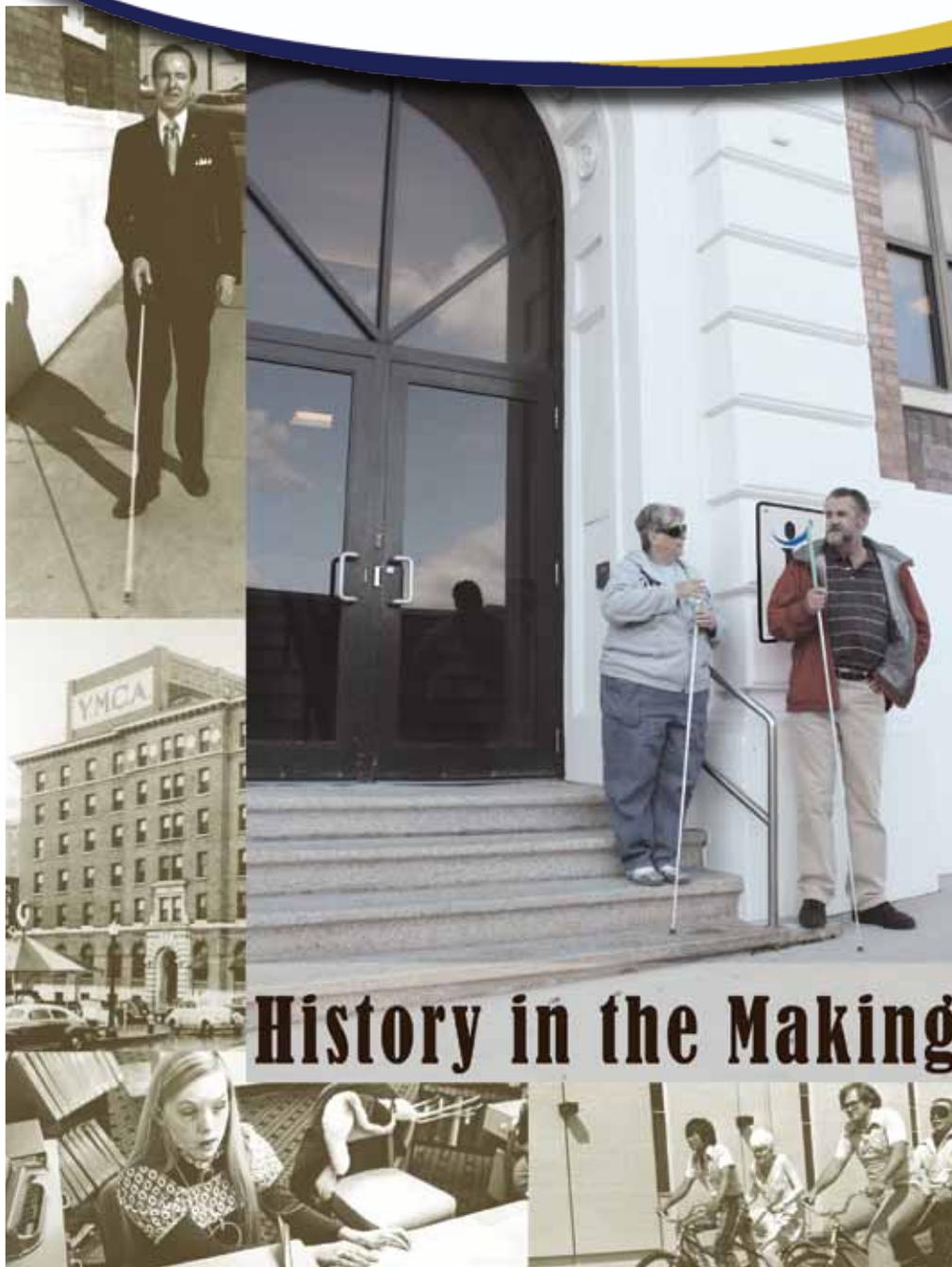


# The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



## History in the Making

### **INSIDE:**

Collecting the history of blindness in Iowa

Kingsley man turns passion into self-employment

Reminiscences on the early days in Orientation

Library celebrates 50th anniversary

Healthier options come to vending operations

Weathering software upgrades for PC

# |contents|

winter 2011 volume II \_ number 1

## news|features

- 4 | **Charting History**  
IDB chronicles the history of blindness in Iowa.
- 6 | **Historical Landmark**  
IDB building lands on national register of historic places.
- 11 | **Talking Tech w/Curtis Chong**  
Making the transition to Windows 7 and Office 2010.
- 20 | **Profile: Muhammad Jihad**  
Former Orientation Center student happy at Hy-Vee.
- 21 | **Blind Perspective**  
Our lives are a part of history in the making.

## |departments

- 3 | **From the Director**
- 7 | **Independent Living**
- 9 | **Vocational Rehabilitation**
- 12 | **Library for the Blind**
- 15 | **Orientation Center**
- 17 | **Youth Transition**
- 18 | **Business Enterprises**
- 23 | **Upcoming Events**



## |from the editor

The Scottish historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle wrote that “history is the essence of innumerable biographies.”

If it is such, then the IDB’s oral history project will stand to be the foundation of the history of blindness in Iowa.

Through the project, Iowans affected by blindness, either through their own vision loss or by experiences with others with vision loss, tell their stories. They share stories from the mundane daily activities of living as a blind person to how advances in technology have enabled greater independence in our society.

In the sense that everyone is a historian of sorts, chronicling these experiences will produce an impressive collection for the public. But your help is needed.

The following pages offer a glimpse at the project and ways to contribute. Please consider adding your story.

— **Shoshana Hebshi**

Letters & comments can be e-mailed to:  
[idbcomm@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:idbcomm@blind.state.ia.us)

**Editor:** Shoshana Hebshi. **Contributing Editors:** Karen Kenger, Beth Hirst, Linda Trogdon.

**Contributing Writers:** Kelsey Anderson, Julie Bergeson, Tai Blas, Curtis Chong, Roger Erpelding, Meredith Ferguson, Betty Hansen, Beth Hirst, Randy Landgrebe, Rebecca Swainey and Barb Weigel.



contact us |

**Main Office:**

524 Fourth St.  
Des Moines, IA  
50309-2364  
(515) 281-1333 or  
(800) 362-2587 (in Iowa)  
Fax: (515) 281-1263  
TTY: (515) 281-1259

**Cedar Rapids Office:**

411 3rd St. SE, Ste. 700  
Cedar Rapids, IA  
52401-1837  
(319) 365-9111

online at:  
[www.IDBonline.org](http://www.IDBonline.org)

General email:  
[information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us)

Printed with soy ink.



*The White Cane* is published quarterly. Address or subscription changes can be sent to [information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us)

If we as blind and visually impaired Iowans are to achieve the full participation we want, we must change the public's attitudes about blindness. This is no easy task. We know, however, that learning happens best through stories and personal connections. That's why our oral history project is so important. Not only will it document changes over the past century, but it will also stand as testimony to the accomplishments of ordinary blind and visually impaired Iowans.

Already we have 10 in-depth interviews recorded as well as 11 shorter ones. The stories, the candid expressions of emotion and opinion, and the delightful anecdotes contained in these interviews guarantee a rich and varied collection, which I believe will add both depth and breadth to the understanding of blindness.

The stories are telling not of hopeless, helpless and dependent lives, but of challenges met, of work, and family and fun, of hardships overcome—stories not so different from those of sighted Iowans.

Through several narrations, we see glimpses of life growing up as a blind child in public school, and the joys and sorrows of being sent to a residential school far from home. We see one

person earning a living with her music, another providing child care, and a third putting herself through law school. We see adaptations made in everyday life to accommodate vision loss, and a wedding dress made using those adaptations. We glimpse at life with a blind spouse from the sighted spouse's perspective. We see how advances in technology put one man out of a job and provided another the platform for an excellent career.

Please consider sharing your story. We need it to add your personal dimension to this history. Trained interviewers will make it easy, and you can review the transcript and block anything you don't want shared. See page 5 for details.

Advances in technology are making this collection possible. Those same advances are making their way into all aspects of our lives, giving us as blind and visually impaired people access unheard of a few years ago.

Sincerely,  
*Karen Keninger*

# CHARTING HISTORY

IDB chronicles history of blindness in Iowa through oral history project

**W**hen I entered school, I was not particularly embarrassed to enter first grade almost old enough for junior high, for there were teen-agers in the class...so many entered school so late, because of the lack of information regarding the school and encouragement to enter. I recall one graduating class that ranged in ages from eighteen to thirty. The extension of the privilege to continue in school had to be granted more often than not, but I think in earlier days that fact was just understood. ~ Lois Tiberghien (class of 1910) remembers attending the Iowa College for the Blind, now known as the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS) in Vinton, IA.

Circumstances have changed for the blind community since Lois Tiberghien attended school more than a century ago, not least of which is expansion of services for the blind. Since 1910, numerous historic moments related to legislation, education, family life, work, and leisure activities have affected the blind in Iowa. Just as Lois Tiberghien recorded part of her history, the Iowa Department for the Blind is embarking on an oral history project to document the history of blindness in Iowa through the personal stories of Iowans just like you.

Through the winter IDB staff and volunteers are collecting live interviews and written submissions from blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired Iowans and other individuals associated with the blind community in Iowa. The intention is to collect, document



Learning music at Camp Laurie in 1967.

and preserve personal stories related to the history of blindness in Iowa going back 70 to 80 years. IDB Director Karen Keninger initiated this project as she has “always been interested in people’s personal stories, and blind people in Iowa have rich and fascinating stories to tell.” The project will be unveiled in late summer.

*We stayed within the self-contained classroom exclusively until 5th and 6th grade when we visited a social studies class, without doing any of the work. I had no meaningful contact with sighted students in the school. Since mobility training was in its infancy during that time, none of the children received any cane training. That left me to move around in familiar places, or go sighted guide with others. I didn’t mind that so much as an elementary student. However, as a teenager, that all changed. ~ Mary Wilmeth recalls growing up blind with limited services in the 1950s.*

| Continued on Page 5 |

Through these stories, we have already begun to unravel how much an everyday occurrence (such as a work or educational experience) can tell us how attitudes and opportunities have changed for the blind community.

*Initially I was able to use large print successfully and even actually before that regular print was O.K., but about that time was also the time that regular textbooks transitioned from a little larger print to smaller print and that was the time that my vision changed. So, I began to use large print books, books on tape and going into high school. I couldn't read large print books quickly enough to get the information digested so I had live readers then who would read some of that material to me...and I got the feeling that I always did well in school and even though I spent hours and hours in the evenings doing my homework, people looked at my grades and not at my efficiency. And so I remember having just a little hint of Braille suggested, but that wasn't actually until I was in college. So, in high school I didn't have any Braille instruction. ~ Kristal Platt reflects on the various reading methods she used in school in the 1980s.*

A potential contributor may think his or her experience is too ordinary. Yet, think about how the documentaries or stories from other communities have generated amusement, enlightenment and deeper understanding of a topic. All contributed stories will become part of a project intended to evoke that same reaction from its audience.

*I was enrolled into the Rehabilitation Center in Des Moines where I spent 13 months learning cane travel, Braille, typing, and self help skills, like cooking, cleaning, and personal*

## Submit a Story!

Whether you are blind, have a blind family member, or have been involved with the blind community, we encourage you to share your unique story.

Submit your stories by e-mail or regular mail in audio, print, or Braille to:

Shan.Sasser@blind.state.ia.us

or

History of Blindness in Iowa

Attn: Shan Sasser

Iowa Department for the Blind

524 Fourth Street

Des Moines, IA 50309

You can also record a five-minute story to a voice mail box at: 877-742-4938.

With any story you submit please give your name and contact information. If possible, submit your story by February.

All stories submitted to this project will become a part of a History of Blindness collection owned by the Iowa Department for the Blind. By submitting your story, you will grant IDB all legal title and all literary property rights. IDB will have an unrestricted license to use your recording, and all the information which it contains, in any manner the IDB may wish to use it, for as long as the IDB wishes to use it.

*This project is supported in part by the State Historical Society of Iowa, Historical Resource Development Program and the Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.*

*grooming. I also learned self-confidence skills of woodworking and auto mechanics. My time at the Center was very beneficial in that I was counseled and taught techniques that put me back on course to going to college as I was planning after high school. ~Anthony Balik recalls his experience at the Orientation Center from 1962-1963.*

# IDB building lands on national register of historic places

The building that houses the Iowa Department for the Blind in downtown Des Moines has been placed on the National Register for Historic Places for significance within Iowa because of the important role it has played in the rehabilitation of blind individuals. Work is underway to upgrade that status to national significance.



Kenneth Jernigan in 1972.

The building, located at 524 Fourth St., was built in 1912 as Des Moines' original YMCA. The State purchased the building for the

Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1959 after the YMCA moved to its present location along the Des Moines River.

The building was an integral part of the visionary philosophy of the Commission's new director, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, who transformed

services for blind Iowans into what became known as the Iowa Model for rehabilitation services.

Through his work in Iowa, Jernigan became a national figure in the fight for civil rights for the blind. The National Park Service, which oversees the National Register, selected the Department's building for its role as the place where Jernigan first implemented his training model and directed the movement.

"Our building has housed more than just history," said IDB Director Karen Keninger. "It is the fulcrum for the notion that it's OK to be blind—an idea that Jernigan set in motion and continues to echo through these walls each day." ♦

| Continued from Page 5 |

While Balik's memory came from his time spent in the Department's Orientation Center, Keninger and other project coordinators are looking for stories related to blindness in Iowa, such as a first job experience, what it was like raising a family as a blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired person, different uses for assistive technology or changes experienced in attitudes toward or within the blind community. No story will be turned away as long as it is on topic.

It may be hard to think of your story as "history," because after all, you're still living it. However, history is alive and it's always changing and expanding. Too much of history has been lost or forgotten because no one thought it was important enough to record. This is what makes this project and your personal stories so important. Keninger says, "Blind and visually impaired

people live rich and interesting lives. Iowa has been a test bed for social change around blindness, and is, I think, truly historically significant in that regard. The results of these changes play out in people's everyday lives."

Once all the stories are collected and compiled, the oral history will be made available to the public.

Through money obtained by a Humanities Iowa grant, the project will have its own website, and coordinators will develop a traveling exhibit that will visit a number of libraries around Iowa. The Department will also host a lecture presented by Keninger on the project and its findings and an open house to give the public an opportunity to learn more about the Department's pivotal role in the history of blindness in Iowa. Each of these will be designed in an engaging and varied format, in order to educate as many Iowans as possible. ♦

## Vision loss provides platform to help others

By Barb Weigel &  
Julie Bergeson  
Contributing Writers

**M**argaret Oliver woke up one morning in her mid-sixties and realized something was terribly wrong. She couldn't see anything out of her right eye except a big red spot. Her local eye doctor sent her to Iowa City, where she learned she had histoplasmosis, a disease caused by a fungus which can result in blindness.

Although the disease had affected the right eye, the vision in her left eye remained unchanged. Margaret went back to her job, working full time as a nurse.

In the late 1980s, during cataract surgery, the surgeon discovered bleeding in Oliver's left eye. A specialist performed a surgical procedure to stop the bleeding. Recalling the day she went back in for her follow up appointment, Oliver remembers thinking she was going to be given a new prescription for glasses and sent on her way. Instead, she learned the procedure didn't work and there wasn't anything else that could be done for her. She would go blind. Margaret said she "felt like someone had hit me across the middle with a two-by-four."



Margaret Oliver (right) presents a certificate of completion of senior orientation in 2009 to participant Karen Cox. Oliver was an integral part of the Senior Orientation program.

A short while after receiving her diagnosis, Oliver received a call from a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor from the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB). She remembers feeling angry and thinking "how dare this person who, I assumed, was sighted tell me they are going to help me learn how to live without my eyesight."

After this call, Oliver did a lot of thinking and realized she could live for another 30 years. She decided she wasn't going to spend them twiddling her thumbs. But she needed help. When the VR counselor called again, Oliver agreed to meet with her.

Oliver explored her options and decided the best thing was to attend the IDB's

Orientation Center. While she was hesitant about her decision, she was also hopeful.

Though she received support from most of her family, her daughter was skeptical. But after two months in training at the Center, her daughter said, "I am so glad you're doing what you are doing because now I feel like I got my mom back." It was then that Oliver knew she had done what she needed to do, for herself and for her family.

During her training, Oliver learned how to live life without vision. Of all the classes she participated in, wood shop was her favorite. She remembers her first day, cutting an old piece of wood.

| *Continued on Page 8* |

| Continued from Page 7 |

The smell of the wood and the noise of the saw enthralled her. Through the course of her training, she made a headboard, of which she said: “To this day, I am very, very proud.”

Oliver’s training not only gave her the skills and confidence to return to her own apartment to live independently but it also gave her the desire to work again. Initially funded through an AARP program, Oliver joined the Independent Living (IL) program at the IDB as a teacher’s assistant.

For 13 years, her kind, understanding manner helped countless senior citizens adjust to their own vision loss. Just as she had been when the IDB first contacted her, many of those she talked to were quiet and hesitant. Oliver would wait two to three weeks to give the rehabilitation teacher a chance to visit the client and then she would call again. Echoing her own experience, Margaret’s clients began to change. They started to open up and, after learning she also lost her vision later in life, became more willing to talk about their situations. They started asking more questions and became willing to receive the services they needed to maintain their independence.

Throughout the years,

Oliver also assisted with IL’s Senior Orientation program. The weeklong training in the Orientation Center provides seniors with an opportunity for concentrated skills training and a chance to meet other older lowans experi-

“I would probably still be sitting twiddling my thumbs if I hadn’t done what I did.”

encing vision loss. Meeting others is one of the most beneficial aspects of going through the program, Oliver said.

Oliver said at the beginning of each session, the seniors were scared, and their voices were shaky. She remembers the participants not knowing what lay in store for them. During the week, however, she observed a “180-degree” change in their voices, and confidence began to replace anxiety.

Oliver said during her

time working in the IL program she most enjoyed visiting with clients. To hear them exclaim: “You are blind, and you’re doing this and you’re doing that” gave Oliver the freedom to share her story and encourage others to receive services and improve their lives. “I know I helped them but they also helped me,” she said.

Oliver is now 82, and she retired from IDB in 2009. She continues to keep in touch with some of her clients, and she remains an advocate for IDB services.

“I just feel like whether it was my doctor that sent my name down to the Department or whoever did it, thank God they did because I would be a much different person right now,” she said. “I would probably still be sitting twiddling my thumbs if I hadn’t done what I did. I am so thankful for the Department.”

*For more information on senior orientation or other independent living services, call (800) 362-2587 or e-mail [barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us) ◆*

**Get tips for living independently with vision loss each month in your email inbox.**

**To sign up, go to: <http://idbonline.org/form/independent-living-tips-sign-form>**

## Passion, hobby become career for Kingsley man

By Shoshana Hebshi  
Editor

A trip to Kingsley, Iowa, is not complete these days without a stop at The Shooting Shop. Wait, where *is* Kingsley?

Travel the county roads through the rolling farmland of northwest Iowa, make sure to stay on the east side of Sioux City and north of Highway 20. Roll into the small town with its quaint tree-lined streets and mom-and-pop shops, drive up Burlington Street. Tucked away behind a little cream-colored house, The Shooting Shop is every gun owner's dream.

Most important, it is Bob Farmer's dream that has been realized.

After his vision began to deteriorate from retinitis pigmentosa, Farmer, 47, was forced to rethink his working life. As a purchasing agent for Dean Foods—one of the largest employers in the area—Farmer worked 12 hours a day until the company required him to operate a vehicle. When he couldn't do that because of vision loss, he worked from home for three months. Then the company

| *Continued on Page 10* |



Bob Farmer uses a magnifier to help him in his job as a gunsmith in his new shop adjoined to his garage.

## IDB's Victoria Kollmann receives prestigious Iowa award

In October at the annual Iowa Rehabilitation Association (IRA) Conference, Victoria Kollmann, VR counselor for IDB, was awarded the Gerry Byers Award for Outstanding Service. Kollmann, regarded by her colleagues as an extremely effective counselor,



has worked at the IDB for 16 years and is passionate about her work, having helped more than 200 blind or visually impaired Iowans to find jobs or establish their own businesses.

Kollmann has been very active in the IRA, which plays an important role in educating and motivating its membership to help people with

disabilities to achieve employment and life goals. "It was a wonderful honor, and I know that Gerry Byers was an excellent rehabilitation counselor and involved with IRA, and I don't know I can ever fill his shoes," said Kollmann. "It made me feel really good that people thought of me in that way." ♦

—Betty Hansen

laid him off.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do,” he said. “There’s not a lot of job opportunities in Kingsley.”

David Lenz, an employment specialist with the Iowa Department for the Blind, met with Farmer and had a frank discussion about his future. “We talked about what he wanted to do, did he want to go back to work, and how we could accomplish that,” Lenz said.

Farmer told Lenz about his dream of being a gunsmith. Once the seed was planted, the project was underway. Farmer signed up with the Iowa Self-Employment Program, a part of the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Working with IVRS and the Department, Farmer secured start-up money, training and assistance in getting his business off the ground.

First, an assessment study was conducted to determine the consumer need in the area. Those results came back showing that locals with hunting licenses were eager to have a gunsmith not connected with a retail chain. “People want a personal experience,” said Farmer.

“In that small, eight-county area, there were 11,000 people with hunting licenses,” said Lenz. “There’s definitely a strong contingency

## Working for themselves

Since its inception in October 2007, the Iowa Self-Employment (ISE) Program has assisted 117 Iowans with disabilities to achieve entrepreneurial success. Formerly known as the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, the ISE is a partnership between Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Iowa Department for the Blind.



Self-employment is regarded as a viable employment outcome for recipients of vocational rehabilitation services. There are two qualifications that an applicant for the ISE program must meet:

1. The applicant must have at least a 51 percent vested interest in the business and
2. The applicant must actively own, operate and manage the business in the state of Iowa.

There are five steps in the ISE program: Initial Planning, Application, Business Plan Feasibility Study, Implementation and Client Follow-up.

Funding for the ISE program is appropriated by the Iowa Legislature. Clients can receive up to \$10,000 of technical assistance funding and an additional \$10,000 in financial assistance to cover the purchase of equipment, supplies, or other costs. This financial assistance must be matched dollar for dollar with funds provided by the client.

There are 94 individuals using the ISE program, three of whom are working directly with the IDB. ◆

—Betty Hansen

of people who own guns and shoot guns and get ammo, and get their guns fixed if they’re broken. The only competition was big box

stores, who ship their guns off to get fixed. So there was appeal to keep it local.”

The local excitement was

## Talking Tech

w/ Curtis Chong

### My transition to Windows 7 and Office 2010

Early this fall, I decided to take the plunge, rebuild my office computer, and start using Windows 7 and Office 2010--all in one go. Windows 7 is the most current operating system from Microsoft, and Office 2010 is the latest Microsoft offering in its line of Office products.

I was reasonably certain that Windows 7 would work with my screen access technology, and I had heard from a number of blind friends and colleagues from around the country that Office 2010 would be OK as long as I upgraded my screen access program to the latest version.

While I have been using these two significant upgrades for only a few months, I have reached the point where I am comfortable performing everyday tasks without having to search for buttons or checkboxes that I used to find with ease.

For me, the transition from Windows XP to Windows 7 was not as challenging as the transition from Office 2003 to Office 2010. Windows 7 is essentially a lot like Windows XP with a few improvements. On the other hand, running Office 2010 on a Windows 7 computer has resulted in a few interesting quirks for me. For example, I noticed right away that the "My Documents" folder has gone away. Windows 7 now likes to use libraries which are essentially collections of pointers to files and folders. Beware of the library if you like to know where things are located on your hard drive or on a network drive. I find myself doing more copying and pasting of paths in Windows 7 than in previous versions because of the absence of the "My Docu-

The transition to Windows 7 was not as challenging as the transition from Office 2003 to Office 2010.

ments" shortcut.

#### Changes You Will Notice With Office 2010

In Office 2010, Microsoft has decided to implement the Ribbon for all Office applications--not just Microsoft Word. For people who have grown accustomed to the standard menu bar found everywhere else in Windows, this will require some learning and exploration because all of the usual menu items have now been relocated. Fortunately, in programs such as Microsoft Word and Outlook, many of the standard keystrokes still work: Control+E still centers text; Control+U still toggles underlining; and in Outlook, you can still press Control+N to create a new message, Control+R to reply to a message, Control+Shift+R to send a reply to all message recipients; and Control+Shift+B to open the Outlook Address Book.

My transition to the Microsoft ribbon was made less painful because of something called the Quick Access Toolbar. This is a toolbar on which you can place those buttons that are not often used and which take several minutes to find when you need them. For example, one button I have placed on my Quick Access Toolbar in Microsoft Word is the one used to print envelopes--something which I do about once a month. Once I explored the Ribbon to find the Envelopes Button, I was able to right click on it and add this button to the Quick Access Toolbar. Then, when I need it again, I simply press two keystrokes to get to the Quick Access Toolbar and right arrow to the Envelopes button. It is really that simple.

For those who want to learn something about how to navigate the ribbons used in Microsoft Office 2010, I found a free audio tutorial which, although it deals only with the ribbons of Word 2007, still provides extremely valuable infor-

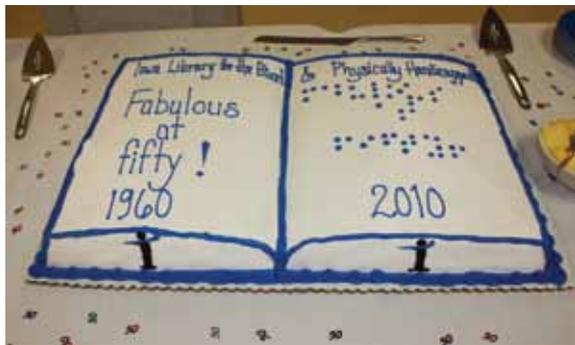
| *Continued on Page 22* |

# Fabulous at 50!

The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped celebrated its 50th anniversary Nov. 5, 2010 with an open house at the IDB. Those who came not only enjoyed a book-shaped cake, they also made their way through several booths demonstrating all aspects of Library service, including downloading digital books from the web.



ABOVE: Library staff Sarah Cranston (left) shows Library users a digital talking book player. LEFT: A book shaped cake had Braille and Roman characters wishing the Library a happy 50th birthday. BELOW: Tracey Morsek, former Library Director, addresses a robust crowd during the open house. BOTTOM LEFT: Morsek receives a certificate of recognition from Cindy Jones of the



Governor's Office. BOTTOM RIGHT: Library staff Karen Schweitzer (sitting) demonstrates how she and other staff edit audio recordings to make digital talking books.



More photos online at  
[facebook.com/  
 IowaDepartmentfortheBlind](https://www.facebook.com/IowaDepartmentfortheBlind)



# Honoring a D.E.A.R. reader

By Kelsey Anderson  
Contributing Writer

**W**ith a book in one hand and a white cane in the other, Mavis McVeety appears to have found her niche at the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

During the Library's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house on Nov. 5, McVeety was given the D.E.A.R. Reader award to acknowledge her outstanding support for the library.

McVeety began using the Library in 1961, as a student at IDB's Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center. The Library has since become one of her most valuable resources. While working at the State Historical Society, McVeety was able to give exhibit tours because the Library created Braille versions of museum guides.

"Some of the people thought a blind person couldn't give guided tours in the exhibits, but I did," she said.

McVeety continues to use the Library to provide her with recreational reading materials. Every day she reads a Braille book and listens to an audio book at night. With her own digital book player, McVeety believes improved technologies make reading "so much easier."

McVeety has also made several contributions to the Library. As a volunteer, she helped produce Braille materials for other readers. Recently she donated a 72-volume Braille dictionary, which is shelved in the Library's Career Resources Center. "I know that we have the career center for students and people who are writing resumes, and I thought that was a great place for it," said McVeety.

"As a borrower myself and having had books Brailled for me, I realized that was just a really important part of what we do here, and I really wanted to be a part of that." ♦



## From the Librarian

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know, the more that you learn, the more places you'll go." -- Dr. Seuss*



Greetings! I am Randy Landgrebe, Program Director of the Library. I returned to the IDB on May 3, 2010 and began my duties as Program Director on Nov. 15, 2010.

I have nearly 20 years of library experience in public libraries in Iowa and Colorado, during which I have worked with some of the best people in the world: library patrons!

Among the goals Library staff will be working toward in the months to come is converting the locally produced magazines from cassette to the NLS digital cartridge. The digital magazine will allow patrons to easily read magazines as they are most often read—not cover to cover; but however the patron wants to read it!

This goal is just one piece of an overall plan to create and maintain the very best Library for the Blind in the United States.

Please contact me with any questions or comments regarding Library service. I can be reached by telephone at 1-800-362-2587 or 515-281-1291 or via email at [randy.landgrebe@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:randy.landgrebe@blind.state.ia.us)

*Sincerely,*

*Randy Landgrebe*

# BOOKLIST

When someone confronts vision loss (or any other life-altering change), reading about it can provide guidance, inspiration, and practical advice. Hearing the stories of others, be they historical or current, can give new perspective to one's own experiences. These titles are a sampling of the Library's holdings from the subject area "Disability – Visual."

**DB/RC38282, LT5651**  
***If Blindness Comes by Kenneth Jernigan***

Defining a "blind person" as one who has to develop so many alternative techniques as to substantially alter his pattern of living, this guide encourages the newly blind to ask "how can I do it?" rather than "can I do it?" The history and purpose of the National Federation of the Blind are discussed as are other available services, programs, devices, and employment information. 1994.

**BR15781, DB/RC59457**  
***The Blindness Revolution: Jernigan in His Own Words* by James H. Omvig**

Blindness activist and attorney examines the transformation of the Iowa Commission for the Blind by Dr.

Kenneth Jernigan, a National Federation for the Blind leader. Describes Jernigan's reorganizing the service agency beginning in 1958 from its ineffective medical model to a civil-rights-based "empowerment" organization. 2005.

**BR9962, RC39905**  
***More Than Meets the Eye: The Story of a Remarkable Life and a Transcending Love* by Joan Brock**

Thirty-two-year-old Joan and her husband Joe were employed at the Iowa Braille and Sight-Saving School when Joan suddenly lost the ability to see the color pink and soon was irreversibly blind. Then Joe was diagnosed with cancer and died. Joan and her daughter moved, and Joan obtained a "talking computer," spoke about her experience, and wed a high-school crush. 1994.

**DB/RC67704**  
***Label It! Braille and Audio Strategies for Identifying Items at Home and Work* by Judith Dixon**

Advocates investing time and energy to label items to organize one's environment and make daily life more manageable. Offers tips on methods, tools, and materials for creating labels for

apparel, medications, food containers, appliances, and miscellaneous items. 2008.

**BR13354, DB/RC51875**  
***The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* by Ernest Freeberg**

Chronicles the life of Laura Bridgman, who, born into a New Hampshire farm family in 1829, became deaf and blind at the age of two. Freeberg recounts Laura's transformation into a woman who voraciously absorbed the world around her under the tutelage of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe of the Perkins Institution for the Blind. 2001.

**BR16939, DB/RC63900**  
***Blind Rage: Letters to Helen Keller* by Georgina Kleege**

A blind professor and author pens letters to the deceased Helen Keller and probes for the private feelings behind Keller's idealized public image. Kleege expresses admiration for Keller but criticizes her as an unrealistic model. Speculates about Keller's love life and personal emotions. 2006. ◆

*To request these or other titles contact your Reader's Advisor at (800) 362-2587.*

## A look back in history with Jim Crawford

**Compiled by Rebecca Swainey**  
Contributing Writer

*Jim Witte, a former program administrator of the Orientation Center, talks with Jim Crawford, a former Orientation teacher. Crawford was hired in 1967 by Kenneth Jernigan, founder of the Iowa Model for the rehabilitation of blind individuals. Crawford was part of the Center team until his retirement in 1996. Witte sat down with Crawford recently to talk about the old days.*

**Witte:** When you left the Commission (IDB) one of the newsletters talked about you as being a sort of a renaissance man.... I've always thought of you more as a man for all seasons...remind me how you came to Iowa in the first place.

**Crawford:** When Max Rutledge was building that new building on Grand Avenue for Farmers Mutual Hail, he was talking to Russell Lundy about personnel and Lundy said, "Why don't you ask Crawford if he wants to come down from Minneapolis?" I was editor there at the time of a weekly newspaper. So, I came down to Des Moines, we talked about all kinds of things, and Max hired me.

**Witte:** You went from that job to Grinnell, right; to the radio station?

**Crawford:** No. One day Max said they were getting rid of my job at Farmers. So I went to Russell and asked, "Do you need an editor?"

Luckily he did, so I went to work for Russell Lundy as editor of Iowa Business and Industry Magazine for five years. Then I went to work for the radio. I was a salesman for the station over in Grinnell. I still have a long re-



Jim Crawford (left), a former Orientation Center teacher, sits with Jim Witte, former Center program administrator, in a photo from the 1980s.

cording somewhere that told about my radio experience.

**Witte:** So, how did you come to work at the Commission for the Blind?

**Crawford:** Well, because I had met Kenneth Jernigan, when Jim Valiant (administrative assistant) left Mr. Jernigan called and asked if I'd like to work for the Commission. I said I would but my son had one more year of high school so I felt I had to stay in Grinnell. Mr. Jernigan waited the year and called again. He was dismissing one of the rehabilitation counselors and wanted me to take his place in Field Operations. My first job was going down to cover areas south and east. After a year I went into Orientation for awhile, then back to Field Operations for a few years. I

| Continued on Page 16 |

| Continued from Page 15 |

landed back in Orientation in 1978 where I remained until my retirement.

**Witte:** Your work with the Lions Club was an important factor in Jernigan wanting to hire you. Your background in journalism and your very active role in Lions (eventually including over 50 years perfect attendance and twice serving as District Governor) made you a natural for the Commission for the Blind. In fact, your Lions background put you on a first name basis with Jernigan.

**Crawford:** Oh, I was. (Chuckle) In fact, after we agreed to the deal he said, “Oh, one more thing—there’s no more Ken and Jim. It’s now Mr. Jernigan and Mr. Crawford.” Back then staff members were to refer to one another by surnames only.... But speaking of Lions, let me tell you how we built those first bookshelves for the library. I was president of Downtown Lions Club at that time and I said “I think we ought to do something for the library for the blind. Their books are just sitting on the floor of the gym.” Once I got my club interested we bought and cut up the lumber, took the pieces to the Commission and worked in teams to put it all together to get the books up off the floor.

**Witte:** I remember you and some other Lions coming through what’s now the shop area. You were there to put those shelves together. I met you for the first time then, but I didn’t see you again until 1967.... I taught you travel then, I think, in staff training.

**Crawford:** Yes, you did...

**Witte:** You were always a very good salesman for the philosophy of the Commission for the Blind. That was one of the strong points for your being in the Orientation Center. A big factor was your personality. Your sense of humor was always evident

and very valuable to the Center. I mean, you were able to get along with everybody and you were well-liked and respected by all the students; even back in those days when you were rousting the male students out of bed at 6 a.m. for gym class. ... So, when you look back at those years in Orientation, what gave you the most satisfaction?

**Crawford:** When I sent somebody on a 5.2 (miles—final travel route) and they made it. THAT was my biggest source of joy and sense of accomplishment. ♦



## Finding the perfect tree

Orientation Center students and staff chose a 12-foot concolor pine from Murphy’s Tree Farm as part of its annual preparations for Christmas. Students choose the tree, help cut it down and, back at the IDB, decorate it.

## Youth program experiencing transition of its own

In a move to improve services for blind and visually impaired youth in Iowa, the Iowa Department for the Blind transferred its two Transition specialists, Tai Blas and Keri Osterhaus, to its Field Operations division.

As of Oct. 1, 2010, Blas and Osterhaus became Transition vocational rehabilitation counselors and began carrying a caseload of blind or visually impaired youth.

In this new role, Blas and Osterhaus will continue to plan and organize educational activities during the school year and the summer, bringing groups of youth together in weekend retreats and summer camps, plus they will take on additional duties of helping the youth gain job experience and plan for college.

The Transition program began in 2002 as part of IDB's Orientation Center. Transition Specialists were

blindness (cane travel, non-visual techniques, etc.). The youth were also assigned a separate VR counselor to set career goals. This reclassification of the program enables the Transition specialists to focus on long-term

“This smooths out the process for the students and for us. There will be just one point of contact for families.

goals for the youth.

“We realized that work experience before graduating from high school was becoming more important for these youth to obtain,” said Megen Johnson, program administrator for the Vocational Rehabilitation

program, who will oversee the Transition team.

“In the end, the youth will not only gain the social and personal benefits of going

through the Transition program, they will now be able to set career goals and easily continue working on these goals as they transition into our regular VR program.”

As counselors for the youth, Blas and Osterhaus will provide more continuity of service for the youth.

“This move smooths out the process for the students and for us,” said Blas, who has worked for IDB since 2008. “Each youth in the Transition program will have Keri or myself as his or her counselor, instead of having us in the program plus a VR counselor. There will be just one point of contact for families.”

Osterhaus and Blas will work with youth from age 14 until senior year of high school, at which time plans will be made to assign the student to a long-term VR counselor, who will assist and follow him or her until the case is closed and education and career goals are met.

*For more information about Department Transition programs, contact Tai Blas at (800) 362-2587 or via email at [tai.blas@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:tai.blas@blind.state.ia.us). ◆*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Blind and visually impaired Iowa youth are eligible for Transition services from age 14.

focused mainly on helping youth build confidence as they learned the skills of

## Healthy food coming to a vending spot near you

By Roger Erpelding

Contributing Writer

B.E.P. Program Administrator

“Vending machines are often the last place you can find healthy food choices” states Susan Klein, a consultant with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH).

Yet, two blind vending managers with IDB’s Business Enterprises Program will be stocking their machines with healthy alternatives beginning in January, as they participate in a healthy choice initiative sponsored by IDPH.

Carl Drees and Dan Meier, who operate vending facilities in the Wallace and Lucas state buildings in the Capitol Complex, will pilot this program in their machines. The length the program will run will de-

pend on the customer demand and financial success.

Standards for the initiative are set by the Nutrition Environment Measures Survey-Vending (NEMS-V), using a three-tiered coding system for food: green, yellow and red. Foods will be marked with a green or yellow dot to signify them as healthier options.

Green foods and beverages “give a serving of whole grain, fruit, vegetables or low-fat dairy products.” Green products also have 35 percent or less of their calories from fat, zero trans-fat, 400 milligrams or less of sodium and 200 calories or less per serving.

The yellow foods must meet the same criteria, except they are not a serving of whole grain, fruit, vegetables or low-fat dairy.

Red foods will not be marked, as the program wants to draw attention to the green and yellow foods.

Program coordinators at IDPH believe many people avoid using the vending machines in the buildings because there is a lack of

healthy options. Since the Lucas Building contains about 200 IDPH employees, and they are more health fo-

It will be interesting to see what sells and to see if people are being more health conscious.

—Dan Meier  
B.E.P. Manager

cused than the general public, program coordinators believe it is a good site to test for this theory.

As they pilot the initiative in their operations, Drees and Meier will work toward a goal of providing 30 percent of these healthy choices in each of their vending machines. Items may include Dole fruit crisps, Baked Lay’s chips, baked pita chips, granola bars, Fiber One bars, Kashi bars, small Rice Krispie Treats and whole-grain Pop Tarts.

Several approaches will be used to point out the

| Continued on Page 19 |



| Continued from Page 18 |

healthy food selections to customers, including using the color-coded dots, says Carol Voss, spokeswoman for the program and nutrition coordinator for Iowans Fit for Life, a division of IDPH that promotes healthy lifestyles. Public information will be distributed explaining the program and encouraging people to visit their vending facilities to find more healthy options. There will also be a food cart featuring several sample items that will tour the Capitol Complex. Drees and Meier will incorporate marketing tools, such as clustering healthy items on the right side of the vending machine close to the areas where customers place coins and bills to begin the purchase process.

“It will be interesting to see what sells and to see if people are being more health conscious,” said Meier.

Darnell Huppert, a senior account executive with food wholesaler VISTAR, has also been involved in this project. At a recent meeting he brought by a variety of items that will meet the green and yellow criteria.

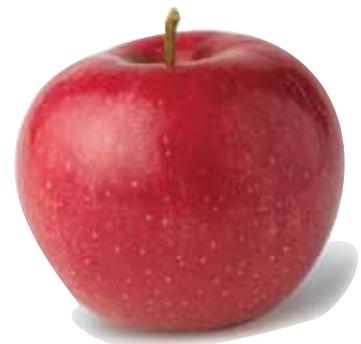
As the demand increases for healthy choices by customers, manufacturers will come on board to provide more of the healthier products. The vendors are looking forward to these new products to increase the possible selections. “If you put something new in the machine, everyone wants to try it, and if it is good it sells,” said Meier.

Voss said she hopes this pilot project is only the beginning of promoting healthier eating for Iowans. IDPH has applied for an additional grant to target customers in rest areas and state parks. “We hope this will be another surge to keep the program going,” she said.

How long will the pilot project last and what is its future? At this point, no one is certain. Will

the healthier choice products sell? All are positive and hopeful. Additional grants, upcoming federal regulations on vending nutrition labels and customer demand will also have a great deal of influence on this question. And as manufacturers provide healthier and tastier products, the sales will correspond accordingly.

“If state employees eat healthier,” said Drees, “they will miss less time from work, resulting in reduced health care costs, saving Iowa taxpayers’ money.” ♦



## After rehabilitation, Jihad returns to helping people

By Courtney Townsend  
Contributing Writer

After having a stroke that left him visually impaired, Muhammad Jihad thought he was done working for good. However, after contacting the Iowa Department for the Blind, he soon realized this was not the case.

“It helped me get back on my feet to go back out to the workforce,” he said.

Jihad, 44, is now a full-time employee at the Hy-Vee grocery store in Windsor Heights—a suburb of Des Moines. The job keeps him busy washing dishes, setting tables and filling jelly trays and napkin holders, but his favorite part of the job is interacting with customers.

“My biggest thing is helping people,” he said. “Hy-Vee likes it because I’m always happy and talking to customers, because I’m very friendly.”

That is evident. It is rare to see Jihad without a wide grin upon his face, greeting people and asking about their well-being in his booming voice.

Previously, Jihad worked in Des Moines federal buildings doing custodial work; however, after his stroke he thought his time working anywhere was over.



Muhammad Jihad works in the cafeteria at the Windsor Heights Hy-Vee, where he’s happy talking with diners.

That led to a conversation with IDB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Toni Reimers. And, in May 2009 he entered the Orientation Center unsure of himself. “If I hadn’t gotten into this program, I don’t think I’d have gone back to work,” he said.

But, once he learned non-visual skills he felt a huge boost of confidence, he said.

After graduating from the Center in September 2009, Jihad said he realized that his attitude toward his blindness had changed, and he was ready to leave and go back out to the workforce.

“He was always very upbeat and worked hard on developing a positive attitude about his blindness,” said

Sandy Tigges, director of the Center. “It’s really exciting to see a former student be so successful in a job because that’s what it’s all about.”

The skills he was taught during his time at the Center have proven to be useful at his Hy-Vee job.

“I have to do [my job] differently because of my vision loss,” he said. “I use the TC vision scanner to read labels, instructions and manuals, but I keep the dining room clean.”

Jihad said his supervisors were hesitant at first upon hiring him because of his blindness. But they soon realized that not only did he get the job done, he did it well.

“At first I was concerned

| Continued on Page 22 |

By Linda Slayton

When someone says, “We’re seeing history in the making,” we know something important is happening in the world. The truth is we see history in the making every single day of our lives. More amazing to me is that we get to live history in the making. Think about the changes that have occurred since each of us was born. Age-wise we may be anywhere from 10 to 100, but every one of us has witnessed tremendous changes in our lifetime.

For blind people those changes are remarkable. There are so many areas where opportunities have grown out of seemingly infertile soil. When I began losing my sight in 1986, I didn’t know any blind people who even had a job. The blind people I had met were elderly, stayed home and had others who assisted them. It’s no wonder that I felt disillusioned at my future prospects. No wonder I was so scared. Indeed, blindness was the one thing I had been warned about since becoming diabetic as a child.

I think the reason the Ori-



Department for the Blind drew me in, initially, was because it was the only place I believed any hope existed. The philosophy made sense to me. The core elements of the program not only made a promise, it placed that promise squarely in front of me in the form of capable and successful blind people.

While I was a student, the Commission for the Blind

“As blind people, we are ourselves history in the making.”

was placed under the Department of Human Rights. I was part of a grass-roots effort to regain our department-level status. As part of the newly formed Department for the Blind, I saw first-hand what organization, effort and belief could accomplish. About that same time, technology started blossoming and along with it came technology for blind folks. I remember writing a letter of recommendation for utilizing something called a CD Rom. I had no idea what a CD Rom was and could only write that letter after a crash course on its benefits. Fast forward and here I am in a world of digital book players and flash

drives! JAWS went from being a thriller to a means of communication.

My husband, Kevin, and I watch a show called *Covert Affairs*, in which one of the main characters, Auggie Anderson, is a blind man who works for the CIA. He uses highly technical equipment. The best part is the devices are no longer science fiction and the blind guy is portrayed as an intelligent human. (Sorry, Mr. McGoo, I’m leaving you for Auggie!)

My point is that as blind people, we are ourselves history in the making. We are at a turning point in which we switch from being considered poor disabled outcasts to being integrated contributors in society. I don’t get the chance very often to say thank you to those who paved this road for me. So thank you. I don’t take lightly the sacrifices you made for the future I get to live now. I hope that, in some small way, I leave something for those that follow me down this same path. Our shared path may have its twists and turns, even brambles, but we walk it together—taking neither the past nor future for granted. ♦

*Linda Slayton is a freelance writer living in Des Moines. She can be reached by e-mail at [lcs-slayton@yahoo.com](mailto:lcs-slayton@yahoo.com)*

| *Continued from Page 10* |

palpable. When Farmer held the Shooting Shop's grand opening Sept. 11 in the room he built off his garage to house the new store, more than 100 people came to explore the store and meet him. Local media also covered the shop's opening and wrote about this blind man who is becoming a gunsmith.

But in Farmer's and Lenz's view, he is just a hard-working man realizing his dream.

"During this whole process, he called me at least once a day," said Lenz. "He really made it happen. If you're an entrepreneur you have to make it happen. You can't sit back and let other people do it for you. You have to be the one that worries about everything."

Farmer now keeps himself busy with the store 16 hours a day. He uses a magnifier to help him see when he does detailed and intricate work on the guns he fixes. He also custom creates

ammunition and sells retail guns of all makes and kinds.

Every day his business seems to grow, he said. He recently had an offer to move his shop to nearby Sioux City or Merville, which he turned down.

"I've got something to get up for now," Farmer said.

"He's a typical hard-working American entrepreneur," said Lenz. "If you want to be successful, you can be. He doesn't feel sorry for himself. He just moves on." ♦

| *Continued from Page 11* |

mation. This free tutorial can be found at [http://www.blind-training.com/free/ribbons/Ribbons\(mp3\).zip](http://www.blind-training.com/free/ribbons/Ribbons(mp3).zip)

It is safe to say that both Windows 7 and Office 2010 can be used with the latest available versions of screen access tech-

nology. All of the new computers that are purchased today will certainly be running Windows 7, and it is highly likely that if you have made the decision to acquire the Microsoft Office product, you will receive Office 2010. Unfortunately, there is very little in the way of free training material

available. The nonvisual access technology team at the Iowa Department for the Blind has made the transition to Windows 7 and Office 2010. We would be delighted to discuss these programs with anyone and to point you to any of the training resources we find. ♦

| *Continued from Page 20* |

because there are so many obstacles, like pushing carts or interacting with customers, and I wasn't sure what his abilities were," said Randy Kruse, store director. "He's done a fantastic job, though, and it is great to have him on board. It's good to be a part of giving someone a second chance to have a job and feel worthy again."

Jihad said he likes this job better than his previous job in custodial care, and he's more

comfortable because there is less stress and there's a lot of interaction with customers.

When he is not working hard, he enjoys listening to a variety of audio books, which he receives from the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a division of the IDB.

"Right now I'm listening to the Quran, but I like fiction and history books, too," he said.

Jihad said he is very grateful for the assistance he obtained through the

Orientation Center and the Department. Since his time at the Center, he has moved back into his Des Moines home and enjoys being self-sufficient once again, he said.

He now can continue his life as it was before vision loss, with a few modifications to help with his blindness.

"I thank the teachers for the help and getting me back out in society. I don't have to wait on anyone to help me anymore and can function with my blindness," he said. ♦

# NOTES

## Director

Karen Keninger

karen.keninger@blind.state.ia.us

## Deputy Director

Bruce Snethen

bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us

## Commission for the Blind

Next meeting: Jan. 20, 10 a.m.

Sandi Ryan, commission chair

Steve Hagemoser, member

Mike Hoenig, member

## Mission:

The Iowa Department for the Blind is the means for persons who are blind to obtain for themselves universal accessibility and full participation in society in whatever roles they may choose, including roles that improve Iowa's economic growth.

- We would love to come speak about blindness at your club or organization's next meeting.
- We also provide training workshops on blindness at your school or office.
- If you've never seen our building and want to learn more about our services and what we provide in our building, we'd love to give you a tour.

Email us at [information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us) or call us at (800) 362-2587 for more information.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Jan. 20

### Legislative Open House

#### Legislative Dining Room, State Capitol

Staff members from the Iowa Department for the Blind will host an early morning open house at the Capitol to meet and greet state legislators and their staff. Visitors can munch on tasty breakfast items and sip on hot coffee while learning about the many services offered to blind and visually impaired Iowans through the IDB. They can also receive information on how IDB programs work to save the state money and get Iowans back to work. From 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Open to the public.

## Feb. 12

### Iowa Braille Challenge

#### Callanan Middle School

#### 3010 Center St., Des Moines

Youth from across the state will travel to Des Moines to compete in the annual Iowa Braille Challenge, testing their reading, writing and comprehension skills against peers in their age groups. Winners will have an opportunity to compete at the national Braille Challenge in the summer held in Los Angeles. The Challenge is a great way to celebrate Braille literacy and support the youth and their families who use it daily. More information on the Challenge is available at <http://brailleinstitute.com>. Registration for the event begins at 9:30 a.m. Photos from last year's Challenge can be found at [www.facebook.com/iowaDepartmentfortheBlind](http://www.facebook.com/iowaDepartmentfortheBlind).

More upcoming events and details at [www.idbonline.org/news](http://www.idbonline.org/news)

Iowa Dept. for the Blind  
524 Fourth St.  
Des Moines, IA 50309

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

## What is the Iowa Department for the Blind?

[www.IDBonline.org](http://www.IDBonline.org)

*Vocational Rehabilitation*

*Independent Living*

*Library for the Blind &  
Physically Handicapped*

*Youth Transition*

*Business Enterprises*

*Orientation Center*

**Come take a tour of our historic building and  
find out more about our programs and services  
for blind and visually impaired Iowans!**

Call 515-281-1333 or 800-362-2587 (within Iowa) to schedule a tour.