

# The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



## **INSIDE:**

Confidence: The main ingredient

Iowan launches adaptive sports business

Tama woman takes her life back

Making the most out of your Library experience

The Accessible Technology race

Hidden resources for getting low-vision equipment

A student's journey from fear to confidence

## **CONFIDENCE IS THE CORNERSTONE**

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## |from the editor

We can take for granted our ability to take a quick jaunt to the grocery store for some milk or log on to a computer to check our email. But when one has experienced significant vision loss, these tasks can seem impossible at first.

We know that with the proper training in nonvisual techniques, a blind or visually impaired person can live as full a life as anyone else. Before those skills are mastered, however, a person must gain the confidence necessary to know that he or she can carry out those tasks with grace and assurance.

This issue explores many ways the Department for the Blind has helped Iowans discover their confidence in living with vision loss. From slicing a cantaloupe to crossing a busy intersection, the stories inside exhibit courage and self discovery in truly inspiring ways.

— **Shoshana Hebshi, Editor**

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On May 1, Peggy Elliott began her three-year term as a member of the Iowa Commission for the Blind. Appointed by Gov. Branstad, Elliott will take her seat at the next Commission meeting, June 21, along with her fellow commissioners Mike Hoenig and Steve Hagemoser. She replaces outgoing Commissioner Sandra Ryan, who served as Commission Chair for the past three years.

The Commission, which meets several times each year, is a policy-making body charged with oversight of the administration and activities of the Department.

As managers and supervisors, we don't often get the chance to witness firsthand the incremental changes in skills and confidence that our standard training creates, even over the course of a single week. This year, IDB managers took the opportunity to return to our roots by teaching 10 students during a weeklong Orientation on the Road.

Using the model created several years ago by front-line staff, we went to Honey Creek in southern Iowa, rented cabins and taught the basics. Students came from the far corners of the state, bringing varying levels of skill and confidence with them. Throughout the week, we

laughed, we talked, we learned from each other, and we all left with something we hadn't come with.

For me, the week reinforced my belief in our short-term as well as our long-term training programs. It gave me intimate glimpses into the journeys that people face when they're beginning to cope with vision loss. It reminded me how each person's path is unique, and yet they all needed to experience the challenges and their own successes to build enough confidence to move on to the next challenge.

I saw, too, the effects of role-modeling and the learning opportunities that come spontaneously not just teacher to student, but student to student. With a new network of friends created by this experience, students will be able to continue that peer-to-peer learning and sharing if they choose. They are also encouraged to come in for more extensive training in the Orientation Center. And at IDB, we will continue offering these short training experiences as well as the longer full-up Orientation Center training.

Sincerely,

*Karen Keninger*

# The Main Ingredient

## IDB programs build confidence first as skills are taught

**F**ifty-one years ago, a philosophy that it is OK to be blind was bound into the functions of the Iowa Department for the Blind (then the Commission for the Blind). That idea—that blindness does not have to limit a person’s capability in our society—has shaped the way every program and every client is treated each day. We know through practice that if given the proper training and tools, a person with significant vision loss can be as productive and successful and happy as any sighted person.

In the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center, our teachers are trained to allow a student to learn non-visual skills through a trial-and-error method called “structured discovery.” The students who have some vision wear sleep shades to help them focus on learning these new skills, such as cane travel, Braille, using a computer and home economics. This way, a student’s mind adjusts to utilize other senses that help them navigate a trip to the grocery store or send an email.

“There have been many students over the past 50 years who have come to the Orientation Center at a point in their lives when they felt they had no other options,” said Sandy Tigges, program administrator of the Center and a former Center student. “They must



Programs at the Iowa Department for the Blind provide opportunities for blind and visually impaired Iowans to learn the skills they need and build their confidence to live their lives to the fullest.

confront their vision loss, learn the skills necessary to go on with their lives and, most important, build

their confidence to go out into the world as a blind person.”

On average, students stay six to eight months in the Center. When they graduate they feel empowered and ready to get back to work, to their families and friends, and back to their lives as a whole.

While they are in the Orientation Center,

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## Hidden Resources: Find used low-vision equipment through statewide database

By Mike Lightfoot

University of Iowa Center  
for Disabilities and Development

Sometimes financing assistance to purchase assistive technology devices can come from unexpected sources. For example, if you've determined that a closed circuit television (CCTV) is what you need to support your reading interests, you may not have thought about acquiring a used one. At a price substantially less than the full retail cost of a new unit, a neighbor down the street or possibly a stranger across the way may just have one they no longer need and would be more than glad to see it put to better use than serving as a bulky paperweight in a spare bedroom.

But how do you find out about that "hidden resource?" That's where Iowa Compass' Used Equipment Referral Service can help.

Since 2004, this program has allowed individuals to buy, sell, swap or give away AT equipment through a statewide used equipment database. Through the free Used Equipment Referral

Service, or UERS, individuals can list their devices for 60 days or longer and get statewide exposure by calling Iowa Compass' toll-free number (800-779-2001) or by connecting with the UERS website at [www.iowacompass.org](http://www.iowacompass.org) and clicking on the "Used Equipment" link.

If you're someone looking for a used AT device, UERS can be contacted using the same method as the lister using the toll-free line



or the accessible website. As you contact Iowa Compass in search of a device, staff will provide you with information on all listings appropriate for your needs. You can then decide which listing to pursue, and go on to organize the sale, trade or donation with the person listing the device. Iowa Compass does not get directly involved in the negotiations between seller and buyer.

The Used Equipment Referral Service of Iowa Compass has significantly increased the number

## Tips for buying CCTVs (new and used)

- A larger monitor allows for greater magnification.
- A color CCTV will be more expensive, but isn't necessarily better. Many people see better with just a black and white contrast.
- Used equipment often runs about half the cost of new, depending upon the age of the machine.
- On any used equipment, try to get a year when the product was made (often it's on a label on the back of the machine), and get a manual if possible.
- If buying from a vendor, check out the duration of the warranty and what it covers (new and used equipment).
- If buying from a vendor, ask how repairs are handled. Some companies have representatives in the field that will come to your home. Others require you to ship the product (inconvenient and expensive).

of individuals with disabilities who have acquired AT devices.

If you have equipment to list, or are looking for used equipment check out [www.iowacompass.org](http://www.iowacompass.org) to participate in what may have been a "hidden resource" for assistive technology. ◆

# Sports enthusiast brings adaptive activities to disabled

By Tai Blas

Transition Counselor

**T**wenty-eight-year-old Mike Boone has loved sports his entire life. As a child, the Ankeny resident did not watch much TV, preferring the active outdoor lifestyle of his Colorado home. His father became blind as a result of Type I Diabetes when Boone was two years old, and Boone holds fond memories of the many things his father accomplished despite his vision loss.

“One of my earliest memories of my dad is kicking a beeping soccer ball around with him in our back yard” says Mike. “After he lost his sight he worked extremely hard to learn new skills so he could continue to provide for our family. He didn’t let his disability affect his role as Father.”

His father passed away in 1991, and since then, Boone has been committed to promoting sports and recreation among the physically disabled. Last year he launched a new venture, Adaptive Sports Iowa (ASI), focused on teaching physically disabled Iowans various sports and activities, such as rowing, running and beep ball—an adaptation of baseball.

Boone uses his extensive



Mike Boone, director of Adaptive Sports Iowa, with the author during a beep baseball clinic in Vinton.

athletic experiences as the foundation of his business. While pursuing his Sports Administration degree at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo., he had an opportunity to combine his passions of sports and serving the disabled, including working as a ski instructor for an adaptive sport program.

“The experience I had working for the ski program truly impacted me. As a result of that experience I understood the positive outcomes that sports and recreation opportunities can provide to the physically disabled population.”

During his studies for a master’s degree in public administration at Drake University in Des Moines, Boone worked as a graduate assistant managing the university’s sports and recreation facilities. Later, he worked as sports coordinator for a parks and recreation department in central Iowa.

When Boone decided to pursue ASI, he received support from various community leaders and the Iowa Sports Foundation and held its first event March 8 in Ames to discuss bringing sports to a population that has largely been ignored by the sporting community.

The Adaptive Sports Iowa Summit, as it was called, attracted nearly 80 individuals, organizations and groups from all over Iowa with a vested interest in seeing adaptive sports opportunities grow in Iowa.

“When we started planning the ASI Summit we were hoping for 30 people to attend. To have almost 80 in attendance was humbling to say the least,” Boone said. “It’s my belief that the program’s popularity represents Iowa’s desire and need for a program like ASI. No one can argue that the need exists.”

Since the Summit, ASI has developed a guide-running clinic to train blind runners and potential running guides, a beep baseball clinic to introduce blind individuals to beep baseball (and possibly form an Iowa team), an adaptive RAGBRAI team with team training events and Operation ASI—an adaptive sports initiative targeting veterans that will kick off in mid-July. Operation ASI

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# Tama woman battles vision loss and wins

By Barb Weigel  
IL Project Specialist

**N**orma Albertson has faced challenges before. Prior to losing considerable vision from macular degeneration she battled cancer three times.

But it was the vision loss that threw the 83-year-old for a loop, and through the simple act of cutting a cantaloupe, Albertson realized she would overcome this battle as well.

In 2000, Albertson, who lives in Tama, began to notice her vision was worsening. She got new glasses and had cataract surgery, but nothing seemed to help.

As her vision continued to deteriorate, she began giving up the activities she enjoyed, such as baking, cooking, cleaning and participating in church activities, and she fell into a depression.

Her vision was getting “worse and worse all the time,” she said, and her depression grew as a result. Her husband, Ervin, began managing the day-to-day activities his wife had always done, and Albertson found herself dependent upon him. She spent her days sitting in a recliner while Ervin took care of everything.

In August 2007, Albertson’s son approached her



Eighty-three-year-old Norma Albertson, who has macular degeneration, is confident in the kitchen after receiving training for several years from the Iowa Department for the Blind.

about receiving services through the Iowa Department for the Blind. She said she was surprised when her son came to her, but she was ready to seek the help.

Albertson met with Independent Living teacher Julie Bergeson later that month. Bergeson helped Albertson sign up for library services from the Iowa Library for the Blind to get Albertson back to enjoying books. She is now an avid Library user, and she also uses the Iowa Radio Reading Information Service (IRIS) to access the newspaper. “There are a lot of books I really enjoy and can’t wait to get back to,” she said. “I have plenty to do now.”

In November 2007, Albertson participated in a Community-Based Training (CBT) in Marshalltown put on by the

Independent Living program to provide hands-on training on skills for living with vision loss. She was one of three participants.

Albertson and Bergeson point to this event as the beginning of Albertson’s turnaround. Bergeson said: “Norma’s wheels were always turning. She was quiet but was always soaking in information.”

Shortly after this CBT, Albertson agreed to participate in a weeklong intensive training program for seniors held at the Des Moines office of the IDB. She said she was nervous about the idea and “worried about staying in a hotel. I knew I couldn’t see buttons on the elevator, and I worried whether I would find my room. But I didn’t have

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## Meet Liz and Lance, our newest Independent Living teachers

My name is Liz Soenen. I live in Goldfield with my husband, Greg. I have two sons, two daughters-in-law, three grandchildren, and we are in the process of adopting a nine-year-old girl. My undergraduate degree is from Iowa State University and master's degree from University of Northern Iowa. I love working as an independent living teacher in north-central Iowa; the clients and co-workers are the best.



My name is Lance Blas. I live in Des Moines and serve central Iowa. I have lived in your beautiful community for just about three years. I moved here from Salt Lake City, Utah, in May 2008. I have met so many wonderful people and everybody has made me feel right at home. I love meeting people, getting to know them and working with them to be as independent as they want to be!



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anything to worry about.”

The senior orientation was held in March 2008, and throughout the week she learned many things, including an introduction to Braille, using a computer non-visually, preparing meals in the kitchen and making crafts. Albertson said the thing she enjoyed the most was the group discussion. Each morning, the group of about 10 seniors and 10 staff discussed different aspects of vision loss. They talked about family reactions to their vision loss, the use of a white cane for safe and independent mobility in the community and one woman's story of learning she was going blind and her adjustment to that blindness.

Although Albertson didn't particularly care for working in the kitchen, one experience stands out. She was presented with the task of cutting up two cantaloupes, and said: “When they told me

I was to cut up two big cantaloupes with the blindfold on, I just about dropped over. I thought I could never do that — I'd cut myself and maybe even cut my fingers off! I remember I just cut each cantaloupe in a quarter.”

She remembers being told she was wasting a lot and, as a result, “I realized I had to cut those quarters again. That's when it started working and it wasn't too bad. I got done and I couldn't believe it. I had done it! I didn't even cut myself. I was just amazed and proud of myself! It wasn't until I got home though that I realized what had happened...that I had changed my whole life.”

Albertson recalls returning home and Ervin had errands to run. Their son was coming for the weekend, and they were going to make macaroni salad. Ervin left for his errands, and she sat down in her recliner, as this had become the routine. As she sat there, she recalled

her cantaloupe experience and thought: “What am I sitting here for? I can do that. I can get ready.’ So I got up, got the dishes out, and I got the macaroni cooking. It was just like something new had happened. All of a sudden, I got my confidence back. And I have been doing just about anything ever since.”

Bergeson said she will never forget the day she knew Albertson's outlook had changed. Albertson told her she no longer thought of her blindness all day, every day. Now it is part of her and not something holding her back.

“I know I can't see very well, but I now try harder,” Albertson said. “I can do just about anything.”

She no longer sits in her recliner as Ervin takes care of things around the house. She is a contributing partner in their life together. They share responsibilities and manage their day-to-day tasks. As Bergeson says, she is “back to being Norma.” ♦

## Billy Joe's proprietor blends fun and hard work

By Shoshana Hebshi  
Editor  
& Betty Hansen  
DeafBlind Specialist

**T**ucked away off a side street in West Des Moines, a blind man is fulfilling his dream. He has always had the drive and the intention, but pulling together a fully operational bar with a loyal patronage and welcoming atmosphere combines all his professional and social skills and challenges him as a businessman.

Al Bickell, who lost his vision from retinitis pigmentosa, owns and operates Billy Joe's Lounge on 25th Street. You will often find the 6-foot-5 Bickell behind the bar serving drinks to regulars or operating the karaoke console as customers test their pipes to popular tunes.

"I get to do a lot of the things I really enjoy doing, which is socializing with people, as part of my job. I also get to explore and participate in the whole music side of what I like doing," he said.

While Bickell, 36, said he has always been confident and motivated, the



Al Bickell owns and operates Billy Joe's Lounge in West Des Moines, using his management and creative skills to build a successful business.

time he spent going through IDB's Orientation Center and Vocational Rehabilitation program helped him gain confidence in his blindness.

"Without the IDB I wouldn't be doing this. I don't know what I'd be doing," he said.

"I became a lot more comfortable with my blindness and less worried about what other people think about it. I also learned to educate others about it."

While his blindness is part of him, Bickell does not let it define him. While many of his customers know he is

“Without the IDB I wouldn't be doing this. I became a lot more comfortable with my blindness.”

blind, he says they tell him they often forget that detail after a while.

"I think that's eventually the goal, that you hope to get to this point that you're not judged on a characteristic. Hopefully I do that every day," he said.

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Bickell bought Billy Joe's two years ago with resources he'd set aside for such a venture. The former bar—Billy Joe's Pitcher Show—had been family-owned and came with an adjoining movie theater. The owners had been the first to operate a karaoke bar in Des Moines, Bickell said, and he did not want that novelty to change. But the movie theater was not profitable, so he decided to transform it into an events center. It now serves as a wedding venue each Saturday.

"Al was determined," said VR Counselor Terry Osterhaus, who worked with Bickell. "He always had a desire to own his own bar or restaurant. He understands the business world, and has the confidence to succeed in it."

Bickell continues to add changes to the bar, and enjoys the creative aspect of this part of the job. He has integrated theme nights into the weekly routine.

Weekends are solely devoted to karaoke. Bickell is starting a new tradition this

summer by bringing in local bands Sunday afternoons for live band karaoke. Monday

He oversees the bar's bookkeeping, using accessible software JAWS and Kurzweil and a KNFB mobile reader to get the job done. He contracts with an accountant to ensure that everything is up to par. He employs 20 people, most of whom are part-time, including two managers and a caterer. It's a seven-day-a-week business that involves a lot of details that most people aren't even remotely aware of. But, Al loves it. He also loves finding a balance between



Al Bickell talks to a bar patron during his regular Special Needs Night.

nights are for Texas Hold'Em. Tuesdays are open mic singer/songwriter nights and steak nights. Wednesday nights the bar hosts an early karaoke, and Thursdays are reserved for the special needs crowd until 8 p.m. and then karaoke at 9.

"Things are definitely in flux, constantly, and it's always the big struggle to keep things fresh," Bickell said.

With a background in the food service industry, Bickell is accustomed to working with all types of people and working with numbers.

work and spending time with his 12-year-old son, Christopher, who enjoys coming to the bar for breakfast on the weekends.

"Normally, 90 percent of the time the people who are here are enjoying themselves and in a good mood, so you're around happy people all the time, which you don't get at most jobs," he said. "That's a big plus, to come into work and you have mostly happy people. If they're not happy when they come in they're usually happy when they leave." ♦

# All you care to read, and more!

## Getting the most out of your Library service

By **Beth Hirst**  
Assistant Library Director

**E**ver been to one of those all-you-can-eat buffets? Whether it was Chinese, down-home country cooking or an elegant Mother's Day brunch, you were free to choose whatever you wanted and to return to the bountiful spread as often as you liked.

Using the Library can be as enjoyable, varied and even "nutritious" as one of those hearty meals. The array of available media, titles, authors, programming, ordering methods and means of delivery allows the library patron to mold her service to her own tastes.

The patron (let's call her Mrs. Reid) has taken control of her library experience in a number of ways. Choosing her own books and finding the most convenient way to order them has reinforced her independence and enhanced her reading satisfaction.

First, Mrs. Reid has made a point of getting to know her reader advisor, Susie Stageberg. They talk about authors and subject areas Mrs. Reid enjoys, and Susie is able to suggest other titles of interest. When Mrs. Reid hears a book recommended on the radio or by a friend, she asks Susie if it is available. She goes through the *Talking Book Topics* when it arrives, and she can call in her choices, mail the order form, email a list, or come in to the Library for immediate service.

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### How do I order my books?

- Online Catalog
- Download from BARD
- Over the phone
- Through the mail
- In person

## Meet Susie and Rachel: Your Reader Advisors

**Susie Stageberg**  
*Serving Library patrons with last names (L-Z)*



- **Full Name:** Susan E. Stageberg, but everybody calls me Susie unless they are annoyed with me.
- **Born:** Philadelphia, Penn.
- **Lived in Des Moines area:** 23 years.
- **Has worked for ILBPH:** For 10 years, 7 of those in the Library.
- **Favorite Book(s)/Author(s):** *To Kill A Mockingbird* or *Gone with the Wind*—hard to choose. Favorite author is Diana Gabaldon, who wrote a wonderful series

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**Rachel Bussan**  
*Serving Library patrons with last names (A-K)*



- **Full Name:** Rachel Marie Bussan
- **Born:** Iowa City, Ia.
- **Lived in Des Moines:** 2 years.
- **Has worked for ILBPH:** 9 months.
- **Favorite Book(s)/Author(s):** My favorite childhood book was *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery. Anne, the heroine, was a clever girl who never gave up

| Continued on Page 12 |

of historical fiction/time travel romances called “Outlander.” I love the way historical fiction brings the names and dates of history to life.

- **Favorite part of being a Reader Advisor:** Every day I talk to somebody whose life is better, richer, because of the work we do. I get a kick out of connecting somebody with a “new favorite” author or series.
- **Loves Libraries because:** The Library is a place where you can be entertained, made to think, travel without leaving your chair.
- **Words to Live By:** To paraphrase Eleanor Roosevelt, “No one can make you feel inferior without your permission.”

and found beauty in everyday life. I love all kinds of books, from non-fiction, such as *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* by J. K. Rowling, to Japanese graphic novels such as *Otomen* by Aya Kanno.

- **Loves Libraries because:** They provide me with an endless supply of free books and answer my questions, no matter how hard or how strange they may be.
- **Words to live by:** “The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don’t want it badly enough.”  
—Randy Pausch: *The Last Lecture*

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If Susie is busy with another patron, Mrs. Reid can speak to Rachel Bussan, the other reader advisor.

Sometimes Mrs. Reid wants to browse the collection when the Library is closed. She gets on her computer and looks up The Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC): [opacnew.blind.state.ia.us/opacnew](http://opacnew.blind.state.ia.us/opacnew), which allows her to search for books by title, author, subject, or narrator. She can opt to have books sent to her now or later.

Another way Mrs. Reid exercises her independence is by using BARD, the Braille and Audio Reading Download. Having followed a simple sign-up procedure and obtained a personal digital cartridge and cable, she can choose

from more than 20,000 titles in the National Library Service (NLS) digital download collection. Depending on the speed of her Internet connection, the downloads only take a few minutes. She can keep her own “virtual library” on her computer and transfer titles to her cartridge as she wants to read them.

Mrs. Reid takes advantage of other Library services as well. If she has print material she needs in an alternative format, the Production Unit can record or Braille it for her. She enjoys descriptive videos, and she takes part in a book discussion group that meets bimonthly via telephone conference call. Mrs. Reid receives several locally produced recorded magazines and looks forward to the day (coming soon!) when they

will be circulated on digital cartridges.

Every patron can tailor his service to suit his needs, just as our fictitious Mrs. Reid has done. Library staff encourage each borrower to find the level of independence with which she is most comfortable.

Patrons who enjoy surprises and like a variety of reading material can use the Profile system. Subject areas and favorite authors are noted in the patron’s file, and the computer will send books automatically from those categories.

Get to know the Library staff and the assortment of services offered. Whether you fill your plate with mystery, romance, current events or travel guides, you will find the fare substantial and the discourse stimulating. And you can always come back for more! ♦

# How fortunate we are!

## Annual volunteer workshop highlights important work

In April we honored our Library volunteers, who provide their time to produce audio and Braille books to our Library users, as well as fix talking book machines and perform other helpful tasks that keep the Library running smoothly. Several of our volunteers were given awards during our annual Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop April 8.

Angela Graham, a Braillist from Clive, received the Elizabeth Perowsky Award for her 35 years of volunteer service to the Library. She started when her son was in preschool and continued ever since. Graham produces many of the Braille textbooks for the Instructional Materials Center, which provides school materials to youth around the state.



Angela  
Graham



Charlotte  
Zeman

Charlotte Zeman, Tim Gracey and The Pioneers received the Florence Grannis Award, named after the Library's first librarian.

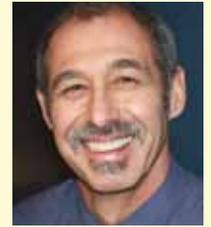
Zeman, a music Braillist from Cedar Rapids, has been volunteering for the Library for 15 years. Music Braillists are a rarity; there are about 50 in the United States. Zeman produces Braille music for Library users around the state, many of whom are students in school bands. She has completed 38 pieces for the 2010/11 school year.

Tim Gracey, an audio book narrator from Des Moines, has been a volunteer for four years. He's a retired vocational rehabilitation supervisor. He has completed 19 projects during his time as a volunteer and is faithful about coming in on a regular basis.

The Pioneers — a group of Des Moines volunteers who fix talking book players — also received a Grannis Award. The seven-member group has a combined 83 years of volunteer service to the Library. As the Library transitions to the digital talking book player, the Pioneers will also move into the digital age. ♦

## From the Librarian

*"The secret of happiness is freedom. The secret of freedom is courage."* —  
Thucydides



I hope everyone's appetites have been sated by the abundant smorgasbord of Library articles in this issue! The nutritive value of reading books is readily evident; it's an activity capable of increasing one's independence. I encourage you to make the effort this week to exercise your freedom—if this isn't already a part of your diet—by choosing some of your own books.

You have "met" our Reader Advisors in this issue. Please call Susie or Rachel to tell them what you want to read. If it's a subject area, ask them to provide you a diverse list to choose from, and you can pick out the exact book you need.

Also, don't be afraid to search our online catalog (OPAC) for books. And if you hunger for even more books, Susie or Rachel can give you information about downloading NLS books from BARD.

That too is freedom, and ultimately that is what we want for you. Every time you decide what you want to read you increase your freedom, your independence. Once you have a taste of this freedom you will surely be coming back for a second, third and many more helpings.

*Sincerely,*  
*Randy Landgrebe*

# BOOKLIST

This booklist features new locally recorded books, with a special option for readers who use IDB's website. Go to [www.idbonline.org/library/audiobooks](http://www.idbonline.org/library/audiobooks) to hear audio annotations and excerpts from the books. If you start to listen and find you are hooked, call or write your reader advisor with your order.

## DB015342

***Seeing in Darkness: A True Story of Friendship and Courage* by Ann Wade. Narrated by Rick Stageman.**

A fateful event on an April night in 1984 tested the character of three men. A collision of motorcycle and van at 70 miles an hour left friend Ron with a badly fractured leg, Stan blind, and brother Steve with an unexpected responsibility. 2010.

## DB015363

***I Love It, I Love It, I Love It! (65 Years of Fun & Games)*, by Jim Zabel with Rich Wolfe. Narrated by Harlan Watson.**

Autobiography of the man who was the voice of University of Iowa football and basketball broadcasts for over 60 years. 2010.

## DB015310

***Montana Rose* by Mary Connealy. Narrated by Mary Richards.**

Montana Territory, 1875. Cassie Griffin's husband dies, leaving Cassie no choice but to choose a new husband the same day she buries her first. Cassie reluctantly agrees to marry Red Dawson, who offers to marry her only to save her from a scoundrel who's been stalking her for months. Cassie soon realizes how little she knows about life. In turn, Red realizes how brutalized his wife was by her first husband. First book in the Montana Marriages trilogy. Followed by "The Husband Tree." 2009.

## DB015345

***May I Walk You Home? (Courage and Comfort for Caregivers of the Very Ill)*, by Joyce Hutchinson & Joyce Rupp. Narrated by Melissa Chapman.**

Walking a companion home is an old-fashioned custom, often lost in our modern era. But there was a time when walking someone home was a way of offering protection and guidance. The authors capture the spirit of that personal companionship for those who accompany the dying on their final journey. 1999.

## DB015145

***Inside, Outside: A Retiree's Peace Corps Journal from South Africa*, by Sydney**

**Kling. Narrated by Sue Smith.**

The journal of a woman who, shortly after retirement at the age of 67, decides to apply to the Peace Corps. As she begins to document her thoughts in a journal, Sydney Kling details not only her new and baffling daily experiences as a Peace Corps applicant, but also the roller coaster of emotions she finds herself on, whether dealing with the application process or contemplating the reality of leaving home and family for two years in a foreign country. 2007.

## DB015311

***Once in Every Life* by Kristin Hannah. Narrated by Anita Sundin.**

Tess Gregory, a successful deaf research scientist, is killed before her time. She gets a second chance — in 1873. She's now Amaryllis Rafferty, wife and mother of three, and she can hear. Shocked and disoriented by her new surroundings, she is drawn into the savage heartache burdening the family, especially her husband, Jack, a man who fears himself capable of anything. 1993. ◆

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

## A student's journey from fear to confidence

**M**y name is Hilary Mallet. I am currently a student in the Iowa Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center in Des Moines, Iowa. Five years ago I would never have imagined I would be participating in this program. At that time I did not know I had any problems with my vision, nor had I ever been to Iowa.

I am from the Silicon Valley area of California. In 2007 I was an accountant for a construction company. I began making mistakes in my work and could not understand why. Then, during a routine eye exam in December 2007, I learned I have keratoconus (a condition that affects the shape of the retina and causes vision loss).

The company I worked for tried to accommodate me. They got a bigger monitor for my computer. They allowed me to work from home when I was no longer able to drive. But I had no alternative techniques and no concept of how to function non-visually. Ultimately I lost my job and moved in with my family.

I decided I wanted to go back to school to become a teacher. When I checked into it, the school said they could set me up with a CCTV and put things in large print, but before doing that they suggested I talk with a rehabilitation counselor for the blind. I did and was eventually scheduled to begin training in the Orientation Center in Albany, Calif.

Then I met Robert. He's a native of Iowa



Hilary Mallet came from California to the Orientation Center in Iowa where she has built confidence and independence in living with vision loss.

and has no desire to move to California or anywhere else. So, I moved to Iowa in May 2010 to be with him. His mother said she had a good friend she'd like me to meet and introduced me to Linda Ryerson, an alumna of the Iowa Department for the Blind's Orientation Center. Linda talked with me a long time and gave me a lot of good information about Orientation Centers in general.

One day, Robert's son's class had a presentation from IDB, and he brought home one of the Braille cards. Robert suggested I check into the program.

I contacted the Department and was sent some information. Not long after I was contacted by Rosie Thierer, a rehabilitation counselor with the Department. She and I met a few times and I let her know I was interested in the training program so she

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## Boosting confidence in the wood shop

Orientation Center students spend time in our wood shop building a project of their choice. In the process, they learn that working with power tools without using vision builds self confidence. Here are two students' examples.



### **Brad Bergan, 23**

Hometown: Mason City

Project: Entertainment Center

What did you learn from making this project?: "How to use the tools and make a project."



### **Lisa Seley, 50**

Hometown: Des Moines

Project: Hope chest for daughter

What did you learn from making this project?: "I increased my confidence in learning this new skill."

— Kelsey Anderson

## In Memory



James K. Crawford, a long-time staff member of IDB and focus of the Orientation

section of the winter 2011 *White Cane*, passed away peacefully on April 19. He was dearly loved and respected and will be greatly missed. Good bye Jim. We'll always remember "It's a beautiful day."

Read the interview with Crawford at [www.IDBonline.org/publications/white-cane-magazine-winter-2011/departments#Jim\\_and\\_Jim](http://www.IDBonline.org/publications/white-cane-magazine-winter-2011/departments#Jim_and_Jim)

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arranged for me to tour.

My tour guide, Jim Lohoff, couldn't have been more encouraging or enthusiastic. That clinched it. I knew I wanted to be here.

It's funny, I never was nervous about coming to Des Moines. I was a bit nervous about what I'd specifically be doing in my training, but I never had second thoughts about coming. I knew I was here to make my life better.

My experiences in the Center have fully supported my expectations. When I first

came I worried about crossing streets. Now I don't fear street crossings; my concern is focused on getting to my destination. Believe it or not, I'd never taken a city bus before in my life. Now it's no big deal.

Since I started here in January, I'm learning every day and I know I will continue to learn and grow throughout my training. I've landed in the best spot I possibly could. ♦

*Read more from Hilary Mallet on the Cane Tracks blog at <http://idbcomm.wordpress.com>*

## Alumni give back to Orientation Center

From time to time alumni express the desire to "give something back" for what the Center has meant to them. When staff had a week of meetings to attend in March we realized here was the perfect opportunity for alumni to give back Ken Murphy, a retired teacher from Cedar Falls, took over home ec. Jim Goff from Washington, Iowa, taught travel. Abe Sigler from Nevada, took computer class and Dave Barry, from IDB's maintenance staff, stepped in for industrial arts.

Two college students graciously worked their calendars around to help out. Alicia Seedorff (Grand View) returned to teach Braille and Gloria Graves (Drake) covered computers. A big thanks to you all; your help was greatly appreciated. ♦

# Program is foundation for confidence and success

By Tai Blas

Transition Counselor

At age 14 Kaylee Hill was an anxious teen, shy in many situations because of her vision loss. She did not feel comfortable asking for help, accepting assistance or answering questions about her blindness.

In 2004, Hill began participating in IDB Transition summer programs, where she learned important living skills and connected with other teens with vision loss, which helped develop her social skills.

Now, at age 21, Hill assists customers at Wal-Mart in her hometown of Council Bluffs. She works 30 to 40 hours a week, and she credits the Transition program with helping her develop the confidence she needs to perform her job duties.

“I know for a fact that if I had gotten a job before the Transition program I wouldn’t have been comfortable approaching customers to assist them. I would have been too shy,” she said.

Before she began participating in Transition, Hill was not only uncomfortable helping others, but was also uncomfortable receiving help from others. “If someone asked me if I needed assistance or questioned me



Kaylee Hill during various summer Transition programs that helped build her confidence and drive her toward success as an adult.

about my blindness, I would have felt like crawling in a hole and crying. Now, I am able to explain my blindness. I have no problem approaching customers who look like they need assistance.”

Initially, Hill only worked in the electronics department at Wal-Mart. At her first review, Hill’s supervisor asked her to double check her work because she sometimes picked up the wrong product. She had difficulty reading the UPC codes and product names because they were often very small. The IDB helped Hill purchase a Ruby handheld magnifier

and handheld CCTV.

Hill’s job duties have since expanded to cover the electronics, photo and cell phone departments. With the Ruby and CCTV she reads through cell phone contracts with customers to make sure they understand the terms. Her managers are impressed with her use of this technology and have increased her hours. They are hoping to hire her on full time in the near future.

Hill is enjoying her work and the financial independence it provides. She plans to move into her own apartment in September. ◆

## Former mechanic finds success in food service biz

By Roger Erpelding  
BEP Program Administrator

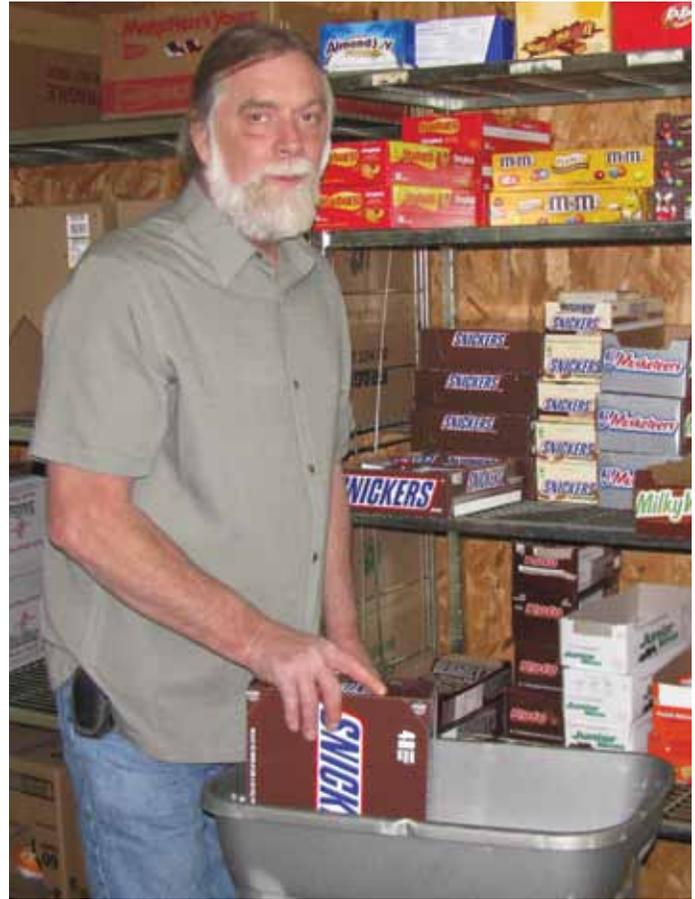
“I love a business challenge. I like being my own boss and making money.” These were the thoughts that brought Jon Buffington to the Business Enterprises Program in 2000 and that in the years since have made him a successful and profitable manager.

Buffington, 58, currently manages a large vending operation in the Sioux City area. In Sioux City itself, his locations include the Woodbury County Court House, the Trospers-Hoyt Woodbury County Administrative Office Building, the Law Enforcement Center, the Sioux City Convention Center, Western Hills Area Education Agency, the main post office, the United States Court House, the Mail Processing Center postal annex, and the Ramada City Center Motel. In Sergeant Bluff his locations include two rest area roadside locations, and STREAM, which is a large call center. There are two additional roadside locations near Onawa.

Buffington grew up on a farm in Kossuth County, and his years of watching his parents run their farm gave him a business foundation. After graduating from high

school, Buffington studied marine mechanics at Iowa Lakes Community College; which involved primarily small engine repair. This was followed by six years of work in the auto mechanics field, where he was eventually promoted to a service manager. Two years of construction employment, five years with K-Mart in the auto mechanics section, and two years as an auto mechanic in Bancroft were next on the list.

Buffington is blind due to Stargardt’s disease, a form of macular degeneration. By 1999, at age 46, his vision loss was interfering with his ability to perform in his chosen vocation. So in 1999, Buffington entered the Adult Orientation Center at the Iowa Department for the Blind. “I had no idea of



Jon Buffington has run a successful vending operation in the Sioux City area for more than 10 years.

what I was going to do with my life,” he stated. “I knew that I wanted to be self-employed, and thought about selling used cars.”

While attending the Center, Buffington and his fellow students were on a mission to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Part of this journey was to solicit staff for donations or to be walkers in an upcoming “Walk for the Cure” event. While walking around the building, Buffington encountered the staff

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of the Business Enterprises Program. After he collected his pledges and left, Mark West, B.E.P. counselor, came to me and said “That student belongs in B.E.P. Do you know him?” I didn’t, but had just learned his name, and that is all it took.

Buffington began B.E.P. training in June 2000 under three leading managers: Joseph Van Lent, Kevin Bodtke and Randy Criswell. “The training was difficult,” Buffington told me; but it was obviously effective, as he has successfully managed facilities in our program since May 2001.

Buffington’s first assignment was in Cedar Rapids, where he took charge of the main post office and several of its satellites. It was a small business, but perfect for Buffington to show his knowledge and acumen.

In April 2003, the Sioux City facility was up for bid, as its current manager was moving to a larger facility in Des Moines. “I wanted to move and I wanted more,” were his motivations to ask for a transfer and promotion. He was the successful candidate and moved to Sioux City in May.

In the last eight years, many of the locations listed above were added. “Having the Department establish three more roadside locations was my idea, and it has

worked. STREAM called me. The motel also called me.” Western Hills A.E.A. was part of a department effort to place vending at several of

“It was the best choice I’ve made in my life.”

these locations throughout the state. Mr. West, in doing some site surveys, found that the Convention Center needed vending.

Buffington also inherited another business aspect from the previous managers—the jail commissary. Each week, a jail staffer calls Buffington with orders from each prisoner; these items are selected from a list provided by Buffington. After each order is filled and sorted, the stock is returned to the jail by noon on Wednesday. Each person is allowed up to \$10 in product per week. After staff checks the order for accuracy, he is issued a check for the merchandise.

In April 2009, the cafeteria in the courthouse was closed. The customer base had become so small that it was no longer profitable. There was already vending in the building operated by Buffington in conjunction with the cafeteria, so the

vending machines remained.

Mr. Buffington has four employees, two of which are part time. One of the employees is blind. Six of his operations are 24/7 in nature, so he and staff can be found working almost any day.

On a recent Monday, Buffington discussed his typical day. The day begins with him organizing his lists of products needed that he has accumulated during the previous week; then he calls his wholesalers for delivery. Products are loaded and delivered to many of his locations later in the morning. While at the location, Buffington and his staff fill machines, test them for problems, check for refunds, and collect money. “Whatever’s thrown at me, I deal with it,” is how his schedule runs.

Buffington is pleased with the B.E.P. program. “It was the best choice I’ve made in my life. It can be seasonal like farming, and the winter can be tough. But you have to plan for this. It is all about money management.”

And the good news is that his customers concur.

“Jon is a wonderful guy and we enjoy doing business with him,” according to Dawn Braddy, General Manager, Ramada City Center. “He is always there if something is wrong, and responds to suggestions. He makes my guests happy.” ♦

## Talking Tech w/ Curtis Chong

### Technology for the Blind: Sometimes we win, sometimes we don't

When I think about nonvisual access technology, I am struck by what appears to be a never-ending race concerning how this technology enables those of us who are blind or visually impaired to live and work on a par with our sighted friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Oftentimes, technology enables us to stay ahead of the game—that is, it provides us with a clear advantage that people with “normal” vision do not possess. Other times, because of the way a particular technology is used, we are left slightly behind with a clear disadvantage that could result in the loss of employment.

Consider the personal information management systems with refreshable Braille that have been designed for nonvisual use, such as the BrailleNote, Braille Sense or PAC Mate. These devices allow a person to store a lot of information that can be quickly retrieved when needed. Someone who has mastered these devices can find a name, address or phone number in short order, and in a crowd where everyone else has only pencils and notebooks, this confers a definite advantage.

When personal digital assistants (PDAs), Blackberries and/or smartphones were far less common, and blind users (out of necessity) carried their personal information management systems around with them most of the time, the advantages (to the blind person) were more significant. However, in today's world, where just about everyone carries a cell phone that can surf the Web, a personal information man-

agement system for the blind does not confer the benefits it once did. Today, a person who is blind is better off using a nonvisually-accessible smartphone—an item that is not as easy to find as we might wish.

The development of the personal computer in the early 1980s provided a platform on which blind or visually impaired people could run programs that would either enlarge displayed information or speak the contents shown on the video monitor.

Before computers were widely used in the office, the blind employee who had mastered the complexities these early computers had a clear advantage. While his/her coworkers found word processing and e-mail to be intimidating, the blind person could communicate efficiently and quickly. Now, computers are ubiquitous, and everybody in the work-

place—including the blind employee—is expected to be proficient. Also, the blind employee is assumed to be able to operate the same proprietary in-house software as his/her peers. In cases where such software is compatible with access technology used by the blind, everybody works on a level playing field.

However, if it should turn out that the proprietary software doesn't work with the access technology, then chances are that the blind person will not be regarded as competitive and will not be hired.

The bottom line, therefore, is that it is not always the case that a technological approach or solution will provide a clear advantage to someone who is blind or visually impaired. Rather, in looking at the impact that technology has had upon the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired, it is important to keep in mind the context in which the technology is going to be used. ♦

Technology enables us to stay ahead of the game. Other times, we are left slightly behind.

By Linda Slayton

Unfortunately human characteristics are never 100 percent. No one is totally charming or obnoxious. Nor is anyone totally confident. Confidence is a positive characteristic; something we strive to achieve. Some people seem born with it and some never seem to have enough. When we have confidence, we project confidence. Just be careful that confidence is not misplaced. Believing you can walk through quicksand isn't the same as doing it.



The question is, then, how do we build confidence? For me, confidence came most easily in the areas in which I felt comfortable, such as writing. My confidence started because writing felt natural to me. Putting words together to express thoughts was one thing I immediately liked to do. It was the same with cooking.

Confidence starts in our comfort zones. It's much harder to build confidence in areas in which we are unfamiliar.

My favorite quote regard-

ing confidence comes from Thomas Edison. He said, "I have not failed 10,000 times. I have successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work." Confidence is not about doing things and having success so much as it is a mind set. It's the ability to wrap your mind around a belief in yourself. It's an inner

“Confidence is not about doing things and having success so much as it is a mind set. It's the ability to wrap your mind around a belief in yourself.”

faith that no matter what the situation, you will find a way through and come out better for it. It's putting wisdom and knowledge together to walk around the quicksand instead of through it. Confidence focuses on the outcome, not the means.

The Orientation Center at the Department for the Blind is a great example of what I'm talking about. It's a place where we learn to be-

lieve that we can do things as blind people. The classes and skills are tools to help us realize that we can be successful and productive. I finished only two classes in the Center. It didn't matter because I left the Center with confidence. I had that inner belief that I was going to be just fine as a blind person. That has never left me.

Few days go by when I don't encounter a situation where my confidence wanes. Even then, the thing I most notice is not my lack of confidence, but that my overall confidence has grown by leaps and bounds as years have passed. When our beliefs are strong they are hard to knock down. In closing, there is one last quote I'd

like to share with you regarding the building of confidence. In those times when I'm just not quite there yet, when confidence eludes me, I rely on this old stand-by, "Fake it 'til you make it." It works every time. ♦

*Linda Slayton is a freelance writer living in Des Moines. She can be reached by email at [lcslayton@yahoo.com](mailto:lcslayton@yahoo.com)*

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will offer continuous programming opportunities in bocchia, cycling, golf and target shooting.

ASI is also planning

various adaptive sports expos to provide demonstrations of adaptive sport equipment for interested individuals.

For more information on

*Adaptive Sports Iowa, visit its website at [www.adaptivesportsiowa.org](http://www.adaptivesportsiowa.org) or call (888) 777-8881 ext: 115* ♦

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they are working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to set career goals. This way, when they leave the Center, they will have a plan in place and be ready to tackle the next phase of training or the job market itself.

The VR counselors work with clients throughout the state as well, helping them to keep the jobs they have or, when that doesn't work, train for and find new jobs. Counselors also work with employers to develop jobs suitable for certain clients.

In one case, IDB Employment Specialist Brenda Criswell worked with a woman in the Quad Cities who loved animals and wanted to work in the veterinary industry. Her passion for animals was clear, and Criswell was able to help her get a job working for a busy veterinary practice in the heart of Davenport. "Joseli's confidence has increased ten-fold in working with Dr. Seng," said Criswell. "He has raised the bar for her by giving her more responsibilities regarding the provision of quality care for the animals. His belief in her and her drive for success is a winning combination!"

When a person with vision loss comes to the Department for assistance but does not want to seek employment, they are referred to the Independent Living program. Independent Living teachers visit lowans in their homes and teach a variety of skills that enhance independence. The clients receive training in mobility using the long

white cane, so they can safely and efficiently move around their homes and neighborhoods. "Being able to go where you want when you want is a great achievement and significantly increases a person's confidence and independence," said Becky Criswell, IL program administrator.

Teachers also teach simple modifications in the kitchen so a client can do as much cooking as he or she wishes. Some clients also want to learn Braille to be able to read, take notes, label items around the house and keep track

of messages and appointments. Others want to learn non-visual computer skills or how to continue their crafts despite their vision loss.

"Many times, when a person comes to us, they have given up all hope of living independently, and sometimes they have already moved into assisted living," Criswell said. "But we help them understand that they can still do most of the things they want to do and can still live on their own."

"The Department's mission and philosophy have not wavered in more than 50 years," said IDB Director Karen Keninger. "It continues to be our staff's no. 1 focus to help blind and visually impaired lowans—no matter what stage of vision loss and no matter the circumstance—get beyond their sight impediments and get back to work, back to their families, back to their lives. We believe that with the training and other successful activities we provide, a person can gain the confidence to do the things they want to do." ♦

The Department's mission and philosophy have not wavered in more than 50 years.

## 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: June 21 at noon  
Peggy Elliott, member  
Steve Hagemoser, member  
Mike Hoenig, member

## Mission:

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

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

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

## June 15 & 16

### Trainings on Library services

#### Atlantic, Harlan, Clarinda & Shenandoah

IDB staff will be visiting four communities in southwest Iowa to teach residents about getting the most out of services from the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. See the back cover of this issue for more information on these community events.

## July 13

### Vision Loss Resource Fair

#### Iowa City Senior Center, 28 S. Linn St.

Independent Living staff members will be presenting assistive aids and devices as well as methods for living with vision loss. The event is free and open to the public. 2 to 4 p.m.

## June 26-July 1 & July 25-28

### Youth Transition Summer Camps

#### Various Locations in Iowa

Youth from around Iowa who have significant vision loss will participate in a series of summer camps that will provide opportunities for them to learn important life and social skills while having a great time. The programs require advance registration. To learn more, call (800) 362-2587 (within Iowa) or (515) 281-1333.

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

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

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

# Want more from your Library? Come to a training in southwest Iowa in June!

The workshop will help you understand the many ways the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped can enrich your life.

**Atlantic • June 15**  
1 to 3:30 p.m.  
Heritage House  
1200 Brookridge Circle

**Clarinda • June 16**  
9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
IWCC Depot  
923 E. Washington St.

**Harlan • June 15**  
1 to 3:30 p.m.  
Harlan Library  
718 Court St.

**Shenandoah • June 16**  
9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Bricker Room  
400 W. Sheridan Ave.

Learn about:

- Applying and accessing Library services
- What you get when you sign up for services
- Obtaining and operating a digital talking book player
- Using the online library catalog
- Downloading digital books from the web

If you wish to attend any of these sessions, please call toll free (800) 362-2587 or (515) 281-1333  
or email us at [information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us)