In 2017 we celebrated the anniversary of VisionServe Alliance’s 30th year of incorporation. Erika Petach (BVRS-Pittsburgh) chaired a very committed Fund Development Committee who set an initial goal of raising $15,000 in new donations that included the number three in it. Erika was the first to commit $300 in addition to the commitment she already made as a board member. Board and Committee members followed with their own new commitments like $30/month, $1,000/annually for three years, and $333. Once the Board and Committee made their pledges, the campaign was taken to our members who also responded, some very creatively.

In our last LINKS issue, we promised to reveal the outcome of the 30/300/3000 Campaign after the start of the new year and we are pleased to report to you that the Fund Development’s goal of raising $15,000 was not only met but it exploded into $40,473.32 in new donations and pledges!

Thank you to everyone who pledged and donated. Your donations are already making an impact growing our capacity and infrastructure starting with the launch of a new website December 1st last year which has modernized the public image of VisionServe Alliance.
Chairman’s Message
Mark G. Ackermann, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Lighthouse Guild International

While those of us in certain parts of the country are longing for the cold weather to be over and for the warmth of spring to arrive, change of another sort, is in the air. VERY BIG CHANGE! By now, I hope you have read my message to all members, which was forwarded to everyone on February 5th (see full text on our website). For the first time in the history of our Alliance, we are planning for the smooth transition of our CEO to a new chief executive.

Roxann Mayros became the CEO of VisionServe Alliance in 2005. Twelve years later, this organization has grown into one of the finest trade associations of its kind. I say, “of its kind,” intentionally, because Roxann has clearly molded VisionServe Alliance into a very special organization that caters to the needs of the CEO’s of all our agencies, while at the same time offering educational and professional development opportunities to the senior staff members of our member agencies.

The VisionServe board has undertaken a search process that is designed to culminate in the naming of our new CEO late next fall. A Position Specification will be made available late February and VisionServe Alliance members will be invited to apply or nominate individuals. Thereafter the search will be opened to the public. Your input is welcome throughout the process.

Signature

CEO Corner
Roxann Mayros, VisionServe Alliance, St. Louis, MO

It was with a sense of excitement and a heavy heart that I notified VisionServe’s board of my intent to retire on December 31, 2018. At each annual meeting, I thank our members for allowing me to serve in the “best job in the field,” and I mean it. My thirteen-year tenure has given me noble work, new knowledge, meaningful relationships, a sense of purpose, and a passion for our field that goes beyond explanation.

I will be forever grateful for the opportunities to work with a series of board chairs and directors that provided me support and the freedom to grow this great organization.

My first real job was at age 12, and I’ve been working ever since. So even though I think I’m too young to retire, I also know that I’m ready to smell the proverbial roses a bit, try my hand at new things, share my knowledge of this great field we work in on my terms, travel a bit, and spend a lot more time with my granddaughter.

Thank you for allowing me to work for you! It has been the best job of my life!

Signature

2018 Board of Directors
Chair: Mark Ackermann, Lighthouse Guild International
Vice Chair: Bernadette Kappen, New York Institute for Special Education
Secretary: John Mitchell, Cincinnati Association f/t Blind and Visually Impaired
Treasurer: Steve Poulit, Vermont Association f/t Blind and Visually Impaired
Immediate Past Chair: Miki Jordan, Wayfinder Family Services
Michael Bina, Maryland School for the Blind

Lauren Branch, NewView Oklahoma
Roxann Mayros, VisionServe Alliance
Mike McGowan, NOAH
David Morgan, Future In Sight
Thomas Panek, Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Erika Petach, Blind and Vision Rehab Services of Pittsburgh
Shari Roeseler, Society for the Blind-Sacramento
Dennis Steiner, VisionCorps
Renee Vidrine, Lighthouse Louisiana
The Lighthouse for the Blind in St. Louis started the Braille Brilliance program in 2015, which incorporates in-home braille tutoring, quarterly braille-related group events, and braille pen pals to boost braille skills and present braille in a fun context. The program has made a big impact around the state of Missouri for children who are braille readers.

In 2017, the Lighthouse held several braille events including a Braille Buddies Day where kids brought a print reading friend or sibling to learn more about braille through crafts and fun activities. There was a tour of a sculpture park where kids explored large and outdoor sculptures, small models of the sculptures and read braille descriptions (features previously funded by The Lighthouse).

The kids had a braille scavenger hunt with braille clues and tactile maps at a large mall, selecting a restaurant from a braille list and practicing folding their money. They also shopped with prize money awarded at the end of the day. “This was the best Saturday ever,” said one child. At the State Park Hiking Day, the students also explored the Braille Trail.

The Lighthouse receives rave reviews about these activities from the kids participating, siblings, friends, and especially parents. Some kids come from over three hours away to connect with other braille readers. For more information about The Lighthouse’s Braille Brilliance program contact John Thompson at jwthompson@lhbindustries.com or (314) 423-4333.

**VisionRefer! App Under Development**

We are excited to announce that VisionServe Alliance has secured the support of the Gibney Family Foundation to develop a unique app in partnership with VisionServe member Lighthouse Works that will help make referrals of low vision patients by their doctors to vision rehabilitation centers (especially VisionServe Alliance members) nationwide as simple as clicking on an App. We are calling the app VisionRefer! and it will be made available to every ophthalmologist in the country to make referrals to VisionServe members easy and efficient. We will provide you with more details and progress reports as we move forward.
Dear Members and Friends,

At the outset, please allow us to thank you for your continued commitment to VisionServe Alliance. This annual report provides highlights of our 2017 fiscal year, during which we celebrated our 30th year of incorporation, as well as an overview of our financial status. As a membership organization, it is important to reassure you of VisionServe Alliance’s relevancy and our ongoing commitment to keep overhead low while increasing support to our members through individualized services, high level conferences, advanced collaborative networking opportunities, and national advocacy.

For those who went above and beyond with their support of the Alliance through your philanthropic backing of our 30th anniversary fund raising campaign or contributed to our annual appeal, we extend our deepest gratitude and applaud your extraordinary support of our mission.

Thank you for wholeheartedly being a part of VisionServe Alliance. We look forward to much more in 2018!

- Created new membership categories open to nonprofits, for profits, students and retirees
- Provided consulting services to members.
- Published in JVIB
Thank you to our donors and supporters—your generosity in 2017 allowed us to strengthen our programs and better support our members. Thank you for supporting the mission of VisionServe Alliance.

**Personal Donors – General Fund**

$8,842

Mark Ackermann  
Al Avina  
Mike Bina  
Jeff Brasie  
Pam Brandin  
Ronald J. Cole  
Elly Du Pre  
Dave Ekin  
Loretta Himmelsbach  
Wells Jones  
Mary Junnilla  
Bernadette Kappen  
Becky Kirsch  
David and Kimberly Leight  
June Mansfield  
Roxann Mayros  
Mike and Sheri McGowan  
Nancy Miller  
John and Kathy Mitchell  
Erika Petach  
Steve Pouliot  
Rachel Rosenbaum  
Reinhard Mabry

**30/300/3000 Campaign Donors – $23,890 (including pledges)**

Mark Ackermann  
Willa Adams  
Mike Bina  
Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh  
Braille Institute  
Lauren Branch  
Jeff Brasie  
Dave Ekin  
Envision Inc.  
Doug Fowler  
Kathryn Garre-Ayars  
Kate Grathwol  
Guide Dog Foundation  
Billy Henry  
Wendy Hymes  
Denise Jess  
Wells Jones  
Miki Jordan  
Bernadette Kappen  
Lighthouse Guild  
Lighthouse Louisiana  
Lighthouse of Pinellas  
David LoPresti  
Mark Lucas  
Roxann Mayros  
Mike and Sheri McGowan  
James Michaels  
John and Kathy Mitchell  
Lou Moneymaker  
Libby Murphy  
Lee Nasehi  
Dan Needham  
Diane Nelson  
NewView Oklahoma  
Thomas Panek  
Sylvia Perez  
Erika Petach  
Courtney Plotner  
Steve Pouliot  
Bill Powell  
San Antonio Lighthouse  
Savannah Center for Blind and Low Vision  
St. Louis Society for the Blind  
Lou Tutt  
Valley Center for the Blind  
Vermont Association for the Blind & V.I.  
Renee Vidrine  
Ken Warkentin

**Sustaining Donors - $23,950**

ABVI-Goodwill  
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Blind and Vision Rehab Services  
Braille Institute  
Center for the Visually Impaired  
Earle Baum  
Ensite Skills Center  
Future In Sight  
Junior Blind  
Lighthouse Guild  
Louisiana Association for the Blind  
MAB Community Services  
Metrolina Association for the Blind  
New York Institutes for Special Education

**Conference Scholarship - $3,750**

ABVI-Goodwill  
Braille Institute  
Metrolina Association for the Blind  
St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind  
Anonymous  
Anonymous Employer Match

**CORPORATE SPONSORS**

**CEO Summit**

Junior Blind  
Lewis Direct  
Lighthouse Guild  
NIB  
OrCam  
Robert Brinckerhoff/Morgan Stanley  
Vanda

**Executive Leadership Conference**

Aira  
AI Squared/Freedom Scientific/Optelec  
Bookshare  
First Nonprofit Group  
Humanware  
Junior Blind  
Lewis Direct  
Lighthouse Guild  
Mutual of America  
NIB  
OrCam  
Robert Brinckerhoff/Morgan Stanley  
Spark Therapeutics  
Vanda

**In-Kind Contributions**

Lewis Direct  
Lighthouse Louisiana  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

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**By the Numbers**

| **111** | Members |
| **13** | New Members |
| **$75,000** | Sponsors |
| **5** | National conferences |
| **7** | National presentations |
| **7** | Partnered research projects |
| **7** | National Presentations |

| **14** | Sponsors |
| **Financials** | 2017 | 2016 |
| Assets | $515,223 | $506,870 |
| Liabilities | $208,991 | $234,150 |
| Total Net Assets | $207,136 | $146,033 |
| Donor Restricted | $21,528 | $22,573 |

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**Conference Scholarship - $3,750**

ABVI-Goodwill  
Braille Institute  
Metrolina Association for the Blind  
St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind  
Anonymous  
Anonymous Employer Match

**CORPORATE SPONSORS**

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Humanware  
Junior Blind  
Lewis Direct  
Lighthouse Guild  
Mutual of America  
NIB  
OrCam  
Robert Brinckerhoff/Morgan Stanley  
Spark Therapeutics  
Vanda

**In-Kind Contributions**

Lewis Direct  
Lighthouse Louisiana  
St. Louis Society for the Blind
Here are a few reasons YOU should attend:

High level learning.

Impactful Networking

Session on the New Tax Law

Activities to Refresh

DONATE
My best childhood memory is...

My dad, who was a Dickens Scholar, passed away on January 13, and the memories have been coming fast and furious in the past few weeks. When I was 11 my parents surprised us with a Dalmation named Pip to help with the adjustment of moving to Ontario.

Tell us about one item on your bucket list?

Community theatre. My inner actress (undergrad degree in Drama) is still waiting for another chance to “tread the boards.”

What is your best guilty pleasure?

A good old-fashioned Ontario butter tart. Ever tried one? If not, get on up here and enjoy! YUM.

My best childhood memory is...

My dad, who was a Dickens Scholar, passed away on January 13, and the memories have been coming fast and furious in the past few weeks. When I was 11 my parents surprised us with a Dalmation named Pip to help with the adjustment of moving to Ontario.

What do you do in your down time?

I have been practicing yoga for about 9 years, love to hike and walk, sing in an 84-voice community choir, but my all-time favorite activity is cycling. I also love to read novels and watch all my series on Netflix!!

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Ha! Who knows? I didn’t plan on being any of the things I’ve been since I started to work. In a fantasy world, where I could do it all over again, I’d be a stage actress full-time.

What are you reading, watching and/or listening to right now?

I’m reading Divisadero and about to start one that I think will be terrific called “Erotic Stories For Punjabi Widows: A Novel. I’m pretty keen on CBC radio (you guys in the States can find it on your NPR stations), and I really like Cuban music, and watching “Ozark” and “Grace and Frankie” on Netflix, This is Us, and Jane the Virgin.

How did you learn about VisionServe Alliance?

I first heard from Lou Tutt when I served on AER’s board. I also chatted with Joe Catavero, and Kathy Zeider encouraged me to think about joining.
VisionServe Alliance CEO Summit
Tanque Verde Ranch, Tucson, AZ | April 29-May 2, 2018

VisionServe Alliance Executive Leadership Conference
Portland, OR | October 28 – 31, 2018

MISSION: To engage leaders in building a better world through services for people with vision loss.
VISION: To be a leader and a unified voice in the field of services for people with vision loss for advocacy, education, ethical management, professional growth, and enhanced services.
PURPOSE: To build and nurture a diverse core of future and current leaders within a healthy and vibrant network of private nonprofit organizations throughout the United States and Canada whose commitment is to enrich the lives of those living with vision loss and to remove the barriers to the pursuit of opportunities.

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