom-line oriented."

DLB employs 265 workers with a majority of those in the manufacturing side of the business. It also has a fulfillment center in South Dallas and a call center it acquired recently in Farmers Branch. DLB has contracts with a variety of companies to make things like markers, TxDOT vests, diploma holders, and more.

And, yes, most DLB workers at its facility on Capitol Avenue — across the street from the Kroger — are visual impaired or completely blind. Employees use a variety of adaptive technologies to get the job done. DLB's quality is top notch, said [Tish Cox](#), a local designer who moved production of her high-fashion products into DLB last year.



JAKE DEAN

***To take a look inside the manufacturing facility, see the attached slideshow.***

McElroy joined DLB in November 2015 after trying retirement out for a few months and not really liking it. The aeronautics industry veteran wanted a new challenge, and saw an opportunity given the size of the textiles industry.

Sipping on a glass of wine one Saturday, he wondered, what is 0.002-percent market share of textile imports?

It came out to \$50 million. McElroy thinks DLB can capture that. So, that's the non-profit's five-year revenue goal. This year the company will do about \$24 million in revenue this year, with only about \$1 million of that from philanthropy.

About 50 percent of DLB's business comes from the government, who order things like brightly colored vests and office supplies. McElroy anticipates that percentage to decrease as they attract more clients from the private sector.

To talk more about DLB, McElroy sat down with the *Dallas Business Journal*.

### **Can you tell me more about your five-year plan?**

Our plan for five years, which started a year ago, is to be at 575 people with an aggregate impact on the community of \$332 million.

### **What does aggregate impact mean?**

Aggregate what we do, the jobs we create, the spending that occurs as a result of that job and other things.

### **Philanthropy is a relatively small part of your revenue at 4 percent. What do you want that to be?**

We would like to see our near term goal of philanthropy be a multiple of what it is today. Because \$1 million or \$1.5 million for something this size is not a lot. It could be much greater. For instance, look at these new labs that we put in. I've done some naming philanthropy where somebody says, 'Hey I'm going to put this new lab in. Wasn't that your brother who had this condition?' And they say 'Oh yeah, it was. I would love to do this in his honor. Here's my brothers name.'

#### **Evan Hoopfer**

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*Dallas Business Journal*

