

The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



INSIDE:

Homemaker finds her stride

Nationwide supports a diverse workforce

Library services for job-seekers

Vet Technician lives her dream

Transition Youth have some summer fun

Technology worksite assessment explored



Employment is the Expectation

Volume II, Issue 4 • Fall 2011

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|from the editor

Whether you're simply trying to pay the bills or feeding a passion, today's job-market is tough. With the right outlook, however, some “barriers” can be nullified. This issue demonstrates how blindness doesn't have to be a barrier to achieving that dream job, or any successful career.

Within these pages you'll hear how a homemaker got her groove back, a veterinary technician pursued her dream, and how employers are becoming increasingly open-minded.

In this issue of *The White Cane* you'll find guidance and maybe even some inspiration for going after that job you thought was out of reach. Whatever your motivation, remember that with proper training and resources, the possibilities are endless.

— Meredith Ferguson, Editor

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| from the director

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Printed with soy ink.



The White Cane is published quarterly. Address or subscription changes can be sent to information@blind.state.ia.us

Blind Iowans can and do work at nearly every kind of job in Iowa, from farmer to factory worker, dishwasher to director, teacher to telemarketer. They work in Iowa's schools, businesses, hospitals and factories, and hold jobs at all levels of organizations large and small. They work on their farms, and own and operate their own small businesses. They hire others, and pay taxes. They create additional jobs in Iowa's economy.

Ideally, a person losing his or her vision should be able to stay in the job he or she already has. Vision loss doesn't take away the knowledge and skills acquired over years of work in a field. It may only take a few accommodations and some specialized training to get back to full productivity. But often the transition during vision loss includes a job change. People need to learn nonvisual techniques, acquire new technologies, and regain the confidence that vision loss often takes away. Getting back into the work force may mean going after a job similar to the one they left, or it may mean an opportunity to embark on a new career.

For over 50 years, the pri-

mary goal at IDB has been, and continues to be, to get blind and visually impaired people of working age back to work, or help them keep the jobs they already have, in spite of vision loss. We've provided the counseling, technology and skills training that teachers, accountants, auditors, bookkeepers, lawyers, and more need to keep the jobs they already know. And we've provided a full spectrum of training, technology, counseling and related services to help others re-enter the work force with a new set of skills and confidence.

In the following pages, you will see a list of the types of jobs our clients have either kept, or obtained, over the past three years. You will follow a few of them through their journeys and will see how our Vocational Rehabilitation, Orientation Center, Library, Access Technology, Independent Living, and Business Enterprises programs help support them on their way.



Sincerely,

Karen Keninger

Jobs held by blind Iowans

Iowans demonstrate that blindness and unemployment don't have to go hand-in-hand.

The following list illustrates the wide variety of jobs blind and visually impaired Iowans have acquired or kept with IDB assistance over the past three years.

Accountant
Accounts Clerk
Adaptive Computer Instructor/Consultant
Administrative Services Manager
Assembler
Assistant Chief Of Operations
Attendant-Housekeeping
Attorney
Baker's Helper
Benefit Liaison / Independent Contractor
BEP Manager
BEP Vender
Billing Specialist
Bookkeeper
Box Assembler
Building Inspector
Building Maintenance
Business Administration Specialist
Business Manager/Owner
Business Owner/In Home Pet Care
Cashier
Central Office Secretary
Chief Financial Officer
Child Care Provider
Cleaner
Client Services Representative
Collections Agent
Community Service Specialist
Computer Programmer
Consumer Loan Underwriter
Convenience Store Manager
Cook, Soup
Customer Sales Agent
Customer Service Clerk

Customer Service Representative
Customer Service/Order Entry
Day Care Center Director
Director
Director of Patient Support Workers
Dish Room Worker
Dishwasher
Education Administrator
Electrical Engineer
Elementary Teacher
English Teacher
Faculty Member
Farmer
Fleet Coordinator
Floor Maintenance Worker
Flooring Sales
Food Preparation Worker
Food Server
Food Service Attendant
Food Service Worker
Garden Center Crew Member
General and Operations Manager
Ground Maintenance Worker
Hotel Clerk
Information Technology Support Worker
Insurance Customer Service Rep.
Insurance Underwriter Assistant
Janitor
Janitorial Services Manager
Kitchen Attendant
Lawyer
Legal Support Worker
Machinist
Massage Therapist
Material Handler
Mathematician
Medical Office Clerk
Medical Social Worker

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Middle School Special Ed. Teacher
 Middle School Teacher
 Night Aide
 Nursing Aide
 Office Administrator
 Office Clerk
 Office Coordinator
 Office Manager
 Office Worker
 Packer
 Parts Salesman
 Pastor
 Personal Trainer
 Photographer
 Post Secondary Instructor
 Postal Service Clerk
 Power Plant Engineer II
 Production Worker
 Program Director, Radio
 Program Manager
 Program Planner II
 Management Analyst
 Proof Reader
 Public Relations Specialist
 Publisher
 Randolph-Sheppard Vending Operator

Reader Advisor
 Receptionist
 Recreation Worker
 Reservation Sales Representative
 Retail Sales
 Sales Associate
 Securities and Commodities Trader
 Seed Tech
 Senior Blind Specialist
 Silverware Roller
 Small Engine Mechanic
 Social & Human Service Assistant
 Social Services Worker
 Stock Clerk/Courtesy Clerk
 Sales Floor Store Manager
 Substance Abuse Counselor
 Supported Living Technician
 Teacher Assistant
 Teacher Elementary Education
 Teacher, Secondary
 Teacher-Blindness Skills (Contractor)
 Technical Analyst
 Training and Development Specialist
 Tutor
 Vending Stand Clerk
 VR Counselor/Transition Specialist
 Woodsmith
 Word Processor ◆

Tour Pappajohn Sculpture Park with a Braille Transcript!

The Pappajohn Sculpture Park is a high-profile addition to the cityscape of downtown Des Moines. Braille transcripts of the audio tour of the Sculpture Park are now available at the main circulation desk of the Des Moines Public Library's Central branch, across the street from the park. They may be checked out and taken to the park and returned like any library book. Also, a new Braille/tactile sign has been installed at the entrance to the park. These accommodations will help blind visitors enjoy the park and its sculptures.



NFB-NEWSLINE® adds more options

By Peggy Chong
Contributing Writer

Sorting through lists of job openings is a daunting task for anyone looking for work. NewsLine, which is a joint project of the Iowa Department for the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa, offers an easy way for job seekers to search jobs of interest and have the results emailed to them. Check out Option 9 on the Main Menu. Reading local papers can also provide ideas for job contacts. NewsLine offers Associated Press Iowa, the Burlington Hawkeye, the Cedar Rapids Gazette, Des Moines Register, Iowa City Press Citizen, Mason City Globe, Moline Dispatch, the Quad City Times, and the Waterloo Courier.

New additions to this service include the weekly Target ads published in the Sunday paper. Subscribers will now be able to learn what is on sale at the local Target Store, anytime, anywhere.

Target Corporation is just the first of what we hope to be many more box store, gro-

cery store, and business ads that will become available through NFB-NEWSLINE®. Advertisements have been, for too long, missing from the content provided by local newspapers. NFB-NEWSLINE® has now found a way to provide the graphical advertisements in a format that can be adapted to work with NEWSLINE's telephone-based service. Please stay tuned to hear what other stores will be joining NEWSLINE very soon.

And now that NFB-NEWSLINE® has added the "email an article" feature, readers can have the advertisement articles emailed to themselves. The text articles can be saved to a file on a computer to be reviewed at a later date.

Recently, five of the Meredith Corporation's national magazines became available over NFB-NEWSLINE®. These include Family Circle, Better Homes and Gardens, Ladies Home Journal, Parents, and Fitness Magazine. We are pleased that our Iowa-based publisher wishes to make their content available to ALL Iowa readers in an acces-

sible format.

NFB-NEWSLINE® in Iowa also added local access numbers to call into our news and information service this past winter. These local numbers will help us to lower our telephone costs. If readers have a telephone plan that has unlimited long distance service, we strongly encourage using the local NEWSLINE numbers to read the newspapers and information. Readers can always access NFB-NEWSLINE® through our toll free number, 1-888-882-1629, if they do not have unlimited long-distance service.

For more information on these items and more options, NFB-NEWSLINE®, or if you have forgotten your password to access NFB-NEWSLINE®, please contact me, Peggy Chong, at 515-277-1288.

Happy Reading! ◆

Homemaker finds stride with training from IDB

By Barb Weigel
IL Project Specialist

Let me introduce you to Jan Borgwardt, 49, of Vinton. As a premature triplet, she has had vision loss due to retinopathy since birth. As a teenager, she also developed glaucoma, which caused further vision loss.

Growing up, Jan attended the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS) in Vinton. After graduation, she attended a community college and graduated with a diploma from the chef training program. She then worked at the IBSSS as a cook. In 1985, she went back to school and received her bachelor's degree in business management in 1989. She moved back to Vinton and married her husband, Kurt, in 1993.

Upon getting married, Jan became a full-time homemaker, and a few years later she also became a full-time mom. She managed the many tasks of maintaining a home and raising a child, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, paying bills, finances and more. She was also the secretary, treasurer, and a volunteer teacher for her church. She had been able to do much of this visually,

but that began to change in 2007.

Jan's vision began to deteriorate and she found herself relying more on family and friends. She struggled to see and started having daily headaches as a result of trying to perform her many responsibilities. Up until this point, Jan says, "I had gotten by, but the vision in my remaining eye had gotten so clouded that I could hardly see at all. I spent more time just trying to function instead of getting stuff done. It was a struggle just doing the everyday stuff."

Jan decided she needed help. She contacted the Iowa Department for the Blind, and we met to discuss her options. Jan's primary concern was her ability to competently and independently carry out her responsibilities as a wife and mom. She wanted to avoid being dependent on others for two reasons: she did not want to be a burden to others; and she did not want others to control her life.

One of Jan's primary goals was to improve her cane travel skills. Growing up, she carried a cane for identification, but never had to use it for independent mobility. This needed to change since she was no longer able to

move around visually. She wanted to be more confident in the kitchen, as cooking is one of her favorite activities. She also wanted to learn Braille so she could implement alternatives to print and decrease, if not eliminate, her daily headaches. And she wanted to improve her computer skills. All of these skills would help her manage her home again.

Jan is a quick and motivated learner. With basic cane travel instruction and the use of a longer cane, she took off! She was soon traveling throughout Vinton without difficulty. It didn't take long to realize that the only thing holding Jan back was her lack of confidence. She simply needed to realize she could do it!

Shortly after beginning services, Jan's computer crashed. Her new computer and some of her old programs were no longer compatible. As a result, Jan began using JAWS (Job Access for Windows and Speech), a computer speech program, and Money Talks, an accessible bank account management program.

Provided with a few instructions, and fueled by her own motivation, Jan taught herself to use both

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programs. She now surfs the internet and manages her emails, address book, and finances using her computer.

Jan's success in the kitchen was much the same. Simple adaptations (e.g. marked appliances) and modified tools (e.g. talking timer and adapted measuring spoons) were all she needed to quickly regain her independence. To everyone's delight, she is not only cooking for her family again, but is also preparing meals for church functions.

Jan began using Braille textbooks to refresh her Braille skills. She quickly worked her way through the textbooks and began seeking additional courses through the Hadley School for the Blind, a non-profit distance education program offering courses related to vision loss. She has completed a Braille reading course and is now working on a Braille writing course. She has also taken courses related to living independently, cooking, and more. She is always seeking more to learn.

In addition to the things mentioned earlier, Jan also uses some simpler tools to manage other daily tasks. For example, she uses an envelope writing guide to address envelopes, a talking calculator for her finances,

sox locks to keep her matching socks together, Dymo tape to label her microwave with Braille, a talking blood pressure meter to monitor blood pressure, and a talking glucometer to test blood sugars. She also uses higher end items, such as her CCTV, to read her mail and pay her bills.

One of Jan's goals has been and remains to be, to attend the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center in IDB's Des Moines office. Due

I still get frustrated. But now it isn't because I can't see, but just because moms get that way.

to family commitments, it hasn't been possible for her to commit to the full program. She was, however, able to commit to a week in September, 2009 and attended Senior Orientation. Jan admits she had some anxiety about the week, and it wasn't until halfway through the week that she began to relax and enjoy herself.

When asked if there was a particular event that made a big impact on her, she said it was grilling her own steak at the restaurant. She really enjoyed that activity and knew at that point that she was

feeling better not only about the training, but also about herself.

As Jan regained her independence, it was evident that much of what was holding Jan back was her lack of confidence. She is a great problem solver and motivated to learn. She needed to believe in herself and realize she can tackle anything that comes her way.

As she grew in confidence, Jan began doing things she admits she never would have attempted before working with IDB. She signed up to be a Pampered Chef consultant, made homemade strawberry jam, and is now home schooling her son. They are in their second year and doing well.

Jan's case was successfully closed in December, 2009. She says her entire life she has been told she can't do this or that and admits, "I still fight that, but I assert myself more." She also states, "I still get frustrated, but now it isn't because I can't see but just because moms get that way." Jan and I enjoyed working together. Jan says, "I learned a lot but there's always more to learn." ♦

Independence Pioneers

By Betty Hansen
Deaf-Blind Specialist

Employment; it is the Iowa Department for the Blind's expectation for our clients with an IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment). An equal chance to compete for the job! That is what we ask from any employer who is considering hiring a person who is blind or visually impaired.

Nationwide Insurance, headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, prides itself in hiring a diverse workforce. When Cody Dolinsek applied to work in the company's Call Center, his application wasn't any different than hundreds of others. In addition to his own personal ability, what Cody also had going for him was an open-minded supervisor, Jo Elle Embick, who was eager for Cody to work on her team. Jo Elle saw that Cody was an extremely competent, personable, and open individual; and she therefore wanted his energy on her team of 400 employees. Ms. Embick admitted to possessing some ignorance about blindness—that is, not knowing what to expect from someone who was blind. But she was more than willing to

learn. She and Cody enjoy laughing at each other's faux pas; she often forgets that he can't see, and he forgets that she needs to be able to see his computer monitor in order to figure out what he is doing.

Initially, there were the usual technological issues that arise when integrating nonvisual access technology into the corporate technological infrastructure. JAWS for Windows, a screen reading program, had to be installed and configured, and a few minor issues needed to be resolved by some cooperative team work between technology experts from the Department for the Blind and Nationwide.

Cody is expected to meet the same performance standards as his sighted coworkers. Meeting notes, new instructions, and policies are sent over to the Department to be Brailled. They are then sent back in time for team meetings so that Cody can keep up-to-date on the company's workings. His reviews are conducted in the same

manner as his coworkers'; his boss sits at his station and listens in on his calls with customers. Cody needs to be reminded from time to time to turn on his monitor so that his supervisor can observe what is displayed on

“Don't get yourself all worried about this or that, and it won't become a big issue.”

the screen to ensure he is entering data correctly.

Jo Elle says that people really like Cody. He is one employee that she has kept on her team for the past two years. Her message to other employers is “Just do it. I know that sounds like the old Nike slogan, but I encourage employers to hire a person with a disability; it's been a perfect match for us. Don't get yourself all worried about this or that, and it won't become a big issue.”

As far as Cody and Nationwide are concerned, it has been a “perfect match.” ◆

Woman overcomes blindness to work again

Sharon Brown, of Clarinda, experienced dramatic vision loss in December of 2007. She had lost her sight in one eye 12 years earlier, and when the vision in her second eye deteriorated, she was not able to retain her job in dietary management.

She was 65 years old, blind, and had health challenges, but she was not ready to call it quits. Working was important to Sharon and, in her mind, retirement was not an option.

She heard about the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) and decided to call to see if there were resources that could help her go back to work. A Vocational Rehabilitation counselor visited Sharon in her home to talk about the services of the IDB. She learned that the Department is a state and federally funded agency that provides an array of free services to blind or visually impaired Iowans.

Following an application process, Sharon and her counselor developed a plan of action. The first step was to work with a Rehabilitation Teacher to learn the skills that would enable her to regain the independence she lost as her vision deteriorated.

Sharon became more mobile as she learned to use a white cane. She also regained her ability to manage her home by learning alternative techniques in cooking, baking, sewing, and cleaning. She learned basic Braille and can use it to mark items such as file folders, spices, and medication bottles. Braille and other labeling methods help Sharon set the oven temperature and operate the microwave and washer and

dryer.

She was pleased to discover that she didn't have to give up her love for reading. The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has one of the largest collections of books and other materials in audio, Braille, and large print formats. Sharon received an audio playback machine and enjoys listening to her favorite books. The equipment is free to use, and the materials are delivered and returned postage free through the mail.

The second step of the plan was for Sharon to work with a technology specialist from the IDB. Together, they determined what assistive technology Sharon would need to go back to work. The specialist then provided Sharon with the training that was necessary for her to use the technology effectively.

The third step of Sharon's plan involved teaming up with an IDB employment specialist to update her resume and prepare for and conduct a job search. An effort was made to build connections within the community of Clarinda and surrounding area.

"Sharon's positive attitude and strong work ethic, combined with the skills and confidence she developed while working with the Department, have given her the drive and initiative needed to find competitive employment," noted Brenda Criswell, Iowa Department for the Blind Employment Specialist.

Criswell helped Sharon connect with Liz Carlson of the Iowa Works Center in Clarinda. Ms. Carlson soon realized that Sharon had what it would take to be a great

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The Library: A Job-Seeker's Resource

“As the economy continues to struggle, many libraries are transforming into job centers. On-line job application assistance is only the tip of the iceberg. Some libraries are developing specific job searching areas with helpful resources such as online job searching portals to help people sort through the clutter and get back to work faster.” [From GeektheLibrary.org]

By Beth Hirst
Assistant Library Director

Libraries of every kind have seen a tremendous increase in patron requests for assistance in finding jobs. From providing computer and Internet access to offering books on careers, job searching, and interview strategies, public libraries have become community centers for job seekers. Although they have always carried such materials, it is in the last two to three years that libraries have really been sought out for this purpose.

The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has a long tradition of serving job hunters. The primary focus of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) unit is job placement for blind clients, and the Library has supported that effort in many ways. In turn, funding for the Library is drawn largely from VR dollars, so various Library services are designed to sustain that educational and VR relationship.

The goals of the Instructional Materials Center include not only the provision of textbooks for K-12 students, but post-secondary and employment materials as well. The Center has served children all the way through school and into careers as diverse as business executive, counselor, teacher, salesperson, minister, chiropractor, and technical analyst.

The audio and Braille production units

have produced employee manuals and training materials for grocery clerks, beekeepers, a gunsmith, telemarketers, even a forklift driver! Sales people and shop owners, offering everything from bicycles to vitamins, have received their catalogs, stock lists, and company promotional materials in formats they can read.

A Methodist pastor who moved from Illinois to Iowa was thrilled that he could request to have books recorded for him. He is able to support his ministry and enrich his sermons with the research materials the Library has provided. An insurance salesman-in-training has received management and motivational books recorded by library volunteers. A teacher of the visually impaired is able to administer tests and assessments for his students with the Braille versions made for him by Production staff.

The Library's Career Resources Center (CRC) has been developed over the last decade. Patrons have used its job search materials and public access computer to look for job openings online. With support from Department VR counselors and job placement specialists, clients have learned about position applications, cover letters and resumes, and interviewing techniques.

An uncertain economic climate has led to a high unemployment rate, and sadly that is nothing new for persons with disabilities who

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Library Consumer Advisory Committee

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped requires each network library to have an advisory committee composed of a representative group of users and members of related organizations. Input from the advisory committee is used in the formulation of policy and strategic planning.

- Meets three times a year in June, September, and November
- Committee size ranges from eight to fifteen members, not including library staff
- Librarian usually presents a “library update,” while other library staff may be available for discussion.

Committee Contributions:

- Increase public awareness of the library’s facilities and services
- Increase the potential for services to unserved individuals
- Help the library establish priorities for future expansion of services
- Encourage the efforts of volunteers in service to users
- Provide comments and reactions regarding the development of new equipment and materials

Committee Members:

- Gary Patterson, Chair: (515) 278-2686
- Teresa Haifley, Vice Chair: (319) 653-5650
- Theresa Philpott, Secretary: (515) 284-8619
- Peggy Chong: (515) 277-1288
- Michael Stout: (641) 831-4221
- Don Cameron: (515) 279-6693
- April Enderton: (515) 282-0049

For more info on the Library Consumer Advisory Committee, email Gary Patterson at: gpatterson002@mchsi.com

BOOKLIST

Employment may be the expectation, but we could all use a little help and inspiration when we want to find or keep a job. And if we are retired, or even on vacation, we can enjoy reading about the successes of others. The following books offer stories to move you, advice to motivate you, and practical suggestions for making life choices. If you are interested in reading any of these titles, call or write your reader advisor. Most are also available on BARD for download.

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DB71327

***200 Best Jobs for Renewing America*, by Laurence Shatkin.**

The author and the editors at Jist present a guide to identifying and securing jobs in the six industries that are projected to grow under President Obama's 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: infrastructure, green technologies, education, information technologies, health care, and manufacturing. Lists job descriptions and security; required education, training, and skills; earnings; and growth potential. 2010.

DB69746

***Can I Wear My Nose Ring to the Interview? The Crash Course: Finding, Landing, and Keeping Your First Real Job*, by Ellen G. Reeves.**

Provides tips for applying and interviewing for jobs and suggests involvement in networking and mentoring to discover potential employers. Addresses attention-grabbing cover letters, resume structure, interview basics, and physical preparation. Also answers frequently asked questions and discusses office etiquette. For senior high and older readers. 2009.

DB66826

***What Now?*, by Ann Patchett.**

Author reflects on life choices in a 2006 commencement address she delivered at Sarah Lawrence College. Draws on her own experiences and offers inspiration to anyone at a crossroads, be it a milestone or an everyday decision. Bestseller. 2008.

DB71909

***Hope Unseen: The Story of the U. S. Army's First Blind Active-Duty Officer*, by Scotty Smiley.**

Account of U.S. Army Captain and Ranger Scotty Smiley, who after losing his sight during a suicide-bomber attack in Iraq, became the first active-duty blind officer. Covers Smiley's post-injury accom-

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From the Librarian

What is a job? You have read throughout this magazine about the successes achieved by individuals who have found a job, or even a career that brings them happiness, perhaps even joy.



It is my firm belief, that as one seeks to know themselves (and one must do this to begin any kind of job search), they will eventually discover what they know is their vocation.

I will concede this: One must eat, one must have a roof over one's head, and one must have all the other necessities required to live. Yet, I know, if one is not following their vocational path, they will not be living fully. So, take that job to pay the rent, to support your family, to pay the bills. It is assuredly the right thing to do. But, don't settle, permanently, for working at anything less than that which you love and brings you joy. Remember what it is you are trading for your paycheck when you go to work each day.

There are writers from all backgrounds and ages, writing in nearly every genre, who have written about finding one's vocation. Give me a call or send me an email if you are interested in some books on this topic.

Sincerely,

Randy Landgrebe

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plishments, including earning an MBA, winning an ESPY, climbing Mount Rainier, and teaching leadership at West Point. Discusses his faith. 2010.

DB68003

Nickie's Nook: Sharing the Journey, by Nickie Coby.

Selected writings from the online journal of blind college student and aspiring social worker Coby, who has Complex Regional Pain Syndrome. Discusses her guide dog Julio, her Christianity, and the differences between blindness and chronic illness. For senior high and older readers. 2007.

DB72036

Words in My Hands: A Teacher, A Deaf-Blind Man, An Unforgettable Journey, by Diane P. Chambers.

Sign-language teacher/interpreter discusses her occupation and her introduction to eighty-six-year-old deaf-blind musician Bert Riedel, a former dentist who has Usher syndrome. Describes the tactile signing lessons she gave Riedel and his family and explains the role of their PowerBraille Display machine. 2005.

DB66601

The Last Lecture, by Randy Pausch.

Carnegie Mellon computer professor Pausch provides personal lessons and stories for his young children to learn from as they go through life. Continues the message of his widely circulated taped lecture on achieving childhood dreams that he delivered after he learned he was dying of pancreatic cancer. Bestseller. 2008.

DB67531

The Winner's Manual: For the Game of Life, by Jim Tressel.

The head coach of the Ohio State University Buckeyes football team presents a revised version of the manual he gives his players. Wanting to encourage and motivate people, Tressel discusses planning, dreams, goals, attitude, discipline, excellence, faith, work, love, responsibility, teamwork, hope, and handling adversity and success. Bestseller. 2008.

DB66824

Winning the Disability Challenge: A Practical Guide to Successful Living, by John

F. Tholen.

Psychologist presents strategies and solutions to help disabled individuals adjust psychologically and emotionally after becoming occupationally impaired. Uses success stories from his clients to illustrate that enjoyment of life can continue. Offers positive affirmations, relationship suggestions, and practical information on government benefits. 2008.

DB015303

The Richest Man in Town, by V. J. Smith.

Motivational speaker V.J. Smith tells the moving story of the friendship he developed with Aaron "Marty" Martinson, a cashier at Wal-Mart whose modest income and social status failed to prevent him from becoming "the richest man in town" – one who easily garnered the universal love and respect of his co-workers and customers. – barne-sandnoble.com. 2007. ♦

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

Pursuit of a dream

By Rebecca Swainey
Braille Teacher

Chelsey Allen was born an astonishing twelve weeks premature, resulting in eye conditions of retinopathy of prematurity and congenital glaucoma. She had her first pair of glasses by the age of two. “I’ve been going to the eye doctor as long as I can remember,” says Chelsey.

She vaguely recalls some women coming to her home when she was a preschooler, to help her optimize the vision she had. When it came time for school, Chelsey went to the local public school. There she learned to read regular print along with everybody else. She had an itinerant teacher, but meetings were infrequent and Chelsey viewed them as an annoyance with no bearing on her life. She had a good deal of vision and neither she, nor her family, had ever thought of her as blind.

At home she had the usual list of chores: doing dishes, keeping her room clean, taking out the trash. The chores she enjoyed the most involved taking care of the family’s pets. Over the years the family’s menagerie grew to include rabbits, gerbils, an iguana, and a pot-bellied pig as well as the usual cats and dogs.

In her senior year, Chelsey met David Lenz, at that time the Iowa Department for the Blind’s Rehabilitation Counselor for southwest Iowa. That was her first contact with IDB. They had some meetings and she came in for a tour of the Orientation Center, but nothing much happened from there. Chelsey’s attitude was, “Yeah, I’ll think about it,” with no intention of taking it further. She felt IDB was pestering her, and she didn’t



Chelsey Allen, Veterinary Technician, holds a patient--a cocker spaniel named Shadow.

need what was offered.

After high school, she set out to pursue her lifelong dream of working with animals. With this in mind, she chose to attend Iowa State University in Ames, halfway across the state from her small western Iowa hometown. She was miserable. She missed her animals. She missed her family. After one semester she transferred closer home to Iowa Western Community College. During the time she attended IWCC she stayed in the dorm—close enough to get home on a regular basis, but far enough to begin breaking the ties.

After three semesters at IWCC, she returned to Ames in the fall of 2005. There she proceeded to “crash big time.” That prompted a meeting with her IDB counselor and the head of Field Operations. They told her, “You’ve been dragging out school, but your grades are still going downhill. Your

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vision is getting in your way. You need to learn alternative ways to do things." At the time she didn't see that she had any problems with her vision, but she agreed to come into the Orientation Center.

In 2006 she came into the Center very hesitantly, expecting to stay for three months. "I thought this was stupid. I don't need this. This isn't for me." Then about six months into the program her mind-set changed to "Fine. You want me to do these things? I'll do what I'm asked just to make you happy."

Somewhere along the

way Chelsey stopped saying "What do you want me to do now?" and began saying "What can I do next?" She started asking to travel to places like Pet Smart and the mall. She asked to learn to cook on the grill. She ultimately stayed for a full year.

Things were far different this time when she returned to Iowa State. She had a new attitude about blindness, and a new sense of confidence. She had learned to advocate for herself. She was no longer embarrassed to ask for things or to do them in a different way. School took off. She graduated in the spring of 2009 with

a degree in Animal Science.

She then decided to go to Kirkwood in Cedar Rapids for further training as a Veterinary Technician, receiving her associate degree in 2011.

Finally, with a lot of hard work and persistence, Chelsey scored several interviews and more than one job offer. She chose Banfield Pet Hospital in Clive, Iowa. "Thanks to the help of IDB, I was able to find alternative ways to do things, gained confidence with my blindness skills, and, most of all, developed confidence in myself." ♦

Curious...

about the Orientation Center
or any of the
Iowa Department for the Blind's
programs?

Take a tour!

We offer free tours of our historic building and an inside look at our programs and services.

Call 515-281-1333
to schedule a tour.



On the farm

This spring Orientation Center students and staff traveled to Living History Farms in Urbandale. They were able to practice their travel skills while taking a tour and learning about life on the farm.

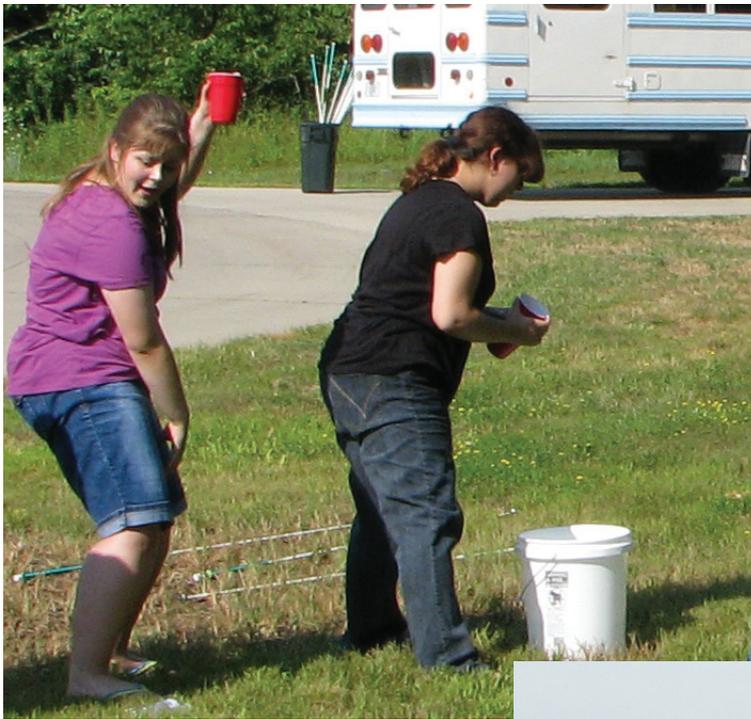
Photo by Dave Hauge.

Transition youth gain independence and have fun!

Iowa Department for the Blind's Transition program targets the needs of young adults who are blind or visually impaired. At age 14, a youth becomes eligible for services by registering with a Transition Counselor. Academic and career goals are set and a plan implemented.

This is an important stage to lay the ground-work for a successful and independent life. But it's also a stage filled with adventure. Transition youth can participate in a variety of weekend and summer programs. Below are just a few pictures from a recent summer activity!

For more information on Youth Transition programs, call (800) 362-2587 or (515) 281-1333



To the left: Danielle Dunagan and Keterina Beyerink cool down with the water game "over-under". These youth participated in the Lakeside Palooza, one of the Transition camps held this past summer. While at the camp, they learned non-visual techniques, and what IDB services can benefit them, while improving their communication skills with team-building activities.

Pictured on the right: Transition youth and IDB staff enjoy a little canoeing. To avoid the heat, Transition youth enjoyed a variety of activities involving water. They learned that blindness doesn't have to stop them from having some summer fun!



|business enterprises

Iowa BEP offers employment opportunities



Pictured on the left is one of the vendors who received training from the Iowa Business Enterprises Program. He is checking on one of the vending machines he is in charge of.

Trainees learn many things, from ordering merchandise to managing employees.

Vending sites are located in county, state, and federal buildings as well as along the interstate highways. Blind persons who have completed training in the Iowa program manage these facilities.

By Roger Erpelding
BEP Program Administrator

The Business Enterprises Program is all about self-employment. It gives blind persons the opportunity to train and to be placed in established facilities. It also gives the individual the responsibility of operating a business in all its aspects. It is a good opportunity that pays well. But with all self-employment ventures, there is no guaranteed paycheck, and one takes the good months with the bad.

Fortunately, we are on the move to improve our training program and to help assure success among our

managers. We will be having our first classroom training this autumn. In addition to this, we have instituted new on-the-job training with our trainees and managers to specify training needs, which will benefit future operators in our program.

Current interest in our program is driven by the widely known fact that a large and profitable facility which includes a large vending route and two rest area vending sites will be opening near Davenport later this year. Although it is unlikely that a new trainee would land this job, someone already in the program moving to the Davenport facility will create

another vacancy within the program. This has garnered two new trainees, and they are both doing well.

As time goes along, we continue to look for opportunities in any federal, state, county or city location that is covered under our federal or state laws which give us priority. We also continue to pursue opportunities on the private level, as well as explore other business opportunities outside of the traditional mold.

So what makes a person leave their home and community, pursue training, and become enmeshed in self-employment where there are no guarantees? I asked

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three people recently to comment on this very question, I received three different but distinct answers and views.

Abe Sigler began his training on June 27, 2011. He was formerly employed at a local group home in Nevada. He is currently receiving rest area training with Matthew Hicok, and will transfer to a trainer in Des Moines later this year. His goal is to finish training by the end of the year.

Abe likes the flexibility of working conditions relating to self-employment. He can work hours that suit him, and make self-employment job choices. Situations, challenges and schedule could change every day, lending variety to his work endeavors. “I can control the solution to a problem and choose how I want to take care of it,” Sigler said. “It is nice to know you can solve the problems your way.” And getting back to that varied daily routine, Sigler states “It’ll be something new every day. And besides, I like dealing with customers.”

James Goff spent 20 years working as a tool and die designer in Washington. While attending the Orientation Center, we talked about Business Enterprises Program training. Geography was his main concern. However, after his successful comple-

tion of Center training, he followed the progress of a fellow student who had obtained assignment in a large and successful vending facil-

I can control the solution to a problem and choose how I want to take care of it.

ity. That fellow student, Terry Brannen, has managed the Des Moines Post Office vending facility for over a year. “I kept telling Jim to get trained and licensed, then worry about where he was going to live,” Brannen emphasized. Terry’s advice became more and more germane, and Jim began training on August 16, 2011, with a manager who operates a large vending route with roadside locations not far from his home.

Jim had met four managers before entering the training regimen. “They all liked what they were doing, and they were all successful,” he noted. So it was time for Jim to join the successful pattern he had observed.

Terry Brannen has never looked back. He operated a bar in Shenandoah for 25 years, went through the Orientation Center, immediately

went into B.E.P. training, and was assigned to manage the Des Moines Post Office vending facility in May of 2010. Why did he change

courses at this stage of his life? “I was at the end of one career and needed the skills to learn another. It is re-tooling.” And Brannen had two additional motivations. “My kids were in the Des Moines area. And the alternative was to sit

at home and watch re-runs of BONANZA, which I’d already seen 50 times.”

Success—happiness—variety—challenges—family—choices—work—jobs. All are motivating factors in getting blind folks involved in this employment based program. New managers will bring new ideas, which will help keep our program fresh and increase the likelihood of expansion. ◆

For more information about Iowa BEP opportunities and getting started in our training program, contact Roger Erpelding at (515) 281-1358 or in Iowa call (800) 362-2587.

Talking Tech w/ Curtis Chong

What goes into a technology worksite assessment?

Today, it is hard to find any job that doesn't involve some use of computer technology. If you walk around in a typical office, you will find a computer sitting on just about every desk. It would seem that everyone in the company—from the maintenance worker to the corporate president—needs to be able to send and receive email and create electronic documents.

So what happens if a person is blind or visually impaired and uses Braille, speech, or screen enlargement technology to operate a computer? How is this access technology integrated into the corporate networks and systems that employers use today?

What does the nonvisual access technology team at the Iowa Department for the Blind do to help clients of the agency to make the most effective use of the corporate hardware and software they need to operate on the job?

When one of our clients receives a job offer, the client's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor is usually the first person at the Department to be notified. The counselor then contacts the appropriate member of the nonvisual access technology team. In a typical situation, the team member needs to know the name of the client, the type of access technology that the client uses, the name of the employer, and contact information for a person in the corporate Information Technology department. This last piece of information is critical because, in general, the human resources person or hiring supervisor does not usually know about the specifics of the corporation technology infrastructure. On the other hand, the person from the Information

Technology department can tell us everything we need to know about the technologies used by the company, and perhaps more important, can clear the way for us to set up a test system to determine how well nonvisual access technology will work at the company.

Here is an example of some technology-related questions that we might ask:

- What operating system is used on corporate desktop computers?
- What program does the company use to send and receive email?
 - What program does everybody use to read and create electronic documents?
 - What set of programs is our client likely to use most of the time to perform the duties of his/her job?

A fair amount of investigation and testing needs to be done for each worksite where one of our clients is going to work.

- Finally, would it be possible for someone from the Iowa Department for the Blind to visit the company and conduct a few technological tests to see how well nonvisual access technology would work?

In an ideal world, every program that our client needs to use on the job works perfectly with nonvisual access technology—that is to say, Windows is the corporate operating system being used, all of the programs can be operated with a keyboard instead of a mouse, everything talks when it is supposed to and remains silent when speech is not needed, and information that a user with low vision needs to see can be enlarged or appropriately highlighted.

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| blind perspective



By Linda Slayton

While I was in the Orientation Center we had several conversations about the word “amazing”. I learned that those with vision often see blind people as amazing. They think that if they had little or no sight they would not be able to do the same things. Sometimes it simply seems astonishing to them that blind people can do anything independently. For me, it helped to internalize that, with the right tools and techniques, the things I would learn to do were just basic skills that everyone uses. There was nothing particularly amazing about them or me.



I do pay attention to the word amazing. The reason is simple. I’ve learned to be aware of why I think things are amazing and I want to understand why others do. It is also because I routinely find many things, events and people, amazing. Just because the use of alternative techniques may not be amazing does not mean that there aren’t amazing blind people in this world. Amazing is not a bad word. It is just better when used in the right context.

For me, someone is amazing

when they create or do something that is so profoundly spectacular that I literally stop and think about it. Something amazing in my mind is not so much about the outcome, but more about the marriage of concept with reality. It’s that hidden factor that makes what could have been good become great. It’s the puzzle piece that

Amazing is not a bad word. It is just better when used in the right context.

merges ordinary into extraordinary.

When we focus on employment, the term amazing can be demonstrated on many levels. Having a job is not necessarily amazing. However, the way one finds a job can be amazing, the job itself can be amazing, or someone can be an amazing employee. The important phrase is “can be.” For any to reach that status requires something beyond the norm. All require an intense investment of self.

Beyond the logistics of obtaining and performing a job as a blind person, being blind

has little to do with employment. An employer is not hiring a blind or sighted person; he/she is hiring an employee. Whatever occupation we seek, we must make certain we give the most we have to offer. In the current job market we can’t be just average or even above-average, we have to be the best. Whether we like it or not, people see blindness. Our goal is to reduce it to a characteristic status. The best way to do this is to present a candidate who so profoundly outshines the other prospects that employers literally picture us in that job. We have to stand out. Offering the best of ourselves in any situation should always be our goal. When we reach that goal and others notice, that is success. The key to being amazing is not in doing what others think we can’t do, but in doing what only we know we can better than we thought we could. So, go ahead, be amazing – and then some. ♦

Linda Slayton is a freelance writer living in Des Moines. She can be reached by e-mail at lcslayton@yahoo.com



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employee. Carlson told her about West Central Community Action, which is headquartered in Harlan. If Sharon met the income and age requirements, Carlson could partner with them in hiring Sharon as an office assistant through their Senior Community Service Employment Program. Sharon met all requirements, had a worksite assessment to determine what accommodations she might need, and her job as a Customer Service Representative/Senior Aide became official.

Carlson could not be more pleased. “Having Sharon here is a great asset. I am also grateful for the collaboration among the Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Works, and West Central Community Action. This is a win—a win for everyone.”

From the start of her relationship with the Department for the Blind, Sharon’s main goal was to get back into the mainstream of employment. In October 2010, she succeeded in returning to the workforce. ◆

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are looking for jobs, but aggressive VR services and unflagging Library aid continue as enduring resources for Department clients. Read more about blind Iowans at work on IDB’s Success Stories webpage at: <http://www.idbonline.org/success-stories>. ◆

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Unfortunately, in a typical worksite, only some of the programs that our client needs to use work very well with nonvisual access technology. The rest of the programs either don’t work at all or require an extra amount of effort from the client to be used effectively. Sometimes, with a little bit of tweaking, the screen access technology can be customized to work more efficiently and effectively, and in some instances, one of our technology experts needs to do a little bit of script writing so that our client can use the software that he or she needs to run to perform his/her job. In the worst case scenario (which fortunately does not happen too often), no amount of tweaking or programming of the access technology solves the problem; regrettably, we must conclude that a particular job cannot be performed using nonvisual access technology.

So, while technology seems to be integral to just about every job in the labor market, a fair amount of investigation and testing needs to be done for each worksite where one of our clients is going to work before we can be satisfied that all of the technological barriers and problems have been addressed appropriately. ◆



NOTES

Director

Karen Keninger

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Deputy Director

Bruce Snethen

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Commission for the Blind

Next meeting: December 20 at noon

Mike Hoenig, commission chair

Steve Hagemoser, member

Peggy Elliott, 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 or call us at (800) 362-2587 for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 15

Friends of the Library for the Blind Barnes & Noble Bookfair

9am - 10pm

The Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind host their first annual Barnes & Noble book sale to raise money for the Friends. Take your Holiday list to any Barnes & Noble book store and get your Holiday shopping done early! The Barnes & Noble in the Jordan Creek Mall will be providing children's reading from 1:00 to 4:00pm, games in Braille, musical entertainment, and displays on Braille and print books.

October 15

White Cane Safety Day

In 1963, President Lyndon Johnson signed a joint resolution with congress proclaiming Oct. 15 White Cane Safety day. The proclamation was issued in order to raise public awareness of the significance of the white cane, and to encourage motorists to exercise caution and courtesy to bearers of the white cane. The white cane is a universal symbol for blindness, signifying independence, mobility and confidence.

Reminder:

Commission Board meeting packets are available to the public, upon request, before the scheduled meeting date. Packets are available in Braille, large print and electronic formats. If you would like to receive this information, please contact Tiffany Bickell at (515)281-1336, or email Tiffany.Bickell@blind.state.ia.us.

**More upcoming events and details at
www.idbonline.org/news**

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Iowa Dept. for the Blind
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Des Moines, IA 50309

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