Florida Agencies Serving the Blind (Florida ASB) has taken the lead in organizing and funding a twelve-month pilot program of VisionRefer! – VisionServe’s web-based patient referral system—to introduce VisionRefer! to ophthalmologists in Florida. Referrals are already successfully being received, beginning with an initial referral made by an ophthalmologist and sent to the Manasota Lighthouse on January 11, 2019.

“VisionRefer! is a 21st-century solution that will allow physicians to easily and quickly refer patients of all ages for vision rehabilitation services,” notes Roxann Mayros, outgoing President of VisionServe Alliance who came up with the idea of VisionRefer! “I am excited to see the pilot project already generating referrals, just like we knew it would.”

Florida ASB and 17 other Florida VisionServe member agencies received funding support for the pilot project from Florida Division of Blind Services to create marketing materials such as a tear-off flyer, and print ads. Additional marketing support is being provided by the Florida Society of Ophthalmologists and their partner, Eschenbach Optics, who will begin traveling statewide introducing VisionRefer! to ophthalmologists.

“We hope that this pilot project will share the benefits of vision rehabilitation services to patients and their practices and dispel myths about our professions and fears that patients will be diverted from their care,” says Dr. Elly du Pre, Executive Director of Florida ASB. “Our goal is to make adoption of VisionRefer! easy by helping them put VisionRefer! on their desktops and provide handouts to give to their patients.”

The VisionRefer! pilot project will also launch in March at NewView Oklahoma and Future In Sight in New Hampshire to test the efficacy and impact of state-wide single provider systems. It is projected that a nation-wide roll out will begin in late summer.
Chairman’s Message

John Mitchell, President & CEO, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

I hope each of you are enjoying the New Year with the optimism, hope and renewal it brings to each of us. I look forward to serving you as your new VisionServe Alliance Board Chair and continue the positive progress and growth that was achieved in 2018. Needless to say, I am honored to serve in this capacity and will do everything I can to lead VSA, with my fellow Board members, to embrace the great opportunities that we have available to us.

This is a very exciting time for VisionServe with Roxann Mayros retiring and transitioning her role of 13 years as President and CEO to Lee Nasehi on March 1. Roxann has been diligent in ensuring a smooth transition and passing of the baton to Lee. 2019 will also be a year of growing our partnership with Prevent Blindness to improve and expand VisionServe’s public awareness, our presence on Capitol Hill and work in the Public Policy arena. All of these efforts are in line with of our Mission of “Engaging leaders in building a better world through services for people with vision loss.” We are looking forward to continuing our work to bring value and support to the important work and missions of each of your organizations.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions or ideas. My email address is john.mitchell@cincyblind.org. I look forward to seeing all of you in Nashville, Tennessee at our CEO Summit, May 5-8th.

CEO Corner

Roxann Mayros, VisionServe Alliance, St. Louis, MO

Twenty-five years ago, I spent my work day designing marketing information systems for Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. and Fortune 100 in Europe. Each day I wished that my work made a real difference. Helen Keller said, “Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.”

In 1993 I received a call asking me to “take a look” at a small agency serving the blind. Their Board was considering closing it due to mismanagement and a flood that had destroyed everything but the shell of the building. I jumped at the chance even though I knew nothing about nonprofits and even less about blindness.

Now that I am retiring 26 years later, I have had the most fulfilling of careers. I have met amazing people, seen extraordinary generosity, watched inexperienced leaders become national leaders, made lifelong friends, and been a part of growing VisionServe into a national collaborative network like none other inside or outside of our field.

I thank each of you for your professional and personal friendship, for providing your support, teaching me everything I know, and for allowing me to have “the best job in the field!” Please stay in touch – roxannmayros@gmail.com or 727-505-5801.

2019 Board of Directors

Chair: John Mitchell, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Vice Chair: Bernadette Kappen, New York Institute for Special Education
Secretary: Mike McGowan, NOAH
Treasurer: Lauren Branch, NewView Oklahoma
Immediate Past Chair: Miki Jordan, Wayfinder Family Services
Joe Bogart, Blinded Veterans Association
Lee Nasehi, VisionServe Alliance
David Morgan, Future In Sight
Libby Murphy, Louisiana Association for the Blind
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
Ken Warkentin, Valley Center for the Blind

Welcome to our new Board Members Joe Bogart, Libby Murphy and Ken Warkentin.
Many thanks to outgoing Board Members Mark Ackermann, Mike Bina, & Steve Pouliot
APH and Lighthouse Central Florida Team Up On New Program

We love to see two of our members collaborating! While in Orlando to launch a new product at ATIA, APH (Craig Meador) partnered with Lighthouse Central Florida (Lee Nasehi now Kyle Johnson) to field test their new device called “Code Jumper” with students enrolled in Lighthouse’s after school program. Code Jumper is a powerful equalizer that teaches blind and low vision kids how to “code.” Great for school-age and transition programs. Want to learn more? Check out www.codejumper.com and sign up for the waiting list!

$5,000 in Tech Grants Awarded to Member Agencies

The following member agencies were awarded Tech Grants through the Inspiration Foundation to support technical development:

- The Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind in New Port Richey (FL) was awarded $1,500 to fund the purchase of a tablet and software (JAWS & Zoom text).
- New Vision for Independence in Leesburg (FL) was awarded $1,500 to fund the purchase of a desktop, laptop and software (JAWS, Zoom text and VictorReader Trek)
- VisionServe Alliance, $1,500 for a new laptop.

The Tech Grants from the Inspiration Foundation are life savers to our members who often struggle to afford updating their technology. We truly appreciate your support.

VisionServe Academic Scholarship Awarded to David Sterne of Visually Impaired Preschool Services

David Stern, the lead Blind/Low Vision Specialist at VIPS in Kentucky has been awarded a $1,500 academic scholarship from VisionServe Alliance to go towards his Blindness and Low Vision Certification. We are especially happy to support David’s commitment to our littlest ones with vision loss. Congratulations, and thank you again for choosing this field for your life’s passion. It is our pleasure to support the future of our field.

Diane Nelson, Executive Director and David Sterne,
VisionServe Alliance

2018 Impact Report
– Year in Highlights

Record number of conference attendees, including 4 scholarship recipients. “I so greatly appreciate that you selected me to receive a scholarship for the conference, as our agency would not have been able to support my attendance without it. The opportunity for education and connection building at VisionServe is invaluable and I am so grateful to have been a part of it.” – Shellen Heber, scholarship recipient

What an incredible year. VisionServe Alliance’s first professional leader, Roxann Mayros, announced her retirement when the year began, and by year-end, Lee Nasehi had been chosen as our second professional leader.

And in between, we continued our daily mission to support and inform member organizations, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Prevent Blindness that will create new opportunities and national awareness of our field, produced two highly attended and rated national meetings, and launched a new web-based patient referral system called VisionRefer!.

We firmly believe the impact of our organization comes not from what we accomplish, but from the passion of the people who believe in our mission—our members and supporters. Thank you for believing in VisionServe Alliance!

VisionRefer! Pilot Program begun in October by Florida ASB & 17 Florida agencies

National policy work in Washington D.C. Pennsylvania members met with Senator Casey’s staff to discuss a comprehensive vision bill.

Strong partnerships and friendships. “Thank you so much for the amazingly wonderful conference! I think it’s the best I can remember in 20+ years of attending them.” – Pam Brandin

Lee Nasehi hired as Roxann retires. “There is tremendous need across this country and I know that together we are going to make a difference.” – Lee Nasehi
Thank you to our donors and supporters—your generosity in 2018 allowed us to strengthen our programs and better support our members. Thank you for supporting the mission of VisionServe Alliance.

**Personal Donors - General Fund**

$12,125
- Mark Ackermann
- Lauren Branch
- Pam Brandin
- Jeff Brasie
- Ronald Cole
- Mary Junnila
- Bernadette Kappen
- Roxann Mayros
- Mike McGowan
- Gerald & Nancy Miller
- Thomas H. Miller
- John & Kathy Mitchell
- David Morgan
- Lee Nasehi
- Steve Pouliot & Fiomena Rego
- Shari Roeseler
- Kenneth Rosenthal
- Dennis Steiner

**30/300/3000 Campaign Donors**

$11,447
- Mark Ackermann
- Envision Inc.
- Billy Henry
- Denise Jess
- Miki Jordan
- Lighthouse Guild
- Dan Needham
- Diane Nelson
- NewView Oklahoma
- Savannah Center for B & L.V.
- Vermont Assoc. f/t Blind & V.I.

**Sustaining Donors - $21,180**

ABVI - Goodwill
- Anonymous
- Braille Institute of America
- Jeff Brasie
- James Dismas
- Earle Baum Center for the Blind
- Renee Fleury Harris
- Billy Henry
- Lighthouse for the Blind – St. Louis
- Mark Lucas
- MAB Community Services
- Jim and Cheryl Mayros
- Metrolina Association for the Blind
- Mutual of America
- Barbara Niedland McCarthy
- Anat Nulman
- Lynne Zaveda O’Brien
- Karen Ross
- Debbie Sloan

**Power of R Campaign - $5,950**

ABVI - Grand Rapids
- Blind & Vision Rehab Svrs of Pittsburgh
- Bosma Industries f/t Blind
- Pam Brandin
- Florida ASB
- Bernadette Kappen
- Lighthouse for the Blind – St. Louis
- Lauren Mayros
- Toni Mayros Barkdoll
- Mike McGowan
- Lee Nasehi
- Erika Petach
- Prevent Blindness
- San Antonio LH
- Society f/t Blind Sacramento
- Tampa LH f/t Blind
- Lou Tutt
- VIPS
- Brenda Wendling

**Conference Scholarship - $1,380**

ABVI - Goodwill
- Anonymous
- Braille Institute of America
- Jeff Brasie
- James Dismas
- Earle Baum Center for the Blind
- Renee Fleury Harris
- Billy Henry
- Lighthouse for the Blind – St. Louis
- Mark Lucas
- MAB Community Services
- Jim and Cheryl Mayros
- Metrolina Association for the Blind
- Mutual of America
- NIB
- NewView Oklahoma
- Optelec
- OrCam
- Robert Brinckerhoff/Morgan Stanley
- U.S. Trust
- Vanda Pharmaceuticals

**Executive Leadership Conference**

Aira
- AFB
- APH
- Blind & Vison Rehab Svrs of Pittsburgh
- Bosma Industries f/t Blind
- First Nonprofit Group
- Lewis Direct
- Lighthouse Guild
- Mutual of America
- NIB
- NewView Oklahoma
- Optelec
- OrCam
- Robert Brinckerhoff/Morgan Stanley
- San Antonio Lighthouse
- The Generational Institute
- US Trust
- Vanda Pharmaceuticals
- Wayfinder Family Services

**In-Kind Contributions**

Lewis Direct
- Northwest Assoc. for Blind Athletes
- St. Louis Society f/t Blind & V.I.

---

**By the Numbers**

- **116** Members
- **8** New Members
- **98%** Retention of members
- **21** Sponsors
- **20** Strategic goals accomplished
- **181** Conference attendees
- **7** National conferences attended

**Financials**

By the Numbers

- **Assets Donor Restricted**: 2018 $32,078, 2017 $22,573
- **Liabilities**: 2018 $100,000, 2017 $60,000
- **Total Net Assets**: 2018 $50,000, 2017 $37,500
VISIONSERVE ALLIANCE
4TH ANNUAL CEO SUMMIT
May 5 – 8, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance is open to CEOs/EDs of our member organizations and is your chance to take a deep dive into two timely topics with nationally-known speakers: Day 1: Back by popular demand is Lily Trager with Morgan Stanley on Impact Investing for Nonprofits. Day 2: Contracts and Compensation—All You Need to Know with Tom MacMurray of Mutual of America and Jason Taylor of the Krizner Group. Just added! Pre-conference presentation Sunday on Board Engagement with Diane Chipps Bailey, Managing Director & National Practice Executive with US Trust.

You’ll also meet VisionServe’s new leader, Lee Nasehi, for a “CEO Chat,” an opportunity to share with her your desires for VisionServe’s future.

Each afternoon will feature facilitated networking activities which will provide opportunities for you to connect one-on-one with leaders from across the country. The Summit ends with our ever-popular Spiel and Steal session, where you can share a winning strategy, pose your biggest challenge, and learn from your peers.

Hope to see you there! Last date to register at the standard rate is: Thursday, April 4th!

Tom MacMurray
Lily Trager
Diane Chipps Bailey
Jason Taylor
Kelly Harris, President/CEO of Conklin Center for the Blind in Daytona Beach, Florida
www.conklincenter.org

What is your best childhood memory?
Learning to ride horses Western style – cowboy hat, cowboy boots and all! I ended up going to “Camp Lonestar” in LaGrange Texas and came to love barrel racing!

What are you reading, watching and/or listening to right now?
I listen to music to escape and read to learn. I’m currently reading “Social Value Investing” by Howard Buffett, providing a management framework for developing and measuring partnerships.

Tell us about one item on your bucket list.
That’s easy – and it’s right here in my back door. I want to go to the Daytona 500 – “when in Rome!”

What do you do in your down time?
My church community has always been prominent. I also attend concerts by my son who is a talented classical musician. He’s currently in Europe studying, so now I have to seek out my own source of entertainment!

What is your best guilty pleasure?
Going out to restaurants with good company for a nice meal, red wine, and laughter! I’d be out to dinner every night if I could!

As a new leader, what are you most impressed by at your agency?
I was struck by the number of staff who have made working at the Conklin Center their life-long career. Many have worked upward to 25 years.

Tell us what you value about your membership in VisionServe?
Because of my congenital glaucoma diagnosed at 5 months old, I’ve had some experience in the blindness community but not professionally. Attending my first VisionServe conference just 30 days into the job allowed me to make new friendships that offered practical guidance and a network of professionals and services that I lean on daily.
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.