

# The WhiteCane

The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind

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Senior Orientation opens doors to self-discovery

Teacher-client partnership cultivates new ideas

How should blind people plan for a career?

Words to live by

Confidence to explore and discover

BEP manager embarks on new journey

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## Encouraging Exploration

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## |from the editor

The author T.S. Elliot said, “We shall not cease from exploration.” This is as much a challenge as it is an observation. It’s a challenge to constantly re-examine yourself and the world.

This issue of The White Cane is all about exploring your needs, desires, talents, and dreams—what it is you want out of life; not what someone has told you you should expect.

Self-discovery can be a scary and rewarding experience. IDB is a resource that can provide you with the guidance and tools you’ll need to travel new paths should you choose to explore them. What you do with those tools and guidance, however, is up to you.

Not knowing where your explorations may lead could be risky, but that’s also part of the fun. Consider opening a new door or traveling down that untrod path and see where it takes you...

— Meredith Ferguson, Editor

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I am settling into my new job, and I am delighted to have been selected to lead an agency that has a proven track record as a leader in the field of Blindness Rehabilitation. IDB is facing significant challenges due to a soft job market and budgetary constraints, but we will meet those challenges by building on past successes and implementing new strategies that will increase employment outcomes.

IDB is fortunate to have the greatest orientation center in the nation, so we will do everything we can to ensure that center graduates develop the skills and attitudes that will lead to success. We will also work hard to ensure that center graduates develop technology skills that can be utilized effectively in our changing job market.

We will expand transition services by creating more summer work opportunities for individuals attending high school and college in order to increase their preparedness for employment.

We are developing a community based program that will address the training needs of individuals who require more technology skills to work competitively.

IDB will partner with VR customers to locate employment opportunities for VR clients who are job ready.

The National Federation of the Blind, Iowa chapter (NFB-I) and the Iowa Council of the United Blind (ICUB) are organizations that are committed to improving the quality of life for all blind Iowans, and we want to partner with those groups to generate more referrals, reestablish a mentoring network, and advocate for the Iowa Blind.

We have a great deal to accomplish, but if we all work together to improve the quality of life for Blind Iowans, we can change what it means to be blind in the great state of Iowa.



Sincerely,  
*Richard Sorey*

# Meet new members of the IDB staff

## IDB welcomes new director, Richard Sorey!

**O**n June 1st, 2012, the Iowa Department for the Blind welcomed a new director, Mr. Richard Sorey. Mr. Sorey is a native of Chesapeake, Virginia. He attended James Madison University where he received a BS in Communication Arts in 1984 and his MSED in Counseling from Old Dominion University in 1995. He began his Rehabilitation career in 1984 as a Job Placement Specialist in Richmond, Virginia.

Mr. Sorey comes to us from the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services where he worked as the Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind. Prior to that, he worked for 16 years at the Virginia Department for the Blind where he held several positions, including serving as the Director of the Business Enterprise Program and the Regional Director for the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

While serving as the director in Mississippi, Mr. Sorey reported to the Executive Director of the Department of Rehabilitative Services. He enjoyed his time in Mississippi and his experiences taught him a lot, but he just couldn't pass up the opportunity to interview for the position at IDB. "One of the things that I learned is that we're very fortunate to have an agency for the blind that provides separate, distinctive rehabilitation services for those folks that are blind," he said. He feels fortunate to have been selected.

As director, he is looking forward to leading IDB, and blind Iowans, into a new chapter. He reflected on the atmosphere, saying, "I can already tell, after only being here a short period of time, this is a family. I'm very privileged to be involved in this family."

IDB's new director, Mr. Richard Sorey gets ready for one of the many meetings he's had to familiarize himself with the agency. Mr. Sorey is settling into his duties and is looking forward to his time here in Iowa.



His main goal as director is, "To add onto, and to build on what we are already doing. No matter how well you're doing, no matter how successful you are, you can always be better. That's my challenge to all of us." He's looking forward to building partnerships with the consumer groups in Iowa, and in general, focusing on helping blind Iowans achieve their goals and objectives.

He remarked on IDB's already excellent program, of having a history of being the best blindness rehabilitation agency in the country, and we are recognized on a national level. "We've got a great agency; so many tools, resources and equipment, and so much knowledge we just can't go wrong," he said. IDB may already be an excellent program, but there's always room for improvement. Director Sorey is up to the challenge. ♦

# Jim Omvig appointed to Iowa Commission Board

By Rick Dressler  
Communications Specialist

Jim Omvig is no stranger to the Iowa Department for the Blind. Widely recognized as a pioneering advocate for civil rights for the blind in Iowa and nationally, he has had a long, illustrious career as both lawyer and activist. His longtime connection to the department dates back to 1961 when he started as a student in the Orientation Center.

Originally from Slater, Jim and his wife Sharon only recently returned to Iowa after living around the country. Following his move back, Jim was appointed to the Iowa Commission for the Blind board by Governor Branstad. Mr. Omvig begins his tenure on the Commission at the same time as IDB's new director, Mr. Richard Sorey, takes over. Looking forward to getting back to his roots, Mr. Omvig stated his goal is, "to work with [Mr. Sorey], and just really make this the best place it can be so that blind people in Iowa who have not had services yet can have the best possible services."

Diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at the age of 10, Jim attended and graduated from the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School in Vinton. After living at home and working in a creamery for several years, he made his way to Des Moines and became a student in the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center in 1961. Thankful for the training he received, Mr. Omvig said, "I [learned] how to deal with my blindness just absolutely and totally."

Mr. Omvig went on to receive his undergraduate and law degree from Loyola University. After traveling around the country, he soon realized that other states didn't offer the kind of training he received in Iowa. Mr. Omvig has been involved with work for the blind ever since. He was the first



Jim Omvig brings years of experience to his position as a member of the Iowa Commission for the Blind Board.

blind attorney ever hired by a federal agency, the National Labor Relations Board; and he's been a member of the Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled in Washington, D.C. He's come full circle in a way, from being a student to coming back 51 years later to be a member of the board.

While "partially retired", Mr. Omvig obviously isn't slowing down. Passionate about improving opportunities for the next generation, Mr. Omvig urges young, blind Iowans to get the proper training they need to succeed in life. More importantly, he encourages them to connect with inspired blind people. His advice is, "Get immediately connected with other blind people who are successful so you've got role models every day of your life." ♦



# Senior Orientation opens doors to self-discovery



Mary Jo Bragg (left) learns how to mark cans of food. This was one of many skills she learned while spending a week in Senior Orientation.

Every year, the Independent Living program hosts a week of intensive training for seniors at the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) in Des Moines. Participants learn skills and develop confidence to help them adjust to vision loss. They are also given the chance to meet others who share their experiences.

In April, Mary Jo Bragg, from DeWitt, IA, participated in Senior Orientation. Mary Jo submitted a reflection on her experience in hopes that her letter “conveys to you and anyone else who may read it just how much this experience has opened my life to possibilities I thought were lost.” Here is what Mary had to say:

“My experiences with Senior Orientation brought

me to a new awareness of myself and gave me the tools to run with my new-found liberty.

When I first heard that I was a candidate for this week of self-discovery I was very apprehensive. I had no idea what to expect or what I could possibly come away with, after all I was “blind.”

What I discovered was: Yes, I was blind, but I had accepted the stereotype of the general public and my family that said I would always be needy. I, however, discovered I can do anything I set my mind to. I just have to find different and new ways to accomplish the things that, as a sighted person, I took for granted. I learned to accept that I can still cook, enjoy books, take walks, work with my crafts, and be all that I

was before I lost my sight. I may not be able to drive, but I can take a bus or find a driver. I can still enjoy shopping, being involved with my church, and any number of activities. The world is mine to explore any way I wish.

When we first arrived at IDB, I was immediately set at ease by the warm and friendly, knowledgeable staff. I felt safe and was then able to embrace the teaching and guidance in a warm and loving environment. I can do anything I set my mind to trying. My world no longer had to have self-imposed or pre-conceived limits. Nothing is impossible, just a new challenge that is waiting to be conquered. In one class I learned to cook, in another I learned to read Braille. I learned cane travel and crafts. These were all tools that showed me I was still a useful citizen.

In business class I learned that we are all teachers, helping our family, friends and community to see blindness in a new light. I also learned to come to terms with my lack of vision and that my eyes may not see, but my brain still does. We can be as useful and as involved as we choose to be.

Most of all I learned that we are not helpless victims of fate but masters of our lives!!!” ♦

## Teacher-client partnership cultivates new ideas

By Barb Weigel  
IL Project Specialist

The moment a call comes in with a referral for Independent Living (IL) services, the process of exploring the client's needs begins. The staff person receiving the initial call explores what the client would like assistance with and offers various services to help meet the needs. The referral is then assigned to an IL teacher, and an in-home visit is arranged.

At the initial home visit, the IL teacher continues to assess the client's needs and helps the client explore additional options that may not have been considered. Often, when individuals are first referred to IDB, they have already formed opinions about what they can and cannot do. It isn't until an IL teacher helps them explore and identify alternatives that they begin to realize the possibilities and no longer limit themselves because of vision loss.

The areas to be explored cover all aspects of everyday life. The exploration process is a joint effort between the client and the IL teacher. The teacher not only educates the client about tech-

niques and resources, but also provides guidance. The client is then able to choose the areas important to him or her, and together, the client (with the help of the IL teacher) begins to implement the techniques and resources to meet the identified needs.

Here are some examples of how all of this works:

Cindy recently decided to discontinue driving. With the help of her IL teacher, she is exploring public bus routes, paratransit, and volunteers to get to church activities, medical appointments, and volunteer work. She has also started using a white cane for greater independence and increased recognition and safety in the community.

Due to health issues, Sharon isn't able to get out into the community as much for social events. She now finds herself getting bored. She relied on her library services to help pass the time but recently decided this is no longer enough. She is exploring additional leisure activities such as craft projects to help fill her time and to fulfill her need to be more productive.

Sara has always loved to bake and entertain. She was having trouble reading reci-

pes, finding new recipes, and measuring ingredients. She had started buying ready-made items rather than making them from scratch.

With guidance from her teacher, Sara realized she didn't have to give up these tasks. She explored options for recipes and had her favorite recipes recorded into audio format. She sought and continues to seek new recipes through books and magazines from the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. She also uses adapted measuring spoons and cups to measure accurately. She is again making items from scratch and feels confident enough to entertain again.

The process of exploration is just that—a process. As clients and teachers work together, clients gain the confidence and skills that often result in the desire to explore additional options they hadn't initially considered. It is through the client-teacher partnership that all needs are explored and addressed. ♦

*For more information about IDB's Independent Living services, please call (800) 362-2587 or visit our website at [www.idbonline.org](http://www.idbonline.org).*

# Thirst for knowledge is woman's driving force

By Liz Soenen  
Rehabilitation Teacher

**M**eet Delores – former Hospice patient, residing in Garner's Concord Care Center. Delores is legally blind, in a wheelchair, on oxygen, has a pacemaker, is insulin dependent, and is a cancer survivor. The day she no longer needed Hospice care, she said, "I just didn't want to lie here and go to waste, so I got up and started moving, [to the best of my ability]." This mother of seven (one deceased), did just that. From her little shared room, Delores continually explores new things.

Delores' relationship with IDB began when a caregiver from the nursing home brought her to the Annual Mason City Diabetes Festival in search of information. As she came by the IDB booth, she said, "It caught ahold of me." She wanted to further explore ways in which she could read on her own again. "Reading is like eating for me," she said. "If I can't read, I'm not a very happy camper."

When the digital talking book player came from the Iowa Library for the Blind, she found she could, "explore the machine on my own to listen to the instructions," and she hasn't stopped reading since. The

digital talking book player gives Delores access to a wide variety of interesting reading materials.

Delores recently talked with her local community college about learning to use the computer. She checked out audio computer books such as "Computers for Dummies" and decided that

**I just didn't want to lie there and go to waste, so I got up and started moving.**

learning to use a computer was not for her.

Delores continues to "travel" and explore the larger world through geography and history books. A cartridge provided by the Friends of the Library to every patron enables her to request specific books from the collection; these books can be added to her personal cartridge by a readers' advisor from the Library.

Over the years, Delores has taken some writing courses and written short stories. Since her vision loss, she began using a writing guide to write print independently. Recently, she also purchased a digital recorder which she uses to "write" her

unfinished stories.

The activity coordinator, Marlene Lewerke, encourages her and can line up a volunteer to assist Delores with getting her stories into the computer for printing when she is ready for that step.

Delores explores avenues which can help other people. When she realized the facility did not have a quiet worship area, she began to open up a dialogue with staff about options. Now, something better is in progress.

Delores says her many years with Al-Anon instilled in her a belief that helping even one person is a good thing. She still does this, advocating for self and others in the nursing home, telling others about the services from the Department, participating in activities, and problem-solving so that she can participate in activities, regardless of the amount of vision she has. It was only recently that she stopped calling Bingo, but she is currently exploring ways in which she might be able to continue with this fun activity.

The old adage, "You can't know what you don't know," rings true for Delores. When she has the opportunity to learn something that will enrich her life and others, she is going to find a way for that to happen. ♦



## How should blind people do career planning?

In the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program of the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), our VR counselors are often asked to provide information about jobs that are well-suited to the blind or employers who have hired (and are supposedly familiar with) blind people. These inquiries are based on the all-too-common (and mistaken) belief that people who are blind should work only in careers where other blind people have achieved success or for employers who have had previous experience with blind or visually impaired employees.

While this approach may sometimes garner a successful outcome, it is certainly not one which reflects our belief in the ability of blind or visually impaired Iowans (given proper training and opportunity) to achieve success in today's labor market. When a person is trying to make a career choice, conventional wisdom tells us that three questions need to be considered:

1. What kind of work do I want to do?
2. What kind of work can I do?

3. What does the labor market look like for the jobs that are suited to my interests and abilities, and what is the demand for these jobs where I live or would like to live?

These questions are no less important for our VR clients to consider. In fact, we urge them to think about these questions and to adopt the same approach as their sighted peers. We recognize that there is a powerful temptation to focus exclusively on jobs that have been performed successfully by other blind people or to contact employers who have had successful experiences with blind employees. We urge our clients not to succumb to this temptation but instead to concentrate most of their efforts on doing the same things that other jobseekers do in career planning. We encourage them to regard blindness not as a barrier but as merely another characteristic which, combined with many others, comprises the entire individual.

Our hope is that VR clients will select careers in which they have both a genuine interest and a strong aptitude. Curtis Chong, Program Administrator of Field

Operations and Access Technology, encourages clients to "put aside the blindness and discover your likes and dislikes. Then, we can work with you to build the skill and confidence you need to achieve your goals."

How does one go about discovering the career that matches his/her skills, aptitudes, and interests? According to Chong, the key is to "Start asking yourself some basic questions. Do you want to work inside or outside? What kind of money do you want to make? Do you want to work with people or more on your own? Do you like working with your hands or do you prefer activities that involve more concentration?" This is an area where our VR counselors can be of tremendous help. While they won't actually answer these questions directly, they can provide guidance and advice which will help the client to answer these questions for him or herself.

Once a VR client has a solid grasp on his/her interests and talents, the next step is to talk with the people who hold the jobs in which he/she might be interested. A client should not as-

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sume that a sighted person should never be consulted. The whole idea here is for the client to find out everything that is involved with a particular job or career and then to make an informed choice about whether this is the right career.

Certainly, the characteristic of blindness or poor vision needs to be considered. Is the client proficient in the alternative techniques of blindness, and is proficiency with these techniques actually required for the career being considered? For example, suppose a particular job requires an extensive amount of reading and writing, and suppose further that the job involves completing a lot of work with some extremely tight timelines. The VR client needs to consider the question of whether or

not he or she possesses the ability to read and write as quickly and efficiently as the job requires—regardless of whether the reading and writing tasks are to be accomplished with Braille, speech, enlarged print, or in another way.

And while there are certainly some jobs for which sight is absolutely essential, the actual number of those jobs is fewer than most people think. For example, driving a truck is certainly an activity which today requires the ability to see. But the blind person could imagine owning the trucking company. Flying a plane is something for which a person must be able to see. But a qualified blind person could conceivably work as a design engineer and build that plane.

Our VR program wants

everyone to remember that blindness does not have to stop a person from achieving a lifelong dream. With the right combination of skills and confidence, many things are possible. ♦

*The Department's employment services are delivered through its Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. VR helps blind or visually impaired Iowans prepare for, obtain and retain employment in a variety of occupations. Applicants are eligible for services based upon their visual disability, their need for employment services and their intent to work.*

*If you or someone you know could benefit from our services, call at (515) 281-1333 for more information!*

## Did you know you can...

Make a referral for a family member or friend any time? There are multiple ways you can do this:

- Go online to [www.idbonline.org/form/referral](http://www.idbonline.org/form/referral)
- Send it in via U.S. Mail
- E-mail the form as an attachment to [information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us)
- Give us a call!

Local: 515-281-1333; Toll free (in Iowa) 800-362-2587; TTY: 515-281-1355

# Words To Live By...



By Lance Blas  
Rehabilitation Teacher

Sandi Ryan grew up in Nevada, Iowa. She was a very curious young girl with a passion for reading. She also happened to be blind, so this passion was at grave risk of becoming a major frustration. The school and public libraries only had print books, and Sandi needed Braille or recorded books. Sandi's mother wanted to help her daughter drink in the magic of reading and to experience everything that can be found in the world of books, so she started to investigate their options. Fortunately, this search soon led to the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), home to the regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

"As a 10 year old fourth grader, it was always a big deal to travel to the big city (Des Moines)," Sandi recalls. She made that trip one day with her mother and embarked on an adventure that would last a lifetime. "I couldn't believe how many books were here at this wonderful place. I picked out a book with the help of the librarian and found a place in the middle of all the books, sat down, and started reading. I remember thinking to myself that I want to live in a library all the rest of my life."

Sandi signed up to receive audio books in the mail. Talking books at this time in the

early 1960's were records. She remembers the records being heavy and playing at 33 1/3 RPM. "The record players themselves were bulky square machines that had wonderful sound. The biggest problem with the records was the scratches. They would snap, crackle, pop, and often skip in the best places where you wanted to hear the words the most."

In the beginning, Sandi would order a long playing record with the help of her reader's advisor and it would take up to 10 days to get it. In the late 60's the records became smaller and were able to hold more information. Cassette audio books began being produced in the mid 70's. "I thought I was in heaven. The cassette player was so much smaller than the record player. The cassette books could be carried in one's pocket, and with the cassette having four tracks, I could listen to one book for hours. I would order a book and it would come in the mail in just three to four days in a smaller more manageable container. From what I can remember, David Copperfield by Charles Dickens was on 36 records and at this time it could fit on just 10-11 cassettes. It was so much easier to store the books and carry them around."

"In my college career, I relied on the IDB

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Library to produce my textbooks in accessible formats on cassette and in Braille. The talented Braillists even created charts and pictures for me in a raised image that helped me to understand the material.” Sandi considers herself to be a “visual” learner, so being able to touch tactile representations of what was being taught in the audio text was a valuable learning tool. These services are still available to students through the library at the IDB.

Sandi attended Iowa State University where she earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Dietetics and a Master’s Degree in Human Nutrition. After college Sandi worked as a licensed dietician for the Department of Public Health. She continued to use the IDB Library. “When teaching people about nutrition and good health skills, I was able to get nutrition, health, and cook books from the library in formats that I could access. This really was an important part of the way that I was able to teach and better the lives of the clients that I worked with.”

“The idea that blind people don’t read and enjoy the same books as everyone else was as wrong in the 70’s as it is now. I have always wanted to stay up to date on current events. My Reader’s Digest Magazine would come in the mail, and it would be a month behind the issue that my sighted friends were reading. They would ask me if I had read an article in the latest issue, and I would have to say, ‘No, I won’t get that article until next month.’ I felt left out. Now I get the same current issue of the magazine when my sighted friends get it and, when someone asks if I have read a story, I can confidently say, ‘Yes!’ and we can discuss the story.

Technology has made access to written materials for blind people much easier and more timely. Sandi remembers Braille books taking three years or more to become available after being published in print.



Sandi Ryan discovered an invaluable resource in the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at a young age. Sandi used Library services while attending college, and now enjoys downloading books and magazines from her home.

Tapes were available sooner, but she still had to wait nearly 18 months for the recorded version of a recently published book. Now, audio books are often available within six months of the release of a print book. Sandi is a frequent visitor to the web site of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped ([www.nlsbard.loc.gov](http://www.nlsbard.loc.gov)), where she is able to browse and download new releases. She also uses the IDB on line Library Link to order books. She says “I have so many more choices now because of technology. I am able to download books and now magazines on a thumb drive or cartridge using my own computer. Several books and magazines can fit on one of these devices.” She enjoys magazines such as Good Housekeeping, Diabetes Forecast, and Cooking Light.

Sandi also participates in a book club that is hosted by the IDB. Five to seven people read a selected book each month and then discuss it via a telephone conference call. Sandi is able to download book club selections on to a cartridge so she can have a library of these books on one single device that is smaller than a deck of cards. Pretty cool stuff! While Sandi enjoys being able to download her own books, it is good to know that IDB library staff stands ready to provide this service upon request.

Sandi has benefited from the experts in the library. She says “Back in the beginning I worked very closely with my reader’s

# Volunteers recognized at 2012 Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop and Luncheon

**H**eld on April 20, “Volunteers: Time-Honored Classics” was the theme for this year’s Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop and Luncheon. From the long-serving to the class acts, all volunteers were welcomed and celebrated throughout the day’s seminars for Braillists and Narrators, the Library Users’ Panel, and the Awards Luncheon.

Keynote speaker Cody Dolinsek, doctoral student in philosophy and library patron, conveyed the importance of reading and described the impact certain authors have had on him. He quoted C. S. Lewis and Saul Bellow, and noted that reading Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* led to a turning point in his life. “Books constitute for me one of the most important things that make me who I am,” Cody said. He extended his gratitude to all the transcribers who have Brailled and recorded books for him.

The 2012 Perowsky Award was presented to Narrator Robert White of Moline, Illinois. Bob has recorded over 110 items since he began in 2006, averaging better than eighteen transcriptions per year. Bob also serves as the Library’s field expert, assisting several other narrators in the Quad Cities area with equipment issues and recording questions. A retired theatre professor, he enjoys researching pronunciations and can make even dry reading a pleasure to hear. Every assignment is an adventure in learning something new. “One of the great joys of narrating is all of the doors that have been opened. Thank you again for the opportunities you have given me to expand my world by the choices of books you have assigned,” Bob stated. ♦

For a full list of awards and recipients, please visit [www.idbonline.org/volunteer/volunteer-workshop](http://www.idbonline.org/volunteer/volunteer-workshop).

## From the Librarian

Going places doesn’t always require leaving a comfortable chair. Everyone who has read a great book knows the feeling of being pulled into a scene or a setting. The best writers telling good stories—whether fiction or nonfiction—always help us explore both the unfamiliar and the familiar people and places of life in ways that entertain us and occasionally change us.



I recall the first time I read *Siddhartha* (DB 52190) by Herman Hesse, a fictionalized version of Buddha’s life. I was 16. I knew no Buddhists, but I had seen on television the famous photo of the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, protesting religious persecution in Vietnam. Later I stumbled upon Hesse’s novel in my hometown library. Reading *Siddhartha* took me on a journey far from the world I had been raised in, and it forever changed how I viewed the world.

Many books have changed me. Books have led me to high mountain summits, meditative retreats, to a better understanding of friendship, and books have even led me to new jobs. Sometimes the best explorations of all don’t require a single step, just the turn of a page. Then the book is put away, and the second part of discovery begins.

*Sincerely,*

*Randy Landgrebe*

# BOOKLIST

**Here is a booklist featuring tales of adventure.**

**DB72203**

***Boone: a biography* by Robert Morgan**

Biography of legendary woodsman Daniel Boone (1734-1820) who led pioneer settlers to Kentucky before making his home in Missouri. Examines Boone's freemasonry and Quaker beliefs during revolution and wilderness wars. Details Boone's later years as he struggled with debt and failed business ventures. Discusses Boone's influence on American culture. 2007.

**DB70636**

***Emperors of the ice: a true story of disaster and survival in the Antarctic, 1910-13* by Richard Farr.**

Fictionalized account of Englishman Robert F. Scott's Antarctic expedition based on the memoirs of Apsley Cherry-Garrard, an assistant zoologist on the adventure. Describes Scott's harrowing march to the South Pole and a side trip in search of emperor penguin eggs. 2008.

**DB70119**

***Pirate latitudes: a novel* by Michael Crichton.**

Jamaica, 1665. Captain Charles Hunter of the Casandra assembles a motley

crew to infiltrate the Spanish fortress on Matanceros island and steal its gold. An adventurous, bloody raid ensues against the outpost's garrison and its savage commander, Cazalla. Violence and some descriptions of sex. Bestseller. 2009.

**DB73281**

***Napoleon's pyramids* by William Dietrich.**

While in Paris, Ethan Gage, a thirty-three-year-old American frontiersman, wins a curiously engraved gold medallion in a card game and soon after is framed for murder. Gage escapes to Egypt with Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition. He encounters mysteries, battles, and treachery; finds love; and solves the mystery of the amulet. 2007.

**DB015344**

***Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from the Camino* by Joyce Rupp.**

A 60-year-old nun from Iowa and her friend Tom, a semi-retired priest, walk a 37-day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain. Along the way she reflects on the all-too-physical journey they take in Spain and the spiritual journey that we all take. 2005.

**DB015260**

***The Collected Short Stories of Louis L'Amour: Frontier Stories, Volume 7* by Louis L'Amour.**

A collection of 28 tales of danger, hardship and adventure in the Old West. 2009.

**DB015412**

***Travelers' Tales: Grand Canyon* by James O'Reilly, ed.**

Though millions of people visit the Grand Canyon every year, few venture beyond its spectacular vistas. Through these stories, readers experience the deeper wonders of this magnificent world treasure. Join Barry Lopez, David Brower, Terry Tempest Williams, and more celebrated authors as they swim in hidden grottos under luminous waterfalls, raft the white water of the Colorado River, sleep under billion-year-old cliffs, face the terror of a flash flood, hike ancient Native American trails through astonishing side canyons, and stand alone in an immense solitude. An updated guidebook section provides detailed information on visiting and exploring the area. 2005.

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



# The confidence to explore and discover

By Rebecca Swainey  
Braille Teacher

While students voluntarily enter the Orientation Center, that doesn't mean all are eager to take cane travel class. A case in point is Linda Stone, 65. In 2007, while living in Peoria, Illinois, Linda suddenly experienced a series of losses. First: the loss of her husband after a terminal illness, followed by loss of a job she loved. Meanwhile, she lost vision due to diabetic retinopathy. Finally, there came the loss of her home. Out of necessity, Linda moved in with a daughter. When that daughter moved to Texas, Linda moved to a senior housing complex near another daughter in Marshalltown, Iowa. Living alone, Linda became a prisoner in her own apartment. She feared going out because she could not see. Then she met an Independent Living Teacher from the Iowa Department for the Blind and began her journey towards independence. Linda was soon given a cane and her first mobility lessons. She attended a week of training called Senior Orientation, and from this experience, decided to enter the Orientation Center as a full-time student.

When Linda started travel class in the Center, she was absolutely terrified to go outside of the building wearing sleep shades, which she'd absolutely refused to do during Senior Orientation. With most students, this fear diminishes by the end of their first or second month. In Linda's case, travel class meant extreme levels of anxiety, sometimes even requiring calls to her therapist. After several months, her anxiety decreased to a point that she could solo around the agency's home block. Linda was ecstatic. Measurements of great achievements vary for each student; in Linda's case, soloing home block was like climbing Mount

Orientation student, Linda Stone, hones her cane travel skills while navigating the home economics kitchen. Linda attended a week of training in Senior Orientation before she decided to enter the Orientation Center as a full-time student.



Everest. She would have been quite happy to stop at this point, but with strong encouragement, she pushed on to cross streets and explore the world beyond.

Life changed dramatically as a result of her training. Linda blossomed into an on-the-go ambassador for the Iowa Department for the Blind. "I have given dozens of presentations to all types of groups since I got my training at the Department," Linda said. "I travel all over the place, and not just in Marshalltown. I've gone by myself to my daughter's place in Texas. I've been to Arkansas to visit my brother. I've been to Illinois several times to visit my mother and family there. When I lost my sight, I never imagined that I could do any of these things by myself. I thought my life was over. I didn't think I could do anything. Travel was such a struggle for me when I started in the Center. I said to my teacher, 'Why don't you just give up on me? I'm a lost cause!' But he didn't,

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and I didn't, and now look at me today. I'm always going someplace!"

Concerns for independent mobility are not unique to older or newly blind individuals. Jerad Nylin, 19, was born with Leber's congenital amaurosis, a rare eye disease. Although legally blind, he has some usable vision. He received mobility training until his sophomore year of high school, when he decided it wasn't cool to be seen with a long white cane because others would think he was 'blind'. So his cane was parked in the corner of his bedroom, or in his closet –anyplace except

in his hand. After high school graduation, he realized he didn't have the confidence to compete in the real world. He decided to enter the Orientation Center.

His years of mobility instruction were beneficial, and Jerad started travel class with a good foundation; what he lacked was confidence. His goals were to refresh his skills and improve his confidence while in the process becoming familiar with a new city. He grew up in Cedar Rapids. Des Moines and its surrounding suburbs were a whole new experience.

Jerad's confidence grew, beginning with his first solo route. "I felt so good that I

could go someplace I'd never been before and be successful in doing it. I already knew how to use a cane, but being out there alone in an unfamiliar area was freaky. Having that first bit of success spurred me to want more. It became a game, a challenge that I enjoy." Jerad noted, "I've had all kinds of experiences and now I am confident I can travel anywhere." Jerad will be using this new confidence when he begins school this fall at Kirkwood Community College. ♦

## 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.



### Navigating Shop

Jerad Nylin, recent graduate of the Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center, enters the shop located in the basement of the Department. Using the training he received in cane travel, Jerad confidently maneuvers in between the various machines and other obstacles to reach his work station.

Photo by Mark Edge.

# Benefits of Discovering the World of Work

Transition program focuses on helping blind and visually impaired teens gain employment experience

By Julie Aufdenkamp  
Transition Counselor

It's a common belief that teenagers often pick up more than a paycheck from a part-time or summer job. Why should it be any different for a blind or visually impaired youth? A focus of the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) Transition Program is to provide high school students with opportunities to gain meaningful work experience that could positively impact their future vocational goals and subsequent employment.

There is a lot to gain from a part-time job, including lessons that go beyond high school classrooms. A blind or visually impaired teen employee could gain experience in addressing his/her disability with the employer and other staff and advocating for reasonable accommodations. All high school-aged employees would have opportunities on the job to develop interpersonal skills and other valuable skills related to teamwork, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, gathering and processing information,

following direction, planning, organizing, and prioritizing. Teen jobs could also help build discipline, responsibility, reliability, a good work ethic, and work experience that could pay off later in life.

A part-time job could serve as one method for exploring potential careers. In addition, building work experience; developing job-specific abilities (i.e. computer skills, cooking skills, customer service skills, etc.); and creating a network or a pool of contacts by getting to know people would also be big positives. It's never too early to start networking. A part-time job could enable a high school student to potentially grow with the company, learn about job leads, and develop reference lists.

The employment component of the IDB Transition Program is incorporated into the Weekend Retreats and Summer Camps held each year. Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and staff also work with students on a one-on-one basis in developing plans to prepare for, search for, obtain, and retain part-time employment. Ultimately the

program provides students with the opportunity to learn about the responsibilities and experience the rewards of holding a job. The most important lesson they learn is that they can work competitively and independently despite their vision loss.

All of the Transition Program components serve to enhance each other. They include personal and social development, life-skills training, building non-visual techniques for daily living, assistive technology exploration, connecting with other teens experiencing vision loss, recognizing how to be good consumers of IDB services, becoming more independent and self-confident, exploring careers, trying recreational and volunteering activities, and learning how to advocate. ♦

*The IDB Transition Program is available to blind and visually impaired Iowans (eligible for vocational rehabilitation services), ages 14 to 21 that have completed the eighth grade and not yet graduated from high school.*



# |business enterprises

## Former BEP manager embarks on new journey



Since 1997, Monty Habben has managed several federal, state and local vending sites across Iowa. Habben's involvement with BEP has given him the experience and confidence to pursue a new calling as the Assistant Pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Centerville.

By Roger Erpelding  
BEP Program Administrator

If you choose, you can remain in good standing as a licensed blind manager in the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) for the rest of your working life, and many do. It is a profitable and positive program which works, so why not stay with it?

For others, our program enables individuals to pursue and obtain a lifelong dream through hard work, profit, and success. This is the case with Monty Habben, our manager, Hoover Building Vending, in Des Moines.

After a successful stint in the Adult Orientation & Adjustment Center, Mr. Habben

was trained and licensed in BEP, and obtained his first assignment as Manager of the Waterloo Vending Route in May of 1997. This vending route included the main post office, along with several county buildings, and the Waterloo City Hall.

It was soon learned that Monty could please customers and impress staff as well as his fellow blind managers. Therefore, when the manager of our Sioux City facility was preparing to leave in June of 1998, she called Monty to see if he might be interested. At that time, this facility included a cafeteria, and although Monty had received food service training, he had no experience in cafeteria

management. We assured Monty that we would give him the support and assistance he would need if interested. He "bid" on this facility, and was assigned in August of 1998. Besides the cafeteria, this facility featured a large vending route covering several federal, state and local locations.

Upon his arrival in Sioux City, Monty realized that his direct customer contacts in the cafeteria and his interest in youth ministry could mesh into the beginning of a positive journey. He became involved in Youth for Christ as well as the Boys and Girls Home. His experience in a neighborhood youth center

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as a teenager became a valuable asset in his ability to relate to troubled youth he was serving.

As often happens, a strong foundation in an area leads to additional interest and developments. Therefore, in March of 2003, Monty encountered his next assignment as manager of the Des Moines Post Office Vending. He soon discovered that the environment was much different than a county court house cafeteria. The customers were a tougher group and not always happy with the world or the BEP program. Even so, Monty knew he had the skills to convert problems into prospects. The snack bar had been closed due to its non-profitability. Could the snack bar be re-opened and made profitable too? He worked with postal management and postal union representatives to see if this was possible. To the benefit of all, Monty showed his abilities in making his third, and toughest, assignment an unqualified success.

The money was good, but the hours were long and arduous. This facility is open 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. This facility also has several vending areas. During this time, Monty encountered a number of health problems that required him to take life at a bit slower pace.

Therefore, in May of 2008, he was assigned as manager of a large vending route in the Des Moines area. As before, he served customers in a va-



The Center  
helped me to  
find myself. BEP  
helped me find  
my purpose.

riety of federal, state and local places.

Part of Monty's on-the-job training was spent at the Hoover Building Vending Facility. It was his favorite site, and he vowed "I'll be back." When its manager retired in May of 2010, Monty was assigned as manager. This facility required much less time, as it is contained in one building, except for one satellite location. This allowed Monty to maximize his customer service skills, and gave him time to pursue his work with troubled youth.

Monty moved to Des Moines, but his quest to become involved in the community did not change. While in Des Moines, he became involved with a Christian life ministry, affiliated with the Assembly of God Church. As was true in the BEP program, Monty wanted more. In 2007 he enrolled in the Iowa School of Ministry and

completed three internships; he graduated in May of 2012. He will be leaving the Business Enterprise Program in June, and on July 1 he will become the Assistant pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Centerville, specializing in family development and counseling. "Hope, love and compassion are the most important things," Monty states. "If the world had those, we wouldn't need a police force." With this philosophy in place, Monty will base his ministry on this belief.

Of course, Monty realizes that his new profession will have its challenges as well. "Learning to deal with dysfunctional adults has been my biggest challenge. My ministry is all about relationships and not about rules."

We will miss Monty in our program. He is a leader and an inspiration. He has mentored new managers and trainees, and has served on the Elected Committee of Blind Managers, a peer group that is elected every two years by other managers in the program.

Monty is pleased about his Orientation Center experience and his 15 years in the Randolph-Sheppard program. "I could never have done any of this without the Center. The Center helped me to find myself. BEP helped me find my purpose." ♦

## Talking Tech w/ Curtis Chong

### **Are accessibility laws improving nonvisual access to technology?**

There are laws in force in the United States that protect the rights of people with disabilities (including people who are blind or visually impaired) by requiring information technology to be “accessible” to them.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, prohibits private entities from discriminating against people with disabilities and has been deemed by many to cover access to electronic store fronts presented through the Worldwide Web. It has been used as the basis for lawsuits against Target and America Online, and as a result of these lawsuits, both organizations have made serious improvements to their respective websites and services. Yet, while the ADA requires that automated teller machines be made accessible, there are a lot of ATMs out there today that do not allow a blind person to conduct his/her business without sighted assistance.

Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973, mandates that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities. Although this provision of the law has been around for more than a decade and countless meetings and conferences have been held in conjunction with this sweeping legislation, research has shown that over 90% of federal-agency home pages tested do not comply with Section 508 accessibility guidelines and likely cannot be used by people who are blind or have other perceptual or motor disabilities. Moreover, in federal agencies which employ only a handful of people with disabilities, computer applications that are not accessible continue to be the norm rather than

the exception.

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (a relatively new and sweeping piece of legislation) is aimed at improving the availability of nonvisually-accessible cell phones and other communication devices and increasing the availability of descriptive video programming for televisions. On the plus side, there has been an increase in the number of television shows with descriptive video, and it is likely that this number will continue to grow. Also, on the plus side, Apple has created the iPhone, a sophisticated piece of technology which (although somewhat more costly than your basic mobile phone) does provide an unprecedented level of access to its many sophisticated services and features. But if you are one of those people who longs for a simple mobile phone that is completely usable without sight, you are likely to be frustrated; to my knowledge only one company--Verizon--has in its line up a basic cell phone that is fully accessible to the blind. We can hope that, as this new law matures, more companies will follow Apple's lead and build nonvisual access into their products.

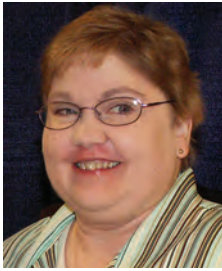
Have accessibility laws improved the ability of the blind or visually impaired to use technology in today's digital age? The answer, I regret to say, is not a simple “yes” or “no.” Certainly, these laws have stimulated some very good work and creative ideas. But despite the good work and creative ideas, blind and visually impaired people are still confronted by many challenges each and every day. There are set top boxes on our televisions that a blind person cannot use without sighted help. There are too many cell phones that are simply unusable without sight. And in the area of employment, the technologies we must use to carry out our work is often beyond the reach of the best talking screen access program. Nevertheless, without these laws, the progress that is evident today would not have been achieved. Simply put, blind and visually impaired people are better off with these laws than without them. ♦





By Linda Slayton

The great explorers such as Magellan, Cortez, and Lewis and Clark were like early celebrities to me. The astronauts who traveled into space left me in awe. All of these people took chances that would have made me hide beneath the covers. Not only did they take those chances, but they did what others said was impossible. I thrived on their tales of adventure as a child. Yes, I'll admit it. I grew up battling "explorer envy".



plorer. You won't find me traveling to Yakutsk or skydiving, but I have developed a greater sense of discovery. Exploration started partly because my life path included blindness. Just as necessity is the mother of invention, it is also the father of exploration. Blindness made it necessary for me to explore--not only to explore

[Exploration] became the key to any environment, obstacle, or desire.

I think it was because of my general nature. You know, being afraid to try anything. I didn't like new foods, new people, strange places or even semi-adventurous activities. I was happy where I was; surrounded by the familiar. I secretly longed for the courage the Cowardly Lion sought from the Wizard of Oz, but there was no way I could survive a tornado just to get it. However, life has a way of propelling us out of our comfort zones. My life was no different. One way or the other I had to confront many of the things I was afraid of and somehow I survived.

I am by no means a great ex-

plorer. You won't find me traveling to Yakutsk or skydiving, but I have developed a greater sense of discovery. Exploration started partly because my life path included blindness. Just as necessity is the mother of invention, it is also the father of exploration. Blindness made it necessary for me to explore--not only to explore where I wanted to go, but also the means to get there, including the tools, skills, knowledge, psychology, and fortitude that entails. Sometimes it isn't an easy task. Exploration wasn't limited to going different places. It became the key to any environment, obstacle, or desire. There were usually two choices: discover a way to accomplish a goal or forget it. It turns out, I'm not easily dissuaded.

It seems strange to look back on the person I was when I lost my vision. There have been many changes, and I realize blindness is only a small part

of those. As far as exploration, however, blindness played the major role. As I increased self-confidence by doing the necessary things to maintain my normal life, I also increased my confidence to do the things I always wished I had the courage to do. For once life didn't push me out of my comfort zone; I stepped away from it.

As blind people, sometimes we are explorers by necessity. I believe we are also explorers by design. I have met so many of us who thrive on doing the impossible--impossible simply being those goals we once told ourselves we could not accomplish or the ones others tried to limit for us. I love to watch people achieving things they never imagined. Like those great explorers, it isn't about success as much as it is about the quest. Remember that Columbus wasn't looking for America. I believe exploration is an amazing part of life. Who knows? Your greatest discovery may just be yourself! ♦

*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)*

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advisors to find and order books. Now I download most of my books on my own. Reader's advisors are still an excellent resource for me whenever I have questions. They are very helpful. Reading and the library are as important to me today as the first day that I discovered both, but much more satisfying now because books are available in many forms and much more quickly than in the beginning. Having books accessible to me has made an impact in my life. From *Horton Hears a Who* to *Thunder Dog*, these books have provided good words to live by."

One final note, Sandi Ryan volunteers as a Braille proofreader for the IDB Library. She makes sure that all of the words are in the right place and spelled correctly before they go into the Braille collection. So much of the work to keep the library going is done by volunteers, and they are greatly appreciated by staff and borrowers alike. ♦

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## **Commission Board Meeting Packet Reminder:**

**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.**

# NOTES

## Director

Richard Sorey

[richard.sorey@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:richard.sorey@blind.state.ia.us)

## Deputy Director

Bruce Snethen

[bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us)

## Commission for the Blind

Next meeting: September 15, 10:00am

Mike Hoenig, commission chair

Peggy Elliott, member

Jim Omvig, 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

## July 16-19

### Transition Summer Program:

#### Lakeside Palooza

#### Honey Creek Resort on Lake Rathburn

Participants will experience diverse events related to camping and the great outdoors. Cooking their own meals, hiking, swimming, boating and learning about nature are just a few of the activities. Transition camps are open to blind and visually impaired Iowans ages 14-21 who have not yet graduated from high school.

## August 27-31

### Fall Senior Orientation

#### Iowa Department for the Blind

#### 524 4th Street

#### Des Moines, IA 50309

This week long training focuses on skills for independent living for seniors who are losing their vision or struggling with vision loss. To learn more about the Senior Orientation Training, visit [www.idbonline.org/living](http://www.idbonline.org/living).

## September 5 & 6

### Dubuque Community Based Training

#### Tri-State Blind Society

#### 3333 Asbury Road

#### Dubuque, IA

This CBT will be held 9:00am - 12:00pm both days. For more information, please contact Barb Weigel at (515) 281-4386 or email [barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us).

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 North-West Iowa!**

## **Vision Expo**

**August 1, 2012**

**Hope Reformed Church  
919 Grand Avenue  
Spencer, IA**

**Listen to Dr. Steven Fox of the Wolfe Eye Clinic discuss treatments for various eye diseases; learn about simple, easy technology solutions for daily living; and chat with other vendors and staff from IDB.**

**Stop on by and discover how vision loss doesn't have to slow you down!**

### **Highlights Include:**

- **Low-vision aids & devices demonstrations**
- **Technology presentations**
- **Visit with eye care specialists**
- **Over 12 exhibitor booths throughout the day**
- **Visit with Iowa Department for the Blind staff**

**If you would like more information about the FREE event hosted by the Iowa Department for the Blind, please contact Jennifer Hutson at (800) 362-2587 or by email: [jennifer.hutson@blind.state](mailto:jennifer.hutson@blind.state).**