



VisionServe Alliance

December 2015 - Issue 2

LINKS

Learning.. Innovation.. Networking.. Knowledge.. Sharing..

And the Winners Are...



Mark Lucas-Presenter, **Mike Bina**-Recipient, **Miki Jordan**-Board Chair



Mark Ackermann-Presenter, **Carl Augusto**-Recipient, **Miki Jordan**-Board Chair



Pam Brandin-Presenter, **Allan Brenner**-Recipient, **Miki Jordan**-Board Chair

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Excellence in Leadership

Each year, VisionServe Alliance members are given the opportunity to nominate a peer for our most prestigious recognition – the **Excellence in Leadership** award. It is the most difficult decision our Board of Directors makes each year as our members are truly the top leaders in our field.

This year was no exception, but one nomination truly stood out.

Dr. Michael Bina's experience in the field of blindness began in 1973 as a Teacher and coach at the Wisconsin School for the Visually Impaired. Since then, his impressive performances in the roles of principal,

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CEO Corner

Roxann Mayros

VisionServe Alliance
St. Louis, MO



What a productive year we have had! We are proud to tell you that in 2015 we led a national effort to influence the rules associated with the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, analyzed results of the nationwide Evidence Based Outcome Pilot Project, completed the third year of the Gibney Family Foundation grant that allowed us to influence the re-vamping of both curricula and textbooks at University vision rehab programs, and most exciting, VisionServe is the recipient of its first Federal grant in partnership with Mississippi State and AFB. Together we will

create and administer the U.S. Technical and Training Center for Older Blind Americans. And just as you expect from us, in 2016 we will continue to influence national policy, take a leadership role in bringing together several organizations of and for the blind to develop common objectives and greater collaboration, produce two national conferences focused on learning and networking, and our membership will grow!

So, as 2015 winds down, please know that I appreciate you and I thank you for your support and interest in the work we do on your behalf each and every day.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Roxann Mayros".

Message from Board Chair

Miki Jordan

Junior Blind of America
Los Angeles, CA



together to challenge the obstacles and seize the opportunities to build a better world. I wish you and yours the very happiest of holiday seasons and a future of peace and hope.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Miki Jordan".

What a productive this year has been! And each and every one of you is to be congratulated for your contributions this year – and every year. The hours spent and the energy directed towards the promotion of VisionServe Alliance's goals is inspiring. And I don't believe I have ever seen or been part of such an amazing assemblage that works so well together; I am grateful and justifiably proud to be a part of this organization. I don't know how else to say it. Together, and individually, you make the world a better place. Thank you – thank you all! And I want to take a moment to thank Roxann for all the wisdom and leadership she contributes on a daily basis. She brings it all together. I am looking forward to 2016 as we continue to work

And the Winners Are...

Continued from the cover

superintendent, and president occurred when he was the leader of the Indiana School for the Blind, The Hadley School for the Blind, Texas School for the Blind, Perkins School for the Blind, and currently The Maryland School for the Blind. Mike has served on the boards of most all major organizations for the blind, including VisionServe Alliance, COSB, USABA, AER, AFB, and APH. His writing skills are exemplary; he's a much sought-after commencement and keynote speaker; and his creativity is unbounded. With a career spanning more than four decades, Dr. Michael J. Bina's nomination received unanimous support.

Lifetime Achievement

In 2013, the Board of Directors created a new recognition to be awarded to a member who has spent a lifetime making untold contributions to the field of blindness and visual impairment. In 2015, the Board was pleased to recognize two outstanding and longtime members of VisionServe Alliance.

Carl Augusto has served in a variety of professional capacities, beginning in 1971 as a rehabilitation counselor. Since then, he was associate executive director of NAC and executive director of the Cincinnati Association for the Blind where he expanded service programs in early childhood intervention and assistive technology.

In 1991, Carl became AFB's president & CEO where during his tenure he expanded AFB's scope to influence corporate America to make products and services accessible, created the digitized Helen Keller Museum, made information and support accessible with Senior Site and Family Connect, influenced a myriad of policy issues, and brought organizations, of and for the blind, together toward common objectives and greater collaboration. As Mark Ackermann said,

"Carl is an outstanding example to the rest of us in this line of work because of his exemplary professionalism, good humor, and obvious commitment to mission and service. He is a pre-eminent leader in the field of blindness and visual impairment."

Allan Brenner has made significant contributions at the local, regional and national levels for twenty years in his role as founding leader of the Earle Baum Center of Northern California. Allan has been the driving force behind an organization that provides a full range of professional services to its clients and produces an acclaimed Americana music event – Earlefest. Allan has held leadership roles in California Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, formed strong local, regional and national partnerships, and was a national advocate and leader during the Medicare Demonstration Project. In addition to his day job, Allan always found time to mentor many in the VisionServe alliance, was the first visually impaired board chair, and has been an exceptional guiding force to VisionServe's maturation as a leading organization in the field.

LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD
WINNERS

VisionServe Alliance

Honors 2015 Scholarship Recipients

Each year VisionServe honors employees of member organizations who are seeking their Master's degree or certification/licensure in vision rehabilitation, O&M, or nonprofit management. Please meet our 2015 Recipients.

VisionCorps



Dennis Steiner Presenting
Jennifer Eaton, Coordinator of Youth Services & Teacher of V.I.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Vision Serve Alliance for the generous scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). With the support of Vision Serve Alliance, I will be able to complete the Orientation and Mobility program at Pitt. By obtaining my certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist I will be able to continue providing high quality education to my students, giving them the skills and tools they need in order to become independent travelers.

St. Louis Society for the Blind



Dave Ekin Presenting
Karly Angeli, LVT / VRT

Thank you to VisionServe Alliance and its supportive members. I am grateful to be given the opportunity to further my training to better serve the low vision population. The scholarship will allow me to become certified as a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist to help adults maintain independence within their home despite vision changes. During my clinical, I witnessed first-hand the difference a VRT can make and I truly hope I can be a part of that difference.

A.V.R.E.



Kenny Fernald Presenting
Stephan Connors, COMS

I want to thank you for the VisionAlliance scholarship and was a tremendous help and encouragement to me.



Chantel Buck, Executive Director
New Vision for Independence
Seeking an MBA

What Are Your Favorites?

Erika Arbogast earbogast@pghvis.org

**Blind & Vision Rehabilitation
Services Of Pittsburgh**

If I didn't work in this field, I would have gotten into politics or been an attorney.

**My best childhood memory is ...
My family had foster children all my life and I had 26 different children living with us throughout my childhood. It taught me at an early age how lucky I was to have two loving parents and a safe, happy home. I have positive memories of all the children that lived with us.**

**What do you do in your downtime?
Shop and Travel. When I am not shopping in stores I am shopping on-line.**

The best advice I ever got was ... If you don't go after what you want you will never have it, If you don't ask the answer will always be no, if you do not step forward you will always be in the same place.

Tell us about one item on your bucket list? I want to visit Australia. I have traveled to all other continents (except Antarctica and have no desire to go there!)

What are you reading, watching and/or listening to? I just finished a book called "All the light which we cannot see". It is a book about a girl who is blind surviving the Holocaust. I am very interested in the Holocaust.

**What is your best guilty pleasure?
The real housewives shows on Bravo. (mindless entertainment)**



What's On My Desk!

Roxann Mayros

rmayros@visionservealliance.org

VisionServe Alliance

My desk is pretty messy most of the time, so I decided to share my bulletin board. Florida (my home state) is featured with pictures of the beach and a sunset, a pink flamingo ornament, and an aqua colored fish. When it's cold in St. Louis, I look at the pictures and it makes me feel better. I have quotes that remind me of important things like "From What We Get We Can Make a Living; What We Give, However, Makes a Life." Arthur Ashe. I don't know who said this one, but I love it: "To give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."

I have little things from past VisionServe conferences – a postcard from Boston (Spring 2013), 9/11 memorial ticket (Fall 2011), Amsler Grid from Envision (Spring 2011), USABA sticker (Fall 2009), and magnet from Niagara Falls (Fall 2006). I also have a Brailled American flag

given to me in 2006, and a note from my niece who took the time to print the

Braille code above alphabetical letter. I smiled when I opened her note and it still makes me smile 5 years later. There is also a copy of an article from Forbes Magazine written in 2004 and entitled Charity Isn't Cheap – Don't Use Overhead as the Litmus Test for Giving. It still hits home, especially when I recently read an article lambasting a charity for "wasting" money on salaries. I almost know the article by heart because I've read it so often, so

when we met in Washington, D.C. in 2010, I invited the author, Robert Degger to speak at our conference – and he did! I truly love three pictures on my bulletin board – an ink drawing of trees that Pam Brandin (Vista Center) gave me from Japan, two pictures of lighthouse's because I began my career in this field leading Lighthouses for the Blind, and a very bright needlework of a hummingbird for two reasons, 1) hummingbirds represent good luck, and 2) during the summer our St. Louis house has hundreds of hummingbirds which bring me great joy.



Our Members In The News

Send your news to media@visionservealliance.org.

Hadley School for the Blind Earns Envision Oculus Award



At its 10th annual conference on low vision, Envision awarded The Hadley School for the Blind with its prestigious Oculus Award. The award is presented annually to individuals or organizations nominated by their peers in vision rehabilitation and research, whose careers or programs have had a significant impact on people who are blind or visually impaired through professional collaboration, advocacy, research or education. "We are proud to honor an institution...that gives so much to the BVI community," said Envision's President/CEO Michael J. Monteferrante in presenting the award. "By dedicating their efforts to the discovery and dissemination of information, The Hadley School...breaks down barriers that might otherwise prevent those who are blind and visually impaired, their families and others from achieving all that they can in the world. We salute their commitment and accomplishments and encourage others to follow their example."

Partner of the Year



NewView Oklahoma was recognized as Partner of the Year by Oklahoma ABLE Tech for outstanding programs and services offered at the NewView Oklahoma Low Vision Center in Tulsa, Okla. Oklahoma ABLE Tech and its statewide partners operate an assistive technology device demonstration and short-term loan program to increase access to and utilization of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. In the first 20 months of partnership with ABLE Tech, NewView Oklahoma in Tulsa has made 199 loans and 363 demonstrations.

"We could not be more excited to receive this award from Oklahoma ABLE Tech," Cathy Holden, NewView Oklahoma Director of Rehabilitation Services, said. "The Device Demonstration and Short-Term Loan Program is invaluable to us. The program allows our patients to try assistive devices in their own home and in their own community to ensure the equipment they are purchasing will work for them."

Bionic Eye A Success

Miami Lighthouse for the Blind & Visually Impaired is proud to have played an integral role in the remarkable story of Carmen Torres' "bionic eye," reported in the Aug.1 article Letting the light in with new bionic eye. The Lighthouse's chief program officer, Carol Brady-Simmons, and Occupational & Low Vision Therapist Raquel Van



Der Biest worked with Torres after the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System was implanted at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

As the first person in Florida to receive the innovative medical device, there was no book on how to teach Torres to use the highly complicated system. It was up to Brady-Simmons and Van Der Biest to literally write it in concert with its manufacturer, Second Sight Medical Products.

Many hours were spent both in Miami and in Torres' Tampa home, painstakingly teaching her how to position her head, her eyes and her body to take full advantage of the limited field of view afforded by the device. Van Der Biest also accompanied Torres to California to test software modifications at Second Sight's laboratories.

All of us at the Miami Lighthouse are excited and proud that the innovative rehabilitation and therapy was an integral part of the successful outcome of this remarkable story.

Reprint from THE MIAMI HERALD

Member Stories

Send your stories to media@visionservealliance.org.

A Unique Opportunity With Pope Francis

By Mark G. Ackermann



On September 24th, the cell phone in my pocket started vibrating with messages from several VisionServe colleagues asking if it was me they were seeing on TV standing at the elbow of His Holiness, Pope Francis as he arrived at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Yes it was me! And, here's how it came about.

Some of you are aware that I worked for the Archdiocese of New York before becoming President and CEO of Lighthouse International in 2009. During my years at the Archdiocese, I served as Executive Director of Pope Benedict's 2008 visit to New York. It was a full-time job, and in fact, it was the most massive undertaking of my career, which required arranging every detail of the four-day visit to New York and the United Nations. We seated 104,000 people in eight different venues and dealt with all

the security and logistical aspects of each one.

About nine-months before Pope Francis's visit, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, asked me to plan and execute the "Evening Prayer" service at St. Patrick's Cathedral, and serve as Chief of Protocol at the Apostolic

Nunciature (residence of the Vatican Ambassador to the U.N.). The next day, the Vatican's Ambassador to the U.N. asked if I would help him prepare the Apostolic Residence for the Pope's stay. This entailed remodeling and painting of the century old home on East 72nd Street in Manhattan. In my "spare" time I studied all of the protocol of dealing with the Pope and the many heads of state he would meet with at the residence.

After months of preparation at St. Patrick's, the U.N., and the Residence, all was ready and New York City was awash with excitement and anticipation. By noon on the 24th, the Secret Service and the New York City Police Department had completed their "sweep" of the Cathedral and we were allowed to let people into the church. Every invited guest and

participant had to pass through strict security measures and by late afternoon the Cathedral, which had just finished undergoing complete interior and exterior renovations, was gleaming and stuffed to the rafters. At 5:00, the radio in my ear crackled with the message, "Shepard One has landed (at JFK Airport)." By 5:45, the Pope was in Manhattan riding down Fifth Avenue in his famous Popemobile, and at exactly 6:30, the Holy Father arrived at St. Patrick's which came alive with music and thunderous applause as he strolled down the main aisle.

I left the service early, escorted to the Apostolic Residence by the New York Police, where I began my second role as "Chief of Protocol." For two and half days, I met dignitaries, benefactors and other important guests, briefing them on proper protocol for their visit with the Pope. I was amazed to see people's faces and emotions as they met this simple man who chose to be called Pope Francis, his way of reminding people daily to help all people, even the poorest of the poor. Some of the wealthiest people in the world and many world leaders left with tears in their eyes having spent only a few minutes with this

Member Stories *continued*

Send your stories to media@visionservealliance.org.

Pope Francis

incredible man.

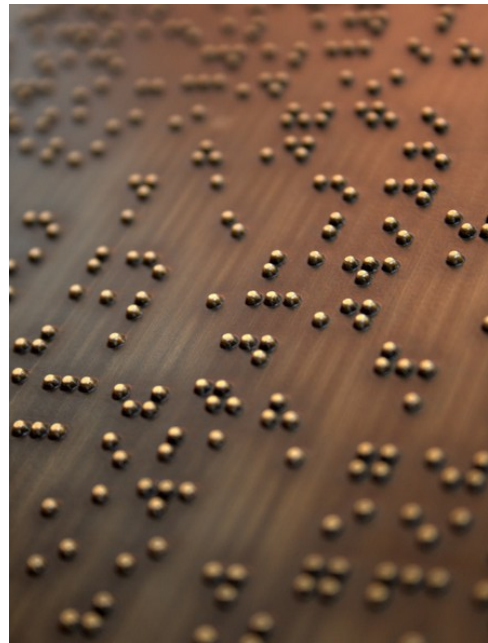
I had the unique and very special opportunity to spend time with the Holy Father at the beginning and end of each day and after each meeting with dignitaries, but also on his final morning when I shared breakfast with him and personally heard his views on a wide range of subjects. I then received a special Apostolic Blessing from Pope Francis, and an amazing two and half days were over. However, a lifetime of memories will last forever.

Lighthouse of Collier Receives Heroes in Healthcare Award

Lighthouse of Collier received the Naples Daily News' 2015 Heroes in Healthcare Community Outreach Award. The Lighthouse was chosen by an independent panel of judges from nominations solicited from the readers of the Naples Daily News and were honored at a celebratory awards luncheon on October 6th. "Here's to Our Heroes" recognizes excellence, promotes innovation and educates the community about best practices to enhance the value and quality of health care in southwest Florida.



Literacy Matters! Cloovernook



Literacy matters to Cloovernook. For over 100 years, Cloovernook has been the industry leader in braille publication (30 million pages annually). Did you know that only 10% of individuals who are blind or visually impaired are able to read braille, leaving 90% functionally illiterate? Or that over 50% of students who are blind drop out of high school and 70% of adults who are of working age are unemployed? Many people do not realize that a person who is blind and unable to read braille is similar to a sighted person who is unable to read print as they lack the skills necessary for most jobs and many everyday situations. This is why Cloovernook's commitment is to make braille literacy accessible for all individuals, blind or sighted.

2015 Annual Meeting & Fall Conference

A future Nobel Laureate, more data than we knew what to do with, networking with 100+ executives, relief that our brains are still "fit," great restaurants and dining companions, local wine, sunshine, rainbows, thunder and lightning, and more made our conference experience in La Jolla absolutely phenomenal!

"I may not have understood Dr. Ferrara's presentation, but I knew I was listening to brilliance and I was glad I was there." **Allan Brenner, Earle Baum**

"The value of the work we do, and the lives we do it for, certainly merit speakers of Dr. Ferrara's caliber. Thanks for putting on such a super conference." **Kyle Johnson, Lighthouse Central Florida**

Comments from the post conference survey:

"Best run and most informative conferences of all that I attend. You all do a great job!"

"The Conference experience was great!"

"I really found the conference well organized and enjoyable."



Al Avina, BVA



Roxann and Richard Ybarra, Braille Inst.



LaDonna Ringering, Center f/t Partially Sighted and Kim Gibbens, San Diego Center



Meeting at Braille Institute—San Diego

Did You Know...

That VisionServe receives in-kind support from members?

- Bosma - Hosted a member meeting to explore client data bases.
- Envision - Printed our stationery, envelopes, etc.
- San Antonio Lighthouse - Hosted our 2015 Board retreat.
- St. Louis Society for the Blind-Produced our Braille and provided access to equipment and support staff.



That Roxann does member tours?

- In North Carolina she visited Industries of the Blind, Metrolina, Association for the Blind, and Winston-Salem Industries.
- In Florida she visited Lighthouse Central Florida, Lighthouse Pinellas, Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, Lighthouse of Manasota, and Tampa Lighthouse.



That we gained 4 new members in 2015?

- NorthWest Association for Blind Athletes - Billy Henry
- Society for the Blind of Sacramento - Shari Roeseler
- The Sight Center of NW Ohio - Stacey Butts
- Valley Center for the Blind - Ken Warkentin

WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS

That 5 members hosted and/or sponsored our conferences?

- Braille Institute - Peter Mindnich
- Junior Blind - Miki Jordan
- NewView Oklahoma - Lauren Branch
- NIB - Kevin Lynch
- San Diego Center for the Blind - Kim Gibbens



That VisionServe moved offices?

Our address is still the same.
8760 Manchester Rd.
Saint Louis, MO 63144



Our Mission

To engage leaders in building a better world through services for people with vision loss.

Our Vision

To be a leader and a unified voice in the field for advocacy, education, ethical management, professional growth and enhanced services.

Our 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.

VisionServe Alliance CEO Summit

Colorado Springs, CO April 27-30, 2016

Come to Life in Colorado!



A place of spectacular beauty with dozens of family attractions, natural landmarks and unique museums.



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.

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