



# LINKS

Learning • Innovation • Networking • Knowledge • Sharing

## Looking Forward to the Future: VisionServe's New Five-Year Plan

VSA BOD and staff met immediately following its CEO Summit to begin planning for the organization's next five years January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2024. Utilizing the Traction/EOS framework, they created the following "Vision":

### CORE VALUES

1. **Exceptional Leadership** is demonstrated by passion, respect, authenticity, self-awareness, communication, humility, fairness, accountability, leading by example, and focus on the big picture
2. **Diversity** recognizes there are many paths to leadership; all who are committed to serve people who are blind or visually impaired at the executive leadership level are welcome and strengthen the conversation and solutions
3. **Inclusion** assures all stakeholders will fully participate in the dialogue as it results in deeper understanding of and better decisions about opportunities for and challenges faced by people with blindness and low vision
4. **Innovation** compels us to fervently seek new ideas in pursuit of the most effective approaches and solutions to enhancing the life experiences of people with blindness and low vision
5. **Collaboration** creates resources greater than the sum of their parts when members leverage effective relationships and complementary strengths throughout their business practices

### PURPOSE

Facilitating executive leadership development and strategic networking leadership opportunities in order to strengthen capacity and impact in the field of blindness and low vision

### 5-YEAR TARGET

**By December 31, 2024 VSA will have:**

- Expanded membership by at least 90%
- Implemented leadership development opportunities, organizational consulting services and strategic initiatives designed to strengthen members' operations in terms of enhanced capacity, sustainability, and effectiveness
- Been instrumental in the development of a national policy agenda benefitting people with blindness and low vision, in partnership with other stakeholders
- Established annual revenues of \$1 Million to support the basic complement of staff necessary to accomplish organizational goals and assure the organization's sustainability

### THREE UNIQUES

1. **Focus on Executive Leadership** – VSA is committed to offering the most effective development opportunities for current and emerging leaders in service to people with blindness and low vision
2. **Collaboration Rather than Competition** – VSA members share resources and knowledge in the best interest of people with blindness and low vision, and in pursuit of fulfilling our common mission
3. **Professional Wellness and Celebration** – VSA intentionally incorporates opportunities for fun, relaxation, relationship building with executive peers, personal renewal and professional recognition in its conferences and other activities as a strategy to nurture and retain exceptional leaders in service to people with blindness and low vision

# Chairman's Message

*John Mitchell, President/CEO of Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired*

We are in the midst of a very exciting time for VisionServe Alliance! Lee Nasehi and your high energy Board of Directors are moving VSA to become a premier membership Alliance prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow that we are all facing. In this issue's cover story, read the introduction of our new "Vision" strategic plan that will bring greater awareness of the need for a national conversation, bring leaders together to focus on issues that impact us all while assuring the long term sustainability of VSA.

As a member of VSA, you know the value of coming together with fellow members to collaborate, share ideas and learn from each other on ways to improve and strengthen the organizations that we lead and improve our ability to meet the needs of the communities we serve. "Together We're Better"

Thank you for being a part of this vital association and your on-going commitment to working together to find collective solutions to the challenges we face. I look forward to seeing you in Atlanta for our Executive Leadership Conference, November 3 – 6, as we come together in a new way, using Open Space Technology, to create a shared vision for the Future of Living Well with Blindness & Low Vision. Thank you for being a member of VSA!



# CEO Corner

*Lee Nasehi, President/CEO of VisionServe Alliance*

We are excited to introduce our organization's "Vision" – part of the two-page strategic plan known in Traction/EOS syntax as the Vision/Traction Organizer or V/TO. While maintaining the aspects of VisionServe Alliance beloved by its members, the plan will take VSA into new territory that seeks to broaden the national conversation, offer new approaches to strengthening member organizations, gain traction on policy initiatives for greater impact and assure the sustainability of the association.

As a membership association, it is our members who must decide what VSA's future is worth. The next few years offer the opportunity to come together as a national community and make life better for the growing millions of people living with blindness and low vision. Networking leadership offers exciting opportunities to make that happen.

While many organizations embrace these values, VSA is the only one whose mission is to connect organizations throughout our field, as well as to strengthen, nurture (and help retain) its leadership. While each member organization has a specific focus important to the field, no one member can do it all. Perhaps the very best gift we can offer each other is understanding. Together knowing as much as possible about the full spectrum of blindness and low vision will result in stronger service components leading to our mutual constituents' ability to live well.



## 2019 Board of Directors

**Chair:** John Mitchell, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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

**Secretary:** Mike McGowan, NOAH

**Treasurer:** Lauren Branch, NewView Oklahoma

**Immediate Past Chair:** Miki Jordan, Wayfinder Family Services

**Joe Bogart**, Blinded Veterans Association

**Lee Nasehi**, VisionServe Alliance

**David Morgan**, Future In Sight

**Libby Murphy**, Louisiana Association for the Blind

**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

**Ken Warkentin**, Valley Center for the Blind





# VisionServe Alliance is Opening Space For the Future of Living Well with Blindness & Low Vision

Join a cross-section of leaders for discussions on the future of living well with blindness and low vision.

In case you haven't heard, this year's conference will be different for two reasons:

*"We look forward to the conference where we can continue to learn and grow in support of our shared mission."*

**– Reinhard Mabry,  
Executive Director,  
NAEPB**

1) Attendance is open to any leader who cares passionately about the future of living well with blindness and low vision. We'd especially like to have stakeholders involved in the areas of education, rehabilitation, employment, medical, technology and social services for people of all ages who are blind or have low vision attend.

2) This conference will incorporate the Open Space Technology format, which will allow participants to generate the discussion topics and schedule for each day. We pledge to make this unique format 100% accessible by utilizing technological adaptations and volunteers from the Center f/t V.I. Atlanta.

Not everything will be different this year—we'll still have our signature networking opportunities including a welcome reception, an exhibit hall for our vendors, a Dine-Around, Annual Meeting, and our Awards Night dinner. You'll want to be there to experience this year's venue for Awards Night--the



fabulous Fox Theatre (right across the street from the hotel).

We will offer CEU's for you and your staff.

We hope we'll see you in Atlanta where we'll "Create Shared Vision." We have all the details on our conference page ([www.visionservealliance.org/conferences/](http://www.visionservealliance.org/conferences/)) including the link to book your discounted room at the Georgian Terrace Hotel. By the way, they have 2-bedroom suites available to help reduce costs.



Help us spread the news about this unique event online on social media:

**Facebook:** @VisionServeAlliance

**Twitter:** @VisionServeA

**LinkedIn:** @VisionServe Alliance

*"VisionServe Alliance is uniquely positioned to convene this important summit in our field. We are excited that it will refine the collective focus and strengthen the collaboration in our field resulting in a greater impact for those we serve."*

**– Kathleen Zeider, President/CEO of ACVREP**

*"There is no limit to what we can accomplish when we work together."*

**– Mike McGowan, Executive Director of NOAH**

**Link to register:** [www.visionservealliance.org/conferences](http://www.visionservealliance.org/conferences)

# What's New At VisionServe Alliance

## VisionServe Alliance Launches AVLNC to Lead the National Conversation on the Future of Blindness and Low Vision.

VisionServe Alliance is spearheading the Aging & Vision Loss National



Coalition, to tackle critical issues related to older persons experiencing impaired sight as the result of age-related eye diseases. The Steering Council of the coalition is currently made up of 17 national, state, local, private and public agencies representing broad constituencies who will advocate for equal access and quality of life for older Americans with vision loss.

The Coalition has begun its work through subcommittees focused on three key priorities:

- 1) Awareness:** Increasing awareness among the general public, professionals and especially seniors themselves of the issues faced by older persons with vision loss and the significant impact for professional vision rehabilitation services on sustaining their independence and dignity.
- 2) Funding:** Enhancing funding for vision rehabilitation services including education and training, assistive devices and technologies for older persons with vision loss.
- 3) Training:** Expanding the pool of qualified professional vision impairment specialists, through support for university programs and incentives for healthcare students to consider this specialty; and providing broad training for allied health personnel.

Please visit <https://visionservealliance.org/avlnc/> for more information about the AVLNC and how to get involved.

The Coalition is an example of how VSA can help facilitate national conversations and networking leadership focused on a particular population, service or issue within our broad field. Please let us know if you would like VSA to consider doing this with another focus related to your organization's mission.

## VisionServe Alliance Offers Traction/EOS Implementation Services to Members.

In order to sustain successful execution, businesses need an operating system. While not



the only method, one of the simplest and most effective approaches to creating an operating system for your business is Traction/EOS by Gino Wickman.

An “entrepreneurial operating system” may sound foreign to some of us in the independent sector. “My first impression of the book, *Traction*, was that while presenting some potentially beneficial tools, the overall method wasn’t applicable to smallish non-profit organizations.” notes Lee Nasehi. “Working with an EOS Implementor helped me see past that. Embracing this approach and implementing Traction at Lighthouse Central Florida, put the organization on a sustainable trajectory and helped facilitate a smooth succession when I moved on to VSA.”

Whether you are a relatively new CEO learning to juggle the myriad demands of executive leadership, a mid-career leader who feels her team has “hit the ceiling” in terms of expansion ability, or a chief executive contemplating retirement and concerned about the future sustainability of his organization, Traction /EOS offers a proven way forward to assure maximum organizational health and individual executive peace of mind.

*“We were on the precipice of some exciting growth, but as an organization, we needed a better operating system to grow well. Traction gave us the structure and the tools we needed to set realistic goals, to stay focused on our vision and keeps us focused on our big picture regardless of any curveballs thrown our way. We were extremely fortunate to have had Lee as our implementor. Her knowledge of the field combined with her remarkable and natural ability to coach a team allowed us to exceed our own initial expectations for ABVI.”*

**– Courtney Plotner, CEO, ABVI Charleston.**



**Now an EOS Implementor, Lee Nasehi is offering EOS Implementation services to members at a fee below market rate. All fees support VSA's strategic plan. To learn more and see if Traction/EOS makes sense for you, contact Lee for a complimentary 90-minute meeting at [leen@visionservealliance.org](mailto:leen@visionservealliance.org) or by phone (314) 961-8235.**

### **Set for Success–VisionRefer 2.0 and You**

VisionRefer, our electronic patient referral system, has been thriving over the last nine months of its pilot year. This past July, the pilot program leaders gathered in Orlando to discuss VisionRefer 2.0 and the future of the site. Over two days, collaborating with Lighthouse Works and ten other organizations, we set a path for the future of VisionRefer. With the timeline in place for future updates and robust features, we are calling for other VisionServe members to join VisionRefer.



Organizations that have been participating in the pilot program thus far have reported that they have seen tremendous results when they take an active role in local outreach to the technicians and staff at eye doctors' offices. "VisionRefer's simple, but powerful referral platform allows for a HIPAA compliant referral process across organizations without expensive software. No more lost faxes or wondering what is going on with your patients. Physicians are excited about being able to have real-time access to what is going on with their referrals without having to call or

wait for a fax." – Rita Greene, Clinic Marketing and Rehab Contract Specialist with NewView Oklahoma

During the pilot year, VisionRefer has had over 100 patient referrals to 27 VisionServe members. TDuring the pilot year, VisionRefer has had over 125 patient referrals to 37 VisionServe members. To get involved today contact Ben Leigh, VisionRefer admin at: [bleigh@visionservealliance.org](mailto:bleigh@visionservealliance.org).

### **VisionServe Alliance Receives Grant from the Gibney Family Foundation to Support Fall Conference**



The Gibney Family Foundation has pledged \$30,000 to support the upcoming Executive Leadership Conference Nov. 3 – 6 in Atlanta. The grant funding will support several key aspects of this year's conference including: 1) a marketing/PR campaign targeting leaders across the sectors of our field from state Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services agency directors, university personnel, non-member service providers, physicians and for-profit product manufacturers; 2) additional technology solutions and services to ensure 100% accessibility of holding an event in this unique format; 3) hiring a professional videographer to document the event; and 4) more robust staffing at the conference. We are grateful to TGFF for stepping in to support the meeting which empowers all participants to share info and ideas equally, and target registrants well beyond VSA membership in order to broaden the national conversation and breadth of exchange.

VisionServe Alliance members can also join the marketing/PR effort by doing any of the following: 1) present the event information at your staff and board meetings; 2) include a brief event summary on the event listings of your agency's website; 3) post the event flyer in your common space; 4) "like" and "share" prepared social media posts, and 5) invite your board members, colleagues and friends to join us at the conference! Watch your inbox for more ways to share the excitement in the coming months leading up to Atlanta! If you'd like more information, email conference director Wendy Hymes at [wendy@visionservealliance.org](mailto:wendy@visionservealliance.org)



# Welcoming New Members & Leaders

VisionServe Alliance would like to welcome our newest members and leaders. To date, we have had 4 new members join, bringing our total to 117. We've also had 8 new leaders come on board.

## MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS



### **American Council of the Blind**

(Alexandria, VA)

Eric Bridges - Executive Director

Focus: independence, security, opportunities, and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people.



### **Sight Center of Northwest PA** (Erie, PA)

Linda Moore - Executive Director

Focus: to prevent blindness and promote independence for those with vision loss



### **Olmsted Center for Sight** (Buffalo, NY)

Tammy Owen - President & CEO

Focus: helping children and adults who are blind or visually impaired achieve their highest level of independence.



### **Spectrios Institute for Low Vision**

(Wheaton, IL)

R. Tracy Williams - Executive Director

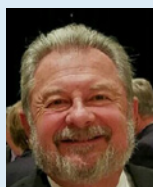
Focus: serving and treating people with low vision challenges regardless of income

## NEW LEADERS IN 2019



### **Janie Blome**

(AER - Alexandria, VA)



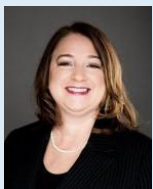
### **Jonathan Fister**

(Lighthouse f/t Visually Impaired & Blind - Port Richey, FL)



### **Kyle Johnson**

(Lighthouse Central Florida/Lighthouse Works - Orlando, FL)



### **Tracy Libertino-Fegarsky**

(Metrolina Association f/t Blind - Charlotte, NC)



### **Jeffrey Mittman**

(Bosma Enterprises - Indianapolis, IN)



### **Laura Park-Leach**

(St. Louis Society for the BVI - St. Louis, MO)



### **Brian Patchett**

(North Central Sight Services - Williamsport, PA)



### **Bob Sonnenberg**

(Earle Baum Center f/t Blind - Santa Rosa, CA)



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

**Sassy Outwater-Wright – Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Community Services, Brookline, MA | [www.mabcommunity.org](http://www.mabcommunity.org)**

### What is your best childhood memory?

*Learning to do things like sailing with my uncle, horseback riding with my aunt, and how to apply makeup with my mom were wonderful. I got to learn that my blindness is always about challenging perceptions in self and in others.*

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

*Reading a Louise Penny Inspector Gamache novel, re-watching "Call the Midwife," and listening to my playlist of Halestorm, Morten Lauridsen, Capercaillie and Gavin DeGraw while I "triage" my inbox.*

### Tell us about one item on your bucket list.

*Belong to a pit bull (which I now do as of six weeks ago) and a beagle, (which I'd name Snoopy) and a husky. For the record, I already belong to a Labrador Guide dog, my 4th guide.*

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

*Run while thinking about work, sleep and dream about work, watch movies and try to not think about work, read and pause to think about work or just think about work. Oh, I also like to cook.*

### What is your best guilty pleasure?

*Dogs and chocolate. I run this nonprofit powered by Spotify playlists, and ridiculous amounts of tea, dark chocolate, laughter and tech gadgetry.*

### As a new leader, what are you most impressed by at your agency?

*We're agile. We try new things in a space that is crowded by old ways of doing stuff. We love to do pilot programs, and believe our consumers are the best judges of whether something will work or not.*

### Tell us what you value about your membership in VisionServe?

*At VisionServe, it's our responsibility as members to support each other, learn from each other and offer questions and discussion to usher in a new era in our history together.*



## **FUTURE CONFERENCES – SAVE THE DATES!**

31st Annual Executive Leadership Conference | Atlanta, GA  
Nov. 3 – 6, 2019 | Venue: The Georgian Terrace Hotel



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ACVB & AtlantaPhotos.com

5th Annual CEO Summit | Albuquerque, NM | April 26 – 29, 2020  
Venue: Hotel Chaco



Photo credit: [www.kipmalone.com](http://www.kipmalone.com)

32nd Annual Executive Leadership Conference | Tampa, FL  
Nov. 1 – 4, 2020 | Venue: Westin Tampa Waterside Hotel



Photo credit: Visit Tampa Bay

**For conference details, visit our conference page online:**

**[www.visionservealliance.org/conferences/](http://www.visionservealliance.org/conferences/)**



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