

The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind



ADAPTATION

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100 years old

Using your other
senses to develop
new alternative
techniques

Vocational
rehabilitation -
the long journey

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meet challenges
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|from the editor

“Adaptive reuse” is a term from the architectural and preservation fields referring to the process of adapting old structures for new purposes. That’s exactly what happened to our building at 524 Fourth Street in Des Moines as it entered the decade of the 1960’s. Originally built as a YMCA in 1912, the building became the new home of the Iowa Commission for the Blind. As it embarked on this new course, the building played an important role in the success of the vital and revolutionary approach to blindness rehabilitation introduced in Iowa by Kenneth Jernigan in 1958 -- a program poised to place our state in the forefront of such efforts nationally and worldwide.

In this issue we explore the general theme of adaptation as it relates to our work. May the spirit of positive change and innovation continue far into this still new century.

— Rick Dressler

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My first three months as director have been very busy. I've been visiting with staff and consumers to evaluate programs and establish working relationships with our partners. IDB has been recognized as a leader in the blindness field for many years due to its great achievements. We will continue to emphasize the philosophy that has allowed so many blind Iowans to achieve great success and provide the highest quality of blindness skills training and counseling to our consumers. We also recognize that the current job market and the needs of blind Iowans continue to change, so we are incorporating new strategies to help blind Iowans achieve their goals.

We've recently expanded our Orientation Center program by hiring an individual to facilitate evening study groups in the areas of Braille and computer, lead students in preparing group meals and organize community outings. We will also be implementing a physical fitness program to help students improve their overall health and build confidence.

The Information Technology team is developing a training curriculum that will provide all blind Iowans who are job ready with an opportunity to develop adaptive technology skills needed to go to work in a competitive environment. The

Orientation Center will be the best place for consumers to pursue this curriculum, but community training will also be available for individuals who cannot attend the Orientation Center.

Vocational Rehabilitation counselors will engage in more career counseling and job development activities to help consumers identify job options and generate employment outcomes. Next summer, we'll enhance our transition program by adding a component that will allow high school students to gain valuable work experience. We're also developing a strategic plan to expand our Business Enterprise program. Our long term objectives are to partner with private businesses and strengthen state vending laws to create more opportunities for Blind managers.

The 100th anniversary of our building presents an opportunity to celebrate past accomplishments and anticipate future successes. We will remain committed to our mission and our core values but will continue to implement new ideas to deal with challenges that we face in the future.

Sincerely,
Richard Sorey



100 YEARS OF SERVICE

IDB celebrates the rich, century-long history of its building



On the afternoon of Thursday, September 13, 2012, the Iowa Department for the Blind hosted a celebration in honor of the 100th anniversary of the building that is its headquarters in Des Moines, Iowa. The event featured photos related to the building's early history, reminiscences by IDB veterans from the days when it was still known as the Iowa Commission for the Blind, dedication of a new plaque on the front of the building indicating its placement on the National Register of Historic Places, and the display of some Depression-era

murals that were discovered in the Rec Room during a remodeling in 1988.

IDB staff, joined by students from the Orientation Center, and interested members of the public enjoyed the presentations. A surprise presence in the audience was Dorothy Kirsner, a seminal figure in early IDB history and former Iowa Commission for the Blind board member.

The IDB building first officially opened on June 13, 1912. A street parade of 1500 people walked from the original YMCA on the northwest corner of 4th and Grand to the new location up the street. Designed by renowned Des Moines architectural firm Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson, the 6-story concrete, brick, and terra cotta "short skyscraper" was built for approximately \$250,000. It was an important social focal point and part of the lively downtown scene of the day. It served its purpose until the mid-1950's, when YMCA officials began plans to build and expand again nearby.

As the decade closed, the building was adapted to be the new headquarters for the Iowa Commission for the Blind (the name of the Iowa Department for the Blind until 1988). Director Kenneth Jernigan, his staff, and students began moving in on February 1, 1960. Despite a damaging fire in the building a month later,

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Dorothy Kirsner, Kenneth Jernigan, and Elizabeth Perowsky enjoy listening to well-known blind Anglo-American jazz pianist George Shearing as he gives an impromptu performance during a tour of IDB in 1974.

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it became the site of what was then known as “The Iowa Experiment.” This was an innovative and groundbreaking training model that advanced the goal of better assisting and empowering blind people to lead independent lives. The approach continues today and has become the most successful model for rehabilitation programs for the blind nationally and internationally. This significant activity was the reason for acquiring National Register status for the building in recent years.

The three hour anniversary event featured speakers and guests of honor. Jack Lufkin, curator at the State of Iowa Historical Museum, elaborated on what it means for a property to be placed on the National Register. Early department veterans Jim Omvig, Jim Witte, and Creig Slayton (via taped interview) looked back on their involvement with the building, the early days of the program it housed, and its prominent role in the betterment of blind Americans.

Dorothy Kirsner, speaking from the audience, responded to a photo showing world-renowned blind jazz pianist George Shearing playing for Dr. Jernigan and two women in the IDB building in 1974. She identified herself and Elizabeth Perowsky, a long-time volunteer Braillist for the library, as the women standing next to Jernigan in the picture. The photo underscores how far word of the Iowa Experiment had spread and the interest it was generating among both blind and



sighted persons around the world. With Mrs. Kirsner there in the audience, it seemed as if the idea and the photo had truly come full circle.

Another unique feature of the event was the opportunity for visitors to examine the 1930’s murals that have presented a bit of a mystery. Investigations to identify the unknown artist continue. Plans to better store and conserve the fragile pieces are underway.

After hearing the speakers, many audience members joined IDB staff outside the main entrance to dedicate the new National Register plaque. Director Richard Sorey praised Shan Sasser, recognizing her important role in securing the designation before she unveiled the bronze plaque.

The day concluded with some guests taking a tour of the building led by former IDB staff member Mike Hicklin, a man most knowledgeable about the building’s changes through the years. With the blowing out of 100 candles and the enjoyment of a cake decorated with images of the building, a feeling of satisfaction remained that this milestone has been marked. ♦



New National Register plaque reflects progress and pride

A new addition to the IDB building is in place to the right of the door by the main entrance on Fourth Street. At eye level, the bronze plaque contains this wording in raised letters:

THE IOWA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND BUILDING HAS BEEN LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR FOR THE WORK OF DR. KENNETH JERNIGAN, DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION FROM 1959 - 1978, WHO MADE SIGNIFICANT AND LONG-LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BETTERMENT OF BLIND AMERICANS

The National Register of Historic Places is a program administered by the National Park Service and is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Its goal is to "coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources."

To be considered eligible for the National Register a property must meet established criteria. This involves examining a place's age, integrity, and significance. Often a building qualifies because it is considered historic, older than 50 years, and looks much the same as it did in the past. In the case of the Iowa Department for the Blind building, it was the significant activity that took place in and around the structure that allowed it to qualify. Initially known as "The Iowa Experiment," Kenneth Jernigan used a positive philosophy of blindness to transform Iowa's deplorable programs, judged worst in the country, into the leading model and training



approach for blindness rehabilitation. This national significance is recognized in the IDB building's National Register documentation which cites Jernigan's role as a champion of civil rights for blind Americans through his work as leader of the National Federation of the Blind.

IDB Rehabilitation Consultant Shan Sasser performed the bulk of the work to compile the research and documentation necessary to submit the IDB building's nomination to Iowa's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Meredith Ferguson contributed significant effort in assisting Shan with the documentation. The SHPO, in turn, reviewed the submission and notified affected parties before passing it on to the National Park Service in Washington D.C. for final review and approval.

While listing on the National Register of Historic Places does not necessarily guarantee a structure's preservation, it contributes much toward public awareness of what should continue to be cherished. The Iowa Department for the Blind can be proud it has taken these steps. ♦

Adaptations that are just good sense

By Barb Weigel
IL Project Specialist

As Independent Living Teachers at the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) work with individuals with vision loss, we often encourage them to use a process of problem solving to find their way to alternative techniques for performing everyday activities. If a person can't see to do something, how else can it be done? The answer is often found using other senses.

I can't see it, so can I...

...feel a difference?

For example:

- The ketchup bottle is different from the French dressing.
- A can of vegetables is larger than a can of soup.
- Heart medication may be smaller than a water pill.
- The blue shirt has small round buttons while the black shirt has larger round buttons.
- The closer a steak gets to being well done, the firmer it feels.
- Salt granules are larger than pepper.

...smell a difference?

For example:

- Cinnamon smells different from garlic.
- Ranch dressing smells different from Italian.
- Pepper smells different from salt.
- Bleach will smell different from laundry soap.

...hear a difference?

For example:

- As hamburger cooks, it sizzles more when it is done.
- Shake the salt and pepper. Salt rattles, pepper does not.
- Garlic salt rattles, garlic powder does not.
- A larger pill makes a different sound than a smaller pill when shaking the bottle.
- A can of Chicken Noodle soup will make a sound when you shake it, a can of Cream of Chicken will not.

...taste a difference?

For example:

- Chocolate chips or butterscotch? Taste one.
- Salt or pepper? Taste one.
- Sweet pickle or dill? Taste one.
- Yellow mustard or Dijon? Taste one.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Over 1,500 students have attended the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center since it opened in 1959.

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When other senses don't lead to a solution, adaptations need to be made. Adapting a task involves creating a way to use another sense to accomplish the task. It is through the use of senses in combination with adaptations that you may function efficiently and independently. Implementing adaptations involves problem solving and some sighted assistance to initially implement the method of choice.

When preparing to use sighted assistance, planning ahead can make a big difference.

Consider this:

- Maximize help already available. For example, while shopping, you rely on a clerk at some point during the shopping experience, whether it is while locating items you want or while checking out at the cash register. Use this assistance to its



maximum potential and be prepared to implement methods to help once you leave the store. Carry rubber bands with you to mark items at the grocery store so you can identify an item when returning home. Carry safety pins to a clothing store and apply a pin to the black pants but not the navy pair. Upon returning home, the items are identifiable without any further assistance and implementation of a long-term solution for identifying them is possible.

- Has help already been paid for? For example, as part of the purchase of a new computer, is tech support part of the purchase?

Think it through:

- Identify what items need to be adapted, i.e. the chicken noodle rattles when shaken but the cream of mushroom and chicken noodle are not distinguishable.
- How can it be adapted, i.e. placing a rubber band around the item; attaching a raised, foam letter; placing the item in a certain location; putting a small tear in the paper label; attaching Braille labels; etc.
- Have the items ready when help arrives. Thinking it through ahead of time will help prevent the need to modify it later and will save time for everyone involved. Have the items out and ready. For example, have Braille labels made, rubber bands ready, etc. Being prepared will help maximize the help while it is available. More can be accomplished in a shorter time if items are prepared ahead of time. ♦

For more information on other independent living services, call (800) 362-2587 or e-mail barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us

Tuning into better employment

By Betty Hansen
Deaf-Blind Specialist

As we reflect on the progressive struggle of the blind to achieve first-class citizenship and equal opportunity in our society, we are reminded that a positive philosophy of blindness is the foundation of the vocational rehabilitation program of the Iowa Department for the Blind. A direct result of the work of Kenneth Jernigan, whose dynamic approach toward the quality provision of services to blind Iowans was a direct result of his association with, and leadership in, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), this approach continues to adapt to the changing conditions of today's economic circumstances. The NFB had advocated that rehabilitation programs for the blind should be conducted using a positive, "can do" approach to blindness. In 1958, Iowa provided an ideal opportunity to prove, once and for all, that a positive philosophy of blindness could be given practical expression in programs of rehabilitation training for the blind.

Prior to Jernigan's coming to Iowa, employment options for the blind were very limited. Jobs in chair caning, rug weaving, and broom making were typical. At the national level, during the 1950's, blind people were not even permitted to take the Federal Civil Service Examination. Governmental and private agencies for the blind subscribed to the "medical" model of blindness – characterizing blind people as "patients" whom they were supposed to heal. These rehabilitation agencies lacked innovative thinking and an understanding of the importance of a positive philosophy of blindness. Consumers who talked about independence and self-reliance were often labeled as troublemakers. Sadly, the provision of services often



Piano tuner Jim Kerch, shown here in 1970, pursued his dream of independent employment as a client of IDB's Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

depended on a person's willingness to "co-operate" with the agency.

Contrast the bleak picture of the 1950's with where we are today. Today, our vocational rehabilitation counselors participate in sleepshade training in our Orientation Center for up to six months. They emerge from the experience with a strong belief in the ability of people who are blind to live a normal, active, and independent life. Instead of considering blind people as patients, our counselors work collaboratively with clients, taking into consideration their capacity, interests, and resources to assist them in making an informed choice. Successful vocational rehabilitation clients, representing a cross section of the population, obtain wide-

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ly-varying jobs with widely-varying pay scales and hours. Types of jobs include building inspector, cashier, computer programmer, electrician, customer service representative, and securities and commodities trader.

Blind people are no longer prohibited from taking the Federal Civil Service Examination and some now hold jobs in the federal government—all the way to the White House.

As a long-time employee of the Department, I can only imagine how things must have been back in the 1950's. Imagine, if you will, the life of a blind person being dictated by trained professionals in the field of blindness who said they knew what was best. If you were born with the talent to be an actor, no worries, you'll do just fine working in a factory. If you were born to be a master chef, no need to panic, you will earn a fine living making brooms. All of that changed in 1958, and the results were apparent as early as the late 1960's.

One Iowan, Jim Kerch, chose piano tuning as his career in 1967 – nine years after Kenneth Jernigan came to Iowa. Although this was an occupation that had been viewed to be a “blind trade,” it was what he really wanted for himself. “I was going to be a piano tuner whether I was blind or not,” he said. His counselor listened to what he wanted and supported his plan. Jim attended the

Piano Hospital and Training Center for the Blind in Vancouver, Washington to learn his trade before returning to Iowa to run his own business. He calls himself a maverick. “Piano tuning is a business, and I made good money. I also worked part-time for Critchett Piano Company in Des Moines, Iowa for five years before joining them full-time for 27 years.”

“I was going to be a piano tuner whether I was blind or not. Piano tuning is a business, and I made good money.”

—Jim Kerch
VR Client, ca. 1967

Another member of Jim's family also received services from the Iowa Department for the Blind. His younger brother, who is also blind, subsequently attended Iowa Lakes Community College in 1978 and now runs a popular restaurant in Minnesota.

These examples demonstrate that once Kenneth Jernigan's approach to service delivery was introduced in our agency, informed consumer choice became a hallmark of the vocational rehabilitation process. The positive philosophy of blindness at the core of our program of service delivery continues to make the program what it is today. ♦

Talking Tech

w/ Curtis Chong

How is Nonvisual Access Technology Related to Civil Rights?

The term “civil rights” is not one that comes readily to mind when a person thinks about nonvisual access technology for the blind such as screen reading software, refreshable Braille displays, talking cell phones, scanning software, etc.

Back in 1958, when Kenneth Jernigan came to Iowa, the term “nonvisual access technology” didn’t even exist. In fact, I would go so far as to say that no one in the field of work with the blind really thought about technology at all in connection with services to the blind. In those days, the most complex piece of equipment designed specifically for use by an individual blind person was the Perkins Brailier.

I submit that in today’s world, digital technology is deeply imbedded into our society and that this is as true for people who are blind as it is for everyone else. Sophisticated digital technologies are commonplace in the classroom, the office, the factory, and in the home. If you doubt this assertion, consider the cell phone, our heavy reliance on email, and the ubiquitous nature of the Internet.

I would also maintain that in today’s world, the ability of people who are blind or visual-

ly impaired to use electronic and information technology with the same efficiency and ease as everyone else is severely hampered by the fact that this type of technology is designed primarily for people who possess the full range of sensory and physical abilities—that is, for people with normal vision who have no physical or cognitive disabilities. It is rare indeed to find a mainstream technology that has accessibility features built in. (the iPhone and other products from Apple notwithstanding).

Back in 1958, when Kenneth Jernigan came to Iowa, the term “nonvisual access technology” didn’t even exist.



As I have pointed out in previous issues of the White Cane, laws are now on the books intended to ensure equal access by people with disabilities (among them, the blind) to electronic and information technology. While we could debate endlessly as to the effectiveness of these laws, the fact is that they do exist and that the principle has therefore been established (at least in the minds of our lawmakers) that the question of equal access to technology by people with disabilities is one that is closely associated with civil rights. For people who are blind or visually impaired, particularly in the area of

employment, it is vital that equal access to digital technologies be achieved. Without this access, employment opportunities will be severely curtailed, and our ability to participate in our communities, not to mention maintaining an independent lifestyle in the home, will be eroded to the point where, ultimately, people who are blind or visually impaired could be relegated to the backwaters of our society. ♦

What makes a book a book?

by Beth Hirst

Assistant Library Director

"Literature is my Utopia. Here I am not disenfranchised. No barrier of the senses shuts me out from the sweet, gracious discourses of my book friends. They talk to me without embarrassment or awkwardness."

~ Helen Keller

What is a book? What constitutes reading? Is it the act of holding a volume in one's hands, seeing words and images, turning the pages?

We at the Iowa Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped know that there are many kinds of books and ways to read them. Alternate methods of reading for the blind have been in development for centuries. Braille was created in the 19th century and took precedence over several other tactile methods by the early 20th. Thomas Edison invented his sound reproduction machine, partly with the idea that it could be used to read to people who were blind. By the 1930s, Congress established the National Library Service for the Blind (NLS), which, through a network of regional libraries, managed production and distribution of Braille materials. NLS developed the Talking Book Machine and long-playing records to provide books in audio format. As technology has changed and improved, NLS has provided higher quality, more durable audio players and formats, culminating with the digital players and cartridges in use today.

The words convey information, tell a story, create atmosphere, or place the reader in a particular place and time. It does not matter if the reader receives the words through sight, hearing, or touch.

Computer applications, designed for people with reading disabilities, will enlarge text or highlight words as a synthetic voice reads them aloud. Background and text colors can be changed, and preferred fonts can be applied. The reader can check definitions of words with onboard dictionaries and find other helps for reading comprehension.

Interestingly, the general reading public discovered the usefulness of alternative methods, such as audio books, over the last 25 years or so. Books on cassette and later, on CD, became huge sellers. They quickly

became an acceptable substitute for reading print for individuals who were busy and wanted to read in their cars or while performing other tasks.

More recently, e-books that can be read on computers and e-reader devices, such as the Kindle and the Nook, have soared in popularity. A single device can hold thousands of titles. Purchases can be made instantly through wi-fi or 3G. E-books can even

be borrowed from public libraries, although there remains room for improvement with this service. Suddenly, rumors abound that print books and the publishing industry itself may be in danger of extinction. An ongoing debate rages over the value of print, the issue of ownership, accessibility of e-readers, the reading "experience", and more.

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This brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of this article: what is a book? Is it a physical item, print or Braille, that sits on a shelf? Is it a cassette, a CD, a cartridge, a file on a computer? Is it all of these things, or none of them?

I contend that the items just listed are merely delivery methods. The contents of the book are ideas put into words, transcribed from the author's mind to paper, a computer screen, or a voice recorder. The words convey information, tell a story, create atmosphere, or place the reader in a particular place and time. It does not matter if the reader receives the words through sight, hearing, or touch. The communication taking place between the author and the reader is much the same. In the case of an audio book, the narrator becomes an equal partner in the collaboration of author and reader.

It is true that a child learning to read needs to experience spelling and grammar through the medium of print or Braille in order to master writing. When the ability to read and express coherent thought in writing is established, extracting meaning from content can be accomplished by other means. Readers can choose the most effective method for them.

"I love books. I will resist purchasing an e-reader until my dying day, plain and simple. I love the whole reading experience: the heft of a Pynchon novel, the dry rasp of paper under my fingertips, the sound of the pages sliding against each other with each turn, the satisfying thud of closing the cover."

~ *The Abysmal (a blog)*

There are those who say they prefer the feel of a book in their hands, the smell of the paper and binding, the tactile satisfaction of turning the pages. I agree that certain kinds of books are intended for a print presentation, for example, coffee-table-size art or photography books, children's books like *Pat the Bunny*, books with creative formatting in which the visual

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From the Librarian

The versatility, convenience, and re-usability of the National Library Service's digital cartridge are attributes



that can't be overstated. You can download *Green Eggs and Ham* (5 minutes) and *The Green Mile* (12 hours) from BARD, and put them both on a single cartridge. Or, you can put one each on two separate cartridges, depending on your preference. A blank cartridge resembles an empty book case. You can build your own library by buying and filling cartridges with books. Or, if you prefer, you can download books, read books, and then wipe a single cartridge clean, using (and reusing) one cartridge for years. No mail, no new manufacturing of cartridges, no new shipping containers—that's walking pretty softly on the land! Either way, the choice is yours.

The Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped are providing, through a grant, one free cartridge and shipping container to every Library patron. If you don't have your free cartridge yet, just contact your reader advisor to get one. You might also consider thanking the Friends of the Library as well. Contact Friends of the Library President, Pat Smith, at Library_friends@msn.com for more information about the Friends.

Sincerely,
Randy Landgrebe

BOOKLIST



2012 Presidential Election Bibliography **By Rachel Bussan**

Every four years the American people have the opportunity to vote for a candidate to fill the highest office in the land. In this issue, we offer books by or about the two major candidates for 2012, plus information on political parties and processes. Many other titles from all points of view are available in the Library's collection. Be an informed voter!

DB74165 ***The Obamas* by Jodi Kantor.**

New York Times correspondent conducted hundreds of interviews to create a portrait of Barack and Michelle Obama and their life in the White House. Kantor examines the first lady's influence on and advocacy for her husband and explores the political consequences of their personal dynamics. Bestseller. 2012.

DB/RC63126, BR16808 ***The Audacity of Hope* by**

Barack Obama.

Democratic senator from Illinois and author of *Dreams from My Father* (RC 43877) details his ideas to improve the country. Discusses American values, the U.S. Constitution, religion, globalization, race, and other subjects of interest to voters. Commercial audiobook. Abridged. 2006.

DB73984 ***The Real Romney* by Michael Kranish.**

Boston Globe political reporters explore the life of former Massachusetts governor and 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. They discuss the influence Romney's father, the late governor of Michigan, had on his political views and describe Romney's Mormon upbringing, his marriage, and his role at the investment company Bain Capital. Co-author is Scott Helman. 2012.

DB70753 ***No Apology: The Case For American Greatness* by Mitt Romney.**

Former Massachusetts governor and 2008 presidential candidate asserts that the country's primary objective should be "to keep America strong and to preserve its place as the world's leading nation."

Discusses geopolitical threats and domestic challenges. Proposes solutions for overhauling Medicaid, reducing dependence on foreign oil, and improving education. Bestseller. 2010.

DB/RC66001 ***American Political Parties and Elections: A Very Short Introduction* by L. Sandy Maisel.**

Distills the American electoral process and critiques its imperfections. Surveys the history of political parties, the electoral college system, presidential campaigns, and state party organizations. Author laments low voter turnout, the lack of competition among political parties, and the state of campaign financing. 2007.

DB72223 ***Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America* by Kate Zernike.**

Examination of the American Tea Party movement, which evolved after the 2008 election of President Obama. Describes its members' opposition to taxes, deficits, and illegal immigration; their strict interpretation of the U.S. Constitution; and their influence on the 2010 midterm elections. ♦

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

Adaptation a daily task in the Center

by Rebecca Swainey
Braille Teacher

Check definitions of the word 'adaptation' in Webster's New World Dictionary and you'll find the following: "...adjustment to environmental conditions as (a) adjustment of a sense organ (as the eye) to the intensity or quality of stimulation...or as a physical adjustment to meet changed conditions..."

People with vision loss know about making adaptations to meet changed conditions. Whether the loss has been from birth, developed slowly over time, or come as a sudden shock, they have, of necessity, made adjustments to their physical environment to adapt to changed conditions. These adaptations may be minor or extensive. They may be undertaken with the intent of remaining an active member of society, or as a withdrawal from a world in which they no longer feel included.

Some have adapted by relying more and more heavily on family members and friends. They deal with problems of mobility and transportation by narrowing their boundaries. Their world becomes the path to the

mailbox, the front porch, or even simply the inside of their home. They depend on others to provide transportation to doctor's appointments, grocery stores, church; they withdraw from organizations and social engagements because they have become too difficult to navigate. They stop using their stove and oven, as well as utensils such as sharp knives, because they don't feel safe in the kitchen. To them adaptation to their loss means being dependent on others.

Then there are those who choose not to adapt; to ignore their vision loss, pretending it doesn't exist. They continue to drive despite uncomfortably close calls. They bump into walls, as well as other individuals, or slip off curbs they didn't notice were near. They strain to read the print on a menu, a price tag, a computer monitor or in a book. They hold fiercely to their independence with the belief that acknowledging their vision loss, adapting to the changes in their life, is the equivalent of giving up.

Often the adaptations people have chosen, or lack of them, leave the individual

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feeling frustrated and alone. When they finally make a connection with the Iowa Department for the Blind for the first time, it's a turning point in their lives. And when they decide to enter the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center for training, they are making a huge commitment to change. Classes in the Center are designed to help students adapt from visual to nonvisual techniques. They learn to travel with a long white cane rather than rely on their limited vision to locate obstacles, stairs or curbs. They learn speech access to operate computers rather than visually reading the monitor. They learn Braille as an alternative to print for personal communications needs such as labels as well as for more extensive reading. They learn simple ways to adapt everyday tools like bending measuring spoons into ladles to dip into rather than pour from containers, or using a spatula to center a pan on the stove. They learn they can safely operate power tools and machinery with very few adaptations—using a rotomatic, a tool for tactile measuring, or a strip of brass as a guide in welding. These simple adaptations allow the individual to independently navigate and interact with their environment.

But, in order for their adaptation to be truly complete, they must also change the way they think. They must learn to problem solve, to “think outside the box” about how they might do things nonvisually, and adapt to meet their own changing conditions. Most of all they must reevaluate what they believe it means to be sighted and what it means to be blind. When they can adapt their thinking to truly accept that “It’s ok to be blind”, they have achieved the ultimate goal of their training in the Orientation and Adjustment Center. ♦

New multimedia exhibit graces IDB library's Reading Room



Part of the History of Blindness in Iowa project, this multimedia presentation in the Reading Room of the library presents vintage films, IDB history, and philosophy.

Camp Palooza makes a splash at Honey Creek

by Julie Aufdenkamp
Transition Counselor



The 2012 IDB Transition Summer programming wrapped up with Camp Palooza which ran from July 16 through July 19. The Camp was held at Honey Creek Resort on Lake Rathbun near Moravia, Iowa.

The focus was to provide the teens with a multitude of opportunities to explore and experience recreational activities in the “great outdoors.” The goal of the camp was to help students learn that they don’t have to limit themselves because of their vision loss and that alternative techniques can be used to adapt to situations in all aspects of life.

Activities featured opportunities to build skills and experiences in areas such as the alternative techniques of blindness. These include the concepts of structured discovery, problem-solving, communication, building confidence, and overcoming challenges and fears.

The focus was to provide the teens with a multitude of opportunities to explore and experience recreational activities in the “great outdoors.”

Orienteering

The students and staff met with a naturalist to learn about orienteering, which involves the use of compasses and stride (step) counting to find a particular location. Braille and talking compasses were used instead of compasses that must be accessed visually. The group broke up into teams, and the naturalist helped team

members to determine the length of their strides. The teams were then given the nautical directions and distances to reach a series of locations. The students calculated the number of strides it would take to travel

the distance and stayed on course by feeling or listening to their compasses. It was necessary to rely on canes in order to detect and steer around obstacles in their paths of travel. The activity was a great exercise in orientation and mobility as well as problem solving.

Tubing

Boating and tubing were among the students’ favorite activities. The teens and staff boarded the boats –

one was a pontoon and the other was a speed boat. Much of the afternoon and evening were spent flying across the water on tubes pulled behind the boats. For some students, tubing was a new experience which

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Adaptations for success in self-employment

By Roger Erpelding
B.E.P. Program Administrator

We learn to adapt to situations all of our lives.

When the pan is stored in an upper cabinet, we grab a step stool or chair; when the apple is ten feet from the ground, we bring a ladder; when the jar is too tight to open, we seek out a device that will enable us to obtain a firm grip and twist the lid.

As blind people, we learn some adaptations or alternative techniques quite early. I began to learn Braille in kindergarten and to write with the slate and stylus in third grade. Other techniques were obtained later in life—especially in gardening and cooking. In fact, we will continue to learn new techniques all the rest of our lives from mentors, our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

It is the same with self-employed business people in the Business Enterprises Program. Many of these adaptive and alternative techniques are learned at our Orientation Center, others while in training, and still others while we are on the job—whatever the situation warrants. The bottom line is simply this—do they work?

Our philosophy and experience says “yes”—loud and clear. Our business managers are living proof that this is so. Examples include using a dog guide or cane, reading and writing Braille, voice computer screen readers, bar code readers that use speech, readers, drivers, and the iPhone.

Terry Brannen, doing business as Marathon Vending,

“I didn’t know a blind person could do this job.”

—Randy Kluesner
B.E.P. Manager

manages the Des Moines Post Office snack bar and vending machines at the main Des Moines post office. A valuable tool he frequently uses is the I.D. Mate, a bar code reader which speaks, and identifies products for Terry. Besides product name, it can also read product ingredients and nutritional facts. Terry also employs a magnifier which enables him to write his own checks and to verify invoices. Terry’s two employees read code dates

to him, as there is no current adaptive device available for this purpose. Terry’s employees may also serve as a temporary driver, “if we need emergency groceries,” Terry states.

Terry lives a few blocks from the post office, so he uses his cane when he walks to and from work.

Part of Terry’s training involved lessons on how to use JAWS with Iowa Department for the Blind technology staff. “This allows me to read supplier catalogs and to take advantage of online specials” he said.

Terry also takes advantage of what he calls “tactile products.” Many of the packages of potato chips feel the same, and many bottled beverages also feel alike; thus, the I.D. Mate makes inventory control and product sorting possible and efficient for a blind person. “When I was in training, I learned how different many candy products feel. As I’ve gained experience as a manager, my experience in this area has increased. Snickers, Almond Joys, Mounds and Salted Nut Rolls are tactilely different.”

Randy Kluesner, D.B.A. R & Y Vending, manages a large vending route in the Davenport area, which

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includes two rest area vending sites. Earlier this year, Randy purchased an iPhone. "I've never been much for technology," he declared, "but this phone is really helpful for a blind person." "The GPS and compass features help me know where I'm at and help me run my route more efficiently. If I have to train a new driver, or go to a new location, these features are very helpful." Randy has programmed a list of telephone numbers into this device, and it even has a reminder feature that assists him. "Earlier this summer, I received a large shipment of chip products with expiration dates of July 27. I programmed this into the phone, and when the time got near, I was reminded that I needed to check this product." A unique feature for Randy has been the phone's ability to help him find objects he has dropped on the floor.

Randy is a huge believer in carrying and using his cane while at work. He is often stopped by customers, who exclaim "I didn't know a blind person could do this job." To Randy, the cane is all about efficiency and competency.

Scott Marchant, D.B.A. Cam's Vending, manages a large vending route in the Cedar Rapids area. He uses



BEP manager Scott Marchant and his guide dog, Cameron.

many of the adaptive equipment and alternative techniques pointed out above—the I.D. Mate, the white cane, and the iPhone, just to name a few.

In addition to this, Scott uses two additional adaptive methods in his business. His dog guide, Cameron, accompanies Scott on his route. Cameron draws customers, and this gives Scott a chance to educate them on the techniques of using a dog guide, and also allows his customers the opportunity to observe him being active in his many business endeavors. "Sometimes the customers pay too much attention to Cam," he observed. When Cameron is not well, Scott's competency in cane skills stands him in good stead.

Scott also uses a digital voice recorder. Inventory control and ordering are its main functions for him. "I can also

record how much coinage I need at my various locations so I can obtain the correct amount I want when I go to the bank," he stated.

As Scott grows in his business, he is also seeking a device that will help him to program his vending machines with speech. If this is available, it will assist him with pricing and other program functions that are currently visual in nature.

As our businesses grow and change, we will find adaptations which will present alternative techniques to keep up with many aspects of being self-employed. After all, adaptation is required for survival and profit. ♦



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pushed them out of their comfort zones. All were successful and gained confidence in themselves. They certainly learned some new alternative techniques with regard to getting on the tubes, swimming back to the boats after tubing, climbing into the boats from the water, and moving about in the boats.

Kayaking and Fishing

Although Mother Nature provided scorching hot temperatures, kayaking and fishing provided some great learning experiences. Participants learned how to get in and out of the kayaks, how to sit properly, how to use the paddle, and how to control the kayak. They learned that they had to rely on their listening skills to maintain their orientation while on the water. The students also learned some of the basics of fishing – how to use a rod and reel and how to use their sense of touch to bait a hook, to determine if fish were biting on their lines, and to remove fish once they were caught.

Night Hike

One evening, a naturalist led the students and staff on a “sounds of the night” hike, a trek along paved and dirt/grass trails through wooded and open areas. At times the trails followed the lake shoreline. It was very dark, and participants were forced to rely on their cane travel skills as well as listening skills. The students listened as the naturalist used recordings to call birds and owls.

Dutch Oven Cooking

A Honey Creek naturalist demonstrated how to use a cast iron Dutch oven and hot coals to bake two scrumptious desserts. The students learned, hands-on, how to safely work with the hot coals and ovens.

At the end of the four-day-long Palooza, the teens took home more than bags of dirty camp clothes. They also took home experiences that reinforced the fact that, with alternative techniques and the willingness to adapt, blindness doesn’t have to stand in the way of success in life. ♦

By Linda Slayton

Adaptation and blindness naturally go hand in hand. Being a successful blind person requires the ability to alter everyday processes in order to function. Sometimes by instinct, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity - we adapt.



enable us to help others understand blindness.

When we meet people who are unfamiliar with blindness, we encounter numerous reactions. The skills of social adaptation help us to transition a person from their initial reaction to a more comfortable familiarity with blind people. It doesn't have to be acceptance of blindness, but it does have to create a level

Social adaptation involves those techniques we use to help understand and deal with social situations.

Most people think of blind people and adaptation in terms of what we do in order to acquire physical skills that allow us to live a life similar to sighted people. We call these modified skills alternative techniques. While we may use them more than others, alternative techniques are used by everyone on Earth. We each develop a unique set of techniques to achieve our goals. We adapt.

I'd like to focus on an adaptation I think we use more effectively than most people. It's one I believe blind people are very good at, but for which we receive little notice. I'm referring to social adaptation, for lack of another term. Social adaptation involves techniques we use to help understand and deal with interpersonal situations. For us, it includes those skills that

of understanding so that communication can take place. It's a process of getting others to view us as normal people. It paves the way to initiate discussion and advance the idea that blind people deserve the same opportunities as everyone else, even if we may achieve goals differently.

I just read a book called "Blindsighted." While the book has little bearing on this topic, I like the title. For me, blindsighted refers to

that point when someone has gained enough knowledge and experience about blindness to see those who are blind as people first and their blindness as only a sub-characteristic. This may require letting someone eavesdrop so they realize we have the same type of conversations as everyone else. It may require humor or intelligence to reach them. It may even require standing up to someone to earn respect. The point is, most blind people are very good at this, and most of us don't even think about what we are doing. We adapt to what the situation calls for. We use social skills to help in awkward situations. Success is achieved when we make a positive difference in someone's thinking about blind people and our abilities.

During my own transition from being sighted to becoming blind, I made many adaptations. On a journey that continues today, I've also learned how much easier those adaptations were because, early on, some wonderful people made certain I became blindsighted. ♦

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

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effects require printed pages, or even flip books that produce animated illustrations. I maintain, however, that when the primary purpose of a book is to impart information or enjoyment through the text, a digital book on an e-reader or an audio book can fulfill that objective equally well.

I do not believe that print is doomed. Reading devices are great, but need to be charged frequently. What if the power goes out, or by some disaster, energy sources become severely limited? We will continue to use printed resources for a variety of reasons.

What may change, sooner than we think, is the author/publisher/retailer model of book sales. Self-publishing authors are marketing through online sellers, such as Amazon, and are releasing some content on their own websites for free. Rather than destroying sales, free access is generating more purchases by readers who discover authors they like and want to own.

Columnist Chris Rechtsteiner writes in "Digital Book World":

When looking specifically at traditional publishers and booksellers, two questions arise:

Could it just be that traditional booksellers and publishers aren't innovating quickly enough to meet the needs of today's authors and readers? (Absolutely)

Could it be that traditional booksellers and publishers are being out innovated by,

of all parties, cash and funding-strapped libraries? (Absolutely)...

Libraries across the country are innovating as quickly as they can with e-book lending, e-reader lending and myriad other programs. Authors are creating all types of new works to experiment with gaining readers and improving reader engagement...

Publishers (both old and new) must step up and provide the platforms (and rights management frameworks) for innovation needed by booksellers (all types of booksellers) and authors to push reading forward. If they don't, publishers will fall by the wayside as true innovation will be limited to a few (one?) large players... while authors take their storytelling to completely new platforms that are altogether outside of the bookselling and library frameworks.

Rechtsteiner's call for innovation ties in to the adaptations that we in the business of services for the blind and print-disabled are developing and promoting every day. Library services will continue to evolve rapidly, to the point where the Library may be unrecognizable in as little as five years. The cassettes will be withdrawn by the end of 2015; downloading will be commonplace; and other delivery methods for digital content that we have yet to imagine may be fully established. What will not change is our commitment to our library patrons and their desire to read what they want, when they want, and in the formats of their choice. ♦

NOTES

Director

Richard Sorey

Richard.Sorey@blind.state.ia.us

Deputy Director

Bruce Snethen

bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us

Commission for the Blind

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 4, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

Mike Hoenig, commission chair

Peggy Elliott, member

Jlm Omgig, member

Mission:

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

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

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 23, 2012

2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Vision Loss Resource Fair

Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center
28 S. Linn Street

Iowa City, IA

Special guest Dr. Rebecca Aspholm will speak about eye diseases and their treatment, and exhibitors will present information, tools, and techniques for dealing with vision loss.

October 24, 2012

12:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Vision Loss Resource Fair

Waterloo Public Library
415 Commercial Street
Waterloo, IA

Special guest Dr. Brendan Girschek will speak about eye diseases and their treatment, and exhibitors will present information, tools, and techniques for dealing with vision loss.

November 3, 2012

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Senior Health Fair

Des Moines University
Student Education Center
3300 Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA

If you are 50 or older, come join us for FREE screenings. Iowa Department for the Blind will be there! Questions? Call 515-271-1041.

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

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

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

Attention Eastern Iowa: Vision Loss Resource Fairs are Coming!

Iowa Department for the Blind staff, guest speakers, and exhibitors will present in two eastern Iowa cities to inform residents about services for blind and visually impaired Iowans.

Iowa City • Tuesday, October 23rd

2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center

28 South Linn Street

Waterloo • Wednesday, October 24

12 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Waterloo Public Library

415 Commercial Street

Learn about:

- **Eye diseases and their treatment**
- **Assistive technology**
- **Tips and tools for maintaining independence**
- **Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**

The informational sessions are free and open to the public.

Learn more about our services and visits to your community at www.IDBonline.org or (800) 362-2587.