

# STONE SOUP *de jour*

The January 2015 newsletter



**VisionServe Alliance**

LEADING TO A BETTER WORLD  
FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION LOSS

## Fall Conference 2014: Winter Park, Florida

The fall conference proved to be a roaring success with attendance over 100, great sponsors, a wonderful host and an amazing location. Thank you to everyone for their support.

*"I would like to congratulate you, Misty and our local host Lee for creating, planning and implementing an outstanding conference which had a solid balance of excellent speakers/sessions, networking, venues, and more."* **Mark Lucas**



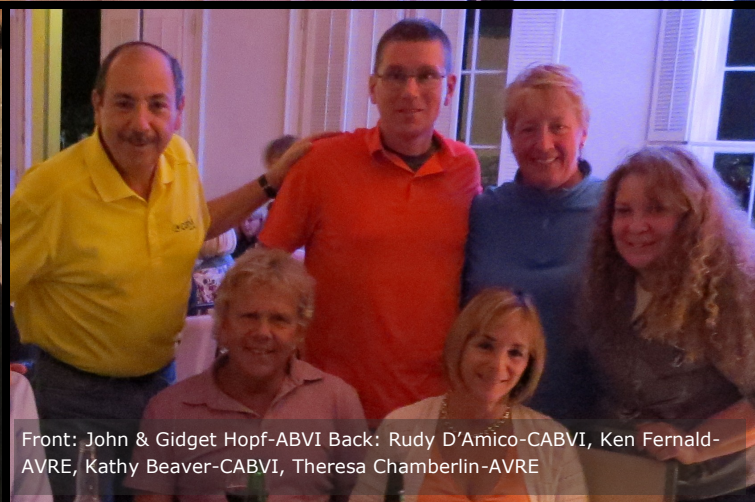
Pictured left to right: Lee Nashei-Lighthouse Central FL, Billy Sparkman-AL Industries, Roxann Mayros-VisionServe Alliance, Miki Jordan-Junior Blind



Nikola Heskett-CCVI



Bernadette Kappen & Joe Catavero-NYSIE



Front: John & Gidget Hopf-ABVI Back: Rudy D'Amico-CABVI, Ken Fernald-AVRE, Kathy Beaver-CABVI, Theresa Chamberlin-AVRE



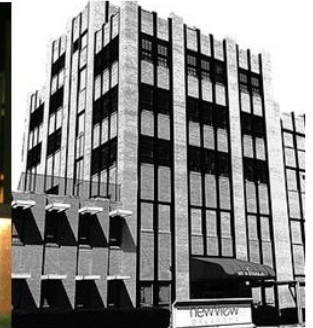
# VisionServe Alliance Spring Conference

Oklahoma City, OK April 22-25, 2015

An epic Western adventure awaits you!



Oklahoma City, "The Big Friendly!", will be an adventure you'll want to board. With its rich history, and activities like Olympic rowing this will be an unforgettable conference.



# VisionServe Alliance Fall Conference

La Jolla, CA November 1-4, 2015

The sparkling jewel of San Diego is calling you!



From world-class shopping to shimmering ocean views, each day will be a new experience. Take it in at the La Jolla conference.



# Message from Miki



2014 was a great year for VisionServe Alliance. Everyone continued to work together for the common good, sharing their wisdom and experiences with their peers and working together to make the world a better place for those we serve. That's a tall order and I am always in awe to witness the brilliance and generosity that surrounds me, not only at our conferences, but day-to-day as we reach out to one another, sharing ideas and concerns. But, to borrow a phrase from T. S. Eliot,

**"to make an end is to make a beginning."**

Having closed the door on 2014, we open the door to 2015 which will present new challenges and opportunities. Thank you for your dedication and perseverance. I can't wait to see what we can achieve together in 2015.



**Miki Jordan**

VisionServe Chair

Junior Blind of America

# Message from Roxann



**Roxann Mayros**

CEO/President

VisionServe Alliance

As Miki says above, "... we open the door to 2015 which will present new challenges and opportunities." One challenge we look forward to solving with you is implementing a nationwide system for evidence based outcomes – proving to the World that what we do in our many specialized organizations for and of the blind makes a real and definitive difference in people's lives.

One opportunity Misty and I are excited about are changes to this newsletter. In 2015, we will focus more on our members and the agencies they lead. In addition to the new features implemented in 2014 – *What's On Your Desk* and *What Are Your Favorites*, we are preparing two new features for later editions entitled: *Where Are They Now*, about former VisionServe members, and *Member Focus*, an inside look at one of our member agencies – the *who, what, why*

*and when* of how they operate. We are also listening when you tell us that you don't understand why the newsletter is named *Stone Soup de Jour*. We hope you will suggest a brilliant new name for this quarterly newsletter *for and about VisionServe Alliance's members*.

**Happy 2015 Everyone!**



# Cover Story *Continued*

*"I have been responsible for many national conferences over the past decade.... So, when I say "Job Well Done!" I really mean it. This was informative, relevant and a wonderful opportunity."* **Lois Model**



John Thompson-St. Louis Lighthouse, Diane Nelson-VIPS



Steve Pouliot-VT Assoc. f/t Blind, Dan Mann-LH of Pinellas Dan Needham-Earle Baum



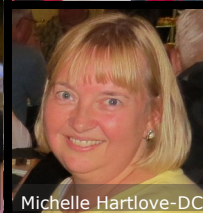
Lauren Branch & Cathy Holden-NewView, Deborah Bloom-Hadley, Joe Abely & Dina Rosenbaum-Carroll Center



Lee Nasehi, Denny Moyer-Ensign Skills



Kathy Zeider-ACVREP



Michelle Hartlove-DC

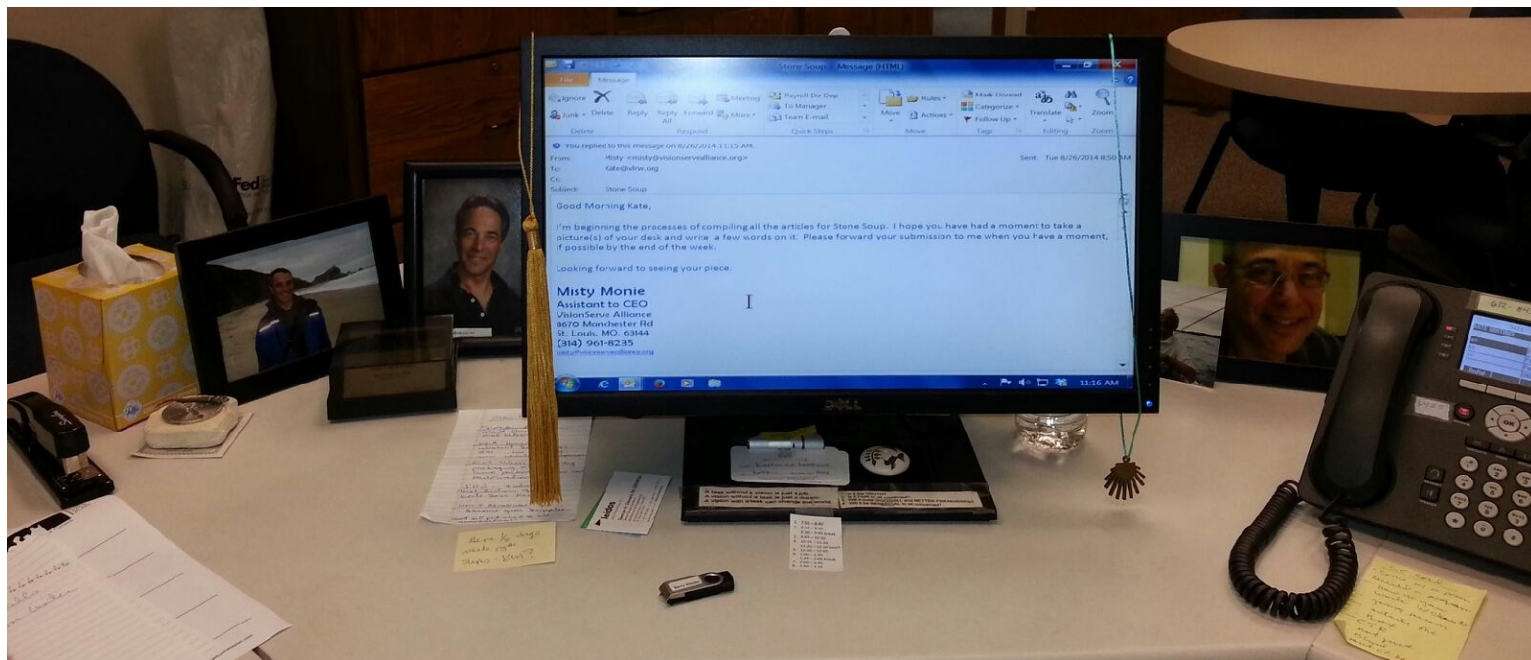


Wells Jones-Guide Dog

## Member Focus

This section highlights our members.

### What Is On Your Desk? Kate Grathwol at Vision Loss Resources



What an interesting question! I have 3 more Centennial events, an annual campaign, our first full one in over 30 years, and an Executive Committee meeting in 30 minutes. Yet my desk reveals none of this. What it does show you are all the people and things that allow me to do the work that we all do.

**Story continues on next page**



# Member Focus *Continued*

This section highlights our members.



## ***Story continued from previous page***

On the left of my computer screen is the tassel from my Doctorate cap reminding me I can do anything. On the right of my screen is my symbol of the Camino de Santiago the shell of the pilgrim. This symbol rode on the back of my 20 pound backpack as I walked 350 mile across northern Spain last year. Another reminder that nothing is impossible

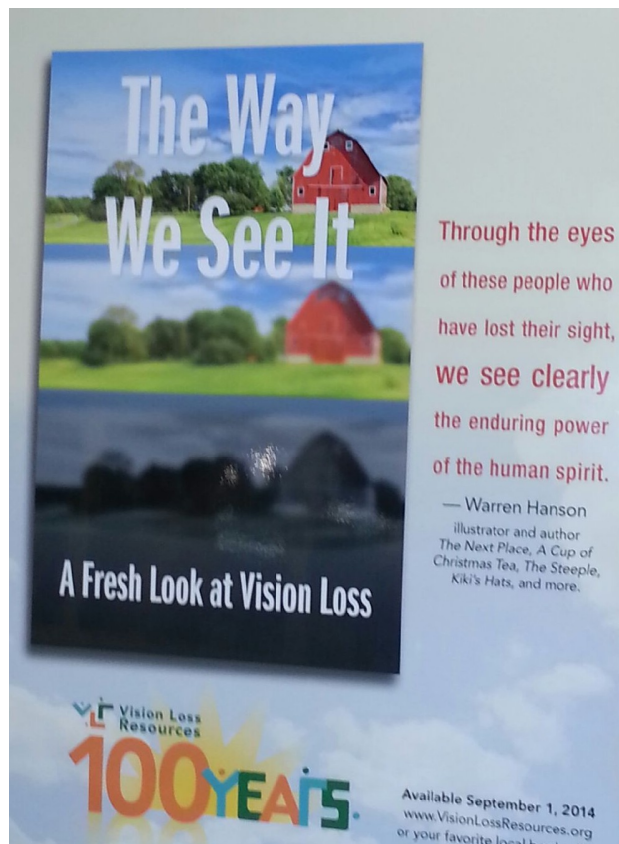
I have photos of my husband Barry, my sail boat where I find peace and calm and really great ideas. I have a photo of the Lake Itasca on my wall. You can just see the water spilling out of the lake on its way to forming the mighty Mississippi. Lake Itasca is the headwaters of the Mississippi river. My desk and office are where all the idea to move Vision Loss Resources begin.

So What else is on my desk?

A copy of the "Way We See It A Fresh Look at Vision Loss". Two years ago 3 clients came to my office to ask if they could write a book for our Centennial year. They wanted to have everyone they met at Vision Loss Resources tell their story about vision Loss and how it is not the end of the world, rather the beginning of a



whole new world! So that is the last thing that sits on my desk, a promotional poster of the book our clients wrote, had professionally edited and is launching at the end of this month! Copies are available on our website if you would like to get your own copy, give one or two to a friend, and of course they are available in accessible formats.



To contact Kate email her at [Kate@vlrw.org](mailto:Kate@vlrw.org)

# Member Focus *Continued*

This section highlights our members.

## What Are Your Favorites?

### Billy Sparkman (retired) of Alabama Industries for the Blind

#### What are you reading and listening to?

I enjoy reading a wide variety of books, and prefer oldies and smooth jazz (not quite elevator music but close) to the unintelligible noise of today's crazy kids---wonder if I sound like my parents?

#### If I didn't work in this field

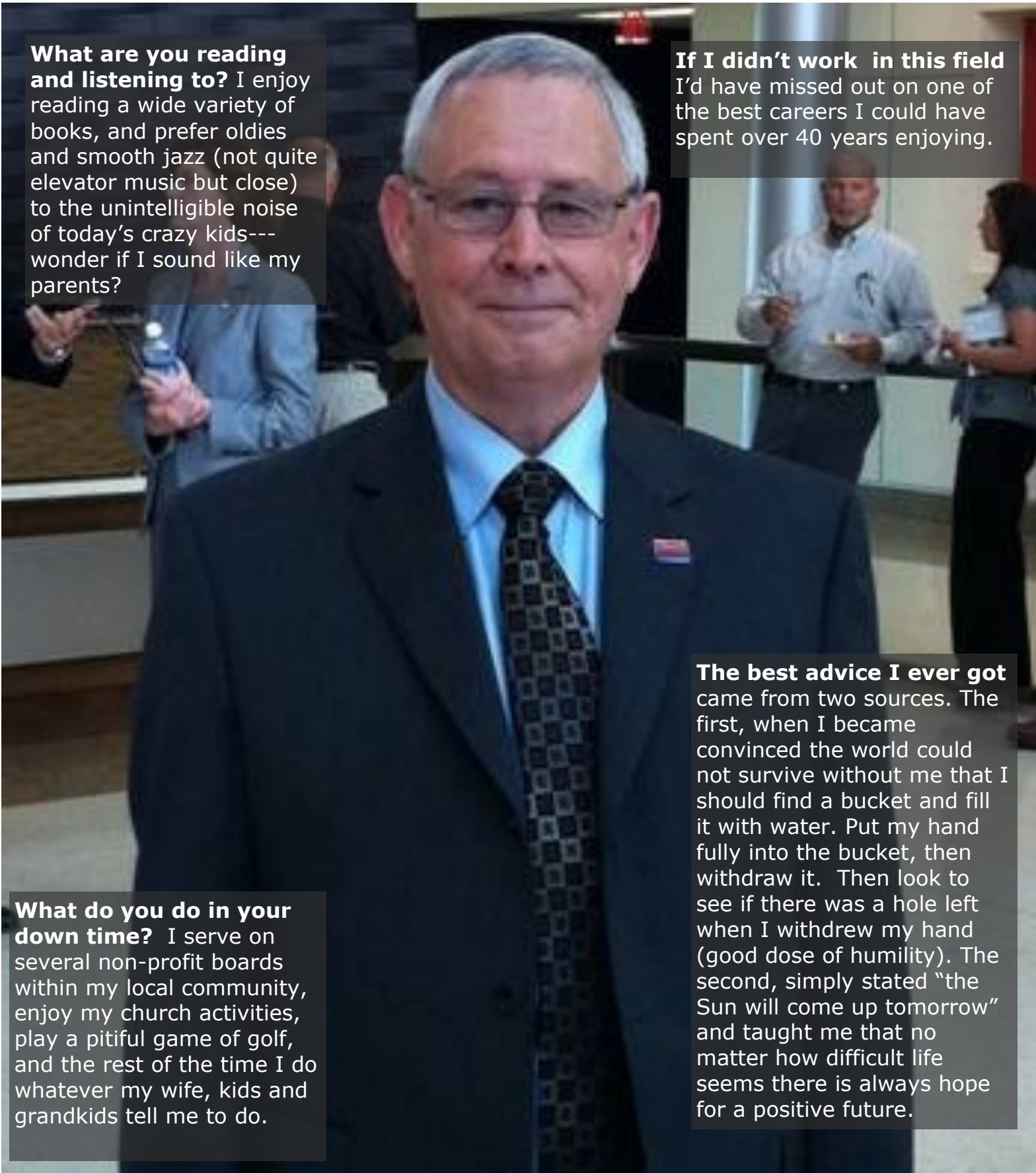
I'd have missed out on one of the best careers I could have spent over 40 years enjoying.

#### What do you do in your down time?

I serve on several non-profit boards within my local community, enjoy my church activities, play a pitiful game of golf, and the rest of the time I do whatever my wife, kids and grandkids tell me to do.

#### The best advice I ever got

came from two sources. The first, when I became convinced the world could not survive without me that I should find a bucket and fill it with water. Put my hand fully into the bucket, then withdraw it. Then look to see if there was a hole left when I withdrew my hand (good dose of humility). The second, simply stated "the Sun will come up tomorrow" and taught me that no matter how difficult life seems there is always hope for a positive future.





# VSA Scholarship and Internship Awards

This section features awards recipients of the academic scholarship and the intern stipend.

## Your Dues in Action

Each year VisionServe Alliance awards \$3,500 in academic scholarships and up to \$3,000 in internship stipends to students who will, or do, work at member organizations. Here are updates and thank you's from some of the recipients.

### **Andrea Ayala Intern for Lighthouse of Southwest Florida: Stipend Recipient**



Andrea Ayala is pictured here with the Lighthouse of Southwest Florida team.

My name is Andrea Ayala. As a master's student from Florida State University, I worked towards becoming a teacher of the visually impaired and certified orientation and mobility specialist. I partook in my orientation and mobility internship at the Lighthouse of Southwest Florida. I have learned so much from this experience and my knowledge of the field and the people in it continue to grow. I love what I do and cannot wait until I have clients that I can call my own. Each client is so different and they all teach me so many valuable things. I am extremely thankful to have this opportunity to participate in such a wonderful experience of working with individuals with visual impairments.



# VSA Scholarship and Internship Awards *Continued*

This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.

## **Laura Delcambre Intern for Leader Dogs for the Blind: Stipend Recipient**



Laura Delcambre pictured with a client at Leader Dogs for the Blind

My name is Laura Delcambre and I worked on my internship at Leader Dogs for the Blind. The information I have learned here has been both vast and invaluable. I am excited to begin work in the field early in 2015. I have completed all of my course work required for certification. I feel that I did a good job at Leader Dogs and this was reflected in my evaluations. The clients I got to know and work with have all taught me so much, and getting the opportunity to work with these amazing Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists (COMS), and Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMIs) was a wonderful experience. I have learned so much about the field as a whole and look forward to new experiences to come. I will continue working towards my Master's degree in special education. I plan to take my certification early during the spring semester and then begin work as soon as I can.

Thank you for helping students continue their career paths. It is important that after all the work is done that there is a way to use the education that we have spent so much time and effort towards to benefit not just ourselves but the community we intend to serve.



# VSA Scholarship and Internship Awards *Continued*

This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.

## **Marlene Snow, OTR/L, OT Manager at NewView Oklahoma: Academic Scholarship**



Marlene Snow (right) pictured with Lauren Branch (left)

Marlene is completing her Master's in Low Vision Therapy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

*I would like to formally thank Vision Serve Alliance for giving me a scholarship. The scholarship will be used to assist me in completing my master's degree in low vision through the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I plan to advance the field of low vision occupational therapy by updating evaluations that will be used to report outcomes. There are only a few occupational therapy evaluations that show outcomes and they are in need of updating to bring them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By showing that we are improving our client's lives through outcomes, we will be able to prove our worth to the insurance community as well as referring physicians.*

*Thank you again for your generous scholarship.*

Marlene Snow, OTR/L, SCLV

## **Maggie Edmunds, Low Vision Therapist at Metrolina Association for the Blind: Academic Scholarship**

Maggie is sitting for her certification with ACVREP and was a recipient of previous scholarships as she worked on her Master's Degree at Western Michigan.

## **Cassie Diplock, Compliance & Support Coordinator at The Iris Network: Academic Scholarship**

Cassie is completing her Master's in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.



# What's Cookin'?

This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.



## Named Champion of Oklahoma Health

NewView Oklahoma was recently honored as the Dr. Rodney L. Huey Champion of Oklahoma Health Award winner by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma. The Champion of Oklahoma Health Award is the program's

highest honor and included a \$15,000 grant in recognition of NewView's comprehensive, statewide low visions services. Dr. Terry Cline, Oklahoma Commissioner of Health and Cabinet Secretary of Health and Human Services, said "NewView Oklahoma's services combine low vision optometry with vision rehabilitation to help clients maximize their remaining vision. Their efforts are truly making a difference in the lives of Oklahomans."

For more information contact: [lbranch@newviewoklahoma.org](mailto:lbranch@newviewoklahoma.org)



## Meet TODAY's New Puppy With a Purpose

There's a new (furry) face around Studio 1A! The TODAY family on January 7th met they're new puppy, which they're raising for a good cause. Today Show anchors, staff and an experienced dog handler are teaming up with Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a New York nonprofit organization, to help train a 10-week-old Yellow Labrador Retriever to become a guide dog. If all goes well, the puppy will graduate after 16 months and get adopted free of charge by an individual who is blind or visually impaired, profoundly changing that person's life.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind follows a specific naming convention for all puppies in which each litter is given a sequential letter of the alphabet and the puppies from that litter receive names starting with that letter. The TODAY puppy is from the W314 litter, which means he's from the third Guiding Eyes for the Blind class to move through the alphabet to the letter 'W' in 2014. For more information: Follow the story on NBC's *Today Show*



## Team USA Women's and Men's Goalball Qualify for Rio

Both the Men's and Women's National Teams have secured their spots in the 2016 Summer Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; a goal that has

eluded them for the past six years.

Now it's time to look forward to their Paralympic performance. Things still need to be worked on for the USA World Champions, as the ultimate goal is to win a medal, hopefully Gold, in the Paralympics.

"It is a tribute to the hard work and commitment to excellence by our athletes and coaches that we have achieved outstanding success" said Mark Lucas.

For more information: [mlucas@usaba.org](mailto:mlucas@usaba.org)



# What's Cookin'? *Continued*

**This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.**

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## **Makes ClickAndGo Maps Available to Clients**

Using the latest in narrative map technology, Leader Dogs has transformed their campus and training routes into a series of audible plans that

clients can listen to online, download to their portable music player or access on their smart-phone prior to arriving for training. Via ClickAndGo Wayfinding Maps ([clickandgomaps.com](http://clickandgomaps.com)), incoming clients have the ability to study maps of Leader Dog's buildings, campus and nearby cities to aid in learning location familiarity and reduce the anxiety of traveling in a new environment.

While clients are on campus, they can use Leader Dog Wi-Fi to access wayfinding maps to help them easily navigate through buildings and the on-campus training course. Common areas such as the dining room, laundry and dog feed rooms can become familiar early in the training cycle. Routes for the various communities and parks utilized for training were mapped by Leader Dog's Certified Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists using standard O&M instructions and directions. Identifiers, such as sound clues and significant landmarks, are also included on the maps.

Implementation of this service supports Leader Dog's commitment to the use of new technology in empowering people who are blind or visually impaired with lifelong skills for independent travel.

For more information, go to <http://www.clickandgomaps.com/leaderdog>.

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## **Innovative Adult Basic Education Program for Visually Impaired a Major Success**

When Miami Lighthouse qualified for Miami-Dade County's "Million Dollar Community Literacy Challenge," the staff was not sure how many visually impaired clients would be interested in signing up for the innovative program designed to help someone gain the education needed to complete a GED. A smaller classroom in the Educational Empowerment Center was set aside, with the hope that 20

students would enroll. Within days, 40 had enrolled. The reception for this important program has been nothing short of overwhelming.

Miami Lighthouse is offering the innovative program in a collaborative community partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The program stresses basic education for adults and the opportunity to pursue a GED. Students also have the opportunity to study English as a Second Language for those students whose first language is Spanish or Creole. Classes began August 2014. Students attend four days a week, with registration on a rolling basis so the program can be joined at any time. Securing a GED can make a huge difference in finding a suitable job and staying independent. Many enrollees dropped out of school because of vision problems.

For more information contact: [csimmons@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:csimmons@miamilighthouse.org)



# What's Cookin'? *Continued*

This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.



## Senator Charles Schumer Visits CABVI

Senator Charles Schumer (NY) visited CABVI of Utica, NY late last year, to express his support for the AbilityOne® program and meet with many of the agency's 220 employees. In particular Sen. Schumer expressed concern about new Federal Government purchasing practices that may violate Federal law and lead to fewer sales and loss of jobs for employees who are blind or disabled at NIB or Source America affiliated organizations.

In order to ensure the AbilityOne program continues to thrive in Utica, Schumer called on the General Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency responsible for government procurement, to develop tools and resources that federal agencies and government offices can use to ensure that they are correctly adhering to the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act. He called on the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to require federal agencies to report annually on their purchases and utilization of AbilityOne products.

Please more information: [StephenG@cabvi.org](mailto:StephenG@cabvi.org)



## Hadley's Braille Music Curriculum

For music students and performers who are blind, learning to read braille music is essential. The Hadley School for the Blind offers "Braille Music Reading," a braille course that presents braille musical notation together with music fundamentals. Using the accompanying CDs, and with close attention to the lessons and diligent completion of the practice exercises and

assignments, even those with an elementary knowledge of music will be able to read single-line braille music on their own.

This course includes fourteen lessons that cover much of basic musical notation, from individual notes to full tunes, in a graduated method. After completing this course, students can continue their braille music study with a selection of short continuation courses. These allow students to read piano music with right- and left-hand lines, songs with instrumental accompaniment and choral music.

"Learning to read music does not mean you stop learning music by ear. Rather, this valuable skill increases your ability to learn and appreciate music," says instructor Linn Sorge.

For more information or to register, please visit [www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu).



## BIA Launches New Outcomes Database to Reflect Our True Impact

Braille Institute has taken a great leap forward in efforts to track where, how and why specialized services make a difference in the lives of those served. With an organizational -wide, outcomes driven database called ETO—Effort to Outcomes.

*Empowering visually impaired  
people to live fulfilling lives*

**Story continues on next page.**

# What's Cookin'? *Continued*

**This section features news, innovations and ideas from VisionServe Alliance member agencies.**

***Story continued from previous page.***

ETO is designed to help an organization measure the incremental progress of its participants, understand the effectiveness of its programs, and demonstrate impact to funders and key stakeholders both quickly and easily.

Like most in the field, Braille Institute has been tracking numbers served and data based on pre and post client assessments, but have been relying on separate organizational databases that require most cross-functional reports and any trend analysis be calculated by hand. With ETO, the efforts of all departments will be collected in one location, and will provide the ability to access data points in real time for daily program decision making and deadline driven fundraising reports. Combining ETO outcome data with the heartfelt stories heard each day will paint a powerfully impactful picture of the value of services.

Braille Institute looks at data with an eye toward both short and long term goals. In the short term, ETO will provide data for all programs to identify the most important skills taught to clients, and to track their overall satisfaction. For the long term, ETO will provide a better longitudinal look at clients overall: the percentage of activities completed by students/clients over time in various settings outside of Braille Institute, generalized use of skills during other activities, and from a management perspective, productivity measures such as unit cost. The hope is that this new tool and the outcomes that are generated will not only benefit clients, but will add to the body of knowledge in the field regarding how to best benchmark successes.

For more information: [adyoniziak@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:adyoniziak@brailleinstitute.org)



## **Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh**

### **New Treatment Program for AMD**

A groundbreaking new treatment program for patients with end-stage age related macular degeneration (AMD) is now available in the Pittsburgh area through a multidisciplinary team including Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, Dr. Viki Christopoulos and Dr. Pamela Rath.

The comprehensive treatment program has been designed by CentraSight and is the only treatment program available in the United States that uses an FDA approved telescopic lens that is implanted inside the eye. Smaller than a pea, the telescope implant magnifies objects that would normally be seen in one's "straight ahead" vision. This image is projected onto the healthy retina in the back of the eye not affected by the disease.

Potential patients undergo medical and vision evaluations to determine whether they may be a good candidate. After an eye surgeon implants the telescope in an outpatient procedure, the patient then works with vision specialists at Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services to learn how to use their new vision in their everyday activities. Studies with the implantable telescopic lens show vision improves over the course of one year.

The telescope implant is not a cure. Patients must meet age and cornea health requirements to be considered a good candidate.

For more information: [earbogast@bvrs.org](mailto:earbogast@bvrs.org)



# A Look Back

## **The history of Stone Soup de jour.**

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We all have a hunger for new information and ideas to enhance our own program's quality, cost effectiveness and outcomes for our students and clients. VisionServe Alliance satisfies this hunger by our attendance at conferences, networking and through newsletters. Stone Soup de jour was designed to share new and creative ideas among agencies and schools--- however, it being "pot luck" required everyone bringing something to the dinner to share. While Stone Soup has internal value for members, it can provide benefit when it is shared with external audiences documenting the collective impact of VisionServe and its member organizations. The idea of the "What's Cookin'?" feature was to use a USA Today format and document 'snapshots' what was going on in each agency or school. The interviews were intended to focus on leadership ideas, but also for us to get to better know the leader themselves.

**Mike Bina**



## In With The New...

### **New quarterly newsletter coming this spring.**

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As Mike said above, the original intent of Stone Soup de jour was to have this big "pot" that all of our members would contribute to. Unfortunately, over the years, the contributions have dwindled which led us to re-think Stone Soup's content. We added two new features in the last issue which were enthusiastically received. The first featured a picture of a member's desk and their explanation as to why the items are on their desk, and the second provided an opportunity to learn more about an individual member with a full page listing of their favorite things. Your enthusiasm for these two new feature articles, led us to conclude that you want to read and learn more about your peers and the organizations they lead. So, starting with the April issue, content will include more new features - short articles from the Board Chair and CEO, a focus on one member organization's services, a one-on-one interview with a current member, and an article we are entitling Where Are They Now? - featuring a former member who is retired or moved on to new horizons. With this issue, you are now able to read Stone Soup in Word or as a page-turning "newspaper," and depending upon your feedback, this format will continue in future issues. So, with all of these changes, we are also looking for a new name for this newsletter. Stone Soup de jour was perfect when we launched this newsletter four years ago in the hopes that all of our members would contribute, but with our new "reporter" type format, we hope you will help us with a new name.

**FREE** conference registration fee for the person who comes up with the winning name!

**Roxann**