

# The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



## **INSIDE:**

A New Perspective

The Secret  
Ingredient

IDB & DMU  
Partnership

Transition Summer  
Programs

Business Ups &  
Downs

Non-Visual Access  
Technology  
Advancements

Role of Numbers in  
Your Life

# NUMBERS

Volume III, Issue 2 • Spring 2012

## news|features

- 4 | A New Perspective  
Learn how a former client has become a 'success'
- 9 | The Secret Ingredient  
Discover how successful VR placements happen
- 15 | DMU Partnership Program  
IDB and DMU work together to prepare future doctors
- 20 | Talking Tech w/ Curtis Chong  
Nonvisual access technology accomplishments for 2011
- 21 | Blind Perspective  
How do numbers affect your everyday life?

## |departments

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



## |from the editor

Some may find numbers to be an impersonal form of measurement. However, with the correct interpretation they can provide you with a wealth of knowledge about an individual or organization. The following pages demonstrate how numbers affect every aspect of IDB.

2011 was a year of immense growth for IDB staff and clients. It was a year of challenges and accomplishments, beginnings and endings. Inside you'll discover how IDB continues to raise the bar for expectations. And you'll find that not only are those expectations met, but they're re-defined in the process.

This issue of *The White Cane* demonstrates how IDB is constantly evolving. A new year brings new beginnings and obstacles--ones IDB is prepared to welcome and overcome.

— Meredith Ferguson, Editor

Letters & comments can be e-mailed to:  
idbcomm@blind.state.ia.us

**Editor:** Meredith Ferguson. **Contributing Editors:** Karen Keninger, Beth Hirst, Linda Trogdon.

**Contributing Writers:** Curtis Chong, Roger Erpelding, Betty Hansen, Julie Aufdenkamp, Beth Hirst, Randy Landgrebe, Linda Slayton, Rebecca Swainey, Barb Weigel and Theresa Philpott.

contact us |

**Main Office:**

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

**Cedar Rapids Office:**

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

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

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

Printed with soy ink.



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

Over the past three years it has been my privilege to serve as Director of IDB. During that time, IDB staff have accomplished many exciting things that have moved IDB forward. The Library fully converted to digital talking books and is nearly finished converting the magazine program as well. The Orientation Center is full. Transition services have been refined and focused on employment.

More diverse technologies such as Apple products have been introduced into the training process. Internal changes in Field, driven by staff input, have smoothed out coverage and service delivery. We have increased the number and effectiveness of community-based trainings and re-established Orientation on the Road in a new form.

We have helped people get all manner of jobs, in spite of the down economy, and have weathered budget cuts gracefully. Our building is now listed on the National Registry. Our oral history project and traveling exhibit along with our enhanced public relations schedule and redesigned website have furthered our goals toward public education and information as well as increased our referral rate significantly. The Business Enterprises Program is poised to reinvent itself. The last phase of our major

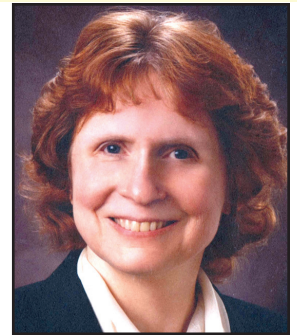
remodeling project will be completed this summer with the replacement of 50-year-old air handlers. We have worked with public and private partners to enhance access to information, broaden the scope of available services, and address concerns and roadblocks to independence.

All this, and more, is the result of the creativity, ingenuity, dedication and hard work of IDB staff and the community that supports our work.

Our work is not done, however. In order to achieve the goal of full equality and opportunity for blind Iowans, a strong and vibrant partnership between the Department and its constituents must remain in place and flourish. Services and approaches to services must continue to evolve as we learn more, and as the world changes in the years to come.

And we as blind Iowans, we as IDB staff, and we as Americans must maintain and continually spread the positive philosophy of blindness on which this agency is based. We must never cease to share, to spread, and to live these beliefs--that it's OK to be blind

| *Continued on Page 4* |





| Continued from Page 3 |

and that with the proper training and opportunity, blind Iowans can and should take their places as equals and first-class citizens with their sighted peers, embracing the challenges, responsibilities and rewards of full participatory citizenship

in Iowa and in America.

In March I will be leaving to pursue other challenges as Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in Washington, D.C. I hope to continue living, sharing and spreading this philosophy in

a new and broader arena.

But I will not forget my roots, and I will watch with pride as Iowans continue to work to make Iowa the best place in the world to be if you happen to be blind.

Sincerely,  
Karen Keninger

## 2012 Iowa Braille Challenge Results

On Saturday, February 25, youth from across Iowa traveled to Des Moines to test their Braille skills in the annual Iowa Braille Challenge. Nineteen students competed in four categories including: speed and accuracy, proof-reading, charts and graphs, and reading comprehension. Iowa is just one of many regional Braille challenge events. Students that score very well in the regional events will qualify to participate this June in the National Braille Challenge, a program of the Braille Institute. The Iowa Braille Challenge was cosponsored by the Iowa Department for the Blind and Iowa Braille School.

### 2012 Iowa Braille Challenge Standings

#### Varsity:

Marissa Hirschman

#### Junior Varsity:

1. Lauren Thomson
2. Annabelle Costanzo
3. Elizabeth Rouse

#### Sophomore:

1. Emily Boehm
2. Casey Anderson
3. Drew Rigby

#### Apprentice:

1. Tian Cleveland
2. Laura McFarland
3. Lydia Groenendyk

#### Rookie:

1. Sillet Yae
2. Brogan Malcolm



# Des Moines woman gets new perspective on what it means to be ‘successful’

By Theresa Philpott  
Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation  
Services  
Contributing Writer

**W**hen I was first approached about writing my success story, I really didn't think I had a story to tell. I just live my ordinary life –going to work, reading, shopping, etc. and never seriously thought about being a success. I just do what I do. It never occurred to me to do anything else, so this didn't seem remarkable to me. When I told a few friends I was writing this article, the feedback was along the lines of “Well why wouldn't you? You are a success.”

I'm still not totally comfortable with thinking of myself as a success, because to me that means I'm done and have nothing left to work towards. It seems easier to view events in my life as successes. Of course, things haven't always been easy. Lots of times it's been a struggle to get to the “success” part. It seems I have a story to tell after all, so here goes.

I was born several weeks premature and needed lots of medical intervention to survive. The result is an



Pictured above, Theresa Philpott sits at her desk. Theresa is employed by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services as a Typist Advanced. With training and assistance from IDB, Theresa has been gainfully employed for over 21 years. Here, she sits by her CCTV, which she uses to magnify print materials. She also uses JAWS, a screen reading software, on her computer.

eye condition known as Retinopathy of Prematurity and Cerebral Palsy. I went to public school for my entire Kindergarten through 12th grade experience with minimal accommodations, mainly large print materials for some classes and preferential seating closer to the blackboard. I learned Braille and was instructed in the use of a long, white cane because it would be easier to learn when I was young and I might need these skills later in life.

I spent the year between high school and college at the Orientation Center at the Iowa Department for the Blind. That was where I learned many of the skills that allow me to live independently now. Even more important though is that was where I gained the confidence to believe I could be independent and have a successful life as a grown-up.

Thanks to wonderful IDB staff, financial assistance,


| *Continued on Page 6* |

and assistance with accommodations, I was able to succeed in college.

This was back in the “olden days”, so I had to rely on books on tape and people to read print textbooks and other materials that couldn’t be taped or Brailled by the time I needed them in class. I took tests in a separate room and was given more time to complete them since someone had to read the test and record my answers. Term papers were quite an ordeal. I had to write them out by hand and finish them early, so a secretary in Student Support Services could type them. Then I could turn them in on the same day as everyone else. Oh, to have had a laptop with JAWS.

I’ve had two different jobs with the State of Iowa and have worked for a combined total of more than 21 years. First I was a Retirement Investment Technician at IPERS and am now a Typist Advanced with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation

Services. I use a CCTV to magnify print materials, have JAWS on my computer so I can process documents and schedule appointments for all the Rehabilitation Counselors who depend on me. Sometimes I use Braille to take notes and sometimes employ the very



I gained the confidence to believe I could be independent and have a successful life as a grown-up.

low tech method of a 20/20 pen and a piece of paper. I have a hand held CCTV type magnifier called a Ruby because sometimes I just need to be able to be on the go.

Another big thing that contributes to my independence and success is the problem-solving skills I’ve developed over a lifetime

being disabled. I have faced many challenges, large and small. Some have involved job duties and figuring out what assistive technology will work. Some have involved more basic skills of daily living, because the way I used to do something just won’t work anymore.

About five years ago I decided it was time to become a homeowner. I had to find a place I could afford that was both accessible in terms of my mobility issues and located in an area where I could continue using para-transit for the majority of my transportation needs. It wasn’t easy, but I now have a condo I am proud to call home.

So, that’s my story for now and the end of this article. Here’s hoping the future challenges and struggles I’ll face lead to lots more successes. ♦

## More Success Stories

Are you interested in reading more success stories? They’re available online! Just go to **[www.idbonline.org/success-stories](http://www.idbonline.org/success-stories)** to learn how blind and visually impaired Iowans are leading independent lives.

While you’re there, be sure to check out the variety of employment services offered by the Department.



## IL program continues to improve lives of Iowans

By Barb Weigel  
IL Project Specialist

Each year brings opportunities to meet many new and interesting people, and last year was no exception. The Independent Living (IL) program of the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) served 1,036 individuals during calendar year 2011. The typical individual served is eighty plus years old, lives alone, and has at least one other disability or chronic health problem in addition to vision loss. Most of the individuals we served wanted to maintain an independent lifestyle, and so they worked with one of our rehabilitation teachers.

Examples of goals that we helped people to achieve included learning nonvisual techniques for: managing phone numbers and addresses, writing checks, dialing the phone, preparing meals, operating a sewing machine, and traveling independently.

Over 1,500 goals were successfully achieved, and 85% of individuals served through the IL program indicated that after receiving services, they felt more confident about their ability to maintain their independence.

Independent Living staff includes: one program manager, one support staff, eight rehabilitation teachers, and two project specialists.

The eight rehabilitation teachers cover all 99 counties in Iowa and on average, travel three or more days per week. Teachers meet and work with people where they live. They provide one-on-one services to help individuals to maintain their independence despite



vision loss.

Rehabilitation teachers also work actively to inform the public about IDB so that more people can benefit from the services offered by our agency. This includes presentations to retirement communities, senior centers, and home health staff, and hosting booths at health fairs, senior expos, and other community activities.

When they are not traveling, rehabilitation teachers spend time in the office following up on client needs such as completing and submitting applications for other community



Pictured here are two examples of how the IL program provides training to Iowans living with vision loss. Above, Leslie Crawford learns the texture of a plant during a visit to the Botanical Center. To the left, Margaret Ann Coffey learns non-visual techniques during a class on crafts.

resources, converting information (e.g., telephone numbers, addresses or recipes) into accessible formats, and fulfilling any other commitments made to the client. Also during office time, teachers attend meetings, answer phone messages, manage e-mail correspondence, and complete other paperwork.

| Continued on Page 8 |

## Community Based Trainings:

With only eight rehabilitation teachers to cover the entire state, it can be difficult to meet the needs of individuals who want more concentrated services. As a result, in 1999, IDB established the project specialist role. Each project specialist covers one half of the state. The primary responsibility of a project specialist is to conduct community-based trainings (CBTs).

The CBT has three purposes. First, it offers an opportunity for groups of individuals to learn basic skills in a variety of areas to increase independence. This increases confidence and often sparks the desire for more training as new ways are discovered to perform tasks once thought impossible because of vision loss.

Secondly, a variety of skill areas are covered so that participants can make informed decisions about the specific skills they need to develop. For example, one person may want to learn how to label items around the home while another may choose to learn about ways to convert recipes into an audio format.

Finally, participants meet other people who are struggling with vision loss,

and as a result, they realize they are not alone. At a CBT, ideas and thoughts are exchanged with a level of understanding that is often difficult to obtain in the general community. When we ask for feedback about our CBTs, this is often listed as the most valuable part of the training.

Last year, our two project specialists conducted 18 CBTs throughout the state with over 100 people participating.

CBTs can be planned and implemented wherever four or more individuals are interested. Each CBT event consists of at least six hours of training during which the following areas are covered:

- Leisure – discuss services available through the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the Iowa Radio Reading Information Service (IRIS) and NFB-NEWSLINE®. IRIS and NFB-NEWSLINE® are services that bring the newspaper to blind or print-disabled persons at no cost.
- Dialing a Telephone
- Identifying Money
- Communications – how to create grocery lists, address envelopes, etc.
- Labeling – instruction on simple, easy methods for labeling items such as canned goods and medication, and clothing.
- Beginner Braille – basic, introductory instruction in the Braille system. Upon

trying Braille, many request additional lessons.

## Senior Orientation:

Each year, the Independent Living program offers two week-long sessions in Des Moines for seniors who want to receive more intensive training. We call this Senior Orientation. Eight to ten seniors from around the state participate in each Senior Orientation week. Participants arrive on Monday and return home on Friday. Throughout the week, training is provided in the following areas: Home Economics; Leisure; Travel; Braille; and Business Class.

## IDB's Training Approach:

Whether it is a CBT or Senior Orientation, each participant is asked to wear a pair of sleep shades (aka blindfolds) during training. The techniques IDB teach work regardless of how much vision a person possesses. With the use of sleep shades, we prove beyond doubt that nonvisual techniques do work and that success is not directly related to the amount of vision one has.

## Preparing for Training Opportunities:

CBTs are offered wherever we have four or more people interested in receiving training. A lot of hard work goes into making sure that



## What is the secret ingredient behind successful VR placements?

By Betty Hansen  
DeafBlind Specialist

The Iowa Department for the Blind's strong commitment to helping blind Iowans to obtain successful employment is demonstrated by the fact that we have two full-time placement specialists who work as a very effective team to open doors for blind or visually impaired Iowans who want to go to work.

Brenda Criswell is our Employment Specialist for the eastern half of Iowa. She is articulate, polished, and professional in her demeanor. These personal attributes enable her to work with higher management, policy-makers, and company executives—in other words, with corporate decision makers.

David Lenz, who covers the western half of the state, complements Brenda by possessing an uncanny ability to get “everyday people” into “everyday jobs.” David rubs shoulders with factory foremen, line supervisors, and others to persuade them to give our clients that critical opportunity which can help them to start a highly successful career.

Brenda and David receive referrals from our vocational rehabilitation counselors.

Typically these referrals are made when a counselor needs some extra help to place a client who, for whatever reason, has had unusual difficulty securing employment. “We look for any hidden barriers that prevent a blind person from working,” said David Lenz.

One such barrier may be the legitimate fear by the client that benefits will be terminated abruptly and unpredictably once he/she starts to receive a paycheck. In such cases, Lenz said, “We get (the client) in touch with Iowa Work Incentive Planning (WIPA) to do benefits analysis because many individuals who are blind seem to have some misinformation as to how much they can work before losing their benefits, which many of them have come to rely on.”

Other impediments to successful employment include uncertainty about the labor market, indecision by the client as to the career path that he/she should take, and misinformation about the demands of an eight-hour job. In this context, Lenz said, “I motivate the client who is blind to go to work by helping him/her figure out what they want to do. I help them figure out

what jobs they can't do as a means of helping them seek out more training or skills development so that they can do the job.”

Brenda Criswell is IDB's Employment Specialist for Eastern Iowa.

Criswell explained, “I have to think, ‘Does this client's ability match the employer's needs’, and then build that bridge to employment.”



David Lenz is IDB's Employment Specialist for Western Iowa.

Lenz said part of his job is to, “motivate the client who is blind to go to work by helping him/her figure out what they want to do.”



“The purpose of the Rehabilitation Employment Specialist is a dual customer approach which includes not just the client, but the business's needs,” explained Criswell. “I have to think, ‘Does the client's ability match the employer's

| Continued on Page 10 |

| Continued from Page 9 |

needs', and then build that bridge to employment. It's also about helping the person realize their strengths and passion; and then making a passionate, appropriate placement. It's important to try to be realistic while keeping the person's passion in their search alive – to help them 'own it'. I need to remember that it's their job, their purpose. This job requires me to listen—to hear where the person has been, where they are along the road to employment, and where they want to be," Criswell added.

Sometimes, during the placement process, a client may, because of fear or frustration, decide that he or she is really not ready to work. Our placement specialists spend a good deal of

person depends on his/her abilities, networking system, and preparedness to enter the world of work. It can

Our clients are as different as everyone else in society...they represent a true cross section of the population.

take anywhere from a few hours to a number of years to complete a placement. Our clients are as different as everyone else in society, meaning that they represent a true cross section of the population.

While we specialize in understanding the unique needs of our clients—particularly those needs related

they average about 600 miles each week. They will often visit two to three new employers each week; this means that annually, during a 48-week period, each employment specialist meets with almost 150 new companies.

Criswell said, "Sometimes the contact with a business is a 'cold call;' sometimes, the calls are formal meetings. I contact those businesses which are closest to the client, using their networks and staying in close proximity to the client."

Each visit represents a terrific opportunity to educate an employer about the true capabilities of people who are blind or visually impaired. Each visit is a chance to make a new friend and another possible employer for lowans who are blind or visually impaired. ◆

## Resources for Businesses

Are you an employer looking for qualified job seekers? Do you want information on how to retain an employee who is experiencing significant vision loss. IDB can help!

time helping clients to keep their confidence and motivation at a high level. We will work with a blind individual no matter how long it takes to get that job. Our belief in our clients is that strong!

Job Placement doesn't happen on a timeline. The time it takes to place a

to blindness and/or visual impairment—it is just as important for us to know what the employer wants and needs. Only in this way can we match the right person to the right job.

Our employment specialists travel, on average, about three days every week, and

*IDB provides employment services to blind and visually impaired lowans who are looking for a job or want to retain or advance their current career. IDB believes that with the right skills and opportunities a blind or visually impaired person can be a competitive and valuable employee.*

*For more information on IDB's employment services, please visit: [www.idbonline.org/employment](http://www.idbonline.org/employment).*

# Get the low-down on your library...

By Beth Hirst  
Assistant Library Director  
& Susie Stageberg  
Reader Advisor  
& Karen Eis  
Librarian/Cataloger

Ms. Reid, undercover agent and armchair detective, enters the Library disguised as a “typical patron”, with the mission of discovering just how well the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped stacks up. She approaches a desk. “I’m here to get the low-down on this joint,” she whispers hoarsely. “Catch my drift?”

“How may I help you?” Reader Advisor Susie responds with curiosity. “Looking for some good books?”

“Looking for some intel actually,” Ms. Reid hisses, while listening intently for unseen lurkers. “How many books do you have here, anyway?”

“That depends on how you count them,” interjects Cataloger Karen from across the cubicle wall. “We have books in Braille, large print, digital audio, and cassette, not to mention described videos and electronic files. There is one number for titles, another for volumes, and a third for copies. At one point we calculated that we had ten miles of shelving throughout the building.”

“Just give me the facts, ma’am, just the facts.”

- Cassette titles: 64, 643
- Digital titles: 10,117
- Large type titles: 8,600
- Braille titles: 35,200
- Braille files with no hard copy: 1,938
- Additional digital titles available by download: 14,679
- Descriptive video titles: 543

Director Randy greets Ms. Reid heartily, “Good morning. I heard you asking about the library collection.”

She throws him a withering glance. “Shh... indoor voice, young man, please! I’m really after the hush, hush info, the classified, the top secret,

hear what I’m saying?”

“Well,” Randy replies furtively, “some information is confidential.”

“I knew it! Just how many people use this library, hmm? How many books do they read? I wager the FBI and the NSA would be interested in those figures. And wouldn’t Homeland Security like to know which author is checked out most often?”

- Unique patrons served over last five years: 7,228

Patrons with the most circulations over five years:

- 1 checked out over 4000 books
- 3 over 3000
- 15 over 2000
- 166 over 1000

Five-year circulation totals:

- Braille: 36,246
- Cassette: 837,279
- Digital: 173,612 (started in 2009)
- Large type: 33,616
- Videos: 5,264

Top-circulating authors in various media:

- Braille (includes print/Braille): Dr. Seuss
- Cassette: Louis L’Amour
- Digital: Danielle Steel
- Large type: Nora Roberts

Ms. Reid surreptitiously snaps a photo of a passing staff member, using the mini-camera hidden in the handle of her white cane. “What about employees, Mr. Director? What’s your staffing level?”

“Twenty-one, including myself,” Randy reports.

“You’d better dust those shelves pretty often,” Ms. Reid answers. “You know, twenty-one can keep a secret if twenty are dead.”

| Continued on Page 12 |



“Oh, look,” counters Randy, “Here comes IMC Librarian Carol.”

“IMC – is that related to the BCI?”

“No,” Carol replies mysteriously, “but instructional materials require unceasing investigation.”

“Really?” says Ms. Reid as she grapples with Carol’s meaning. “That sounds right up my aisle. Tell me more.”

For 2010/2011, the most recent school year completed:

- Students served by IMC: 154
- Requests received and delivered: 1,972

“If textbooks are not available elsewhere in an accessible format,” Carol concludes, “we will create the materials from scratch.”

Ms. Reid gasps, “Creationism? Is that promulgated here?”

Carol looks thoughtful. “In reality, audio and electronic formats are continually evolving...”

Suddenly Braille Producer Karen and Audio Specialist Karen join the conversation. “What Carol means is that we transcribe print materials into Braille,” says Braille Karen. “Or record narrators reading aloud,” adds Audio Karen.

“Wait a minute,” Ms. Reid declares sotto voce. “How many Karens are there?”

“Four,” murmurs Randy discreetly, “although IDB Director Karen will soon be going to NLS in Washington, D.C.”

“Oh ho!” cries Ms. Reid. “You’re sending in a mole!”

“Not exactly,” Randy gently retorts, smiling sadly as he returns to his office.

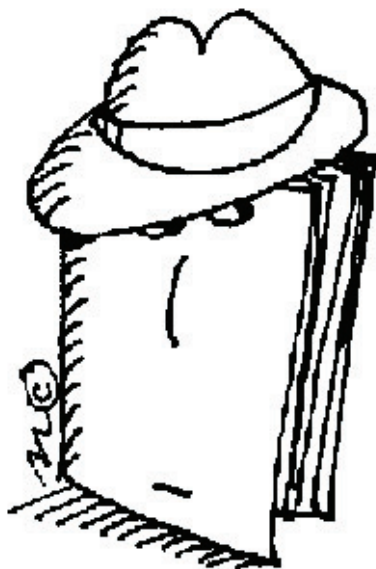
“The Production Unit averages about 100 items per month by title for all media,” states Audio Karen. “That translates to about 1,680 volumes and copies per month produced in all media,” explains Braille Karen. “That includes books, magazines, and non-collection items,” Cataloger Karen sums up.

“I’m floored by the volume of your work,” Ms. Reid admits admiringly, “and awed by the quantity of bits and dots represented.”

Audio Karen mentions that she is off to monitor a session in the studio. “Monitoring,” Ms. Reid confesses, “one of my favorite covert activities.” Speaking into her coat sleeve, she mutters, “Roger that.” Addressing the others once more, she opines, “Machines, devices, playback units – what’s the scoop? Is it true you no longer have a waiting list for those digital doohickies?”

“Machines Clerk Tracy would answer your question, but on Thursdays he works with the Pioneers on machine repair,” Susie informs her.

“Pioneers, huh. Sounds subversive, or mildly anarchic, at any rate.”



“Not at all,” Susie springs to the defense, “they are highly dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers. Last year the Pioneers repaired 900 cassette players. Truth be told, we have nearly 100 faithful, committed volunteers who support the Library in countless ways, including narration and Braille transcription. If I had a nickel for every hour they have contributed, I could retire today!”

“That sounds like about 100 avenues for security breakdown to me,” challenges Ms. Reid. “How do you know they aren’t terrorist infiltrators, stealthily attaching hidden transmitters to machine batteries, or adding subliminal messages to all these recordings and transcriptions?”

“That’s why we have a machines specialist,” says Braille Karen reassuringly, “as well as proof-readers and audio editors. Our materials receive clearance when they are free of all bugs... uh, errors.”

Director Randy returns to announce the information he has extracted from the machines database.

"You asked about a waiting list. Happily the list was exhausted a few months after distribution of digital machines began in 2009. We have plenty of players for all borrowers to have one."

"That's peachy," Ms. Reid snorts, "but I want specifics."

- Digital Talking Book Machines assigned to patrons: 4,049
  - 1,187 advanced
  - 2,862 standard
- Cassette Machines assigned to patrons: 3,795

Without warning, a distant but earnest voice is heard. "Library, the mail has arrived."

Ms. Reid is startled. "The mail? Has it been through disinfection in Ohio?"

"No, no," Randy chortles, "that would be Federal Government mail. We average about 1000 pieces of mail in and out on a daily basis. It's a good thing we have on-site inspection; we wouldn't want our patrons waiting a year for delivery!"

"I take it you've had no reports of anthrax contamination."

"Absolutely not!" Randy replies. "I trust you won't convey any such rumors."

"I don't deal in innuendo," Ms. Reid confides, "only in substantiated data. Follow the evidence, I say!"

"I suspect I should have asked you this earlier," Susie intervenes. "Who are you?"

"I? Juana Reid," she proclaims.

"Oh! Have you read *Outlander*, by Diana Gabaldon?" enthuses Susie.

"How about *Moby Dick*?" spouts Randy.

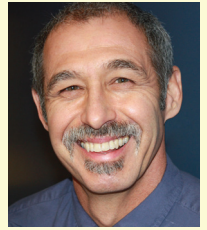
"You're sure to love *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*," Susie gushes. "Soon to be a major motion picture!" adds Cataloger Karen piercingly.

All of a sudden, Ms. Reid seems to flicker and become pixelated. "Overload! Overload!" her now-disembodied voice shrieks. "Too much information! Need... need numbers..." The voice fades along with the projection.

"She was... A hologram!" Randy exclaims. "I wonder who could have sent her." ♦

## From the Librarian

One is, arguably, the most important number there is. It's the number one team that gets the accolades. Being the first at nearly anything is to gain notoriety.



The motivation for everything I do, for everything I ask of the Library's staff comes from a desire to be the best Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in the world. That is, the Iowa Library for the Blind is always working to be number one, is striving always to be the first Library for the Blind to offer unique services. We want to be the first place Iowans think of when they think of excellent library service for blind and physically handicapped individuals living in the Hawkeye state.

Number one is always how the Library views each patron. Every person is important to us and we want to make sure, always, that you get the services and materials you need and want. Let me know how we're doing. Call or email me and talk with me about your library services. Know also, that the staff from the Library will be contacting you in various ways to make sure that you are receiving the best services in the world. That's what the number one Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped does. That's how the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped does business.

Sincerely,  
Randy Landgrebe

# BOOKLIST

A numbers theme yields an eclectic list. To fit with the issue's theme, this booklist features books with numbers somewhere in the titles.

**DB67593**

***Public Cowboy No. 1: The Life and Times of Gene Autry*, by Holly George-Warren.**

Chronicles the life of Gene Autry (1907-1998), who rose from an impoverished Texas childhood to become a yodeling cowboy, actor, and multimillionaire owner of radio and television stations, rodeos, real estate, and the California Angels. 2007.

**DB68636**

***Knit Two*, by Kate Jacobs.**

Manhattan. Club members face love, career, and family challenges. Peri runs her handbag business and the group's late founder's yarn shop. Darwin prepares for twins, and Anita gets engaged despite her grown children's disapproval. Includes recipes and instructions for an afghan. 2008.

**DB68441**

***Izzy and Lenore: Two Dogs, an Unexpected Journey, and Me*, by Jon Katz.**

Author recounts the addition of Izzy, an emotionally damaged border collie, and Lenore, a spirited black lab

puppy, to his upstate New York farm. Describes Izzy's acute sensitivity, which inspired Katz to do hospice volunteering, and Lenore's affection, which helped Katz cope with his own painful past. 2008.

**DB68305**

***Three Sisters*, by James D. Doss.**

Colorado. Ute tribal investigator Charlie Moon examines the death of newlywed Astrid Spencer-Turner, who was mauled by a bear in her bedroom. While Astrid's surviving sisters -- Beatrice and Cassandra, a TV psychic -- vie for the hand of Astrid's widower, Charlie tracks a killer. 2007.

**DB72860**

***Battle at Three-Cross*, by William Colt MacDonald.**

Lawman Lance Tolliver discovers the body of his colleague Frank Bowman while tracking a gang of thieves. Bowman had been assisting botany professor Ulysses Jones and Jones's niece Katherine. Soon Lance is romancing Katherine while caught in a war between border outlaws and Yaquente Indians. 1941.

**DB70294**

***The Four Corners of the Sky*, by Michael Malone.**

Navy pilot Annie Goode

receives an urgent message from her father Jack, a wanted con man. He claims he's dying and needs Annie to fly his old plane on one last escapade. Annie hopes the adventure will reveal the truth about her mother -- but it discloses much more. Strong language. 2009.

**DB67496**

***Street of the Five Moons*, by Elizabeth Peters.**

Art historian Vicky Bliss's boss, convinced of a plot to rob Munich's National Museum, asks her to track down the unknown creator of an imitation Charlemagne talisman found in a dead man's pocket. Vicky heads to Rome -- where she must face abductions and a romance with an unscrupulous English lord. 1978.

**DB72769**

***Five Flavors of Dumb*, by Antony John.**

Eighteen-year-old Piper who is deaf, volunteers as a manager for a rock band called Dumb. While trying to make Dumb profitable, Piper learns a few things about music and business -- and about herself. For senior high readers. Schneider Award. 2010. ♦

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



## A look at IDB's Des Moines University Partnership

By Rebecca Swainey  
Braille Teacher

One of the goals of the Iowa Department for the Blind is to provide the public with valid information about blindness. As members of the general public, doctors are an especially important group to reach. They have direct contact with patients who have experienced vision loss, and their ideas and recommendations have a dramatic impact on how these individuals deal with their situation.

For this reason, in 2010 the Department joined in a partnership with Des Moines University, through which fourth-year medical students have the option to participate in a two-week rotation at the IDB to learn about blindness. This partnership was initiated by the Department's former Public Information Specialist, whose husband held a fellowship at DMU. After several meetings with the school's representative, Dr. Dana Shaffer, who also toured the Department, it was determined that the IDB would be an excellent site for training fourth-year medical students.

Once the partnership was formed, we had to develop a curriculum that would help the med students embrace our positive approach to blindness. We needed to present them with all the experiences and information we could crowd into their brief two-week stay. For the first week, they would be immersed in the Orientation Center. Like all new students, they would receive a pair of sleep shades, a long white cane, and a class schedule. They would spend time in each class, learning to read and write Braille, learning to access the computer with speech, learning to run power tools in Shop, learning travel with a long white cane, and cooking without looking in Home Ec. Most importantly, they would attend the Business Class, a discussion group attended by all students and



Oana Enea, pictured above, poses with her box set she made for her desk. Enea made the box while taking shop class in the Orientation Center.

facilitated by the Center's Program Administrator. In this class issues, attitudes and the Department's philosophy of blindness are examined.

The second week of their training would include traveling with a rehabilitation teacher and a vocational rehabilitation counselor, meeting with the program administrators and supervisors of the Library, Field Operations, Independent Living and Business Enterprises programs, and finishing their projects in Orientation. In addition, they would read a stack of material several inches thick, providing more background on the history and philosophy of blindness both in and outside of Iowa.

On November 8, 2010, the first DMU student, Oana Enea, began her rotation. This was new territory for both her and us. She didn't know what would be expected of her, and we weren't at all sure what to expect from her. It didn't take long, however, to know the partnership was off to a great start. Oana, along with her obvious intelligence, proved to be down-to-earth and totally open to new ideas. She was excited about what she learned at the Department and how it related to

| *Continued on Page 16* |

| Continued from Page 15 |

her training at DMU.

Shortly after Oana completed her rotation, we received the following note: “To Sandy, Dave, all the staff and students at Iowa Department for the Blind, I will never forget my experience with you all, and I haven’t been able to stop talking about it to friends and other students. And I’m glad I have the beautiful box as proof, or some people wouldn’t believe me! You have all helped to show me a new and better way to interact with people that are blind and for that I am extremely grateful. The partnership with DMU was a great idea and I can’t wait

to see, and to be a part of, the fruits of its labor. Thank you so much everyone, I wish you all the best!—Oana Enea, MS4 ”

The box she mentions is her shop project. In Orientation we felt the DMU students should take with them a meaningful reminder of their time with the IDB. Shop teacher Ric Frambach came up with the idea of a desk set. The box would be made of exotic woods with a pen holder at one end and a brass nameplate on the front with plenty of room to add more ‘alphabet soup’. To add to the fun, they would not be told what they were making. On the last day of their rotation

in Business Class each DMU student would be presented with their box representing the completion of their rotation and their on-going connection to IDB.

After Oana’s enthusiastic testimonial, requests for this rotation took off like a shot. In late January 2011, two young men, James Mallen and Alexander Reynolds, began their rotations. By March 1, 2012, a total of 30 DMU students had taken part in this opportunity. Over a dozen more have been scheduled to follow. The partnership—the only one of its kind in the nation—has clearly proven to be a success. ♦

## Curious...

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

## Take a tour!

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

Call 515-281-1333  
to schedule a tour.



### Learning Through Touch

Recently, Orientation Center students visited the Gilbertson Nature Center in Elgin, Iowa. Students were given a chance to learn about various animals by using senses other than sight, such as touch.

Photo by Dave Hauge.

## Would you or someone you know benefit from IDB's Transition program?

Each summer, the transition program at the Iowa Department for the Blind holds camps following a particular theme. Themes can range from outdoor recreation to preparing for college to possible career tracks. Participating in the camps will involve you in a variety of activities that allow you to:

- Learn non-visual techniques helpful for daily living
- Interact and connect with other teens experiencing vision loss
- Become more independent and self-confident
- Gain skills specific to the camp's theme



**June 18-22, 2012**

### **FUNdamentals Camp - IDB, Des Moines, IA**

The emphasis of this camp is on interactive, fun learning with exposure to a wide range of employment and life skills. You will acquire strategies for dealing with the job interview, potential employers and workplace cultures. You will have fun with old friends and new ones in Des Moines as we hit the streets to get a feel for traveling in unfamiliar places, visit employers, and enjoy local attractions. Get ready for some great games and friendly competition!

**July 16-19, 2012**

### **Lakeside Palooza - Honey Creek Resort**

Join us for recreational activities and experience many exciting and diverse events related to camping and the great outdoors. This program is guaranteed to be packed full of excitement. Test the skills you learned at FUNdamentals as you spend this camp fending for yourself, cooking your own meals, hiking, swimming, boating and learning about nature. Be sure not to miss your last chance to spend time with friends before the school year starts.

**For more information, contact one of our Transition Specialists:**

Julie Aufdenkamp or Keri Osterhaus  
800-362-2587 or 515-281-1333.  
julie.aufdenkamp@blind.state.ia.us  
keri.osterhaus@blind.state.ia.us



## Business Ups and Downs: Reflecting on 2011

By Roger Erpelding  
BEP Program Administrator

The end of the calendar year tends to draw comparisons to what a business did in the previous year in all areas—gross sales, merchandise costs, labor costs, along with other expenses such as utilities, insurance, taxes paid, and vehicle expenses. Of course, the last, and most important comparison, deals with net profit. The same is true for all of our Randolph-Sheppard businesses and the managers involved in them. Whether your sales and expenses were up or down, the comparisons also draw forth a variety of questions. Why were sales up or down? Why did I make more or less money? Were there ways I could have cut costs and been more efficient? What might next year bring?

Our self-employment program mirrors what other small businesses have experienced throughout the economy in 2011. The recent optimism in regard to our nation's economy in general, and the Iowa economy in particular, are very uplifting and hopeful.

With this in mind, I took a look at what occurred in our businesses in 2010 and

2011. As expected, there were winners and losers. Unfortunately, our total gross sales were down by almost \$100,000 compared to the previous year. Merchandise and labor costs remained almost the same in actual dollar amounts; however, with sales being down, their percentages increased. Under a "catch all" category which lists all other business expenses, a dollar increase was seen. As a result, as one might expect, total net profit was down by \$110,000.

Let's look at the economic winners for 2011. The Adair Rest Area facility experienced a 10% increase in sales last year. On June 15, a new rest area building was opened, west bound. History has shown that when a new building opens, which combines the rest rooms, vending, tourist information and Internet services in one building, sales increase. This facility now contains two such buildings. There may be another hidden factor, which I will discuss later.

Traveling west from Adair, the next rest areas along I-80 are located at Underwood, just a few miles from Council Bluffs. This facility also received a 10% increase in gross sales during 2011. No new buildings were

constructed or opened, but I believe another factor was at work here—the Missouri River flooding. Traffic was diverted from I-29 during much of the summer, which brought additional traffic to I-80 in that area. This as well may have been a minor contributing factor to the increased gross sales at Adair.

Our South Iowa Rest Area Facility, with two locations at Osceola, and one at Decatur, saw a 10% increase in business. For the first time in several years, there were no construction issues to contend with, and all three rest areas were fully operational. In addition to this, some of the diverted I-29 traffic may have traveled south along I-35 on its way to Kansas City, where interstates 29 and 35 meet.

Our facility at the National Distribution Center, formerly known as the Bulk Mail Center in Urbandale, also took a positive 5% upturn last year. We had heard for some time that additional employees were coming to work there. This occurred in the autumn; thus, this facility was the beneficiary of record sales in November! The good sales bump continued into December, but lessened some as the workload

| *Continued on Page 19* |

decreased.

Of course, if overall sales were down, some of our businesses had downturns as well. Perhaps the most dramatic drop in sales occurred at our Sioux City facility, which includes four rest areas along I-29, several government buildings in Sioux City, and a large privately operated call center. Throughout the first part of the year, the call center at STREAM had decreased employment, thus sales dropped accordingly. To add insult to injury, the closure of I-29 due to the Missouri River flood had a direct impact on the rest areas and their sales. In fact, two of the rest areas were sandbagged for several weeks, and were closed to traffic. The two northern rest areas at Sergeant Bluff, although open, saw greatly reduced traffic during the summer. The June-August period is responsible for the lion's share of business at all rest areas, so the timing here was especially devastating. Fortunately, STREAM hired more folks as the year progressed, so the overall drop in sales was limited to 15%; it could have been worse.

And unfortunately, it

was worse—at our Pacific Junction Rest area facility which also includes one rest area at Missouri Valley; the result was a 30% business reduction. Not only was the Missouri Valley location sandbagged and closed for much of the summer, but the north bound Pacific Junction

The recent optimism in regard to our nation's economy, and the Iowa economy in particular, are very uplifting and hopeful.

Rest Area was closed due to construction. We knew about the upcoming construction, and our manager had planned accordingly. On the up side, we are looking forward to better business in the future at this facility.

Other reductions in sales at our businesses are not so clear-cut. However, there is a pattern here to look at. All five rest areas north of Des Moines on I-35 saw gross sales reduction. All rest areas east of Des Moines—Mitchellville, Grinnell and Victor—saw sales drops as well. Those rest areas near and east of I-380 along I-80

fared better. Traffic counts and additional competition may be factors, but this is unclear.

As stated earlier, we are optimistic about 2012. The closure of two rest areas at Waukee and two rest areas at Ankeny due to urban expansion does not bode well. However, we are already beginning to see sales increases at several of our facilities which primarily consist of in-house vending at federal, state and local government buildings. We are also moving along to begin vending at a large federal facility—hopefully in early spring. With an improving economy, rest areas should experience either business stability or increases this summer. ♦

*The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides opportunities for legally blind Vocational Rehabilitation clients of the Iowa Department for the Blind to manage their own businesses. For more information about Iowa BEP opportunities and getting started in our training program, contact Roger Erpelding at (515) 281-1358, or e-mail [Roger.Erpelding@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Roger.Erpelding@blind.state.ia.us).*

## Talking Tech w/ Curtis Chong

### Non-Visual Access Technology Accomplishments: Calendar Year 2011

In calendar year 2011, the nonvisual access technology team at the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) performed 29 worksite assessments and 34 technology skills assessments. In addition, the team provided technology training to 71 clients and provided over-the-phone technical support to over 100 blind Iowans. These are the numbers which, in relatively dry terms, reflect some of our technology-related accomplishments for the 2011 calendar year.

There is one thing that we can say for certain about the world of technology. It never stops changing. Software and hardware undergo continuous revisions, new technologies continue to be developed and released to the market, and the ways in which people who are blind or visually impaired interact with technology continue to change—almost exponentially. The challenge for IDB is to keep up with these rapid changes while continuing to provide quality service and training.

To keep up with changing technology, IDB's Orientation and Adjustment Center, at the start of 2011, upgraded all of its training computers to use the latest technology from Microsoft—specifically, Windows 7 Professional and Office 2010. The most dramatic change for the computer user lies in the Office 2010 product, which has implemented the Microsoft Ribbon across all Office products. The standard Windows

menus that many of us have become quite accustomed to no longer exist in Microsoft Office, and (perhaps regrettably for some people) it is very likely that the Ribbon will be implemented in the next version of Windows, which is Windows 8.

During calendar 2011, we were able to designate space on the third floor to be used as a Technology Resource Center. This center enables us to have on display a variety of Braille, talking, screen enlargement, and print-reading technologies. In this Center, we

can also provide hands-on training to individual clients in a space that is highly conducive to learning. This new space has already proven its worth.

Also in 2011, we took a significant step toward incorporating the accessible products from Apple into our technology demonstration and training

efforts. We purchased a number of Apple iPads, which we are now able to demonstrate to our clients. Also, if necessary, we can provide a limited amount of training to individual clients to teach them how to take advantage of the low vision and nonvisual access features that are built into the iPad. Apple has taken the revolutionary step of building speech output and screen enlargement technology into its iPhone, iPad, and iPod products, and the company has done this without charging the consumer anything extra for these critical accessibility features. Kudos to Apple.

In calendar 2011, the nonvisual access technology team conducted a seminar dealing with nonvisual access to cell phones. In conjunction with that seminar, we posted a comprehensive article which provided detailed information about the nonvisual access options available in today's cell phone

| *Continued on Page 22* |

The challenge for IDB is to keep up with these rapid changes while [providing] quality service.





By Linda Slayton

**N**umbers play a role in almost everything we do. Often some of the first things we tell people about a newborn are their date of birth, time of birth, length and their weight. Most of the important events in life involve numbers in some manner. These include the year we graduate, the day we get married, the amount of our mortgage and so on. Numbers are just part of daily living.



about a year later when I first became a client of the Iowa Department for the Blind.

My focus on numbers changed at the orientation center. The number that first stood out was 6-9 month stay. That sounded like eternity. The next number that hit me was 5.2 – as in miles to walk wearing sleep shades. Anxiety was building. Then came

I began to think about how numbers played a role in my life as a blind person.

I began to think about how numbers played a role in my life as a blind person. The first thing that came to mind was the day I was told I might lose my sight. I was familiar with the number 20/20. For all of my life that had been my acuity. It was something I was taught was good; something to be proud of possessing. Suddenly, I wasn't 20/20. I wasn't even close. My ophthalmologist cancelled his afternoon appointments and quickly took me in for laser surgery. When I tried to drive again I couldn't read a license plate or the speedometer. My numbers were disappearing. It was

things like 5th floor, classes from 8 – 5:30 and one month before I could spend time at home. I still remember the number that influenced me most of all. I had been in orientation for about a week. I wasn't adjusting well and my eye doctor told me I didn't need to be there. I promptly made the decision to leave the center. My rehab counselor took me to see the orientation director, Jim Witte. It was Jim Witte who gave me my number. He said, "Give it two weeks. If you still want to

leave, then you can go." Two weeks became my number.

It is still amazing and wonderful how my life changed during those two weeks. It wasn't that things became significantly easier or that I had an epiphany. The difference was that my number changed again. Two weeks came and went, but my new focus was on the number of friends I now felt around me. I had walked into the building alone and now I was part of the group. I was with others who understood. The numbers that became important were how many were going to supper, what time were we going, how many jokes were played that day, and how many times we laughed.

Yes, numbers are important. We all have to look out for Number One at times, but we must never forget to count those who helped in our journey. Our lives may begin in a moment and end in a moment, but they are lived by what we choose to do with the number of moments between. ♦

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

| Continued from Page 8 |

these training opportunities are a positive experience for the participants.

Senior Orientation attendee, K.T. of Waterloo wrote, "I came home full of hope and anxious to learn and experience more. What more could one ask from a program?"

CBT attendee, J.S. from Iowa City recently wrote, "Your organization does

a great job of helping us live happy lives and not feel handicapped from blindness."

Preparations are a joint effort between all members of the IL staff. On the list of things to do is securing a location for the training, gathering supplies, and promoting the training event through fliers and press releases

to additional community members who might want to participate.

No matter how many hours are devoted to planning and conducting these training opportunities, it is always worth it! The difference these opportunities make in the lives of people with vision loss is evident with each session we offer. ♦

---

| Continued from Page 20 |

marketplace. This article can be found at: <http://www.idbonline.org/nonvisual-access-mobile-phones>, and it is current as of Spring, 2011. Obviously, with the introduction of the Apple iPhone 4S and its adoption by Sprint, the accessibility landscape has changed considerably, but

the article nevertheless still contains some valuable information--particularly, for cell phone users who are not interested in a smart phone that connects to the Internet.

All in all, despite the accelerating pace of technological change, our nonvisual access technology

team has been able to keep pace so that, in the end, blind and visually impaired lowans will be able to avail themselves of the latest (and possibly the greatest) access features available in today's technology. ♦

---

## Commission Board Meeting Packets

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

# 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: March 17, 3:00pm

Mike Hoenig, commission chair

Steve Hagemoser, member

Peggy Elliott, member

## Mission:

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

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

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

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 9-13**

## Senior Orientation

### IDB Building, Des Moines

Seniors who are already receiving services from the IL program will travel to Des Moines and spend a week devoted to learning skills that will help them adjust to their vision loss and build their confidence. They are also given the chance to meet others dealing with similar issues. For more information, contact the IL program at (515) 281-1333 or (800) 362-2587.

**April 20**

## Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop

### IDB Building, Des Moines

Volunteers are time-honored classics. During this day-long workshop and luncheon, they will be honored for their service and reminded of just how classy we think they are! For more information, contact Karen Schweitzer at (515) 281-1241 or Karen Cunningham at (515) 281-1283.

**June 18-22 & July 16-19**

## Youth Transition Summer Camps

Youth from around Iowa who have significant vision loss will participate in a pair 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. For more information, contact one of our Transition Specialists at (515) 281-1333 or (800) 362-2587.

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

# Attention IDB Volunteers!

Mark your calendars for IDB's annual:

## **Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop & Luncheon**

### **Volunteers: Time-honored Classics**

**Date:** April 20, 2012

**Time:** 8am - 3pm

**Location:** Iowa Department for the Blind  
524 4th Street; Des Moines, IA

A volunteer's time is a priceless contribution. IDB invites all of our volunteers to join us for a special time where we can celebrate and honor those contributions. Join us for seminars specific to your interests, an awards luncheon, keynote speaker, and be there to see who receives volunteer of the year!

*Keep a look-out for your invitation in the mail!*