

LINKS

Learning • Innovation • Networking • Knowledge • Sharing

“Thank you so much for the amazingly wonderful conference! I think it’s the best I can remember in 20+ years of attending them.”

- Pam Brandin, Vista Center

The setting for our 2018 CEO Summit was unique with the aroma of horses, no televisions, and astounding views at every turn. The Tanque Verde Ranch also offered attendees an opportunity to let go of the day-to-day stress of organizational leadership; and to network, relax, and learn. Doug Stevenson, Master Storyteller, didn’t show us how to tell stories, but instead taught us the techniques to make our own stories more effective and persuasive for fundraising, legislative visits, and more. “The storytelling exercises were great ways to deepen the relationships between CEOs as well as valuable skills for so many aspects of



Attending CEO’s participating in small group exercises each morning (from L to R): Elly du Pre, Pam Brandin, Steve Pouliot and Joe Danowsky.

CEO communication,” remarked Dan Needham. Jane Wei-Skillern left us all thinking as she presented a new approach to collaborations that is timely and important to our field. Her Network Principles include: 1) Mission, not organization. 2) Trust, not control. 3) Humility, not brand. 4) Network, not hub.

Miki Jordan remarked that the summit was the, “Perfect setting and blend of networking and speakers.”

Even if you couldn’t attend the summit, you can watch videos of the speakers’ presentations in our members only portal. **See more photos from the CEO Summit on pages 4 and 5.**



Riders getting ready to saddle up (from L to R): Sylvia Perez, Kathie Zeider, Joe Bogart, Doug Fowler, Kristin and Craig Meador, Dan Needham, and Ken Warkentin

Chairman's Message

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

It has been just over a week since our CEO Summit and I'm still receiving emails congratulating our incredible team of Roxann and Wendy for the flawlessly executed CEO Summit. It took some of us "city slickers" a little more time than others to get acclimated to the laid-back atmosphere of the magnificent Tanque Verde Ranch in Tucson. Our two plenary speakers were outstanding, and the networking time was well planned out. We are consistently hearing that the setting was exactly right for a CEO conference. Be assured we will look for similar venues for the future.

During the conference, I had the opportunity to provide a brief "State of the Alliance" update. For those who were unable to attend I will provide some information here:



- The Board met most of Sunday, April 29th where much was accomplished. The board is moving forward with a revision to our strategic plan by carefully reviewing many options for the future.
- One of the strategic initiatives is reviewing possible collaborative partnerships. A committee headed up by John Mitchell is talking with a number of national organizations about the potential of creating various partnerships that could lead to synergistic relationships that will allow VisionServe Alliance to, for example, have a much stronger advocacy effort in Washington, or perhaps help lighten the administrative burden on our staff and create economies of scale, by sharing some back office functions. Our CEO, Roxann, is leading this effort from a staff perspective and she and I have joined John as part of the committee overseeing these discussions.
- I am pleased to report that the board approved the audit from our external auditing firm and that, once again an entirely clean opinion was accepted. In addition, the board reviewed the IRS Form 990 and it has been filed in a timely manner.
- Finally, the CEO Search Committee has been working diligently. The committee consists of Bernadette Kappen, Miki Jordan, Steve Pouliot, Erika Petach and myself. The committee reviewed the resumes of nearly 200 highly qualified candidates. That list has been narrowed to the top 40 candidates. Each will be interviewed by a committee member over the next several weeks. The pool of candidates will then be cut in half and a different committee member will interview these candidates. The final four or five candidates will be interviewed in person. If all goes as planned, we will announce and introduce our new CEO at the VisionServe Alliance's 30th Annual Executive Leadership Conference in Portland, Oregon, October 28 – 31, 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'k'.

2018 Board of Directors

Chair: Mark Ackermann, Lighthouse Guild

Vice Chair: Bernadette Kappen, New York Institute for Special Education

Secretary: John Mitchell, Cincinnati Association f/t Blind and Visually Impaired

Treasurer: Steve Pouliot, Vermont Association f/t Blind and Visually Impaired

Immediate Past Chair: Miki Jordan, Wayfinder Family Services

Michael Bina, Maryland School for the Blind

Lauren Branch, NewView Oklahoma

Roxann Mayros, VisionServe Alliance

Mike McGowan, NOAH

David Morgan, Future In Sight

Thomas Panek, Guiding Eyes for the Blind

Erika Petach, Blind and Vision Rehab Services of Pittsburgh

Shari Roeseler, Society for the Blind-Sacramento

Dennis Steiner, VisionCorps

Renee Vidrine, Lighthouse Louisiana



VisionServe Alliance

New Staff Member



Welcome to new staff member Lindsay Lutz. Lindsay joined VisionServe Alliance this past April just in time to help with conference prep for Tucson. Her expertise includes great computer skills, app development, graphic design and excellent customer service. We're glad to have her talents!

Roxann Remembers

In 1993, I was named the new Executive Director at the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind in Port Richey, Florida. I had always worked in the for-profit world, so I didn't know what I was doing with this struggling and small nonprofit and I knew even less about vision loss. Carl Augusto (Even I knew he was an icon in our field.) found me and became my mentor for the next twenty plus years. He recommended that I join the National Council of Private Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCPABVI), before we were re-branded as VisionServe Alliance, so I did in 1994. I participated from afar for a couple of years because we didn't have any money for travel (shoot, we could barely afford the dues). I attended my first NCPABVI meeting in Nashville, TN in 1996, feeling like a duck out of water – everyone knew so much more than I did. A few years passed before I attended another meeting in 1999 in Florida (because I could drive there). I was a little more seasoned by then, but still overwhelmed by the camaraderie, the experience and knowledge in one place at one time, exposure to national leaders, and hearing about this new issue – Medicare Reimbursement. I didn't miss many meetings after that, even joining NCPABVI's board in 2000. Who suspected back then, that in 2005, I would be named NCPABVI's first professional leader!



3rd Annual CEO Summit

April 29 – May 2 in Tucson, AZ

VisionServe Alliance's 3rd Annual CEO Summit was attended by 41 member CEOs from 19 states and Canada. We are hearing that this summit was beneficial to all (some are even saying we should go back!). We offered two distinguished speakers who inspired attendees and gave them opportunities to learn new leadership tactics and skills. In lieu of the usual networking activities, the ranch offered us the chance to network via horseback and to enjoy the beautiful, unique desert landscapes. If we missed seeing you, make your plans now to join us this fall when we'll meet in Portland, OR October 28 – 31.



1st-Time Attendee Joe Bogart (Blinded Veterans Association) with Thomas Panek (Guiding Eyes).



A stunning desert sunset



VisionServe's Board of Directors (from L to R): Mark Ackermann, Renee Vidrine, David Morgan, Lauren Branch, Miki Jordan, Roxann Mayros, Mike Bina, Dennis Steiner, Steve Pouliot, and John Mitchell (not pictured: Mike McGowan, Thomas Panek, Erika Petach and Shari Roeseler)



Monday's mountain bike group (from L to R): Motti Attia, Bob Brinckerhoff, Lauren Branch, Dan Needham, Wendy Hymes, Marty Schultz, and Ken Warkentin.



41 member CEO's from 19 states and Canada attended this year's CEO Summit.



Paul Schroeder (Aira) caught the biggest fish!



1st-Time attendee Pete Benavidez (Blindness Support Services) rings the dinner bell at our Cowboy Cookout



Roxann and Sylvia Perez (Lighthouse for the V.I. & Blind) seeking advice from an on-site expert.



The saguaro cacti were just starting to bloom



Riders Lou Tutt (AERBVI) and Pete Benavidez (Blindness Support Services)



Storytelling expert Doug Stevenson facilitated a workshop to brainstorm on what makes a powerful story. We won't forget his phrase that pays, "Put the pill in the peanut butter."



Jane Wei-Skillern presented A new collaboration/networking model. "Leaders adopt strategies and tactics to achieve the mission, not solely to stimulate organizational growth."



Together we learned all about the desert on hikes with a naturalist. From L to R: Dan Needham, Lou Tutt, John Thompson, Roxann Mayros, Marty Watts, John Mitchell, Paul Schroeder, Dennis Steiner, and Steve Pouliot.



Two members received scholarships to attend the CEO Summit: Courtney Plotner (Assoc. f/t BVI Charleston) and Deborah Gold (Balance For Blind Adults) with Anissa Pieriboni (Florida Center f/t Blind)

Log into the Member Portal at visionservealliance.org to watch videos of our speakers, view Powerpoints and more photos!

MEMBER AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Mark Your Calendar! National Blind Sports Day is October 6, 2018.



The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) has announced a new event this fall to promote healthy lifestyles for every American who is blind or

visually impaired. The event, called National Blind Sports Day, will take place on October 6, 2018, and is designed to be a day on which people across the U.S., visually impaired and sighted, engage in sports and fitness wherever they are.

“Our goal in the next 3 years is to have at least one organization in each of the 50 states to participate in National Blind Sports Day and for the event to go global in 2019 leading up to the 2020 Paralympic Games,” says Mark Lucas, Executive Director of USABA. The date also occurs during Blindness Awareness Month and a week before World Sight Day (October 11) and White Cane Day (October 15).



USABA is recruiting community-based partners, such as yours, to host one or two one-hour activity sessions such as walking, goalball, tandem cycling, swimming, or simply a yoga, fitness or P.E. activity.



According to Lucas, “Sports and physical activity have the power to provide people who are blind and visually impaired with the framework to set goals, build work ethic, increase independence and live a healthier lifestyle.”

To learn more and get involved, contact Kevin Brouard at kbrouard@usaba.org.

American Printing House for the Blind Expands Its Reach

If you think American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is dedicated to helping students who are blind and visually impaired achieve their full potential, you’d be right. But there’s much more happening at APH than you might realize.



American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

“Although schools remain the core of our work, APH also creates learning tools for homes, workplaces, and communities,” says President Craig Meador. “Learning happens for a lifetime, so we are changing to meet the needs of people at all ages.”

The most exciting evolution at APH is serving college students, adults — particularly older adults who are experiencing vision loss for the first time — and children under age three. This is a result of a new strategic plan that is responsive to a rapidly changing world.



Indoor Explorer helps visitors navigate Louisville International Airport

“We want to build a future that includes everyone,” says Meador. “But we also know we can’t get there alone. The key to success will be in our partnerships. We have to work together if we want to make true progress for the people we all serve. This is why networks like VisionServe Alliance help APH make the necessary connections. I’m enthusiastic about what lies ahead.”

For example, APH recently announced a new partnership with AFB, where APH will assume stewardship of some key AFB programs as both organizations realign priorities. It is also working with a number of companies and agencies to bring new products to fruition.

**Member Spotlight – Lee Nasehi of Lighthouse Central Florida/
Lighthouse Works, Orlando, FL**
www.lighthousecentralflorida.org

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

My husband and I love to cook and entertain – we have lots of dinner parties; we also enjoy visiting our kids which sometimes necessitates overseas travel!

**What is
your best
guilty pleasure?**

Binging Netflix or Amazon series while snacking on Sohan (Persian saffron brittle toffee.)

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

Having a grandchild

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

*A Rock Star or
Bed & Breakfast
Owner/Operator*

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

*Lorenz Family
Reunions in the
mountains with 100
wild and crazy Polish
relatives*

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

*Just finished binging
The Crown; Grace and
Frankie; and Mozart
in the Jungle*

**What is your
best thought about your
membership in VisionServe?**

*VisionServe and its members
are as much a part of
my leadership and my
organization's success as my
colleagues with whom I work
on a daily basis; I consider
many of the VisionServe
members my work family and
forever friends.*



2018 Fall Executive Leadership Conference, Portland, OR | October 28 - 31



2019 CEO Summit, Nashville, TN | May 5 - 8



2019 Fall Executive Leadership Conference, Atlanta, GA | November 3 - 6



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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