

LINKS

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Where in the World is Roxann?



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Upcoming Conference Teaser

Roxann Mayros & Mary Morrison
Assoc. f/t Blind & The Visually Impaired
Charleston, SC

During the past eight summers, Roxann has picked a region of our Country where several VisionServe Alliance members reside, and then she flies in, rents a car, and visits each of them over the course of a week. Sometimes she even visits potential new members! The idea started in 2008 when Pam

Roxann Mayros & Dave Horton
Winston-Salem Industries f/t Blind
Winston Salem, NC

Brandin was Chair of the Board. Together, Pam and Roxann circled San Francisco Bay, visiting 7 members. Since that inaugural trip, Roxann has driven north from Cincinnati to Grand Rapids visiting 5 members, around Boston visiting 3 members and recruiting a new member, to

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CEO Corner

Roxann Mayros

VisionServe Alliance
St. Louis, MO



Welcome to what promises to be another fantastic year at VisionServe Alliance. We are excited about our 29th year of incorporation,

and know that it will be filled with more opportunities for members to participate in high level learning and executive networking; member benefits that return real dollars to your agency; and impactful advocacy and legislative issues that can only be accomplished collaboratively.

2016

VisionServe Alliance - Board of Directors

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Jim Phipps, The Iris Network

Wells Jones, Guild Dog Foundation

Message from Board Chair

Miki Jordan

Junior Blind of America
Los Angeles, CA



for sharing new ideas and strengthening the bonds that draw us together. I look forward to spending time with everyone who can join in our adventure in the Rockies.

I am thrilled about everything planned this year. "More" seems to be key word for 2016. VisionServe Alliance continues to mature, providing more and more opportunities for its members, as Roxann mentions in her Message. We're not getting older, we're getting better. The CEO Summit in Colorado Springs this April is an exciting new conference format. The beautiful setting and the invigorating fresh (if thin) air are the perfect setting

Where in the World is Roxann?

Continued from the cover



Roxann Mayros &
Fontaine Huey
Center f/t Visually Impaired
Atlanta, GA

Roxann Mayros &
Lee Nasehi
Lighthouse Central Florida
Orlando, FL

Roxann Mayros &
Dan Mann
Lighthouse of Pinellas
Largo, FL

Roxann Mayros &
Sylvia Perez
LightHouse f/t V. I. and Blind
Port Richey, FL

the Southeast visiting 4 members in Georgia and South Carolina, two trips around Florida (because we had 15 members there) visiting 10 members, Southern California (with current Chair, Miki) visiting 4 members, and Washington D.C. visiting 4 members and recruiting a new member.

Roxann's latest adventure took her to North Carolina where she visited Bob Scheffel at Metrolina Association for the Blind in Charlotte. Did you know that Metrolina produces bank statements, investment reports, and utility bills in Braille for most of the major companies in the United

States? And that proceeds from this business, support their vision rehabilitation program? Her 2015 adventure also introduced her to the amazing programs at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind, where the Dave and Dan Team introduced her to employees and board members, explained how blind people make eye glasses for the V.A., and gave her a tour of the phenomenal "Little Red School House." Her final stop in North Carolina took her to Greensboro to visit Industries of the Blind, where Dave Lo Presti introduced her to some of the most committed employees on

record. When asked "What are you doing?" One employee responded, "I am saving lives" as he worked on helmets for the military. Why does Roxann make these trips? She believes firmly that the more she knows about VisionServe's member agencies, the better staff will be at advocacy, producing conferences, connecting members to members, providing member benefits, and "selling" what VisionServe Alliance members do to the broader world of allied health professionals, researchers, potential clients and patients, and government agencies.

*Do you want Roxann to visit your region of the country?
Send her a note at rmayros@visionservealliance.org.*

What Are Your Favorites?

Mike Gilliam mikeg@salighthouse.org
**San Antonio Lighthouse
for the Blind**



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

I like to read management self-help books and watch and listen to the things my 30-year-old daughters and son-in-laws do--- College sports, Big Brother, The Voice, Rap, Pop, Country--- keeps me young and closer to them.

The best advice I ever got was .

The only way to be truly special is to make others feel that way---and treating others like you expect to be treated isn't good enough.

Tell us about one item on your bucket list?

I have been extremely fortunate to do most everything I had on my bucket list---and my wife won't let me do the last two---sky dive or bungee jump---as long as she is alive.

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

Have already spent 30 years in for-profit at at&t---and just wish I would have come to non-profit sooner. Serving others and making everyone's job easier are the best!

What is your best guilty pleasure?

Sitting down in my recliner, watching three college football games at once, with a giant bowl of super spicy hot cheese and chili dip with jalapeno Doritos.

My best childhood memory is .

Going out in the swamp in an air-boat one evening and catching 210 bullfrogs and 4 alligators (~4-feet long) with my bare hands.

What do you do in your downtime?

Enjoy antiquing and international travel--going places and buying things that are different worlds from the U.S.

Member News

Send your news to media@visionservealliance.org.

Lighthouse “Kares” for You – 15% Discount!



Among the items scattered on the conference room table are a hand-cranked flashlight, a tri-fold shovel and food packets with a five-year shelf life. They are next to the “blood stopper,” labeled as dressing for wounds and trauma, and a “survival tin,” which includes a sewing kit, fishing hooks and condoms. That last item also is included to protect supplies from the elements. “They help keep things dry,” said John Caine, manager of new business development for Quake Kare, a company that touts itself as the country’s “leading source of emergency survival kits.”

For its first 30 years of operation, the company was based in California. But for the past

two years, Quake Kare has been housed in Overland, MO in the headquarters of Lighthouse for the Blind-St. Louis.

dropped.

In 2013, the Lighthouse laid off about 25 percent of its staff, including 20 legally blind workers. The Lighthouse had worked almost exclusively with the federal government in packaging orders for the military including first aid and other medical kits for soldiers in areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan. But as missions shifted and military budgets shrunk, Lighthouse business

The nonprofit began looking for other business opportunities that would be a good fit for the agency’s workers. Initially, Lighthouse sought to fill the orders for Quake Kare, but ended up buying the company. In 2014, the new acquisition accounted for \$2.1 million in revenue. But last year, it dropped to \$1.7 million. “It’s unfortunate that our business depends on catastrophic disaster,” said

Brian Houser, director of sales/marketing, referring to earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, terrorism and school lockdowns. But it does, and with natural and man-made disasters certain to continue, the Lighthouse wants as many people and organizations as possible to be prepared, especially VisionServe Alliance members.

John Savisky works at the Lighthouse assembling Quake Kare emergency kits. He was initially a bit skeptical. “My first thought was, ‘Who really needs it?’” But then he suggested to a friend in Oklahoma that she buy one “just in case.” “She gets one, and then a tornado hit her home,” Savisky said. “I helped save a friend’s life.”

The Lighthouse/Quake Kare continues to come up with various types of kits, with about 50 options in inventory. Under development is a kit for school lockdowns. It includes a set of colored flags to wave from inside the building alerting emergency crews to the condition of those inside. There are markers to write on windows, and portable toilets, essential when it comes to keeping children confined in a space for several hours. The toilet is basically a five-gallon plastic bucket with a seat and lid.

Reprinted in part from St. Louis Post Dispatch

*The Lighthouse is offering a 15% discount to all VisionServe Alliance members at www.quakecare.com — type in code: **vision15**.*

Member News

Send your news to media@visionservealliance.org.

Visit

www.VisionLossSTL.org
to see the joint efforts of the
St. Louis, MO agencies.

A World of Possibilities in St. Louis

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES:
WE HELP THEM SEE IT.

VisionLossSTL.org



St. Louis is unusual in this "blindness biz" in that there are three agencies (all are VisionServe members) that provide services to people with severe visual impairment – Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairment serves birth to school age, Lighthouse for the Blind provides employment through manufacturing, and the St. Louis Society for the Blind serves older blind and school aged.

Together, these agencies have launched a campaign to educate the St. Louis region about the continuum of services available to people of all ages living in the St. Louis region. Four digital billboards will shine brightly over 12 weeks on 4 interstates/highways reaching from 200,000 to 300,000 vehicles in the region. The billboards feature a website address, commonly called a "splash page." When a person reaches the "splash page,"

they will then have a choice between three links – one for each agency - to learn more about the services each agency provides.

The billboard message - A World of Possibilities: We Help Them See It - was developed by an MBA class at Washington University's Olin School of Business which adopted the three agencies as a class project described as "developing common messages for three organizations that do different aspects of an industry." The Billboards were created to reach the "Community". The students are also developing messages that will be directed to the medical community and family members.

The CEOs at Delta Gamma – Debbie Naucke, the Lighthouse – John Thompson, and St. Louis Society – Dave Ekin, meet regularly for lunch, support each other's fundraising events, and co-present camps and other programs.



"ProMOT-ing" Collaboration

NIB and **The Carroll Center** have partnered on **ProMOTE** (Professional Mastery of Office Technology for Employment) to address the growing need for qualified professional talent and to provide blind candidates the opportunity to enhance skills for upward mobility and career opportunities. ProMOTE is a four-week intensive study program that will be taught at The Carroll Center's state-of-the-art technology training facility on their campus in Newton, Massachusetts. ProMOTE will focus on Microsoft Office, advanced internet use/research, configuring a troubleshooting assistive technology, navigating Microsoft Windows, and file management.

Member News

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made themselves available in that region. They can also enter other requirements, such as the pace at which they

“Run Forrest, Run”



This reference to the movie, *Forrest Gump*, represents projects by two VisionServe Alliance members to assist blind runners across the country.

United in Stride (www.unitedinstride.com) was founded in 2015 by the **Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI)** as a tool to unite runners who are blind or visually impaired with sighted guides across North America. It's the brainchild of Richard Hunter, a nationally recognized visually impaired Ironman triathlete, ultra-runner, and marathoner from Northern California. Hunter

learned early on that finding running partners was a challenge, whether he was searching for sighted guides close to home, or planning out his training schedule for an upcoming vacation. Hunter and his wife provided seed money, then engaged MABVI, the first organization to pair him with a sighted guide (in the Boston Marathon), to develop and manage the United In Stride website. Using the website, VI runners can tag a region on a map where they train, or where they're planning to travel for a race, and submit their name to be matched with sighted guides who have

train and race. It gives runners a simple way to accomplish something that was daunting before.

While running the 2015 Boston Marathon, Richard spotted Thomas Panek, president and CEO of "**Guiding Eyes For the Blind**." Richard shouted out, "I'm really curious, have you ever trained a guide dog to run?" Thomas responded, "I don't know. It hasn't been done." Thomas asked Guiding Eyes Trainers, Ben Cawley and Jolene Hollister, to devise a new training program and over six months, they taught guide dog, Klinger, to navigate curbs and obstacles at a faster pace, which also trained him to think faster. "So what Klinger does when he runs with me is no different than his regular guide dog work, he's just moving at a slightly faster pace," Hunter said. "He can be highly focused."

Klinger is the first running dog to graduate from Guiding Eyes' Running Guides Pilot Program, but Hunter hopes that others may also someday share what he and Klinger now have.

What's On My Desk!

Shelly Taylor staylor@lablind.com
Louisiana Association
for the Blind



to our extraordinary staff, to encourage their creativity and talent to make things happen. On my desk is the estimate for a low vision outreach van, the invoice for our first ever "Dining in the Dark" event, and the Master Plan for completing our new Headquarters complex. These three endeavors are the result of teamwork. My role was easy: just let them run with it!

Other items are more personal, but are very much a part of who I am. A Dallas Cowboys' drinking glass, a small clock, and a little bear dressed in Army uniform hold the desktop down. Growing up in Texas made me a Cowboys fan, love them or hate them. The small clock was a gift from my daughter-in-law when I was promoted to President/CEO. The little bear was given to me by a dear friend when my son joined the Army. The inscription reads, "God spoke liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it." A business card holder sits in front, a gift from my daughter "because I needed grown up things on my desk!" There is a favorite photo of my husband and me and my computer screen has a picture of my two dopey Bassett Hounds. Family is my greatest joy and passion.



My desk is a place of pure unadulterated passion! I'm surrounded by bits and pieces of things that have shaped my life and led me to be here.

When I came to Louisiana Association for the Blind (LAB) in 1995, it wasn't anywhere on my radar scope. From a fast paced job in graphic arts to non-profit public relations and fundraising was a quantum leap, but

absolutely the right place to jump into a career I never planned to have. Since that first day, ensuring services and employment opportunities are available to people who are blind has been my passion.

I believe that from passion comes strategic vision and supporting structure to ensure the growth of the agency. It's my job to provide the support to

Member Agency Profile

World Services for the Blind

Send submissions to media@visionservealliance.org.



World Services for the Blind



On August 3, 2015, Sharon Giovinazzo hit the ground running as the new President and CEO of World Services for the Blind, and seven months later, she hasn't slowed down one bit. Sharon, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2001, found her sight continuously diminishing, and along with it her self-esteem. She moved her computer to the attic since she assumed she wouldn't use it again, and

settled into a cycle of anger and denial.

Eventually, though, Sharon made the decision to get out of bed and get on with her life. She made a phone call to Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) in Utica, NY that provided rehabilitation services. There she found people who were blind or visually impaired using computers, and once she learned that she could make

some adaptations to her own computer, Sharon realized she could do almost anything she wanted.

Armed only with a high school diploma, the 31-year-old Army vet knew she had to pursue higher education if she was ever going to have an independent and fulfilling life. First came community college, where she earned her associate's degree in human services; at the same time she started her first job as a person with vision loss—packaging gloves for the TSA. Despite her lifetime of experience in the medical field, Sharon had no marketable skills as a person who was blind. However, she didn't view the glove-packing job as the only job she was capable of—it was just a stepping stone to the life she wanted.

By the time Sharon arrived at WSB—almost 15 years after losing her sight, and about five years after losing a great deal of her hearing, also to MS—she had earned not only a bachelor's degree in

Member Agency Profile

World Services for the Blind

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Would you like to see your agency in an upcoming issue of LINKS?

Please send us your submissions to media@visionservealliance.org.



human services management, but a master's degree in social work and an MBA, both of which she graduated summa cum laude.

Being Deaf-Blind, Sharon knows first-hand the emotions and struggles many of WSB's clients are facing as they struggle with being newly blind, or are continuing their education in order to begin a career and make their own mark in their community. New and updated programs are bringing more clients than ever to the Little Rock, Arkansas-based campus, which boasts a new feeling of positivity and inclusiveness that radiates from staff members

and clients alike.

The newest program is a preparatory program for the ACT, the nationally recognized college admissions test accepted by all four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Taught by experts in the field of blindness and low vision, WSB's new ACT prep course will provide live instruction, homework review and customized recommendations based on practice test performance—all aimed at helping students who are blind or visually impaired to score higher. Features of the program include personalized support tailored to an individual's needs and goals,

specific support in the areas of test-taking strategies, understanding accommodations for those with disabilities and more than four full-length practice tests will be administered.

Several of WSB's regularly scheduled programs are also enrolling. Desktop Support Technician I, which prepares an individual to be an entry level IT technician, begins June 6, with a final evaluation date of May 9; and the IRS Service Center Collection Representative program, which trains individuals to work as a tax examining technician, begins June 13, with a final evaluation date of May 9.

For more information on these and other life skills and career training programs, visit wsblind.org or call 800-248-0734.

The mission of World Services for the Blind is empowering adults who are blind and visually impaired in the United States and around the world to achieve sustainable independence.

Do You Know...

VisionServe Alliance Benefits Make You A Better Leader?

Both the IRS and public are paying close attention to nonprofit executive compensation! You will have accurate, up-to-date information from a reliable source to protect your decision makers from costly excise taxes and your organization from possible loss of tax-exempt status by participating in our 2016 Compensation and Benefits Survey. The original survey was delivered to your inbox on 2/24. Watch for reminders.



How To Find A Member's Contact Information?

- There is a quick link on the right side of each issue of eNews.
- Detailed information including CEO name, contact information, services provided, and ages served are found under the Membership Access tab of our website.



Your colleagues are only a phone call or email away!

Our Members Offer Money Saving Discounts To Other Members?

Lighthouse St. Louis is offering a 15% discount on emergency kits?

www.quakecare.com – code: **vision15**



VisionServe Alliance Benefits Save You Money?

You can save thousands of \$\$\$'s on unemployment insurance with Nonprofit Insurance.

To learn more: e-mail emedina@firstnonprofit.com.



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

Elevated Networking = Mountainous Ideas!



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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