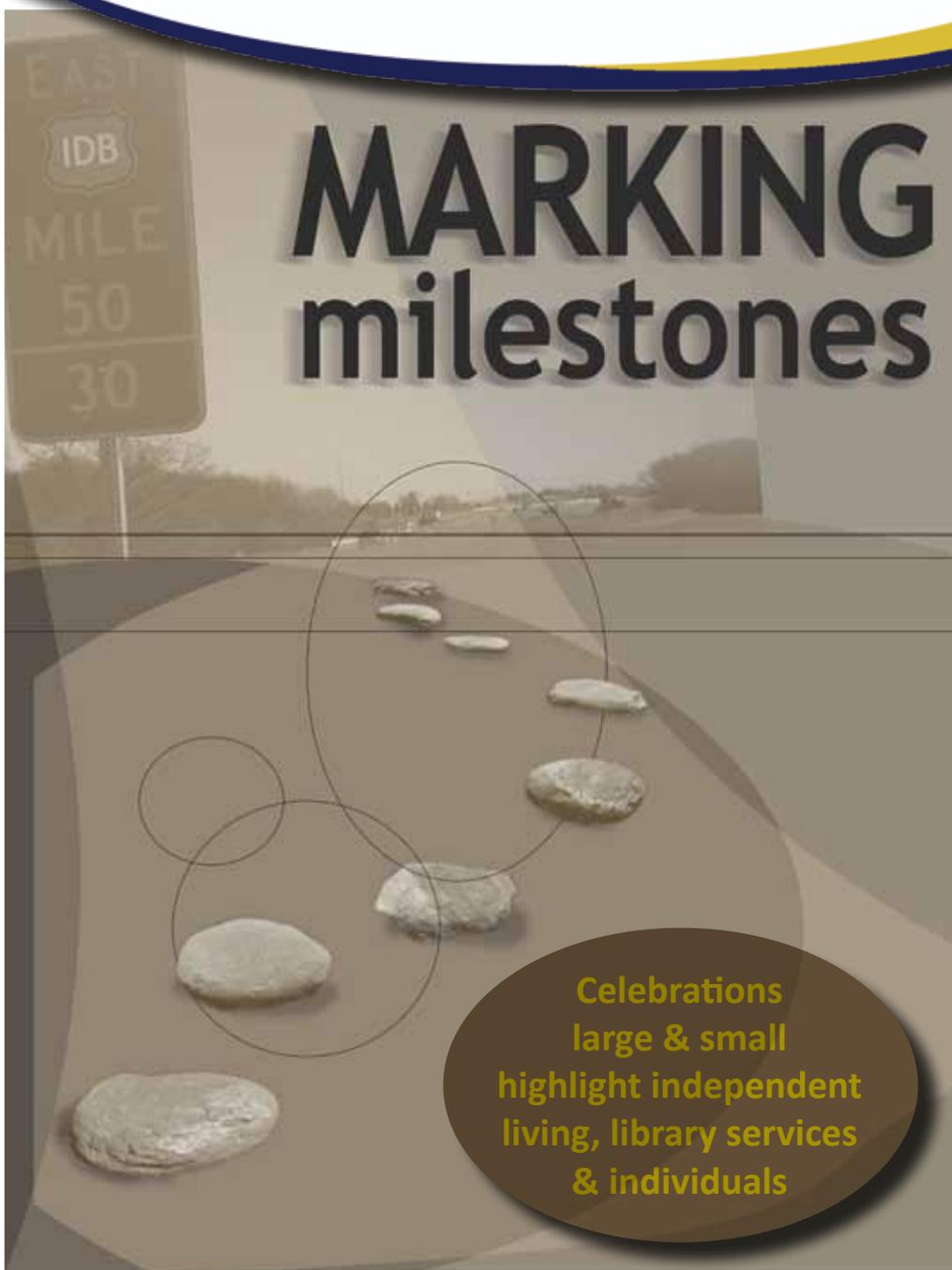


The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



MARKING milestones

**Celebrations
large & small
highlight independent
living, library services
& individuals**

INSIDE:

Celebrating the
Library's 50th
anniversary

Hy-Vee
partnership nets
new positions

iBill is handy but
hard to find

Art workshops
stress need for
accessibility

Independent
Living program
turns 30

Orientation
Center welcomes
1,000th student

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|from the editor

There is so much to celebrate at the Iowa Department for the Blind this summer.

Not only are we marking huge milestone anniversaries as the Library turns 50 and the Independent Living program turns 30, we are celebrating the thousands of blind and visually impaired Iowans we have touched and continue to help every day throughout the state.

In July we will help celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and we note our own contribution to putting blind Iowans to work.

A look back at history will show significant changes in the way blind Iowans are regarded in society, and in the public's view of what the blind and visually impaired can accomplish. While there is still work to be done to achieve complete equality, IDB's mission holds strong after 51 years: It's OK to be blind.

— **Shoshana Hebshi**

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The year 2010 marks a number of milestones for the Iowa Department for the Blind. Fifty years ago we acquired our building, remodeled it for the first time, opened the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and moved the newly-inaugurated Orientation Center into the building.

Thirty years ago we launched our Independent Living program. We'll be celebrating these milestones in a number of ways this year. Watch for information, and join us if you can.

This has been a spring of farewells at IDB. Seven of our most experienced staff members have opted to take advantage of the state's Early Retirement Incentive Program. Bonnie Linqvist, our long-time supervisor of vocational rehabilitation; Terry Polberg, who taught independent living skills for the past thirty years; Cindy Valin, whom many of you know as a reader advisor; Mike Hicklin, our building manager; Doug Cole, a 39-year veteran of the library; Dawna Ray, who has chalked up 34 years in the library; and Lisa Davis, who has held several positions, most recently as our network administrator; are all seeking new challenges and adventures. We wish them all the very best in their retirement.

The Early Retirement Program does not allow us to fill all of

these positions, and the loss will be felt most deeply in the library where Doug's and Dawna's positions will remain vacant for the time being.

Meanwhile, our outreach efforts continue, and programs are strong. With judicious use of our resources, we will prosper in the 2010/11 fiscal year, which began July 1.

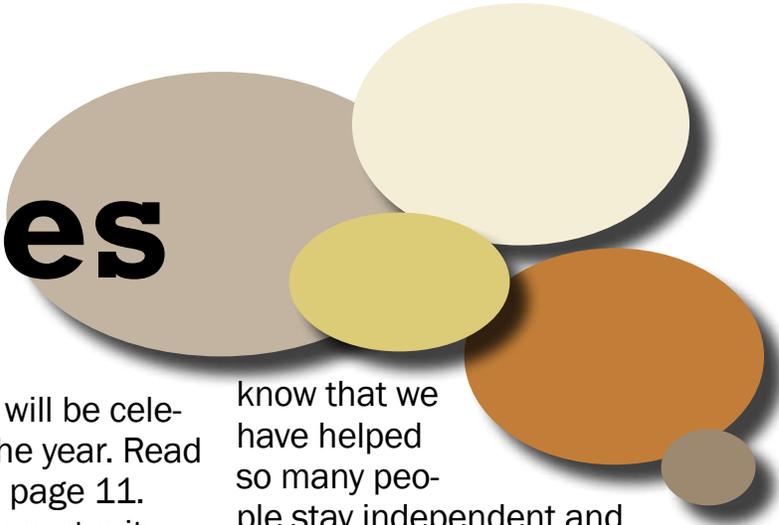
We mark milestones in the making through our "Cane Tracks" blog, which is written primarily by Orientation Center students who tell their own stories as they progress through the Center. Check it out at <http://idbcomm.wordpress.com>. The views expressed on this blog are the personal opinions and experiences of the individuals contributing content. The words they use and the experiences they discuss may not reflect the IDB's official position. Nevertheless, we believe they are real, valid and important experiences, and we hope that their willingness to share them candidly will help others both understand their journeys and develop the courage to attempt their own.

Sincerely,

Karen Keninger



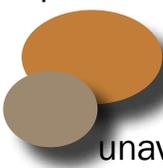
Marking Milestones



It's OK to be blind. This revolutionary, positive philosophy of blindness began to shape the culture and programs at the Iowa Department for the Blind when Kenneth Jernigan became director in 1958. His belief that with the proper training and opportunities, blind people can live, work, learn and play alongside their sighted peers drove the sweeping changes that created The Iowa Model for rehabilitation of blind adults.

Part of Jernigan's vision for this agency was a world-class library for the blind. On July 1, 1960, that dream took shape at the inauguration of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Today, that library serves thousands of Iowans.

"The library has become an irreplaceable part of the package of services blind Iowans can receive from the Department," said Library Director Tracey Morsek. "People all over Iowa have access to a trove of books and magazines that would otherwise be unavailable to them."



The Library's 50th anniversary will be celebrated through the year. Read more about it on page 11.

In 1980, an opportunity arose to address another gap in services to blind Iowans. The Independent Living Program was born. It started as a three-year program, funded through a grant, but proved invaluable. It is celebrating its 30th anniversary this summer. The program provides in-home and community-based trainings to older Iowans and those with multiple disabilities who are not looking for employment. The program also conducts two weeklong senior orientation programs each year, bringing close to a dozen seniors into the Department's downtown Des Moines building to learn the skills of blindness.

"Watching the Independent Living program grow during the past 30 years into a strong and necessary service for Iowans has been such a treat," said program administrator Becky Criswell, who started in the program as a rehabilitation teacher in 1980. "I can look back and

know that we have helped so many people stay independent and in their own homes for longer than they would have without our services."

Read more about the Independent Living program on page 7.

The Department sees milestones met every day through the achievements of each individual it serves. Whether it is learning new ways to thread that stubborn needle, helping someone learn those last few letters of the alphabet in Braille, or facilitating a new hire for a blind worker in a good job, the Department's services have helped thousands of Iowans reach their potential.

These large milestones—50 years for the Library, and 30 years for the Independent Living program—are simply reminders that much can be accomplished with proper execution of a revolutionary vision, and maintaining a far-fetched philosophy that it can be OK to be blind. ♦

ACCESSING ART

We live in a visual world. So when tactile artist Ann Cunningham asked several artists and art professionals to put on sleep shades and create clay casting molds without using their vision, there was some hesitation—but a lot of learning about new ways of interpreting and making art.

As part of a three-day workshop in late June sponsored by the Iowa Department for the Blind, Cunningham, a Colorado-based artist who created the Department's tactile public art installation last year, worked with blind youth, blind adults, IDB staff, artists and art professionals to promote and create accessible art.

"We have multiple senses and they beautifully coordinate with each other to tell us about our world," said Cunningham. "It is rare that we are offered an opportunity to explore our world with the focus on just one of those senses. In this workshop we explored the world through our sense of touch."

Amber Morris, from the Iowa Children's Museum, said she loved the workshop but kept having the impulse to take off her sleep shades so she could see what she was doing instead of feeling it. The workshop took art to a "whole other level" she never imagined.

"I kept thinking about what similar activities we could do at the museum," she said.

That museum is planning to create a large tactile exhibit in the near future, and the three from the museum who attended the workshop gleaned much information and ideas.

To help make existing art more accessible, the IDB recently partnered with the Des Moines Art Center to create tours for the blind at the Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown Des Moines. There, the 26 large, outdoor sculptures are off limits to touching, but during the special tour, people can don gloves and feel the art.

"We live in a look, don't touch society when it comes to art," said IDB Director Karen Keninger. "Creating more opportunities for those who don't



Artist Ann Cunningham (left) works with a blind adult during her workshop on art accessibility.

process art through sight to experience and appreciate art helps us all gain a greater understanding of the world around us."

IDB staff trained 40 Art Center docents and staff to give the tours and discussed ways a blind person interprets art.

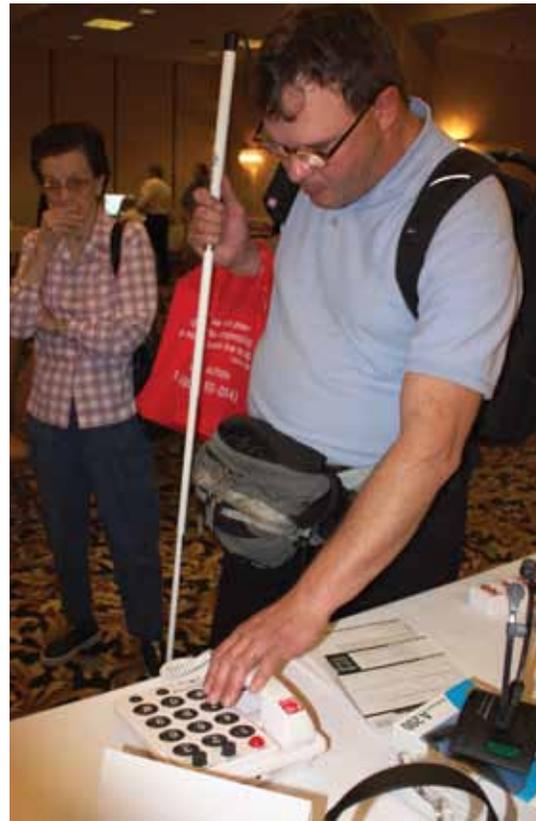
Another art form, albeit less tactile, is writing. The IDB has provided space and opportunity for blind and visually impaired members of the public to take a free creative writing class taught by Iowa State University graduate students this summer. The class met in the computer room in the Department's Orientation Center.

Working on poetry, fiction and non-fiction, instructors Laura Sweeney and Jason Arbogast encourage artistic expression through words.

More information on these three programs is available at www.IDBonline.org ♦

On the road

Community events in Sioux City and Decorah bring IDB resources to the people



Clockwise from bottom left: IDB vocational rehabilitation counselor Rosie Thierer discusses assistive aids and devices to attendees in Decorah; David Lenz, Brenda Criswell and Rich Crawford in Sioux City; A conference attendee in Sioux City is interviewed by the local TV station; Checking out a large-buttoned phone in Sioux City; and “Laughter Yoga” in Decorah./ Photos by Shoshana Hebshi & Courtney Townsend.

This spring, IDB staff traveled to opposite ends of the state to present resources and services offered to blind and visually impaired individuals.

The “Blindness Works Conference” in Sioux City April 21 brought together about 120 people to learn about assistive technology and devices, library services and vocational rehabilitation.

Staff traveled to Decorah May 18 for a similar presentation, which incorporated breakout sessions on independent living, vocational rehabilitation, caregiver support and the benefits of “Laughter Yoga.”



Celebrating 30 years of service throughout Iowa

By Barb Weigel
Contributing Writer
IL Project Specialist

In November 1980, the Independent Living program at the Iowa Department for the Blind began providing services to Iowans with vision loss. With a project director, a secretary, a library assistant and four independent living teachers, its primary purpose was to provide services to blind and visually impaired Iowans who did not wish to pursue employment due to advanced age, serious health limitations or significant co-disabilities. Its goal was to serve 400 individuals a year.

Each year since 1980, demand for services has increased. To date the program has served thousands of people from all of Iowa's 99 counties.

"The program has helped innumerable older individuals with vision loss get their lives back," said Becky Criswell, supervisor of the IL program. "This means individuals who were thinking about moving to assisted living, hiring in-home services or moving to be closer to family support discovered ways to maintain their independence and self reliance. They learned they



did not have to make a major change in lifestyle just because they had a major change in vision."

Since 1980, some changes have occurred in the program to strengthen its purpose and better serve its clients.

In 1981, an Independent Living Advisory Committee was formed. Today it provides the IL program with feedback about its programming and takes news related to IL and the Department for the Blind back to the communities where the committee members live.

Throughout the history of the Advisory Committee, many able leaders have provided the program and its staff with valuable guidance and support. Committee members have been strong advocates for the program, have provided positive peer support to clients and have been heavily involved in public awareness activities.

In the early to mid-'90s, the Vocational Rehabilitation teachers and the IL teachers were combined in order to have one pool of teachers to serve all clients in

| *Continued on Page 8* |

| Continued from Page 7 |

need of home teaching services. This improved access to more people who needed services. Teachers now had smaller territories to cover so they could spend less time traveling and more time with clients.

Even with this change, it remained difficult to keep pace with all of the referrals and provide significant, meaningful services to Iowans who needed them.

As a result, IL conducted its first weeklong Senior Orientation training in 1994. Clients from throughout the state came to the Department building in downtown Des Moines for a week of concentrated skills training. The week proved to be very successful, and having peer interaction enhanced the learning of the new skills. Classes included cooking, Braille, woodshop and traveling with the long white cane.

Now, the Department runs two Senior Orientation weeks each year with an average of eight participants.

Many of these older adults find such gratification in completing the week that they come away feeling empowered and able to take charge of the aspects of their lives they had struggled with because of their vision loss. They have taken their stories and experiences out into their communities by forming local vision loss

Celebrate with Us!

Aug. 5 — Storm Lake

AEA Building, 824 Flindt Dr.
Suites A, B & C

Aug. 19 — Grinnell

Drake Community Library, 930 Park St.

Sept. 1 — Cedar Rapids

First Lutheran Church, 1000 3rd Ave. SE

Sept. 2 — Waterloo

Grace Lutheran Church, 1024 W. 8th St.

Sept. 21 — Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs Public Library, 400 Willow

Oct. 7 — Indianola

Calvary Baptist Church, 2708 N. Jefferson Way

See back cover for more info or visit www.IDBonline.org for details and photos from the events.



support groups, speaking to groups, being interviewed by local media and participating in IL public awareness activities.

“They have become positive role models and ambassadors for the program, helping many others take advantage of the services available,” said Criswell.

“When that realization dawns on them that they don’t have to be afraid of blindness, that they can live life on their terms, they want to share the news with others. They want to make sure other people have the same kinds of opportunities that they have in order to move forward with their lives.”

Another change in the Independent Living program came in 1999, when two Project Specialists were hired to take group training into the communities. These shorter, condensed versions of Senior Orientation, called

Community Based Trainings, are now offered throughout the state wherever three or more clients in the same geographical area express the desire to participate.

The program changes with the times. Thirty years ago, teachers were providing training on alternative ways to use a typewriter and a rotary phone. Now they teach ways to use a computer and cell phone.

Today, in its 30th year, the Independent Living program consists of a program director, eight Independent Living Teachers, two Project Specialists and a secretary. The team works hard to meet the ever-changing needs of the people it serves.

“Techniques have changed, but the message remains the same: You can do what you want to do and we are here to find a way to do it,” said Criswell. ♦

Teamwork spurs partnership with Hy-Vee stores

By Julie Aufdenkamp

Contributing Writer
VR Counselor

Jill Clausen wanted to work. She just didn't think that anyone would hire her or that she would find a job that wouldn't be a problem because of her blindness.

As a vocational rehabilitation client of the Iowa Department for the Blind, Clausen, 44, had been looking for a job for six years, ever since she lost her vision.

Then a door opened.

Clausen was hired as a receptionist at the Hy-Vee grocery store on Grand Avenue in West Des Moines in October 2009. She loves her job.

The Des Moines resident said she looks forward to going to work. "I can't say enough about the fact that my employer doesn't look at me differently than anyone else. I give credit to Hy-Vee for its willingness to work with blind individuals who want to work," said Clausen.

The store's human resources manager, Les Bruner, said he is very pleased with the partnership between Hy-Vee, the Iowa Department for the Blind and Clausen.

The partnership began in



Doris Ranc is the receptionist at the Charles City Hy-Vee. She answers phones and pages people over the intercom. IDB counselors have worked with HyVee to create receptionist positions at various stores around Iowa.

2004 when Hy-Vee hired its first blind employee. Now, six years later, there are close to a dozen blind workers in eight stores throughout Iowa. They hold jobs in the kitchen, in the deli, in the bakery, bagging groceries, and stocking shelves.

"Hy-Vee has been an awesome business partner and has been very open minded when it comes to the hiring of any of our applicants," said Brenda Criswell, employment specialist for IDB. "They trust that we are going to bring them screened and qualified applicants."

Criswell said when a person is hired by Hy-Vee they not only get a good, stable

job with growth potential, they understand they are part of a team that is building a successful company.

"Hy-Vee is a great company to work with," said Criswell.

After some exploration to see what needs of the company's were not being met, Criswell and Hy-Vee managers came up with the receptionist position to alleviate pressure on customer service employees during busy periods.

Prior to creating this new position, no Hy-Vee employees were designated to answer telephone calls. The

| *Continued on Page 10* |

| Continued from Page 9 |

receptionist answers incoming calls and directs them to the appropriate department or employee. The receptionist is also free to complete other tasks as needed, such as taking grocery orders over the phone or completing light paperwork.

In some cases, assistive technology has been provided to make the job accessible for blind employees. Currently, five Iowa Hy-Vee stores have implemented receptionist positions staffed by blind or visually impaired employees. According to Criswell, two other stores “are on the horizon,” and more are considering the possibility.

Bruner said the receptionist has been a great asset to the store. “The fact that we have Jill here three days a week has taken stress off of customer service,” he said.

Clausen said the cus-

DID YOU KNOW?

VR counselors can get employees who are losing their vision assistive technology that will help them on the job.

tomers service staff miss her when she is not there.

“It’s great to hear that. I feel like they respect me and what I do,” said Clausen.

Bruner added that Clausen is “very friendly and personable on the phone.” She is also quite diverse and has



IDB Employment Specialist Brenda Criswell (left) works closely with HyVee managers and human resource employees to match qualified blind and visually impaired workers with positions in the grocery stores.

been assigned other tasks when the phones are not busy, he said.

Bruner particularly appreciates that Clausen has assumed the responsibility of taking grocery orders over the phone from the elderly

and shut-in customers each Tuesday.

“Those customers like

the fact that they are talking to the same person each week. Jill is very easy going and is a pleasant person to talk to,” said Bruner. “She is genuinely concerned about the person on the other end of the phone and wants to make sure their needs are

met. She is a great asset to the store.”

Clausen said she gives credit to IDB for helping her to build confidence by believing in her. “I believe I now have the right attitude,” said Clausen. “I have encouraged my supervisor to expect the same from me as any other employee.”

Bruner noted that Hy-Vee always looks for ways to give people with disabilities opportunities. “We, however, have expectations. We don’t expect any less of disabled people,” he said. “Hopefully other employers will keep their eyes open for opportunities like this. There are jobs in any situation for people with disabilities.” ♦

Fifty years of success, one book at a time

On July 1, 1960, the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped mailed out its first book.

The library had no shelving yet, and hundreds of stacks of Braille and recorded books were piled in lockers, on the running track, or even on the floor of the old gymnasium that is now the Assembly Room. Undaunted, Florence Grannis, the new librarian, saw to it that 500 books were sent that day to blind borrowers throughout the state.

The Library has come a long way since that summer day 50 years ago. It now houses the world's largest collection of Braille titles and sends more than 1,000 books and book players out daily, serving over 7,000 patrons each year.

Today, the library has shelves stacked with books, cassettes and digital books in 60 percent of the IDB building. An electronic database manages inventory and borrower preferences. And a dedicated staff makes sure the Library runs smoothly each work day, getting books out to readers when they want them.

More than 100 volunteers throughout the state work countless hours to Braille, proofread, narrate and shelve books. In fact, about half the Library's Braille collection was produced by volunteers.

Since its beginning, the Library has recognized the need to augment the National Library Service's collection with other materials produced locally to better serve its patrons. In 1961, the Library produced 50 taped books. In 2009, with a digital, state-of-the-art recording studio and a team of trained staff and volunteers the library produced 301 digitally recorded books and other materials for distribution.

"Iowans can be proud of this world-class



The Iowa Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped had its modest start in makeshift stacks and storage spaces in the old YMCA building in 1960.

library," said Library Director Tracey Morsek. "There are larger libraries for the blind throughout the country, but there are none better."

In recognition of the Library's 50th anniversary, staff will be publishing a blog at iowalibrary.wordpress.com. The blog will include weekly tidbits on history and fun facts about the Library.

The Library's mission, as determined by the Iowa Commission for the Blind, is to this day to ensure that it is a model library with service offered to the blind comparable to what sighted people might have from any good public library. ◆

The digital revolution increases independence

By **Beth Hirst**

Contributing Writer
Assistant Library Director

In May 2009 the Library introduced digital talking book players to its patrons, marking a shift to a modern format that promotes independence and accessibility. The new players are easier to use, harder to break and have better quality audio.

Now, more than a year later, the Library has shipped about 3,000 players to readers across the state, and the positive response has been overwhelming.

“Readers have raved about the improved sound quality of the new format,” said Library Director Tracey Morsek. “It has been very rewarding to hear the enthusiasm that has greeted this long-awaited shift to the digital world.”

The only drawback to the new players has been a shortage of digital books in

popular genres. The good news is that the Library’s digital duplication system is up and running. As new copies are put into circulation, we expect they will fly off the shelves as soon as they are checked in.

Another boon to Library service has been the Braille and Audio Reading Download program, or BARD, which allows Library users to download books to their computers whenever they wish.

Almost 20,000 titles are available on the BARD website at www.idbonline.org/braille-and-audio-reading-download.

To use BARD, patrons register online, receive a password by e-mail, and are then able to download as many of

the audio books and magazines as they wish. In May, Iowa readers downloaded more digital books than we mailed to readers on cartridges. All told, 21 percent of all our “circulation” was

A HINT TO IMPROVE SERVICE:

Keep your cartridges in their proper containers to avoid delays in our circulation system. The more organized we keep our collection, the quicker we can ship books to you!

actually downloaded by patrons themselves.

While a certain level of technical expertise is needed to successfully download digital books, patrons can contact the Library for assistance. There are also some community members who have offered to help others nearby learn the system.

Contact the Library for information on how to get help with BARD or to sign up for the service. ♦

Narrator Sue Ketelsen honored with annual award

Volunteers were commissioned IDB ambassadors during the annual Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop April 16. Library staff encouraged the new ambassadors to help spread the word about the great service offered through the Library as well as other programs

through the Department.

Annual awards were also distributed during the day’s luncheon. Volunteer narrator Sue Ketelsen received the 2010 Perowsky Award for her service to the



Ketelsen.

Library. Grannis award recipients were:

- Mary Doidge: Audio editing
- Dave Saurman: Narrator
- Bob White: Narrator, Digital equipment assistance
- Barb Kates: Braillist
- Joan Boggess: Braillist
- Rose Stratton: Braille proofreader ♦

Iowa honored for longtime service at NLS conference

The National Conference of Librarians Serving Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals met in Des Moines for a week in May. About 150 librarians from across the nation along with many members of the NLS staff enjoyed Iowa's perfect weather, superb food, and many interesting meetings. It was the first visit

to Des Moines for many attendees, and they were all delighted with the city.

The conference also gave the IDB an opportunity to shine in the spotlight. Following welcome addresses from Library Director Tracey Morsek and IDB Director Karen Keninger, conference organizers presented the IDB Library with an award for 50 years of outstanding service to the blind and physically handicapped community.

IDB staff Tim West and Karen Schweitzer

highlighted our in-house recording program during a preconference presentation which many attendees stated was the highlight of the conference.

The Library also host-



Library employees, including (from left) Karen Eis, Tracey Morsek, Susan Stageberg, Lynda Wood and Sarah Cranston, received a national award for dedicated service.

ed a dinner reception for the conference attendees, and Orientation Center students and IDB staff gave tours of the Department. Our guests marveled at our facilities and were especially taken with our recording studio.

"Iowa has always been a leader and has certainly one of the best libraries in the world from our perspective, and Karen and Tracey have carried on that tradition," said Kurt Cylke, director of the NLS. ♦

From the librarian

Some say life begins at 50. Nowhere is that more true than at our Library, where we have embarked upon our digital talking book service—truly a leap into the modern age of technology.



While many mid-lifers are dismayed to find their waistlines expanding, we are delighted by the growth of our catalog. Our strong cadre of volunteers continues to produce a diverse collection of digital recordings and Braille books to add to our stacks. These materials, coupled with the collection from the National Library Service, have increased our collection to a quarter-million items.

Our Library continues to benefit from people power. We have ongoing support from the Friends of the Library, who raise money each year to support our programs. And, the Library's Consumer Advisory Committee provides valuable feedback to improve services. The groups are always looking for new members to join their ranks.

To look back on our history, we will be posting to our new blog at iowalibrary.wordpress.com each week throughout the year. We would love to hear from you about your memories and stories about our 50 years and what the next 50 years should bring.

Happy reading,

Tracey Morsek

BOOKLIST

*"There is no frigate like
a book to take us lands
away..."*

~Emily Dickinson

Stuck at home this summer, but longing to experience some far-off locations? The following digital talking books are all set "somewhere else" and are filled with adventure, romance, mystery and perhaps even a jungle cruise. Order these titles, and look forward to some exciting journeys of the imagination.

DB68522

***Dancing With Werewolves*
by Carole Douglas.**

Television reporter Delilah Street heads to Sin City after seeing her doppelganger on an episode of CSI Las Vegas. She finds work with the show's producer, falls for detective Ric Montoya, confronts werewolf mobsters, and investigates murder. Strong language, some violence, and some explicit descriptions of sex. 2007. *First book about Delilah Street, Paranormal Investigator.*

DB67185

***Souvenir* by Therese Fowler.** Teenagers Meg and Carson were torn apart when Meg wed a rich man to save her family's Florida farm.

Years later still-married Meg, a doctor with a 16-year-old daughter, and Carson, a famous rock star, meet again. Some descriptions of sex, some violence, and some strong language. 2008.

DB68635

***Deadly Night* by Heather Graham.**

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, PI Aidan Flynn and his brothers inherit a Louisiana plantation presumed haunted by Civil War ghosts. After a human bone is found on the property, Aidan and local tarot-card reader Kendall Montgomery investigate. Some violence, some strong language, and some descriptions of sex. 2008. *Flynn Brothers Trilogy, book 1.*

DB69389

***Heart of Fire* by Linda Howard.**

Archaeologist Jillian Sherwood travels to the Brazilian jungle in search of Amazon women warriors and a rare red diamond that her late father had also sought. Guide Ben Lewis joins Jillian's expedition and shares in her adventures. 1997.

DB69388

***The Golden Chance* by Jayne A. Krentz.**

Social worker Philadelphia

Fox faces a moral dilemma when she inherits stock in Washington state's Lightfoot Industries. The company is part of the military-industrial complex that Philadelphia abhors, but she is attracted to Nick Lightfoot, the black sheep of the family. 1997.

DB68490

***Chances* by Pamela Nowak.**

Denver, 1876. Telegraph operator Sarah Donovan helps two young sisters whose dog has been shot. Sarah escorts the girls home, where she meets their widowed father, undertaker Daniel Petterman. Though suffragette Sarah's independent spirit clashes with Daniel's conservative nature, they soon find romance. Some explicit descriptions of sex. 2008.

DB67111

***The Secret Adventures of Charlotte Bronte* by Laura J. Rowland.**

Charlotte Bronte and her sister Anne travel to London in 1848 to meet with Charlotte's publisher. On the train they meet Isabel White, a mysterious young woman who is later murdered. Drawn into the intrigue, Charlotte attempts to solve the crime. Some violence and some descriptions of sex. 2008. ◆

One in a thousand

By Rebecca Swainey
Contributing Writer
Braille Teacher

You may recall that the initial milestone for the modern Iowa Department for the Blind occurred last fall when the Orientation Center—the great experiment from which it all began—celebrated its first 50 years. Recently we realized the Center has reached another milestone. This one slipped quietly by without fanfare or even a murmur. At some point in the last few months the 1,000th student entered the program for training.

The name of the exact individual is not important. What is important is that, like all those who came before, this person took advantage of this life changing opportunity.

Over the years the Center has seen minor changes, but its philosophy and approach to training has not wavered. Students today are presented with the same concepts encountered by those first individuals who entered the program in 1959, central to which is that “it’s OK to be blind.”

Students soon learn their days will not be spent just sitting in the classroom but will involve numerous field trips and activities through which they can put this core belief



Orientation Center students plant the summer garden on IDB’s roof as part of a special activity to teach them life skills after vision loss.

to the test.

The following selections from current students are examples of just such opportunities.

“One day in May we students were told our class for the day would be to plant a flower garden on the roof. Some went with Ric to get soil while the rest of us pulled out the dried remains of last year’s flower beds. Later we all went to the nursery to select fresh flowers to plant. The numerous options

available provided us with quite a variety of foliage and blooms for the garden. I love the big, red blossoms of the geranium I selected.”
Becky—Des Moines

“Each month the Orientation Center schedules both small and large group activities. This May both activities involved touring historic sites. Early in the month Scott and I went with Dave Hauge to check out the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library

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Orientation Center students regularly go on field trips around Iowa, such as trips to visit the Amana colonies (far left) and to the Lewis and Clark museum in Sioux City (left).

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and Museum. I am not a native Iowan and I knew very little about Herbert Hoover. With Dave acting as guide the tour was informative and a lot of fun. The grounds are in a park-like setting on the edge of West Branch, a little town not far from Iowa City. There are a number of noteworthy sites on the grounds including the two-room home where Hoover was born, his father's blacksmith shop, a Quaker Meeting House, and the Library as well as President and Mrs. Hoover's final resting place. One thing I learned, to my surprise, was that this was the very first presidential library.

"At the end of the month everyone in Orientation traveled to Sioux City to tour the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. There we saw a short film welcoming us to the

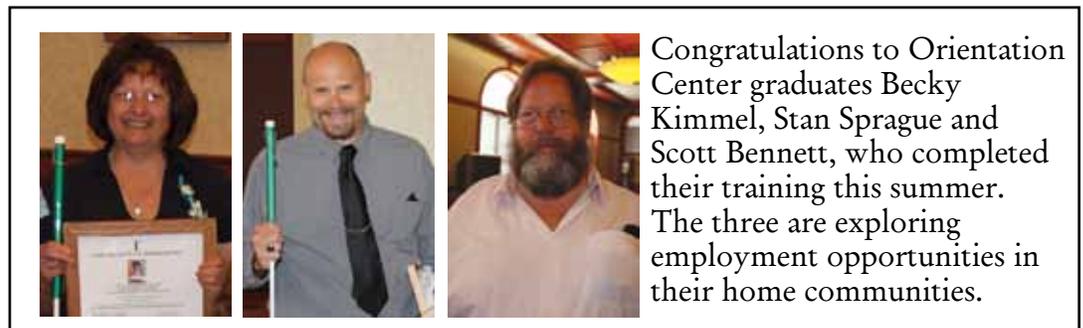
museum and telling us a little of what went on during the expedition. When the film ended our tour guide took us around to each of the stations in the museum. These sites are each designed to represent some portion of the time the expedition spent in northwest Iowa. The museum deals with only that portion of the expedition but, boy, does that cover a lot! Later we had a chance to handle several items including articles of clothing, a wooden button, cone sugar and lye soap. I enjoyed both of these trips and I would encourage people to be adventurous; use all your senses and see the world."

Linda—Marshalltown

"After you have been at

the Orientation Center for a few months and you have learned your way around, you will begin to be asked to give tours of the Department and to accompany staff members on speaking engagements. The idea is that it's students who are in the best position to represent the program, specifically to prospective students and to the general public. We are often asked to speak to school groups. The most interesting of these groups are the elementary school students. Unlike older adults, children are unafraid to ask the questions that are really on their minds. Sometimes in their simplicity children can be truly profound."

Scott—Sioux City ♦



Congratulations to Orientation Center graduates Becky Kimmel, Stan Sprague and Scott Bennett, who completed their training this summer. The three are exploring employment opportunities in their home communities.

School's out, but learning never takes a break

By Tai Blas

Contributing Writer
Transition Specialist

This summer, blind and visually impaired high school students have a chance to reunite with old friends, make new ones and learn skills that will stick with them for a lifetime during several summer camps provided through the Iowa Department for the Blind.

During the FUNdamentals transition program held in early June, blind individuals ages 14 to 18 focused on learning basic alternative techniques of blindness including cane travel, Braille and independent living in order to increase their confidence in these areas.

The crux of this program was that learning does not have to be boring. Seventeen-year-old Jeff and 15-year-old Nick practiced grilling and serving hot dogs and hamburgers to their fellow students. Nick worked on conquering his fear of the hot stove while he mastered flipping pancakes. With IDB Field Operations supervisor Curtis Chong as his travel instructor for the day, Nick learned to find doors with his cane and practiced reading raised print on signs.

On a visit to the IDB, the group learned about the

purpose of vocational rehabilitation and the importance of personal responsibility at home, school and on the job. They visited the Library and learned about its services for students in high school and college. They also practiced their cane travel and social skills.

During a challenge to find the Silly Silo under sleepshades at Adventureland, a local amusement park, 14-year-old Terrance took a leadership role, traveling with ease and keeping track of his group, pointing out many helpful landmarks, such as benches, garbage cans, fences and paths leading to various rides. He also spearheaded many outings to the pool and gym where students worked on personal fitness goals and played basketball.

After watching a video about treating blind people normally according to basic rules of common sense, Nichole realized that things were sometimes less awkward for her when she travels with her cane because people are immediately aware that she is visually impaired. She said that some people do not know how to treat her when she does not use her cane because she sometimes has to look at things very closely and the public does not understand why.

Sixteen-year-old Krista stated that it is sometimes difficult to disclose her visual impairment because it is not obvious, but that she has to do so in band class where she has to share a music stand with another student and must move it close to be able to read.

Having learned Braille in the past, Nichole took pride in helping other students practice their Braille. They made Braille signs with various raised graphics, words and phrases, such as "cash money," "school" and "peace."

While packing up, roommates Jeff and Nick were not sure whose clothes were whose. This prompted a discussion about how to pack their bags and strategies that they could use to identify their clothes. Students had fun and learned a great deal during the week.

Other programs this summer include an art camp, a camp aimed at encouraging youth to attend college, another camp on volunteerism and finally, one that will expose the youth to recreation and leisure activities.

These programs help round out summer experiences for blind youth and get them ready for transitioning to successful lives as adults. ♦

Monty Habben: Working hard and giving back

By Roger Erpelding

Contributing Writer

B.E.P. Program Administrator

It happened while Monty Habben was a student at the Iowa Department for the Blind's Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center in 1995. Habben, then 36, was blind, unemployed, looking to gain the skills and proper attitudes about blindness, and searching for a career as well.

During a business class at the center, Habben heard Iris Rayhons, a former center student, speak about how, through the Department's Business Enterprises Program (B.E.P.), she was successfully operating a large facility in Sioux City. The operation included a cafeteria food service and a vending route. Rayhons impressed Habben with her strong work ethic and her outspoken approach to success.

After completing his Center training later that year, Habben enrolled in Business Enterprises Program training. He was strongly motivated, and it didn't take long for other managers to realize that Habben had what it takes to be successful.

After training was complete and he became a

licensed vending manager, Habben, originally from Ft. Madison, moved to Waterloo to manage the Waterloo Post Office and a small vending route. This gave him a chance to learn what it was really like to operate a small business. "It was an excellent learning experience," he said.

Ironically, in 1998, Rayhons decided to retire, and her facility in Sioux City became vacant. The business that sparked Habben's interest in the B.E.P. program was now available, and he decided to take it over. Rayhon's operation was a bigger and better opportunity with more hard work and more learning. Though Habben had no food service experience and the vending route was much larger, his confidence and drive pushed him to succeed. Habben moved to Sioux City and worked hard to learn the ropes. The business thrived.

Despite his successes, Habben always wanted to be in central Iowa, close to his wife's parents. This chance

came his way in 2003 when the Des Moines Post Office came available for a new vendor. It was another step

It has allowed me to be the face of the blind and to lead by example as to what blind people can do.

—Monty Habben
B.E.P. Manager

up – more work, more responsibility, more income. He met the challenge and he carried on.

But running a business was not Habben's only passion. Now based in the larger city of Des Moines, Habben began involving himself in community causes and working with troubled youth. He wanted to strike a balance between work and community service, so, in 2008 he took over a smaller vending route in Des Moines.

With this new post, Habben was able to spend adequate time at work and helping others. "Besides my work, I know how helping

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adults results in helping youth, and I wanted to balance this with my business success.”

Just a year later Monty’s dream came true. He always

members and taking compliments on how well-stocked and clean his vending operation is there.

Habben’s success does not sit quietly. He enthusiastically passes on his knowl-

students over the years, some of whom had no work experience and a need to understand what is involved in being employed. Habben adapted his business model to their needs, and as a result some of the students became his employees.

Sandy Tigges, Director of the IDB Orientation Center says: “For years Monty put off coming into the Center. Then, once he was here, he put off leaving. Being here was life changing for Monty. He is so grateful for all the services he received from us that he is dedicated to giving back and helping others.”

Habben was also involved in the Department’s Pathfinders mentoring program, which served blind youth, but is now defunct. He promised one of the students that if he completed the program, Monty would take him sky diving.

Much to his wife’s chagrin, he kept that promise.

Working with others and sharing his experience and knowledge has fulfilled many of Habben’s goals, he said. “It has allowed me to be the face of the blind and to lead by example as to what blind people can do. But in addition to giving me the chance to give back, it has given me the pride and confidence that comes with being one’s own boss.” ♦



Monty Habben keeps the vending machines well stocked in the Hoover Building in the State Capitol Complex in Des Moines.

wanted to manage the vending operation at the Hoover Building in the State Capitol Complex. This was the primary facility where he trained, and, as he told customers at that time “I’m coming back.” And when that manager retired in 2009, “come back” he did.

Now, walking around the Hoover building, you can find Habben joking with staff

edge and ideas to other blind individuals. One example is Terry Brannen, who has taken over the Des Moines Post Office vending operation – Monty’s old post. “Monty may appear high strung, but he has a calming influence on me,” said Brannen. “His business experience is very helpful.”

Habben has mentored at least six Orientation Center

IDB loses seven to early retirement, gains new staff

By Courtney Townsend
Contributing Writer
Communications Intern

This spring, IDB lost seven long-time employees to the state's early retirement program.

Doug Cole, Library Associate, 39 years of service

Cole had numerous responsibilities, including managing the Braille and large-print collections. In his retirement Cole plans to volunteer for the IDB and in hospitals. "I really enjoy helping people and knowing that you're doing something to help others," he said.



Mike Hicklin, Plant Operations Manager, 39 years of service

Hicklin worked as a VR counselor before he took over managing the building housing IDB. As operations manager, if something went wrong with the building, Hicklin was there to fix it. He also worked with students to help them become employed in a maintenance job.



In his retirement he plans to stay active and spend time fishing. He said his time at the IDB was very meaningful. "There have been a lot of successes over the years and it's gratifying to be a part of it," he said.

Dawna Ray, Library Secretary, 34 years of service

Ray had many administrative tasks that kept her busy and kept the Library afloat. In retirement she plans to travel, take fun classes, spend time with friends and volunteer for the Library. Ray said, "I've really enjoyed working here with so many dedicated and creative people working towards our goal."



Terry Poldberg, Rehabilitation Teacher, 30 years of service

Poldberg spent his time teaching people in their homes the skills of blindness, speaking to the public and conducting community-based training workshops. He said working with clients and seeing their progress was most rewarding. In his retirement, Poldberg said he looks forward to volunteering and traveling.



The Department also said goodbye to Reader Adviser Cindy Valin, Technology Specialist Lisa Davis and Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor Bonnie Linquist.

Three new staff members joined the IDB team to serve clients in northern Iowa.

Jamie Corwin, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Corwin is based in

Decorah and will work to create new connections in the northeastern quadrant of the state. She is from Waukon, and previously worked as a program coordinator at a community rehabilitation center. The job, she said, is a learning opportunity and will give her a chance to utilize her master's degree in rehab counseling.



Randy Landgrebe, Rehabilitation Teacher

After a two-year stint in Colorado, Landgrebe returns to the Department to fill the needs of Independent Living clients in northwest Iowa. Landgrebe previously was the assistant director of the IDB library, so this new position is a career shift for the Iowa native. He said he is happy to return to the IDB.



Sandy Johnson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Johnson will be helping clients get jobs and retain jobs in northwestern Iowa. Johnson was a high school teacher for 30 years.



"Teaching was rewarding but this is more rewarding because you see results faster and meet really neat people," she said. ♦

By Linda Slayton

There are times in life when milestones should be called “inch” stones. In those times we change so rapidly that we aren’t even aware of those changes until we look back years later. That’s how attending the IDB Orientation Center was for me.



one of life’s best. I made real friends there—the kind you keep forever, even if we don’t talk often. The inkling of hope I arrived with became honest-to-goodness belief in what blind people can accomplish. I found legitimate answers for the question of how to define success based on myself.

I had fun in the Orientation Center. My class was composed of people with mis-

herder and stick. Who knew? People in Des Moines just weren’t quite ready for our motley crew of blind folks. I do believe the interaction was good for everyone.

The building in which we lived has a rich history, which we attempted to make richer. As an old YMCA building it has many areas to explore. We lived amid impromptu con-

tests in the gym, homemade ice cream fiascoes, amazing races and steps made for sitting and sharing confidences. One of the best parts of the program was being able to be together as a large group, secluded in small groups, or alone when we needed to be. All were important

parts of those infamous milestones for me.

I have a great sense of nostalgia about that time of my life—the kind of feeling that develops when we remember a time and place when we had a niche. It’s a remembrance of a pivotal change that made me a different person. Ironically, at a time in my life when I least knew what I would become or who I would turn out to be, I most learned who I was. That’s a milestone. ♦

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

“At a time when I least knew what I would become, I most learned who I was.”

Already in crisis, I arrived feeling like a cartoon character with that black cloud over my head. My feelings were a massive jumble of fear, depression, worry and just an inkling of hope.

Like most newbies, I threw myself into the skills. I focused on schedules and not hurting myself or anyone else as I attempted new feats of bravery. On my very first day a woman came into the rec room, head bleeding and bruised. She announced to the room at large, “I fell off a bridge.” Not what you want to hear on your first day. I later learned that she had stepped off of a high curb on one of the interstate overpasses while on travel.

I gradually came to accept the Center. Then I came to *like* the Center. Now I look back on that experience as

matched ages, ethnicities, personalities and beliefs. Yet, somehow we became a unified group in which everyone mattered.

Each day we faced practical jokes—everything from rubber-banded kitchen sprayers that gave us wet faces to the business class being kidnapped.

While not discounting what I learned in classes, I devotedly waited for the time when class was over and we went out on the town. It’s amazing how many uses the long cane has. Among those we discovered: fishing pole, sword, light saber, picker-upper, people

Talking Tech

w/ Curtis Chong

The iBill Currency Identifier

Although a blind person can successfully manage paper currency through the simple expedient of folding different bills in different ways, there are times when it would be handy to be able to identify a particular bill (for example a \$1 bill or a \$20 bill) without having to ask someone with sight for help. For example, it is easy for me to keep track of the bills in my wallet, but what happens if all of the bills fall out?

Wouldn't it be nice to have a piece of technology that could help me to know what bill I am holding in my hand?

In October, 2009, Orbit Research announced the iBill Currency Identifier. Priced at \$99, the iBill has turned out to be the smallest, fastest and least expensive currency identifier on the market; its nearest competitor is the Brytech Note Teller 2, which sells for \$300.

The iBill is very small, measuring 3 inches by 1.6 inches by .7 inches. It fits very comfortably in a shirt or coat pocket. It is powered by one triple-A battery, which lasts at least one year, (according to the manufacturer).

It recognizes all forms of U.S. currency--from a \$1 bill up to a \$100 bill, and it will provide information about the bill's denomination

verbally (saying one, five, or 20), through a pattern of audible beeps, or (for deaf-blind users) through a pattern of vibrations (e.g., three short vibrations for a \$5 bill).

I have found the iBill to be both fast and accurate. It typically identifies a bill's denomination in less than a second, and it has never failed to correctly identify the money I throw at it.



Impressive as the iBill is, there is one very important shortcoming: it takes a long time to buy one.

People who have ordered the iBill directly from the manufacturer have waited more than three months before receiving their product. Other companies who serve as dealers for the iBill typically receive shipments of the iBill in lots of 25.

Therefore, the demand for this marvelous technology being what it is, dealers have reported that they are sold out the minute they receive the product. Unfortunately, Orbit Research is simply not able to make enough iBills to meet the current level of demand.

We will not be carrying the iBill in our store, but more information on the iBill can be found by going to www.orbitresearch.com/ (888)-606-7248; or Patrick Fischer at www.accessibility.net/(800) 539-4357; or Earle Harrison at www.handytech.us/(651) 636-5184. ◆

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: Sept. 21, noon
Sandi Ryan, commission chair
Steve Hagemoser, member
Mike Hoenig, member

Governor's Office Liaison

Adam Gross
adam.gross@iowa.gov

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

August through October

Independent Living 30th anniversary

Locations throughout Iowa

Join the Iowa Department for the Blind in celebrating its Independent Living Program's 30th anniversary with parties around the state. All are welcome to attend and share in the success of this program. More information can be found on the back cover of this magazine or online at www.IDBonline.org

July 24

ADA 20th anniversary celebrations

Iowa City & Des Moines

The Iowa Department for the Blind is participating in two celebrations July 24 to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. IDB will speak at events with Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) in Iowa City and in Des Moines and also host a table. More information can be found at <http://www.ada-iowa.webs.com>

July 26

Informational meeting

Vinton Public Library, Lower Level

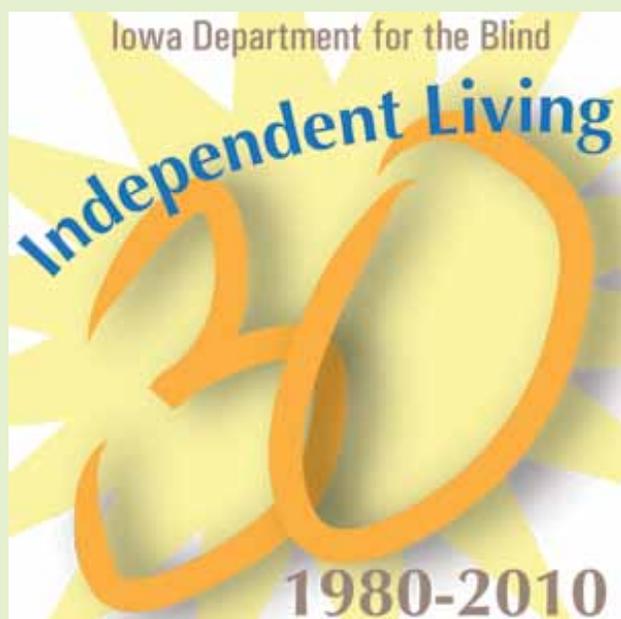
510 Second Ave.

Come to learn about services offered through the Iowa Department for the Blind and about efforts to create a vision loss support group in the Vinton area. More information is available by calling IDB at (800) 362-2587.

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

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

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND



Celebrate with us!

We are traveling to a community near you to celebrate our Independent Living program's 30 years of success. We hope to see you there!

Aug. 5 — Storm Lake

AEA Building, 824 Flindt Dr. Suites A, B & C

Aug. 19 — Grinnell

Drake Community Library, 930 Park St.

Sept. 1 — Cedar Rapids

First Lutheran Church, 1000 3rd Ave. SE

Sept. 2 — Waterloo

Grace Lutheran Church, 1024 W. 8th St.

Sept. 21 — Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs Public Library, 400 Willow

Oct. 7 — Indianola

Calvary Baptist Church, 2708 N. Jefferson Way

Each event will be broken into a morning and an afternoon session. The morning session from 10:30 to noon, will be for service providers, such as home health nurses, social workers, caregivers, etc. The afternoon session from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. will be for members of the public who would like to learn more about IL services or for those who have used services and want to celebrate the program.