

# Striving for Independence

ANNUAL REPORT IOWA FISCAL YEAR 2010



# MESSAGE *from the* DIRECTOR: Karen Keninger



**This year marks** the 50th anniversary for the Iowa Department for the Blind. It has been a year of celebration. We have been looking back to our transformation 50 years ago from arguably the worst program for the blind in the nation to one of the best. We have celebrated the changes wrought by 50 years of hard work which enable blind

lowans to work, learn and live more freely in Iowa society. But we know our work is far from done.

We are looking forward, planning the strategies which will make life even better for blind and visually impaired lowans as they enter without reservation into the rich and varied life of our state.

The Orientation Center marked its fiftieth anniversary on November 1. Even as we planned a weekend of celebrations, teachers were looking forward, improving the curriculum and planning new outings for students.

Work, and the paycheck that goes with it, is one of

the most important keys to the self-confidence and independence of all lowans, including those who are blind or visually impaired. Therefore, two successful initiatives this year center on employment. The first focused on finding jobs for youth during their high school and college years. The second involves job seekers in discovering employment possibilities in the hidden job market. Along with the tried and true methods already in place, these initiatives have helped 68 blind lowans get good-paying jobs in spite of Iowa's struggling economy.

Independence in the home and community is often threatened by the onset of vision loss in later years. That's why the Independent Living program honored its 30th anniversary by working with 787 lowans. The alternative techniques they teach will allow older lowans to continue doing what they want to do.

During its fiftieth year of operation, the Library launched a major technology upgrade moving talking books from outdated cassette-based technology into the digital world.

With all this good news to share, the Department has launched a public relations campaign designed to

# Opening Doors to Opportunity

spread the word about the programs and services it offers, and to highlight the blind and visually impaired lowans it serves.

A whole new website at [www.IDBOnline.org](http://www.IDBOnline.org) showcases Department activities. Our online magazine trumpets the achievements of blind lowans who have used the training and opportunities they received to live the lives they want.

To widen our perspective and our reach, we've entered the blogosphere. Orientation Center students write about their tales of struggle and achievement at ***Cane Tracks*** at [idbcomm.wordpress.com](http://idbcomm.wordpress.com). ***Technology for the Blind*** at [blindtechnology.wordpress.com](http://blindtechnology.wordpress.com) keeps us up to date on assistive technology devices and issues.

Twitter and Facebook keep us in touch with the social media crowd and offer a venue for a free exchange of ideas and information, and our YouTube site gives us a chance to provide demonstrations and information through videos.

Throughout our many avenues of communication and collaboration, we are proud to have had a successful first 50 years and look toward 50 more.

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# Celebrating | a Year of Milestones

# our MISSION & OBJECTIVES

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Iowa Department for the Blind believes all blind or visually impaired Iowans can lead productive, fulfilling lives.

**OBJECTIVES FOR OUR CLIENTS:**

1. Increase confidence and independence in all aspects of daily life.
2. Improve access to information, activities and opportunities.
3. Improve skills to obtain or retain competitive employment.

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT:** For each state dollar, the IDB receives four federal dollars. Money spent on rehabilitating one client pays back in many ways. Instead of taking public money through Social Security, rehabilitated clients pay into the system through taxes. They also tend to be more independent, confident and contributing members of society.

## QUICK STATS:

Leading Causes of Blindness in U.S.:

- Cataracts
- Macular Degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic Retinopathy

**69,000**

Estimated number of blind or visually impaired people in the state of Iowa in 2009. This number is expected to grow as the population ages.

**8,207**

Number of blind or visually impaired adults served by the Iowa Department for the Blind in SFY 2010.

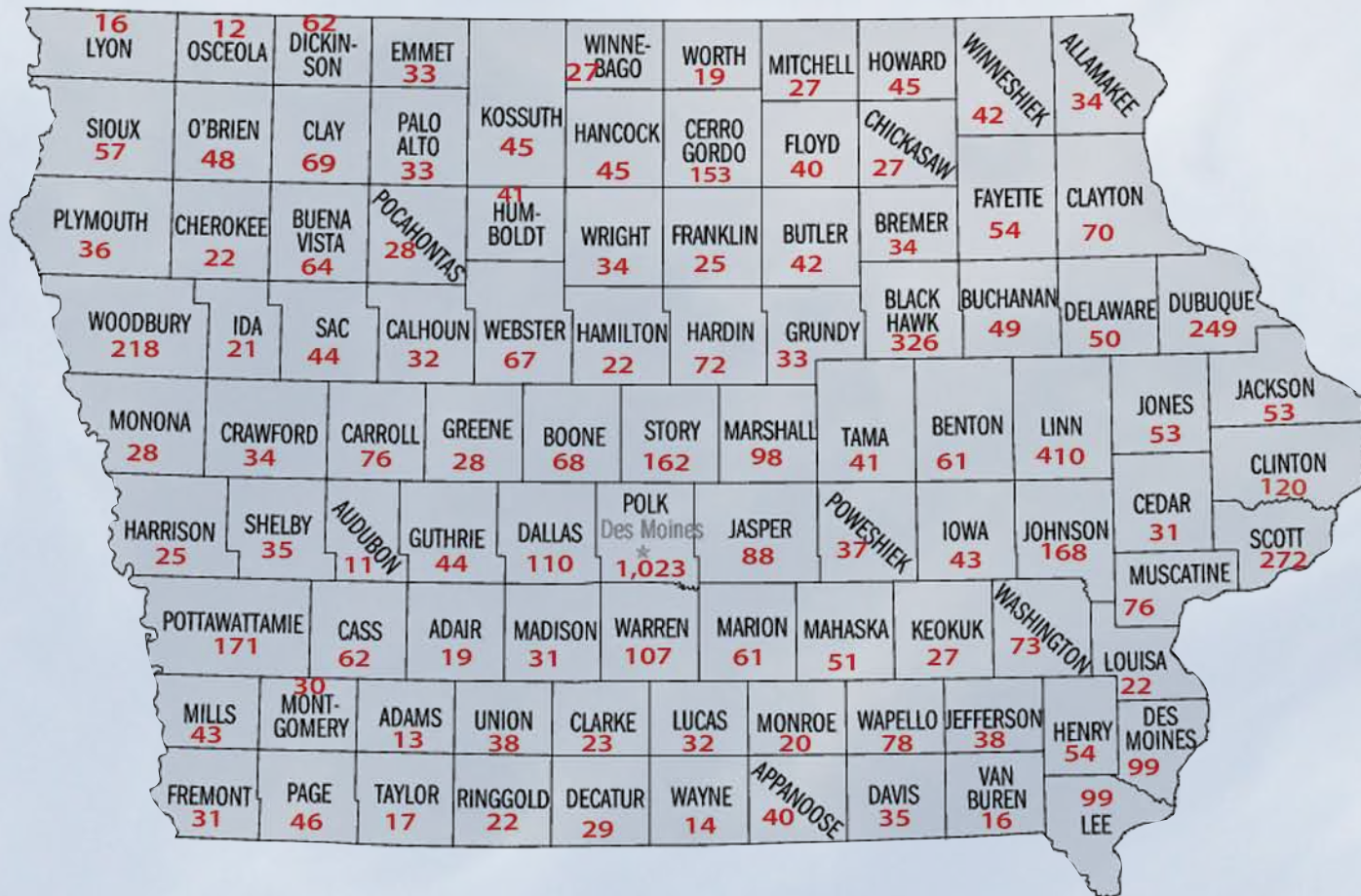
**68**

Number of successful employment cases closed through IDB's vocational rehabilitation program in SFY 2010.

**\$16.22**

Average hourly wage earned by IDB clients who closed a vocational rehabilitation case in SFY 2010.

# SERVING IN ALL IOWA COUNTIES



Number of blind and visually impaired lowans registered with IDB in SFY 2010 by county.

*direct services*

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION



Our vocational rehabilitation counselors travel the state providing assistance to lowans who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind in preparing for, obtaining and retaining competitive employment.

### **Key Services:**

- Helping individuals set and achieve vocational goals.
- Job placement services.
- Assistive technology assessment and training.
- Post-employment follow up.

### **VR staff members participate in:**

- Job fairs, technology expos, speakers' bureaus.
- Partnerships with employment programs to aid in recruitment of qualified employees with vision loss.
- Advisement on assistive technology to public agencies and private employers.

### **Delivery Mechanisms:**

- Following initial referral, clients are assessed, assigned a counselor in their community and placed on track to seek competitive employment.
- Counselors travel to client workplaces and homes to train, meet with employers and work to meet employment goals.

*“I love my work at the hospital. I couldn’t do my job without the Department.”*  
 – Gwen

During the past year, the Vocational Rehabilitation program continued to help blind or visually impaired Iowans to prepare for, obtain, and retain employment in a variety of occupations. While the economy continues to present its share of challenges, we continue to be able to find competitive employment for our clients.

We were fortunate to be able to fill two vocational rehabilitation counselor positions: one counselor to cover the northeast part of the state and the other to cover part of the western half of Iowa. Our counseling staff is now up to full complement, so we can continue to reach blind and visually impaired Iowans where they live and work in their local communities.

– Curtis Chong, program administrator

**SFY 2010 STATS:**

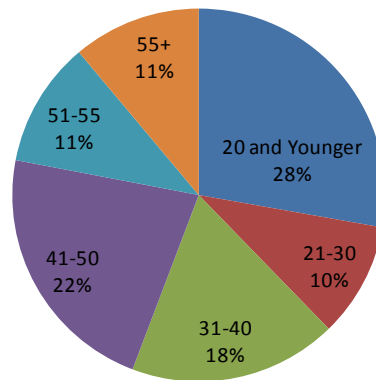
- 430 individuals served
- 68 successful closures
- Average hourly wage: \$16.22 (Average for Iowa = \$17.51)
- Competitive employment outcome: 91% (Target = 85%)
- Older individuals indicating a more positive attitude toward blindness following rehabilitation training: 86% (Target = 85%)

**SOME JOBS HELD BY VR CLIENTS IN 2010**

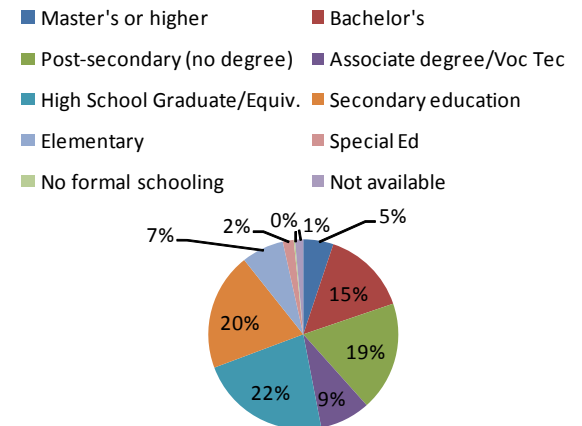
Accountant	Child Care Provider	Janitorial Services Manager
Adaptive Computer Instructor/Consultant	Cleaner	Lawyer
Auditor	Consumer Loan Underwriter	Maintenance Director
Automotive Service Technician & Mechanic	Customer Service Rep	Middle School Teacher
Billing Specialist	Day Care Center Director	Packer
Building Maintenance	Director of Patient Support Workers	Pastor
Business Admin. Specialist	Facility Operator	Public Relations Specialist
Business Manager/Owner	Farmer	Receptionist
Car Attendant	Food Server	Recreation Worker
Central Office Secretary	Hotel Clerk	Retail Sales
	Information Tech. Support	RN Clinician
		Spanish/English Interpreter

**DEMOGRAPHICS:**

Age of VR Clients



Education Level of VR Clients



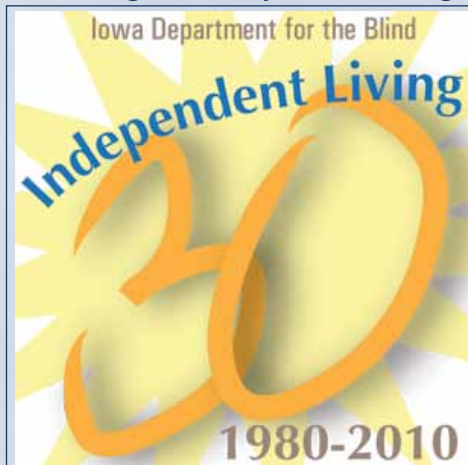
# direct services

## INDEPENDENT LIVING

In SFY2010, the Independent Living program served nearly 800 people. Of those served, 80 percent were 75 years or older. All our clients received training in alternative techniques, guidance and counseling and adaptive devices. In addition to home training, group training is critical and is available through community-based training and a one-week Senior Orientation session. Community-based trainings were held in Spirit Lake, Spencer, Des Moines, Washington and Davenport, and two sessions of Senior Orientation were held in Des Moines.

Services are effective as shown by several different measures. First, individuals are asked to complete a survey regarding trainings and services. We had higher than a 50% response rate, with 86% of those indicating they gained a new skill and a positive feeling about blindness. In addition, everyone sets personal goals, and 83% of these goals were achieved.

Also, the IL program was able to partner with the Northland Agency on Aging (Decorah) and the Northwest Aging Association (Spencer) to conduct a variety of outreach activities including radio and TV interviews, speaking at senior sites, and conducting community-based training. — *Becky Criswell, program administrator*



The Independent Living program turned 30 years old in 2010. Established to fill a need to help blind and visually impaired Iowans who were beyond working age, the program has grown to become quite successful in helping seniors to maintain their independence following vision loss. Program staff celebrated this milestone during the summer months with seven open houses throughout the state.

**Our dedicated IL teachers serve older blind or multiply disabled blind Iowans to help them live more independently in their homes and to function within their communities.**

### **Key Services:**

- Preventing premature institutionalization of older blind Iowans.
- Coordinating community services.
- Providing information, referrals and training in adaptive equipment and the skills of blindness.

### **IL staff members participate in:**

- Senior health fairs.
- Educational activities to promote awareness about vision loss and rehabilitative services.

### **Delivery Mechanisms:**

- In-home teaching of blindness skills.
- Encouragement of peer interaction with peer support groups and group training in blindness skills.
- Presentation of in-service training to meet unique needs of blind Iowans.

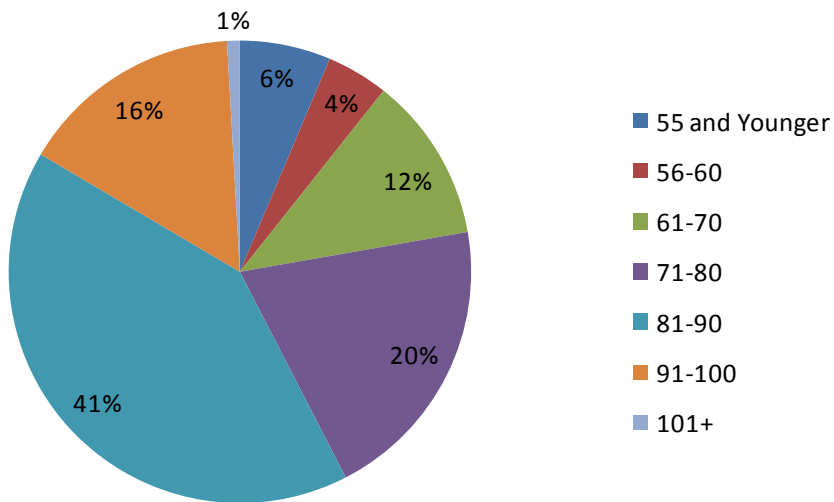


*“The Department has helped me stay independent—living on my own in my home.”*  
—Bea

**SFY 2010 STATS:**

- 787 individuals served
- 445 successful closures
- 11 participants in week long Senior Orientation sessions
- 1,346 referrals (58% older than 80)

**IL Clients by Age**



*direct services*

# LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND & PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED



Providing reading materials free of charge through the mail to lowans who cannot use standard print because of blindness, physical disability or reading disability.

## **Key Services:**

- Providing access to a collection of more than 88,000 titles and 120 magazines in audio, large print or Braille formats.
- As a member of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, borrowers gain access to all NLS services and materials.
- Reader Advisors provide borrowers with personalized service over the telephone.
- Transcription services to provide access to printed materials.
- Career Resource Center allows job seekers to use assistive technology and Library resources to aid job searches.
- Instructional Materials Center serves Iowa's students by securing or producing textbooks and school materials in alternative formats.
- Pioneering transition to digital talking books by recording in-house books and magazines for circulation as well as NLS titles.

## **Delivery Mechanisms:**

- All materials transported through the postal mail free of charge.
- Online catalog allows borrowers to order books and magazines on the Internet.
- Loans of talking book machines to play recorded materials.

*“Iowa has always been a leader and has certainly one of the best libraries in the world.”  
— Kurt Cylke, director of the National Library Service*

**SFY 2010 STATS:**

- **Books Circulated in SFY10: 226,118**
- **Collection Holdings: 114,848 titles**
  - **Digital Books: 2,872**
  - **Cassettes: 64,159**
  - **Braille: 38,396**
  - **Large Print: 8,877**
  - **Descriptive Videos: 544**
  - **Volunteer-produced Braille: 16,520 titles**
  - **Volunteer-produced audio: 8,004 titles**
- **Total Iowans served in SFY10: 6,930**

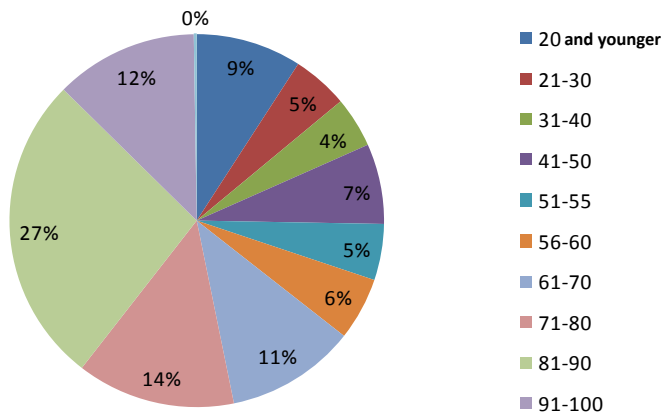
This year, as it celebrated its 50th anniversary, the Library made great strides in introducing the new Digital Talking Book Machine to Iowa Library patrons. Iowa quickly moved ahead with machine assignments, digital duplication to increase the number of available books on flash memory cartridges, and creation of our own locally recorded digital talking books. By May 1, Iowa was one of five libraries nationally to achieve 100 percent distribution of the players. Circulation figures are up this year, due to the availability of direct download of talking books and Braille from BARD and Web-Braille, both supported by the NLS.

The Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped once again supported Library programs with a generous donation of \$10,000. In the four years since its inception, the Friends have given more than \$37,000, the bulk of which has gone toward provision of sacred texts for Library patrons and supplies to support the transition to digital talking books.

Two events in the spring showcased the work of the Library for two different audiences. The annual Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop and Luncheon celebrated the contributions of more than 100 Braille transcribers, narrators, proofreaders, and library assistants. Also, Des Moines was the host city for the National Conference of Librarians Serving Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals. Library staff addressed the conference, gave presentations and hosted a reception and tours of the IDB building. NLS presented the Library with an award for its years of service.

The Library, through its Instructional Materials Center, maintains a close collaboration with the Iowa Department of Education. Educational requests and students served continue to increase as DE and IDB staff advocate for the use of accessible instructional materials (AIM) in the classroom. Library staff’s input to DE’s TrueAIM website (<http://trueaim.iowa.gov/>) has contributed to a nationally recognized resource for educators. — *Randy Landgrebe, program administrator*

**Library Users by Age**



*direct services*

# ADULT ORIENTATION & ADJUSTMENT CENTER



The Orientation Center is a residential training program for clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation program located in Des Moines. It provides in-depth blindness skills and serves to build self confidence in adults facing vision loss.

## **Key Services:**

- Development of self-confidence.
- Home and personal management.
- Industrial arts.
- Braille and computer skills.
- Job readiness.
- Public education.
- Travel with the long white cane and mobility.
- Instruction and supervision provided by trained staff members.
- Intensive training with peer interaction.

## **Delivery Mechanisms:**

- Students live in the Department building in Des Moines and attend class five days a week from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Students in the Metro area do not need to live in the building but can be “day students,” coming and going each day.
- Group and individual instruction by trained staff members allow a student to progress and adapt at his or her own pace.

*“I thank the Orientation Center for helping me get back into society.”*

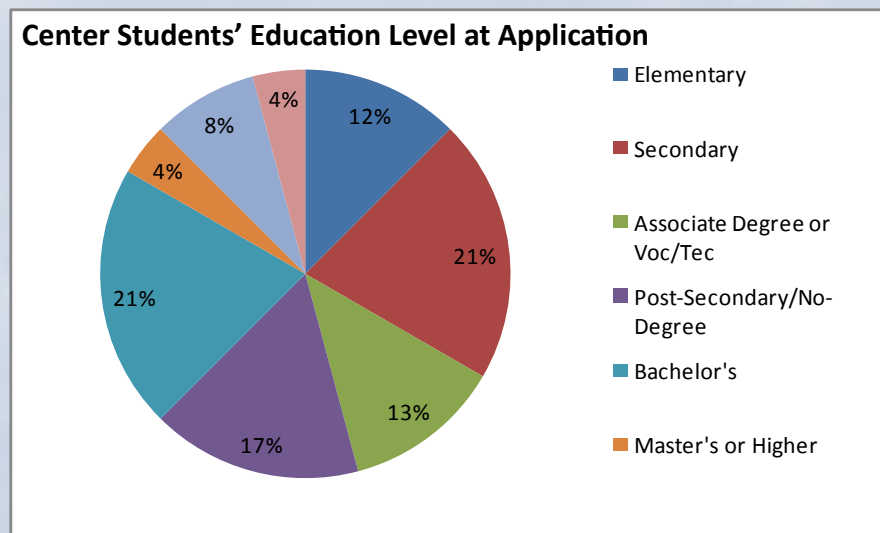
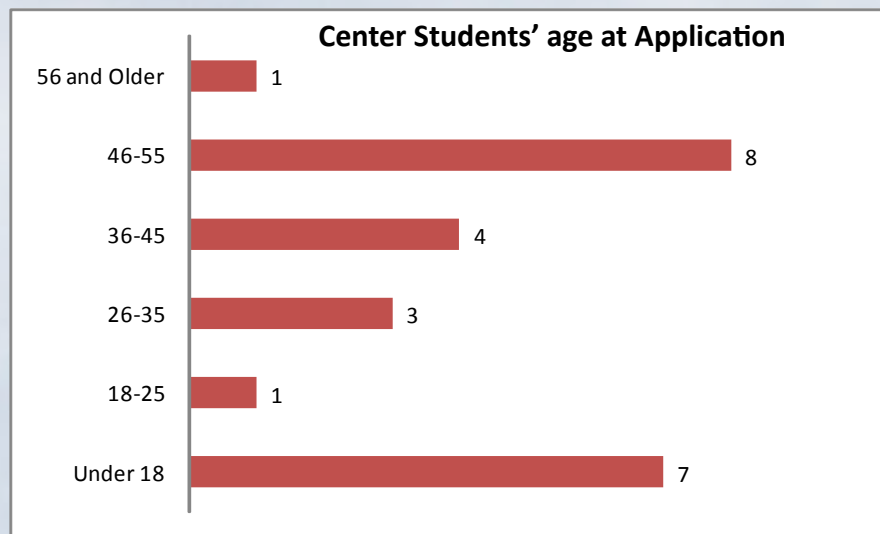
*— Muhammad*

During SFY2010, the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center reached two milestones. On Nov. 1, 2009, we celebrated 50 years of providing outstanding nonvisual training to blind and visually impaired lowans. During the year we also welcomed our 1,000th student into the Center. During training, which averages six to eight months for individuals, we make it possible for blind and visually impaired lowans to become fully participating members of their families, communities and workplaces.

This year, 24 adults—four of whom are new staff—entered the Center, including one deaf-blind student. There, they are given an opportunity to develop self-confidence and a positive attitude toward blindness by learning such important blindness skills as Braille, computer equipped with assistive technology and travel with the long white cane. We look forward to providing another 50 years of top-notch training that will make it possible for more blind and visually impaired lowans to live independently and work competitively. — *Sandy Tigges, program administrator*

**SFY 2010 STATS:**

- **Successful completions of training: 21**
- **Number of graduates obtaining employment: 7**
- **Number of graduates seeking employment: 5**
- **Number of graduates entering higher education: 6**
- **Number of graduates returning as a homemaker: 3**



# *other programs* **BUSINESS ENTERPRISES**

The highlights of our program this year are the substantial progress made in formalizing our training program for manager candidates.

Another highlight has been the placement of two new blind managers who are experiencing success at their facilities. This summer the Internal Revenue Service opened a Call Center in West Des Moines; we are providing the vending for this location, and it has increased the sales and profit for one of our managers as a result.

Our program currently has one manager who is operating several facilities. In the near future, we anticipate two vacancies for management of facilities, so qualified candidates are being actively sought. Our goal is to have two new managers assigned to these facilities no later than Jan. 1, 2012. — *Roger Erpelding, program administrator*

**The Business Enterprises Program (BEP) provides opportunities for legally blind lowans to own and operate their own food service businesses through the Randolph-Sheppard Act.**

### **Key Services:**

- Business development and aid.
- Training and advisement with management applications.
- Building relationships with clientele and suppliers.
- Education and vocational rehabilitation.
- Training and procurement of assistive technology.

### **BEP Managers Produce:**

- Average net income of \$43,629.85.
- Commitment to service and meeting customers' needs.

### **SFY 2010 STATS:**

- **Number of BEP managers: 21**
- **Number of BEP employees: 69**
- **Average Age of BEP Managers: 49**

*“It took me a while to convince myself I would be able to do a lot of these things. I am certainly glad I made this step.” — Carl*

## **Vending facilities run by BEP managers by county (partial list)**

### **Woodbury:**

Woodbury County Courthouse  
Law Enforcement Center  
Trospen-Hoyt Building Federal Bldg.  
Main Post Office  
Sioux City Civic Center  
Best Western Hotel (3rd & Nebraska)

### **Polk:**

Polk County Courthouse  
Polk County Admin. Office Bldg  
Dept. for the Blind Cafeteria  
Mitchellville Rest Area – east & west bound  
Lottery Commission  
New Historical Bldg.  
Ola Babcock Building  
Wallace, Lucas, Justice, Grimes, Jessie Parker & Hoover bldgs.  
Iowa Insurance Office  
City Hall  
Federal Express  
Public Safety  
IUB-OCA Building  
IPTV  
Law Enforcement Academy -- Camp Dodge  
Statehouse vending  
Iowa DOT  
Country Inn & Estates

### **Dallas:**

IRS Call Center

### **Linn:**

Cedar Rapids Post Office  
Federal Bankruptcy  
Cedar Rapids Police Station  
Federal Building  
Grant Wood AEA

### **Benton:**

AmeriCorps @ IBSSS in Vinton, Iowa

### **Buchanan:**

MHI Canteen--Independence

### **Black Hawk:**

Waterloo Post Office  
Black Hawk County Courthouse  
Pinecrest County Bldg.  
Veridian Credit Union – Waterloo

### **Pottawattamie:**

Pottawattamie County Courthouse  
IA Dept of Human Services  
County Bldg – Council Bluffs

### **Scott:**

Courthouse -- Davenport  
Administration Building--Davenport  
U.S. Postal Service -- Davenport  
Correctional Facility -- Davenport  
Communication Center -- Davenport

### **Johnson:**

Johnson County Courthouse  
Johnson County Admin. Office Bld.  
Federal Building  
Coralville Post Office  
Johnson County Jail  
Iowa City Transport Corp of America

### **Warren:**

Banner Shooting Range -- Indianola

### **Jasper:**

Jasper County Courthouse

### **Rest Area vending operations on:**

I-35 in Ankeny, Story City, Dows, Decatur and Osceola  
I-29 in Onawa, Sergeant Bluff, Pacific Junction and Missouri Valley  
I-80 in Victor, Grinnell, Adair, Wilton, Tiffin, Mitchellville, Bettendorf, Underwood and Waukee  
I-380 in Cedar Rapids



# other programs

## YOUTH TRANSITION

The Youth Transition program works with blind and visually impaired youth from age 14 through graduation of high school. The program's focus is to give youth an opportunity to meet others like themselves while learning crucial life skills that help them adapt to vision loss.

Transition specialists work with individual youth on creating a career plan, which includes identifying education goals and gaining work experience before leaving high school. The specialists confer with parents and educators, as well as the student, to find the best route for that individual's success.

The program also sponsors special programs throughout the year to bring youth together for weekend retreats and summer camps. During these programs, participants learn team-building and social skills, plus non-visual techniques for accomplishing tasks.

This year, the program began to put a higher emphasis on the youth gaining job experience. Specialists worked with employers to place youth in entry-level jobs at establishments such as Subway and Theisen's Farm Supply. This job experience helps youth better integrate into society as they do "normal" teenage activities and earn their own money. It also provides opportunity to think of themselves as someone who can work and be an independent individual. These experiences bolster the opportunity for success later in life as they work toward creating a career path.

— *Tai Blas & Keri Osterhaus, Transition specialists*

**The Youth Transition Program works with Iowa youth to help them gain confidence, independence and work experience before graduating high school.**

### **Key Services:**

- Career path planning.
- Confidence building activities.
- Gathering blind/visually impaired youth together.
- Weekend retreats & summer camps.

### **Delivery Mechanisms:**

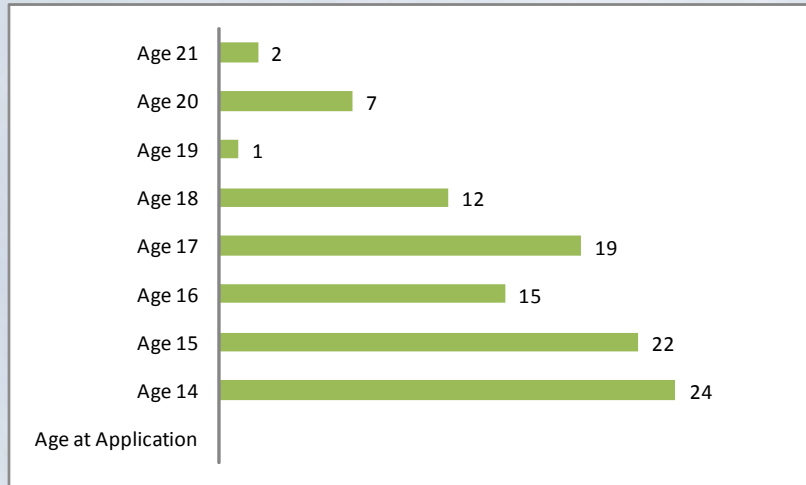
- In-home visits with parents and students.
- Planning and communication with educators .
- One-on-one instruction with students.
- Group instruction with students in supportive environments.



*“When I attended transition, I gained my first understanding that I could do what I wanted to do..” — John*

**SFY 2010 STATS:**

- Number of Transition Program participants: 23
- Number of youth receiving services: 102
- Number of youth attending college with IDB tuition help: 26
- Number of youth obtaining job experience: 16



# the bottom line FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Department is funded through a state appropriation of General Fund dollars, which is then matched by federal grant funds. For each state dollar allocated to the Department, we receive approximately four federal dollars in matching funds. When we lose that state money, we also lose the federal money.

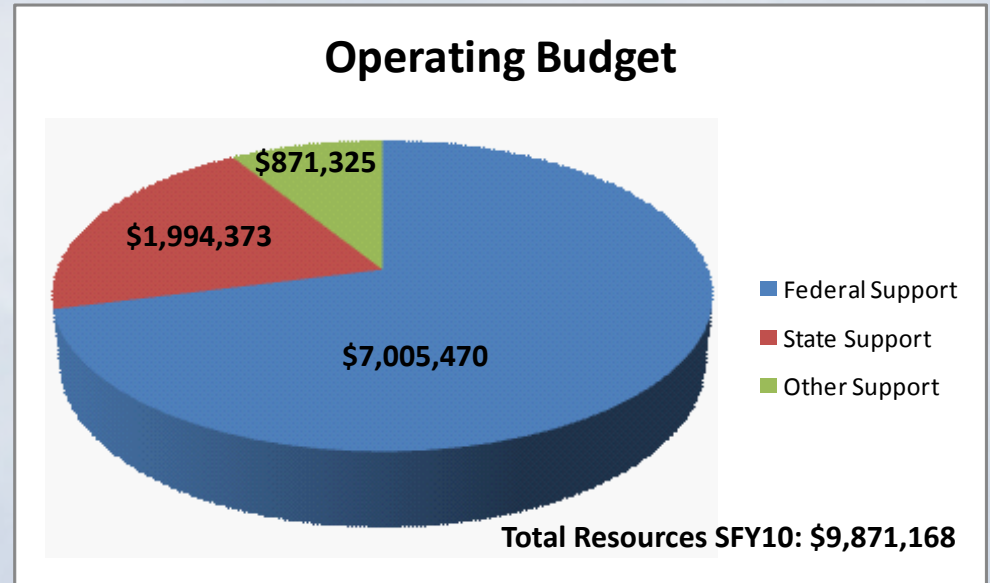
As most public entities, the Iowa Department for the Blind experienced a reduced budget in SFY2010. Budget reductions in 2010 resulted in the layoff of temporary staff members.

However, our bottom line has always been to provide the best direct services to blind and visually impaired Iowans as possible.

Our referrals increased in SFY2010, giving us more clients to serve with fewer resources to do so. We have shifted our staff to increase the number of field staff traveling the state, while decreasing Library staff. This means heavier reliance on volunteers to produce alternative media in the Library and more sharing of duties among Library staff.

Concerted efforts in public outreach have contributed to the increase in referrals and Library use. We will continue to promote our services to the public and support our hard-working staff as much as possible in SFY2011.

Challenges persist with the dim economic outlook in the coming year, but the Department remains committed to providing rehabilitation services to a vulnerable population that gives back to society if given the opportunity.



### Disposition of Resources:

Personal Services	6,448,437
Contractual Services	1,024,304
Direct Client Services	1,505,604
Supplies and All Other	892,703
Reversion	120

**Total Disposition of Resources: \$9,871,168**

## Key Staff

**Karen Keninger**, *Director*, karen.keninger@blind.state.ia.us

**Bruce Snethen**, *Deputy Director*, bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us

**Curtis Chong**, *Program Administrator for Field Operations and Information Technology*, curtis.chong@blind.state.ia.us

**Megen Johnson**, *Supervisor Vocational Rehabilitation*, megen.johnson@blind.state.ia.us

**Becky Criswell**, *Supervisor Independent Living*, becky.criswell@blind.state.ia.us

**Sandy Tigges**, *Program Administrator for Adult Orientation & Adjustment Center*, sandy.tigges@blind.state.ia.us

**Randy Landgrebe**, *Program Administrator Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped*, randy.landgrebe@blind.state.ia.us

**Roger Erpelding**, *Program Administrator for Business Enterprises Program*, roger.erpelding@blind.state.ia.us

## Iowa Commission for the Blind

The three-member commission is appointed by the governor and meets about every three months. Meeting agendas and board packet materials are available online at [www.IDBonline.org/administration/commission](http://www.IDBonline.org/administration/commission)

### Members:

Sandi Ryan, board chair

Steve Hagemoser

Mike Hoenig

## Connect with IDB



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



Facebook: [www.facebook.com/iowaDepartmentfortheBlind](http://www.facebook.com/iowaDepartmentfortheBlind)



Twitter: [twitter.com/idbonline](http://twitter.com/idbonline)



LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/1135404](http://www.linkedin.com/company/1135404)



YouTube: [youtube.com/idbonline](http://youtube.com/idbonline)

Cane Tracks blog: [idbcomm.wordpress.com](http://idbcomm.wordpress.com)

Technology for the Blind blog: [blindtechnology.wordpress.com](http://blindtechnology.wordpress.com)

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