



LINKS

Learning • Innovation • Networking • Knowledge • Sharing

The Changing Landscape of the Field

In the Fall of 2014, the senior executives of VisionServe, ACVREP and AER recognized the need for an ongoing, regular and open dialogue about issues facing the professionals who serve those who are blind/visually impaired. Since then, the dialogue has expanded to include AFB, Salus University, UMass Boston, individuals representing O&Mers, VRTs, executive leadership and more. A position paper was written and distributed to the field. Most recently facilitated discussions have occurred at various national meetings and a survey posted on professional list-serves has collected additional views.

VisionServe Alliance's Board and staff have led and support this continuing dialogue as we believe that the quality of services impacts our diverse membership. Kids become adults who will need daily living skills and jobs, and employers need employees with good travel and work skills. Therefore, national organizations need to talk about the specialized services vision professionals provide to people with vision loss.

The following is a recap that describes challenges, possible solutions, survey results and future endeavors.

Challenges

- Shortage of professionals
- Shortage of university personnel prep programs
- Increase in the number of people with visual impairment
- Lack of third party reimbursement
- Lack of recognition from allied health professionals

Recommended Solutions

- One single professional designation for non-licensed professionals
- Vision Impairment Specialist/COMS
- Vision Impairment Specialist/CVRT
- Vision Impairment Specialist/CLVT
- Vision Impairment Specialist/CATIS
- Universities establish a core curriculum for personnel preparation
- Development of Core Competencies for each professional

Survey feedback from the field distributed Jan. – April, 2016.

- 140 responded
- Overwhelmingly favorable of one single professional title
- Overwhelmingly favorable of core competencies
- Respondents' words: clarity, consistency, standards, accessibility



(continued on page 4)

CEO CORNER

Roxann Mayros
VisionServe Alliance
St. Louis, MO



The lead article in this issue of LINKS talks about the changing landscape of the field. We are also in the midst of a “changing landscape” at VisionServe Alliance. New board leadership will be voted in at the Annual meeting in San Antonio, new committees and task forces are up and running, there are several possible new members in the pipeline and there are staff changes. You met Carolyn Lloyd in the June issue of LINKS. Misty Monie no longer works with us and, as I write this, we are interviewing interesting and talented potentials for our support position. I am excited about VisionServe’s opportunities during this “change in our landscape.”

R. Mayros

Mobility City

There is an impressive new addition to the Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS) building just to the left of the playground.

It is a city block without the traffic called Mobility City. There are real curbs, a crosswalk, plants, a TARC stop, parking meters and two shiny red fire hydrants, all created to scale. For the Orientation and Mobility staff at VIPS, it is a dream come true. The pretend streets even have storm drains, whose little openings can swallow canes or cause a fall. Teaching street safety and important life skills to young children in this safe but realistic environment is revolutionary.



The construction of Mobility City was voluntarily managed and built by the United Auto Workers-Ford Local 862’s so-called “ramp team” (known for installing wheelchair ramps for those in need) with the help of Able Construction of Louisville. It took six months of planning, six weeks of construction and nearly \$100,000 in in-kind and cash donations solicited primarily by Ford Local 862’s President.

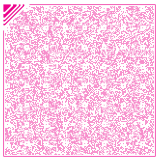
“The entire Louisville community came together to build this creative project”, said Diane Nelson, Executive Director of VIPS. To add to the excitement, Mobility City opened new fundraising opportunities. Each year donors will have the opportunity to purchase naming rights to one of the streets or a pretend store front, providing VIPS with an amazing ongoing fundraising and community relations opportunity.

Before Mobility City, students with low vision from all over Kentucky and Indiana often learned to navigate streets either while out on field trips or on Goldsmith Lane, the very busy street where VIPS is located. This was unnerving and required much supervision of the young children. Mobility City offers a safe space and important details.

Roxann Mayros and Diane Nelson will be meeting with Todd Dunn, President of UAW Local 862, and other stakeholders in the near future to explore how the UAW members and Ford can re-create this environment nationally. Changing the lives of children with blindness and visual impairment has personally touched the union team members who created the city and they want their peers to also have that opportunity.

If you are interested in specific information or want to be put on the waiting list for future projects, please contact the VisionServe office.

West Coast Center for Excellence



Tools used by Chris Downey, Architect

Chris Downey, an architect who is blind, spoke at VisionServe's November 2015 conference where he talked about his choice to remain in a very visual profession after his vision loss. Chris had been a successful and respected architect when, in 2008, doctors found a tumor on his optic nerve. They successfully removed it but it caused permanent blindness. And, for Chris, it caused him to do some soul searching. He determined his creative process was very much intact and that what he needed were new tools. Those new tools include embossed building plans and wax sticks that he bends and manipulates to "sketch." He used these in designing aspects of the new San Francisco LightHouse building. With a parade through the



Bryan Bashin in the halls of the new San Francisco Lighthouse

streets of San Francisco, the LightHouse's \$20 million West Coast Center for Excellence officially opened on June 10th. It will be the first building of its kind, designed for the blind, by the blind and fully operable by the blind. Many smartphones, computers, other devices and apps already feature universal design. The architectural innovations being pushed by the LightHouse are likely to further the trend. For example, the design includes building materials that acoustically resonate in exactly the right way. Downey worked with acoustical engineers who are usually engaged to muffle sounds—the buzz of heating and air-conditioning units, the cacophony of street life—so the LightHouse project was something new for these engineers.

Downey says that it was only after he lost his sight that he realized how limited his architectural training was. "It's not just about how it's seen



Chris Downey, Architect

through the eyes, but how it's seen through touch and hearing and all these other experiences," he says. "Architecture should aspire to more than accessibility, especially in the case of

the blind. What is delight and beauty if you can't see it? What makes for that enriching, beautiful experience if you're going to experience it with something other than sight? For the blind, of course, that is sound."

Congratulations to Bryan Bashin, Chris Downey, Lighthouse employees and board members and, most especially, to the thousands of people with vision loss who will benefit from the LightHouse's West Coast Center for Excellence.

NewView Oklahoma's New View on Low Vision

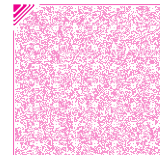


Chris Downey, presenting to architects in Oklahoma City

After hearing Chris Downey, an architect who is blind, speak at VisionServe's 2015 Fall Conference, and seeing the concepts he had incorporated into the design of the San Francisco Lighthouse's new building, Lauren Branch asked Chris to consult on NewView Oklahoma's new Low Vision Clinic.

Wanting to take full advantage of Chris' knowledge and expertise while he was in Oklahoma City, Lauren and staff organized a seminar (with AIA CEU's) for Oklahoma City architects, designers and planners. Chris spoke about signage, lighting, AV and lighting controls, acoustics, visually accessible environments and multi-sensory design. As sponsor of the event, NewView Oklahoma not only fulfilled their goal to show that all things are possible for people with vision loss, but they opened a whole new awareness campaign with architects, planners and designers who create and design public places in Oklahoma City.

Do You Know that ...



You can make a painless and recurring contribution to your "favorite" membership organization?

Simply go to VisionServe's web-site and click on the Donate Now button, scroll down to the Donate link, enter your commitment and check the "recurring monthly" box.

You can purchase VisionServe's 2016 Compensation and Benefits report?

The report is free if you answered the survey, but if you didn't, then you can still benefit from the extensive data collected on executives, manufacturing and vision professionals. Call or e-mail Roxann at **314.961.8235** or **rmayros@visionservealliance.org**

You or your organization can provide expert help to VisionServe Alliance?

To keep our expenses focused on member services, we welcome expertise in communications, human resources, technology, web-site management, social media, grant writing and more!

Corporations believe in our VisionServe "Alliance?"

By evidence of their long time financial support, Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Mutual of America, Bob Brinckerhoff of Morgan Stanley and Lewis Direct believe in VisionServe's mission to build and nurture a diverse core of future and current leaders in our field.

The Changing Landscape...(continued from page 1)

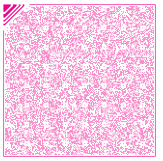
- Respondents said title change would help with licensure, legislative issues and communications with allied health professionals

Future Efforts

- Include Vision Impairment Specialists in Occupational Information Network (O*NET) and U.S. Occupational Outlook Handbook
- Third party reimbursement
- National database of expert courses
- Core Curriculum for Adults (patterned after Core Curriculum for Children)
- Licensing

What Are Your Favorites?

Meet Billy Henry, bhenry@nwaba.org,
Northwest Association of Blind Athletes



What do you do in your down time?

I find running to be a great way to relieve stress. I ran as part of a team in a 200-mile relay last month (July, 2016).

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

The Courage to Act by Ben Bernanke.

What is your best guilty pleasure?

I love spending the day playing Sim City (or some other game where I can build something).

Tell us about one item on your bucket list.

I would love to explore Europe.

My best childhood memory is...

Visiting and spending time with my grandparents in Eastern Montana.

The best advice I ever got was...

Always work hard at everything you do no matter the task or project.

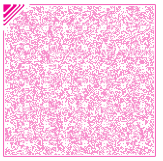
If I didn't work in this field, I would be...

In some position in the for-profit business sector. Beyond the mission-related work I do, I love the strategic and operational aspects of my role.

What's on my desk?

Kathy Zeider – kzeider@acvrep.org

Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACREP)



When I received the call two years ago asking if I would consider being ACVREP's interim President, I had never heard of the field. Each day on the job I became more impressed and passionate about what the professionals in our field do. When the Board asked me to take the position permanently, even though it meant uprooting my life and moving from Phoenix to Tucson, I said yes without hesitation. The opportunity to become a permanent part of this important field and to have the opportunity to contribute to its growth was compelling.

Over the past two years, what was on my desk was all of the certification work flow charts that went into the customization of ACVREP's new website and database. It was a big project, but it has significantly improved the customer service we can now provide to our certificants and improved our operating efficiency. Also on my desk, at the same time, were all of the certification document drafts for the recently launched certification for Assistive Technology Instructional Specialists. Those are now complete and ACVREP is accepting applicants for the beta exam under development.

With those projects completed, what is now foremost on my desk is our Five-Year Strategic Plan and the Scorecard that I will provide to the Board at each quarterly meeting about our progress in achieving the strategic goals. Another item on my desk is the survey we are in the process of conducting to reach out in the next month to all of our certificants for their feedback.

Looking at the picture of my desk it is very neat, but to be honest, I must confess that before taking the picture, I removed the dozens of post-it notes that usually cover the area around my computer or are stuck to the bottom of the computer screen. I have never decided whether post-it notes are a strength or weakness in organizing work flow, but they certainly are a daily part of my life!

My personal touches in the office are not on the desk but hang above or across from my desk. Since there was no artwork in the office when I arrived, I was able to bring in my own pieces that have meaning for me. The picture above my computer monitor is a group of people crossing the street during rush hour in the Chicago Loop. For me, it is filled with action and purpose and reminds me to keep moving forward with energy and drive. For other moments, when I need calm and reflection, I look across my desk to the bookcase where there



is a scene of the Scottish Highlands on a cloudy day. It helps open my mind to more strategic thinking.

When Roxann asked me to write this article, I was

very tempted to tell her I was too busy, but then I thought about how important membership in VisionService Alliance has been to me, personally. My first conference in the field was the VisionServe Alliance conference in Winter Park, Florida. All of you were so welcoming to me then and continue to offer your support and friendship. This article is giving me the opportunity to say thank you to Roxann and to each of you.

Lighthouse Louisiana Says “Thank You”



This August, Lighthouse Louisiana suffered significant losses in our Baton Rouge facility due to unprecedented flooding throughout the region. Floodwaters affected our offices and cup manufacturing plant and 18 of our employees personally.

Because of such incredible generosity from our community we are well on our way to a speedy recovery.

When word got out about the flooding, some VisionServe Alliance members and NIB associated agencies were the first to jump in and provide support. We're immeasurably grateful for the donations we received from the following organizations, their employees and supporters: AVRE, Lighthouse Central Florida, Envision, New



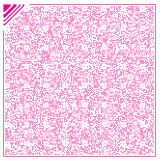
View Oklahoma, North Central Sight Services, Seattle Lighthouse, and the Travis Association for the Blind.

In addition, NIB directly supported our employees by gifting each with a generous gift card. Beyond Vision even hosted an employee walk-a-thon to raise funds for our recovery efforts! These donations are helping to rebuild our facilities. One cup machine is already up and running, and we expect two more to be operating within the next few weeks. This means that we will be able to put 20 employees back to work by the end of September!

VisionServe Alliance Fall Conference

San Antonio, TX November 2-5, 2016

Deep in the Heart!



San Antonio is known as a favorite vacation destination. See why as you wander the downtown River Walk.



VisionServe Alliance CEO Summit

Charleston, SC May 7-10, 2017

Southern Charm and the Historic City



Bursting with Southern charm and hospitality, this city feels suspended in time as you are inspired by it's beauty.

Printing and Mailing Donated by Lewis Direct