

LINKS

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

Welcome to LINKS

- the first issue of our newly named and redesigned magazine for and about VisionServe Alliance members. Formerly called *Stone Soup de jour*, the title was adopted from a children's fable and represented how our members contribute knowledge and information to the metaphorical "soup pot" to assist in growing leadership, building capacity and improving services within our individual organizations. Sounds like the perfect title, so why the change? Not all of our members are familiar with this fable so it was difficult for many to understand why our professional publication was called Stone Soup.

When member comments grew from a few to several, VisionServe staff responded

by putting a call out for a new name. **LINKS** was the winning suggestion as it represents exactly what VisionServe Alliance is all about:

Learning Innovation Networking Knowledge Sharing

Within these pages you will find articles about innovative ideas, meet members, learn more about upcoming networking and learning events, and more.

Let us know what you think about this issue, how to improve future issues, and

most especially, let us know if you like to write or would like to get to know your fellow members better as we are looking for "LINKS Correspondents." Connect with us at media@visionservealliance.org.

In This Issue:

Upcoming Conference Teaser

Message from CEO and Board Chair

A Look Back-Oklahoma City
Conference

Growing Their Mission-Envision

Funding Services for Infants and
Toddlers-VIPS

What are Your Favorites?-Mike Bina

Money Saving Tips

What's on My Desk!-Elly du Pre'

Our Members In the News

FYI

VisionServe Alliance Fall Conference

La Jolla, CA November 1-4, 2015

The sparkling jewel of San Diego is calling you!



From world-class shopping to shimmering ocean views, each day will be a new experience. Take it in at the La Jolla conference.



VisionServe Alliance Spring Conference

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.

USA: A
United States Association of Blind Athletes



Keynote Speaker
Eric
Weihenmayer



CEO Corner

Roxann Mayros

VisionServe Alliance
St. Louis, MO



As we approach the middle of summer, I hope these summer months afford you a little extra time to do a very important thing: share your knowledge and experiences (the "S" in LINKS).

I encourage you to look back on the work that you have accomplished and take time to share with your 110 VisionServe Alliance colleagues. I know that it is extremely hard to take a break to write about your accomplishments, however I can think of no better way to move our field and profession forward than to contribute to the capacity of our field by

sharing the effectiveness of what you do and offering an opportunity for others to replicate successes in their own communities.

So, pull up a hammock, open your laptop or tablet, and send us a one page summary of a success story or initiative (sometimes they are the same), a cost savings tip, or to tell us what is on your desk and why at media@visionservealliance.org. In addition to sharing with your peers, we believe strongly that the world outside of blindness needs to know what we do. This is why we will also post some of your submissions on our web-site's home page and in our new campaign to tell the medical and legislative communities about the successes and outcomes within our specialized service delivery system! Who could ask for a better summer project?

Message from Board Chair

Miki Jordan

Junior Blind of America
Los Angeles, CA



mentions, to the medical and legislative communities.

I'm certainly looking forward to hearing about everyone's latest accomplishments and to sharing some of my own. Have a wonderful summer, find some time to kick back and relax, and keep us all informed on what's happening.

Communication, communication. It's been a buzzword for the last 20 years or more. So much so that sometimes I think we are so obsessed with just getting the message out there and moving onto the next that we don't take the time to consider the actual impact our message can have. In sharing our successes, we not only educate and inspire our colleagues, but we have the opportunity to re-live and savor our victories and breakthroughs. And as a living, breathing community sharing similar missions, the more we communicate with each other, the more we grow and our presence as a whole increases. Today we have the resources at hand to get our message out to each other and, as Roxann

A Look Back Oklahoma City Conference -April 2015

Our goal at each conference is to provide a combination of learning and networking opportunities and Oklahoma City was no exception. Many found the speakers and their presentations highly valuable, especially Dr. Lewerenz's talk about new technologies and Kathryn Freund's unique transportation model. We toured



NewView employees making hoses

NewView Oklahoma where we saw employees in action making fire hoses, vinyl curtains, and expanding technology knowledge.

We took time to honor those lost in the Oklahoma City bombing with an emotional tour of The Oklahoma City



The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum

National Memorial and Museum. Friday night took us to the Oklahoma City Museum of Art where



Dale Chihuly: An Inaugural Exhibition at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art

Native American Dancers introduced us to ceremonial dances and clothing and we were fascinated as Jay Hannah slipped between Cherokee and English as he told us the story of the Cherokee migration to Oklahoma.



Renee Vidrine and Shelly Taylor with Native American Dancer



Native American Dancers

The April 2015 Conference was a huge success and we thank Lauren Branch and her team at NewView Oklahoma.



Native American Dancers



Miki Jordan, Dancer, Roxann Mayros, Dancer, Lauren Branch, Dancer at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.



Roxann Mayros with Native American Dancer



Roxann Mayros, and Tom Panek with Gus, his Guide Dog, viewing the Native American drum.

Success Stories

This new feature will be in all future issues.

Send your success stories to media@visionservealliance.org.



Growing Their Mission

In 2014, Envision was given a unique opportunity: to acquire a radio station to help provide another source of employment and revenue for the individuals it serves.

Journal Broadcast Group had to divest one of its stations as part of a merger. Envision bought the 100,000 watt station at KKGQ 92.3 FM. The acquisition was beneficial for both groups. Journal Broadcast Group was happy to help support the mission of Envision and Envision was thrilled to provide employment opportunities and programming for people who are blind and visually impaired.



cated blues show, gospel show, news and weather updates, and a popular morning talk show – Brett and Tracy Mornings.

The station has a 140-mile listener radius, and operates in downtown Wichita right next door to Envision's national headquarters. The station has a main studio, a production studio and a studio which will soon be outfitted with equipment specifically for use by those who are visually impaired.

Q92 currently has five hosts who are blind or visually impaired, and plans to grow its programming, as well as offer educational opportunities about careers in radio for youths and adults who are visually impaired.

"We were thrilled to add a new dimension to our organization and enter the world of broadcast communications," said Michael Monteferrante, President and CEO of Envision. "Q92 represents our latest success in diversifying our operations and strengthening

The station operates under the name Q92 FM and plays a mix of "90s to now" music, as well as a syndi-

our resources. We're gaining a new revenue stream for funding our programs, new job opportunities for those we serve and a valuable communications vehicle through which we and other organizations can reach audiences. We look forward to making this new venture a key asset to Envision's community and the Wichita community at large."

For more information about Q92, visit them online at Q92Wichita.com.

You can also stream the station via the website or the TuneIn app.



Funding Services for Infants and Toddlers

Visually Impaired Preschool Services (VIPS), located in Louisville, began serving infants and toddlers with blindness and low vision in Indiana on August 1, 2011. Specialized vision services had never been provided in Indiana prior to this date (even though mandated by federal and state law). Indiana officials were also not aware that services should be provided by highly trained professionals.

Story continued on page 6

Funding Services for Infants and Toddlers

Continued story from page 5.



To increase awareness in 2012, we delivered handmade Valentine's Day cards to Indiana legislators with Braille and photographs of Indiana's youngest blind children. The cards were so effective that we expanded the campaign in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Our small Valentine's Card Campaign launched a movement!

VIPS staff testified before the Developmental Disabilities Commission, the Education Committee and the Health and Human Services Committee.

Indiana's Birth Defects Registry did not include many conditions that affect infants/toddlers with severe vision loss so numbers to support funding and/or services was inaccurate. With advocacy from parents and VIPS' staff, House Bill 1358 passed correcting how data is collected.

Along the way, we learned that one of the most reliable ways to receive state funding was to become a topic for a Legislative Summer Study Committee. VIPS was successful in becoming a summer study topic before the Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Human Services Committee. VIPS staff and four families served by VIPS testified before the carefully selected committee as to the importance of specialized services in a child's development. The committee requested in-depth information about how services are provided in other states. VIPS staff members prepared a report showing the variety of ways that states make sure their youngest blind children receive best practice early intervention.



Though being a Summer Study Committee topic didn't immediately lead to legislation or funding, it did spread the word about this specialized population of children. It also

inspired Senator Mark Stoops to draft (with the assistance of VIPS staff) Senate Bill 381 which included a \$500,000 appropriation. VIPS parents and staff scheduled meetings with legislators and lobbied in other ways to gain support for SB 381. Our efforts paid off as the Health and Human Services Committee, with a vote of 11-0, passed SB381 to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Unfortunately, SB 381 died, but a powerful Senator adopted our cause!

In mid-April of this year, VIPS learned that \$500,000 was included in the State budget under the heading of "Hearing and Blind Services." On the last day of session, VIPS was included in the state budget for \$125,000. On May 8th, the Governor of Indiana signed the budget into law.

We are in the early stages of providing a statewide network for Indiana's youngest children with blindness and low vision, but in 3 ½ short years, we have established legitimacy within the state and funding for services.

Our next goal is to make sure every infant and toddler will have access to specialized services no matter where they live within Indiana.

What Are Your Favorites?

Mike Bina MichaelB@mdschblind.org

Maryland School for the Blind



What do you do in your down time? Build Lionel electric train village O scaled replicas of homes our family has lived in. Learning new tricks and being trained by our two dogs, Rosie and Orvis. **My favorite: taking a nap.**

"If I didn't work in this field I would have..."

found a way to work in this field. If not, probably a lawyer, with a pro bono resume, representing those caught in a rut not of their own making.



What's on your bucket list? Spending a month in the Czech Republic, my roots. Dancing with our 5 year old granddaughter at her wedding and raising a toast to our 3 grandson's at their weddings. I am counting on living to be really old and their getting married young - or a combination of both.

What are you reading, watching and/or listening to? Reading *Unbroken*, watching *Mad Men* and *House of Cards*, and listening to the welcomed new arrivals from the South, the mourning doves and robins, and Louie Armstrong radio on Pandora.

The best two pieces of advice I ever got were "Be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant with the weak and the wrong, because sometime in our life you will have been all of these." and "When dealing with the difficult person, make sure that the difficult person is not you."



MONEY SAVING TIPS

This new feature article will be in all future issues of LINKS. Send your contribution to media@visionservealliance.org.



Tip #1

Visions analyzed the cost of reimbursing staff for each subway/bus trip to serve clients in the community or provide presentations or attend community meetings. We discovered that it would be less expensive to give every full time staff member a transit check card equivalent to a monthly metro card. Staff can use it to buy a monthly Metro-card or paratransit pass (for bus or subway use) and for staff that do not do community travel they can use it for train commuting costs (it is useable on all transit systems in, out and around NYC.) It is a nontaxable benefit and helps with staff morale.

We do not charge staff for the cost, \$116.50 per month per person.

Tip #2

At Visions we do all our printing in house including journals, newsletters, etc. This helped us do quick turn



Tip #2 *continued*

around for community events, capacity to meet short deadlines, and use existing staff talent for design and layout.



LIGHTHOUSE
OF BROWARD

Tip #3

Lighthouse of Broward saved 60% on our garbage collection costs by going with a "broker" who reviewed the bill and saw where our Waste Management (WM) provider was, over time, increasing fees and adding charges onto the invoice that was easy for the broker to negotiate back off. Even with the monthly fee we now pay the broker our costs are about 40% of what we used to pay. The broker used to work for WM but he is now able to make a living helping people pay less!

VisionServe Alliance Tip

Save Money in Your
Organization's Budget by:

- Recommending employees apply for VisionServe Alliance's academic and/or certification scholarship.
- Applying for conference scholarships if you lead a small budget organization.
- Moving your retirement program to Mutual of America to save on corporate and employee investment fees.
- Moving from your State's unemployment pool to First Nonprofit Group where you could save thousands of dollars annually.

For more information and applications please visit www.visionservealliance.org.

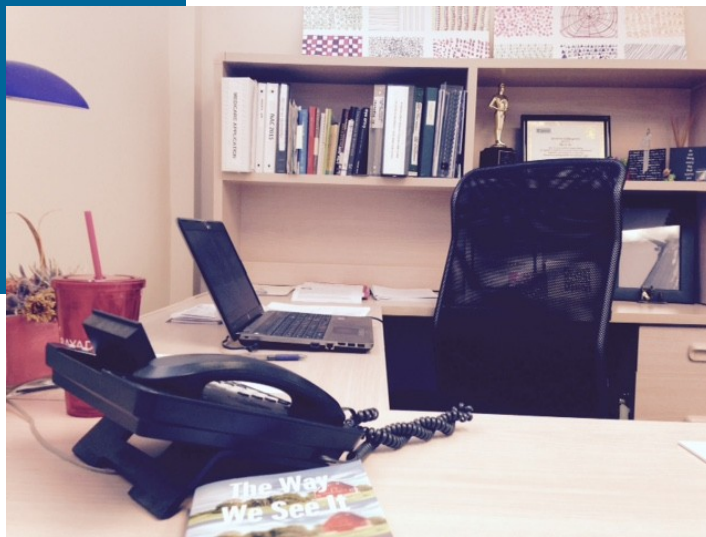
What's On My Desk!

Elly du Pre' edupre@lhob.org
Lighthouse of Broward

My desk is part landing strip and part launch site. A lot of stuff lands on it and camps out for a while until I figure out where best to delegate it (or throw it out) and other things are projects in various stages of implementation. Recently I was asked if my leadership role was more project management or more staff management. My friends who also have small agencies will appreciate my wonderment at the concept.

There are some inspirational components as well, and in the interest of continuity with the great story

Kate Grathwol (Vision Loss Resources) gave us last time, I am showing her agency's wonderful book, The Way We See It, in my picture. It has been launched into a distribution to staff, as it was grabbed out of my hands the day it arrived. Thanks, Kate!



Also for inspiration I have Cliff Olstrom's Undaunted by Blindness on the bookshelf along with great quotes – my favorite from Eleanor Roosevelt: Do

do
one
thing
every
day
that
scares
you

(eleanor roosevelt)

One Thing Every Day That Scares You. Lee Nasehi (Lighthouse Central FL) gave that to me. It reminds me that this office is not a comfort zone, nor should it be. The world is changing, so must we all.

The biggest binder on the shelf relates to our implementation of Medicare billing. We have crossed a big threshold in the past few weeks. We are actually getting paid by Medicare and co-insurance for Low Vision services provided by an OT who

is also a CLVT and CVRT on our staff. As they say, what you focus on, is what you get. So focus on the positive (or the big fat

binder).

Finally, you may notice the "Oscar" statue. Lighthouse of Broward was awarded the first Bank Atlantic Non-Profit Academy Award for Advocacy by a Non-Profit Organization. That actually is related to another of those on-going projects trying to fly out of the nest, this one related to employment.

The adventures continue. I'm looking forward to having tickets to the next VisionServe Conference on my desk, soon.

You all are sitting on my

shoulder, in my office, inspiring me to be stronger and better, every day.



Our Members In The News

This new feature article will be in all future issues of LINKS. Send your news to media@visionservealliance.org.

Mike Bina Gives Commencement Address “Be Spontaneous Find Fun”

Northern State University (Aberdeen, SD) alumnus (class of 1969) Michael Bina delivered the commencement address to the class of 2015, but first, he had to take a selfie.



In the middle of his speech, Bina pulled out a smartphone attached to a selfie stick while the band played the fight song, a stunt that was met with uproarious laughter by the 324 graduates and those assembled to support them. The lesson Bina hoped to convey was to be spontaneous and find the fun in every situation.

While he was a student, Mike coached students from the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired which led him to change his major to special education. “While I did teach them to swim in Northern’s pool, they, unexpectedly, captured my heart.” “Except the unexpected, and when opportunity knocks, like it did for me, first, look though that little peephole cautiously, and then answer the door.”

graduates perhaps are today. I moved to trendy – but not ‘with it’ – Los Angeles.”

Before closing his speech, Mike swapped his traditional mortarboard cap for a tasseled construction helmet and urged students to follow their dreams.

“Later today you’ll replace your academic hat with your career hat,” Mike said as he

made the switch. “If you start a construction business, I want you to build my dream home. If you teach, I want you to build my grandchildren’s future. If you become an attorney – I hope I don’t need one – I want you to build my case.”

Reprinted from Aberdeen News

Winnetka Man of the Year Chuck Young

Residents and business leaders from around the North Shore were on hand as the Winnetka-Northfield Chamber of Commerce



named its Winnetka Man of the Year, Chuck Young. Chuck was honored for his years of service to the Winnetka community. Chuck told

the gathering that Hadley was founded in 1920 by William Hadley of Winnetka, who lost his vision at age 55.

“While Mr. Hadley had lost his sight, there was no lack of vision in the North Shore,” Young said. “Mr. Hadley learned Braille so he could continue his passion of reading. Five years later, with the incredible backing from around the North Shore, Mr. Hadley returned to his calling as an educator, and our village soon became home to a unique correspondence school that perfected teaching Braille by mail.”

The Hadley School now serves more than 10,000 students annually from all 50 states and more than 100 countries. The school also offers education to teachers, parents of blind children and blinded veterans.

“Had William Hadley become blind in any other community, none of this could have happened,” Young said. “This community inspires and offers

opportunities for others to become man or woman of the year.”

Reprinted from Pioneer Press

NewView Oklahoma Receives Awards

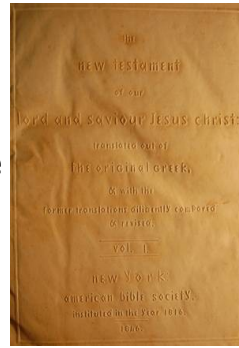


NewView Oklahoma wins the 2015 American Optometric Association (AOA) Apollo Award, the highest award presented to the general public by the AOA. The Apollo Award honors NewView Oklahoma for distinguished service to the visual welfare of the public. The nonprofit organization is the leading employer of the blind and visually impaired in the state of Oklahoma and is the state's only private agency that provides specialized vision rehabilitation services. In 2014, NewView was awarded the local Apollo Award from the Oklahoma Association of Optometric Professionals, before going on to win the award at the national level.

NewView Oklahoma's Older Blind Vision Rehabilitation Program was recognized as Program of the Year by Lance Robertson, Director of Oklahoma's DHS Aging Services. "We are proud, honored and humbled to receive this award from DHS Aging Services. With more than 50,000 Oklahomans currently living with vision loss, we know this award will help to shed a light on the challenges they face on a daily basis. It's our goal and our mission, to empower all Oklahomans with vision loss to achieve their maximum potential," said Lauren Branch.

Historic Gift to the APH Museum

APH Museum received a very rare gift, the eight-volume Holy Bible embossed in raised letters by the American Bible Society in 1846. It is in excellent condition for its age, with very tight text block and minor cosmetic damage to its leather and cloth bindings.



Miami Lighthouse Receives Awards



Miami Lighthouse was honored at the Florida Blue Foundation's 2015 Sapphire Awards as an outstanding nonprofit organization in community health care in recognition of distinguished leadership, innovation and achievements in community health. Penny Shaffer, Market President at Florida Blue, said "The Sapphire Awards embody our desire to recognize excellence among organizations, programs and individuals that have made a significant, positive impact on health-related outcomes for Florida's at-risk people and communities. Miami Lighthouse for the Blind has demonstrated excellence serves

as a model for others to emulate addressing their community's needs with unmatched dedication and courage."

Miami Lighthouse was also the recipient of the Beacon Award in Education. Beacon Council Chair Donna Abood noted that "Miami Lighthouse is both an employer and enables the visually impaired to be employed, and helps drive Miami's economic engine through capital improvement projects."

APH Receives AFB Access Award!

On April 10, APH was presented with the AFB Access Award along with Comcast, Microsoft, MIPsoft, Odin Mobile, Joel Snyder, Ph.D., Texas Instruments Education Technology, and Orbit Research. Chosen annually, the Access Award honors individuals, corporations and organizations that eliminate or substantially reduce inequities faced by people with vision loss.



APH was honored for its collaborative work with Texas Instruments Education Technology, and Orbit Research on the Orion TI-84 Plus Talking Graphing Calculator.

FYI



Would you like to feature your article in our next newsletter?

We are accepting articles about innovative and replicable programs, money saving tips, and articles about awards or notoriety. Please contact us with your ideas, thoughts and more at media@visionservealliance.org



For all these reasons and more visit www.visionservealliance.org

VISIT VISIONSERVE'S WEB-SITE

Are you looking for our member directory?

Visit the members' only section of our website where you will find the directory that lists CEO/ED name, contact information, and a listing of services provided by each member.

Do you want to learn more about future conferences?

You will find future conference dates and locations on the opening page of our web-site, in each issue of eNews and LINKS, and within the Members Only tab where you can also view past speaker presentations and handouts.

Do you want to know who serves on VisionServe's Board of Directors?

Click the About Us tab to learn more about board members, and to also learn our history and see a member list by state.



Scan our QR code

now to be directed to our home page.

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.