



# LINKS

Learning • Innovation • Networking • Knowledge • Sharing

## Members Honored at Annual Awards Dinner

The VisionServe Alliance board of directors was proud to present two recipients with the Lifetime Achievement award. Not necessarily awarded annually, this award is presented based on the board's knowledge of VisionServe Alliance member leaders who have achieved professionally or personally throughout their lives and/or careers.

**Jim Phipps**, with his strong work ethic and great compassion for others, is one of the Lifetime Achievement award recipients. He became the Executive Director at the Iris Network



because he believed that blind and visually impaired individuals in Maine deserved better. Over the course of his tenure, Jim led multiple improvements to The Iris Network. Jim is beloved for having mentored and supported the careers of many professionals in many fields including legal, nonprofit, and visual impairment.

**Gidget Hopf** was also awarded the Lifetime Achievement award for her firm belief in the abilities of people with vision loss and a desire to give people every opportunity to prove it to themselves and



the community. Through a great deal of hard work, determination, and innovation, she built a solid social enterprise that has generated good jobs and lasting careers; while at the same time bolstering the organization to also be regarded as a premiere provider of vision rehabilitation and low vision services to people of all ages.

VisionServe Alliance's Excellence in Leadership Award honors a member who has made outstanding contributions at the local, regional or national level to services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This year

**Bernadette Kappen** was honored for her devotion to children who are blind or visually impaired. In 25 years at Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia,



she worked with children and families in developing language and communication programs that have become models for other professionals. Then as Executive Director at the New York Institute for Special Education, she continues to be a strong advocate whose leadership skills improve the quality of student's lives through educational opportunities and family support. Not only is she an advocate that is innovative and influential in the field, but she is also an active member of VisionServe, serving on the board and various committees.



## CEO Corner

*Roxann Mayros, VisionServe Alliance, St. Louis, MO*

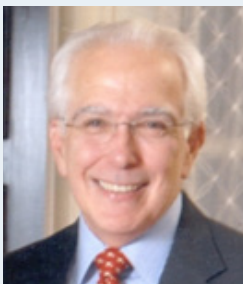
VisionServe's staff and board are constantly striving to provide value to you, our members. In addition to the many money saving benefits we currently provide, I want to tell you about new opportunities and savings we will bring to you in 2018.



- A new and more user-friendly website, filled with the information and data you regularly request.
- The opportunity to add two of your management leaders as members for no additional cost.
- New networking communities.
- Discounts, revenue generating opportunities, and new product placements from OrCam, HumanWare, VFO (Freedom Scientific and Optalec), and more.
- 2018 Compensation and Benefits Survey.
- Opportunities to contribute to the knowledge base of our field by participating in a variety of research projects.

Stay tuned - 2018 is going to be a whirlwind of activity!

## Thank you to our outgoing Board Members



**Wells Jones**



**Reinhard Mabry**

## Chairman's Message

*Mark G. Ackermann, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Lighthouse Guild International*

As I write this message I am still feeling the euphoria of five days in New Orleans with the board, our members, and VisionServe's incredible staff at our annual conference.



First please allow me to thank Roxann and her staff for putting together five flawless days of activities. From our board meeting through the conference, every detail was taken care of with impeccable precision. Wendy and Jen were first time staff to this conference, but you would have never known it as they handled every detail with great professionalism and savvy. Thank you!!!

The conference was highly educational for me and all of our attendees. I understand we are receiving high marks from attendees. The presenters were well received, the roundtables lively and well attended, and of course, as with all our conferences, the networking and camaraderie were the highlights of the week.

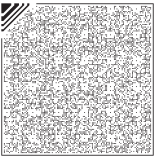
During the annual meeting, we thanked retiring board members and elected three new board members. At other points during the conference, we expressed gratitude to the largest number of sponsors we have ever had, acknowledged retiring colleagues, and presented awards to three deserving members. Congratulations to Gidget, Jim and Bernadette.

Your board of directors spent seven hours on Sunday planning a very aggressive 2018 agenda, including a new strategic plan and the process to select a new CEO to replace Roxann, who has been VisionServe's only full-time CEO since its incorporation. I am proud and privileged to serve alongside this remarkable board.

I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

# 2017 REPORT TO MEMBERS

## ...A FEW HIGHLIGHTS.



- Retained 97% of our 2016 membership
- 13 new members
- Members were surveyed, and their feedback integrated into operations
- New associate membership categories developed for for-profits, nonprofits, individuals, and students
- A new website and membership management system launched
- Both CEO Summit and Executive Leadership Conference had record setting attendance and sponsors
- \$30/300/3000 Campaign celebrating 30th year of incorporation
- Co-led campaign to change WIOA regulations
- Provided member support via strategic planning, board training, meeting facilitation, conference presentations, and track development, etc.
- Negotiated discounts for members with providers of technology, magnifiers, etc.
- Increased social media imprint through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube

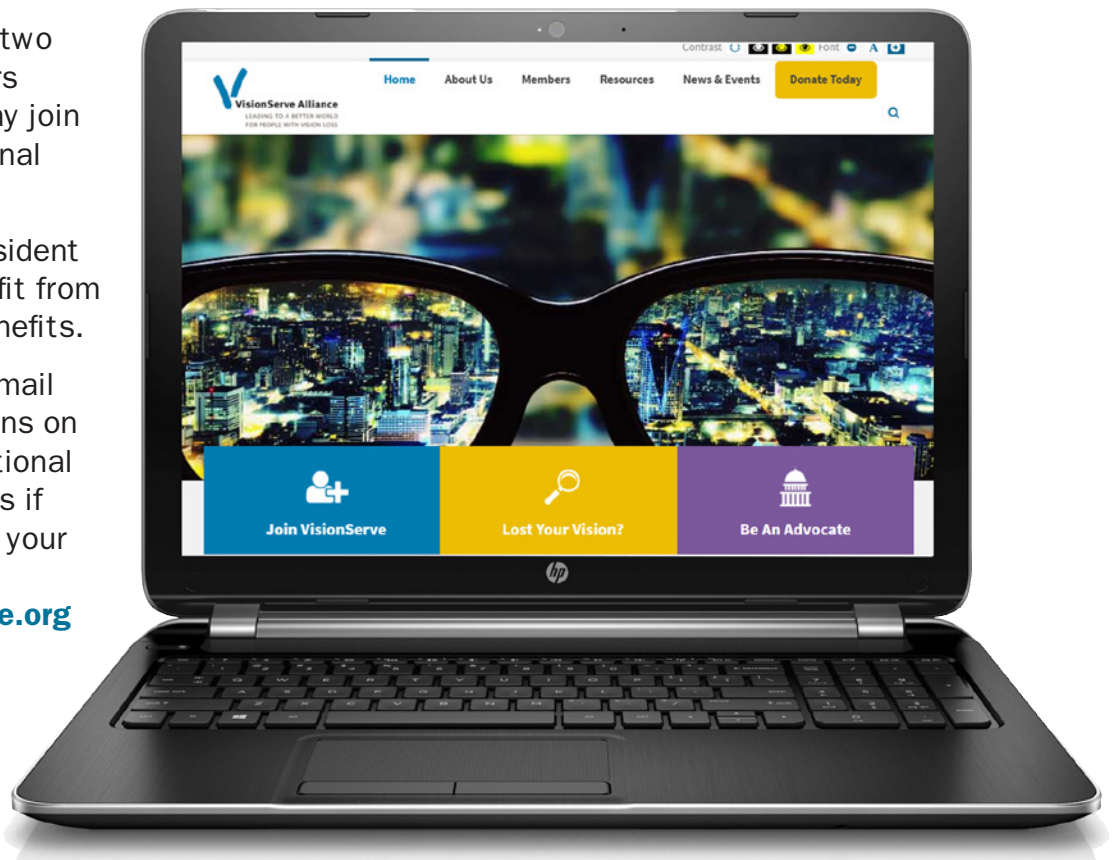
## NEW MEMBER OPPORTUNITY

Beginning January 2018, two additional top level leaders from your organization may join VisionServe at NO additional cost.

Leaders must be vice president or director level and benefit from VisionServe Alliance's benefits.

You will be receiving an email in December with directions on how to add your two additional staff members. Contact us if you have questions about your member benefits at

[admin@visionservealliance.org](mailto:admin@visionservealliance.org)





**NOV. 5 - 8 IN NEW ORLEANS, LA**



## **29TH ANNUAL EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

**This year's Executive Leadership Conference included keynote sessions on cybersecurity and leader communication skills, discussion tables on current topics, awards celebrations, and more.**



Mark Ackermann and Roxann Mayros with Marios Damianides of Ernst & Young, the opening keynote session on cybersecurity. Marios' advice: be proactive by answering "What are our most important assets?" and "What can't we loose?"



Dine Around at the Bourbon House with Sharon Giovinazzo, Barbara Peterson, Anat Nulman, Regan Mattingly, Ellyn Drotzer, Bill Powell, James Michaels, and Denise Jess.



Bob Scheffel, Pam Brandin, Mark Lucas and Arjun Mishra networking at the welcome reception.

Mark Lucas introduced Mike Bina who explained to us that Paralympic means "parallel with the Olympics," and that these athletes train just as diligently as any other Olympian. Our goal as leaders in this field is to change the world's attitudes about disability.







Attendees practiced Dianna Booher's techniques to improve their communication skills in specific situations like how to tackle hostile questions, rambling questions, and speaking on the fly.



Juli Pattison of the Louisiana Lighthouse presents speaker Marc Barnes a thank you gift for his presentation on improving the bond of the CEO and CDO.



Tuesday's discussion tables gave attendees the opportunity to share and hear updates on a wide range of current topics.



Courtney Plotner and Brooks Harken enjoying some beignets from Café du Monde



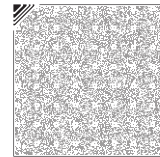
Generous donations sponsored conference attendance for three scholarship recipients this fall: Kathryn Garre-Ayars of Healthy Eyes Alliance, Shellen Heber of the Valley Center f/t Blind, and Sylvia Perez of Lighthouse f/t Visually Impaired and Blind.



Last stop—tour and lunch at the Louisiana Lighthouse hosted by Renee Vidrine and her wonderful staff.



# Celebrating our Donors and Looking at the Year Ahead...



*Celebrating some of our generous donors to VisionServe's 30/300/3000 Campaign. Pictured here: Wells Jones, Nancy Niebrugge, Erika Petach, Mike Gilliam, Ken Warkentin and Mark Ackermann*

We have had a great celebration of VisionServe's 30th anniversary of incorporation. Previous editions of LINKS highlighted our history and announced the Fund Development Committee's 30/300/3000 Campaign to build capacity. Erika Petach, Committee

Chair, first asked board and committee members to donate or pledge using the number 3, like \$30 for 3 months. Celebration #1 - 100% did! Erika next challenged attendees at our Executive Leadership Conference in New Orleans to donate or pledge. Celebration #2 - many did! Celebration #3 - The most creative donation came from Thomas Panek of Guiding Eyes - \$3,333.33!

As the end of our 30th anniversary year quickly approaches, Erika hopes you will join the board, fund development committee, and conference attendees by making your own contribution using the number 3. In January 2018, we will announce Celebration #4 - the 30/300/3000 campaign's successful outcome.



*Donations of \$30 and up receive our commemorative 30-year keychain*

It is easy to do by clicking on the Donate Now button on our website, calling the office at 314-961-8235 or mailing a check.

## Two Opportunities from ORCAM Only for VisionServe Members

- #1.** 50% discount on one MyEye unit  
Free trainer certification for staff  
\$250 for training each client/purchaser  
5%-10% commission on sales  
OrCam will promote/support Demo Day(s)
- #2.** Become a reseller  
Requires minimum purchase  
23% to 30% margin

**To Benefit, mention VisionServe Alliance and contact:**

**Motti Attia** – motti.attia@orcaml.com

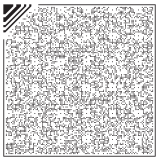
**Anat Nulman** – anat.nulman@orcaml.com



*Kim Galban-Countryman won an OrCam MyEye at our recent conference in New Orleans*



# Q & A Member Spotlight: Dan Needham, Earle Baum Center



**How long has the Earle Baum been a member of VSA?**

*Since 2004  
(maybe longer)*

**How long have you been the Earle Baum's voting member?**

*2 years*

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

*Swimming (preferably open water), listening to live music, spending time with family (usually eating).*

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

*Listening to a lot of podcasts: Planet Money, This American Life, The Moth, and 99% Invisible are some favorites. Reading "Now: The Physics of Time" by Richard Muller.*

**What is your best guilty pleasure?**

*Screamn' Mimi's ice cream or an occasional Manhattan*

**Tell us about one item on your bucket list?**

*Swimming with the Bondi Icebergs in Australia*

**My best childhood memory is...**

*Sledding down the hills in the canyons above Salt Lake City on toboggans with friends. And hot chocolate to warm up at the top of the hill.*

**What do you want to be when you grow up?**

*A mentor for others. I want to help leaders have less stress through their challenges. Perspective and time have value.*



# VisionServe Alliance CEO Summit

Tanque Verde Ranch, Tucson, AZ | April 29-May 2, 2018



## VisionServe Alliance Executive Leadership Conference

Portland, OR | Nov. 11 – 14, 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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