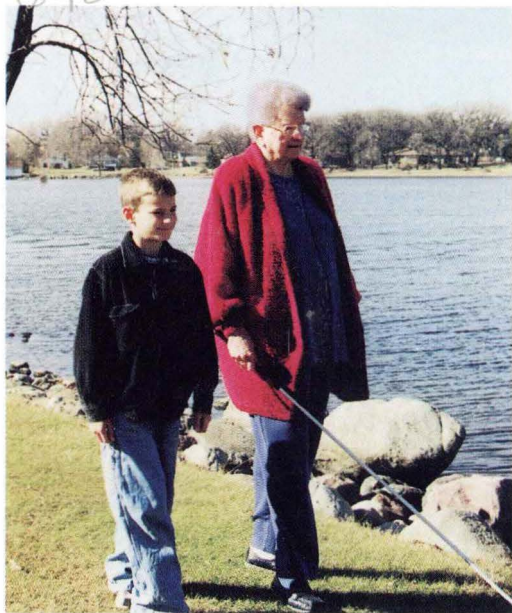


B 648



“(Blindness is) an aggravation, but it’s not a stop-your-life thing.”

Edna sat in the office listening to the doctor say that she was legally blind and that her driving days were over. If you had told her then that she could still be an independent and active member of her community, she wouldn't have believed it. But that was before she discovered the Independent Living Program offered through the Iowa Department for the Blind.

The Department helped Edna deal with her vision loss by providing counseling and instruction on how to

remain independent. She learned how to get around using a long white cane, read Braille, cook, type, and sew. This is Edna's story...

Edna had just retired as the administrator of a HUD housing development. After successfully raising seven children, she planned to have an active life filled with grandchildren and volunteer work. Shortly after her retirement, she noticed a black spot in the vision of her right eye. She was diagnosed with macular degeneration, which quickly affected her left eye as well.

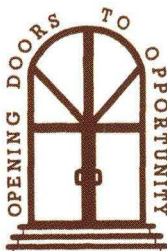
Edna gave up her plans. "If I wasn't going to be any good to anybody, what was I going to do?" The answer came when a friend introduced her to an independent living teacher from the Iowa Department for the Blind. He rekindled her love of reading by introducing her to books on tape through the Department's library. Edna began learning Braille in the hopes of reading even more. But most important, the teacher convinced Edna that she could still be useful.

Edna decided to attend a week-long training for seniors offered by the Department. There she met others who were also adjusting to vision loss. During the training, Edna learned alternative techniques in cooking, sewing, Braille and cane travel. The most important thing she gained, however, was confidence in herself. Since Edna wanted to learn more, she went on to attend the Department's Adult Orientation Center in Des Moines.

Today, Edna is an active grandmother who volunteers through a senior citizen volunteer program. She plays cards and dominoes, sews and is an active library borrower. She speaks to elementary students about blindness, telling them, "Don't ever take over for blind persons. Let them do it themselves."

Edna is not alone in her struggle to adjust to her blindness. An estimated 50,000 Iowans over the age of 65 have significant vision loss. If you, or someone you know, would like to learn to be more independent like Edna, contact the Iowa Department for the Blind at:

Iowa Department for the Blind
524 Fourth Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
www.blind.state.ia.us
800-362-2587
515-281-1333
TTY: 515-281-1355



In the provision of services and in employment practices, the Department for the Blind does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, or physical or mental disability. For further information contact the Director of the Department.

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