

Our Vision Works

A Publication of the Keystone Network of Agencies



OUR VISION

We change people's lives for the better.

OUR MISSION

To empower, educate, and employ individuals with vision loss or other disabilities.

President/CEO
Laurie Staph, MBA, CPA

Sr. Vice President of
Operations & Facilities
PJ Yudt

Vice President of Services
Priscilla Earhart

Sr. Vice President of
Risk Management
Tom Dill, Esq.

Vice President of
Human Resources
Melissa Means

Vice President of Finance
Nancy Black, CPA

BCAB Administrative Director
Teresa Lukes

CBVI Administrative Director
Monica Jones

MCAB Administrative Director
Catherine Nold

KBA Lawrence County
Office Manager
Julie Kern



Keystone Headquarters
3056 East State Street,
Hermitage, PA 16148
Phone: (724) 347-5501

**KBA - Crawford
County**

312 Chestnut Street
Meadville, PA 16335
Phone: (814) 333-3121

**KBA - Lawrence
County**

1750 New Butler Rd, Suite B
New Castle, PA 16101
Phone: (724) 856-3527

www.keystoneblind.org



BCAB

616 Fourth Street
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Phone: (724) 843-1111
www.bcblind.org



CBVI & CBD

100 West 15th Street
Chester, PA 19013

Phone: (610) 874-1476
www.cbvi.net



MCAB

25 E. Marshall Street,
3rd Floor
Norristown, PA 19401

Phone: 215-661-9800
www.mcab.org



There is light at the end of the pandemic tunnel!

By Laurie Staph, President/CEO

As vaccinations have rolled out and restrictions have somewhat been eased, Keystone is finally beginning to see some things gravitate back to normal. All of our agencies have gotten back to providing in person services for transportation with sighted guide, prevention of blindness screenings, orientation and mobility lessons, vision rehab appointments, and access technology lessons. While we always prefer to provide services in person to our clients, there were some efficiencies and lessons learned over the past year to help us to respond faster and adapt quickly to changing conditions. As difficult as it was for many of our clients to utilize online ordering for groceries, they learned quickly and our services departments continued to order, go pick up those orders, and deliver them to their doorsteps. While many of our clients prefer the in person experience, we found that online ordering can continue to be utilized in the future if someone is sick, in short-term need situations, and for some as their preferred method for grocery pickups. By utilizing online orders, we found that we could service many more clients by picking up multiple orders at the same time. This also helped to make trips to the bank and pharmacy take up much less time.

Our Assistive Technology (AT) department adapted everything they do within days to an all virtual platform for the clients and were able to maintain a steady flow of services throughout the pandemic. This new method forced our clients to hone in on the skills being taught so they could replicate them on their own while no one was in person to help them navigate as they had been in the past. I think all of us have gotten zoom fatigue over the past year and a half with all

the meetings, conferences, and classes being virtual. But again, despite not being in person, we did find light in the fact that we were able to get better attendance at most meetings and were able to accomplish many of the same things we had accomplished before.

One thing that we have never experienced before and are learning to overcome are challenges to hiring individuals to work on our employment contracts. As many jobs can adapt to working at home, production employees, lawn maintenance crews, janitorial crews, and photo ID techs are positions that require in person service. Many individuals over the age of 65 retired from the workforce during the pandemic, while others are still fearful of returning to work over virus concerns. Our group of agencies has seen a large influx of open job orders that have been difficult to fill with the additional unemployment benefits that have been provided by the state. Companies have had to get creative in order to incentivize people back into the workforce and we are no different in this regard. We have begun offering referral incentives to current employees to help fill job openings jobs, as well as sign on bonuses for new employees. These are uncharted waters but we want to ensure our current employees are getting the help they need at each site to keep our contracts running smoothly, as well as a good work / life balance.

Over the past year, many companies are seeing the squeeze as far as supply is concerned for products and components. This is also something we are dealing with as an agency. We recently air-shipped our first order of components in order to minimize backorders on tools. With the tight shipping deadlines we have from order to shipment, we have been stocking a lot

of extra inventory due to the significant lag in receiving these items. We have done very well responding to changes in the supply chain and have multiple supplier relationships that have helped us to sustain our production activities on both sides of the state. We are thankful for all of our employees in production and services who were essential workers the entire time throughout the pandemic! Our greatest asset is our employees and we certainly appreciate their efforts to adapt and overcome over the past year.

After cancelling most of our fundraisers in 2020, we held our golf outing and Sizzler at Keystone this year! We were so glad to have a full field of teams, a significant amount of elite and major sponsors, and so many donations of basket items for our auction. Most of our agencies were able to hold their fundraisers this year as well with the same success. Despite all of the

challenges of the past year, as well as challenges that lie ahead, all of our employees have been steadfast in their dedication to our mission and our clients and for that we are very thankful! We are continuing our efforts to find additional work to employ blind and visually impaired individuals across the state, as well as continuing efforts to provide additional services to clients. We are currently working on new product development, as well as service development opportunities for the next year. We are hopeful that some of these opportunities will come to fruition in 2022. We thank everyone in our communities for their continued support of all of our agencies and look forward to the light that is finally shining at the end of the tunnel!

Board of Directors

Maria Boyer | PhilStar Entertainment

Marc Gargano | Retired

Denise Jarrett | Community Action Partnership
| TREASURER

Kevin McDermott | Minuteman Press | CHAIRMAN

Mike Nashtock | Mercer County Community Transit

Brenda Oman | EXAL Corporation (retired)

Bryan Scheidemantle | Scheidemantle Motors
| VICE CHAIRMAN

Jackie Jurenovich | Clear Water Construction
| SECRETARY

Dennis Songer | District Judge

Laurie Staph | PRESIDENT/CEO

Mary Sternthal | Mercer County Head Start

Kevin Willis | Strollo Architects

Elaine Wolfson | Community Counseling Center

KIM Board

Cindy Falotico | iHeart Media
| SECRETARY/TREASURER

Karen Anderson | Whispering Pines
Veterinary Services

Sam Bellich | Area Agency on Aging (retired)

Mark Pappas | VICE CHAIRMAN

Brandon Mirizio | CHAIRMAN

Michael Barr | Barr & Shaffer

Adolf Reichenbacher | CCL Container

KVS Board

Jean Bender | Trivium Aluminum Packaging USA
| SECRETARY/TREASURER

Rick Herman | NLMK Pennsylvania Corp. (retired)
| VICE-CHAIRMAN

Levi Hipps | AHN-Grove City Hospital

Tom Kaikis | ELG Metals | CHAIRMAN

Christian Kuharik | Hope Center for Arts & Technology

Walter Novosel | Nova Cellar Winery

Tony Paglia | Penn State Disability Coordinator

John Pappas

Sam Moore | Tiffany's Banquet Center

How Did we financially survive the Pandemic?

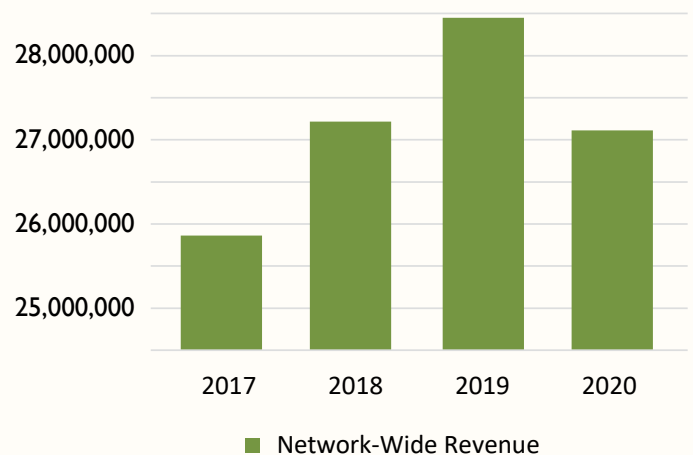
We were very pleased that we had a network wide (all agencies) combined net profit for 2020, especially considering we were running a loss at June 30, 2020 for the combined agencies. The loss at June 30, 2020 was directly related to issues concerning the pandemic. The total amount of the loss was recovered by December 31, 2020, and we were able to end the year with a profit, have all of our contracts again running, and all services were being offered, just in different capacities.

The majority of our contracts were temporarily suspended because of shut-downs at the rest areas, photo ID centers, and other service locations. Our production and toilet paper manufacturing continued to run strong, and we appreciate our “essential workers” in both services and production who came to work every day providing support for our clients and producing products for the state and federal government. We were able to receive money from the Payroll Protection Program for all of our agencies. This money enabled us to keep most of our employees on the payroll during that difficult period. We were also able to pick up some additional contracts relating to special disinfecting services related to COVID-19.

Since we had to cancel all of our “in person” fundraisers in 2020, we applied and received various private and public grants to offset the loss of that revenue.

We incurred significant costs to purchase personal protective equipment such as sanitizer, masks, and other items to keep our employees safe as they performed their jobs. We also purchased hydrostatic sprayers to disinfect high touch surface areas. Although total revenue was down in 2020, it was comparable to 2018, and total assets at December 31, 2020 totaled \$16,209,663. Our financial trends are still moving in a positive direction.

2017-2020 Financial Trends



Looking Forward: What's Next?

With the exception of two contracts at universities, all other contracts have resumed and we anticipate another successful year, measured both in terms of dollars, and the positive effect we can have to improve the lives of our employees and clients.

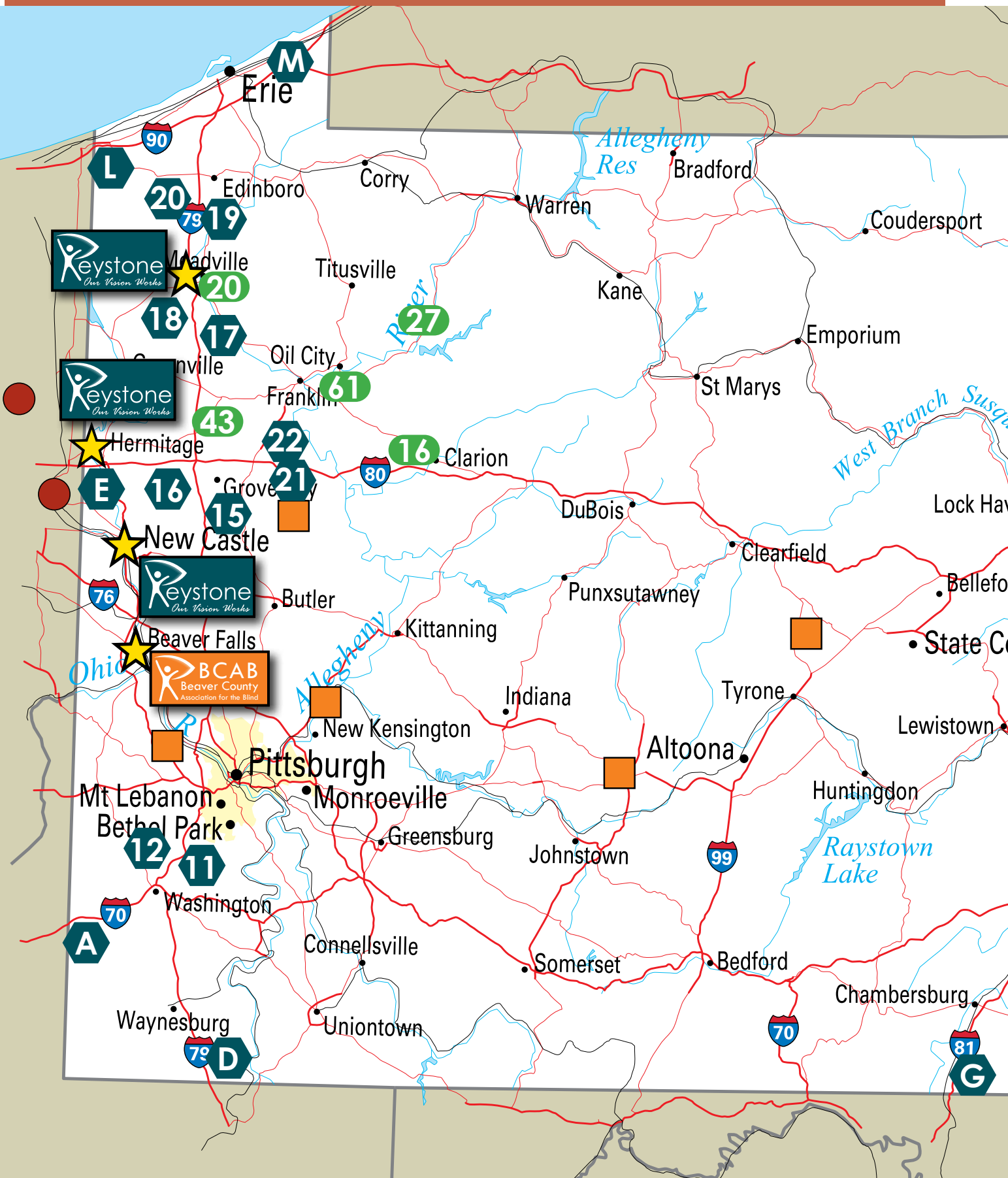
We are seeing that one of our biggest challenges is filling job openings. We have initiated sign on bonuses, and a program called “Refer a Friend” to encourage new employees. We have job openings! If

you know of anyone looking for a job, please see our website for a full listing at www.keystoneblind.org.

We are looking forward to the next 12 months and providing excellent services to our clients, stable jobs for our employees, and a bright future fulfilling our mission to “Empower, educate and employ individuals with vision loss or other disabilities.”

Network Operations

Map of offices and contract locations





Agency Office



Rest Area



Photo ID Center



School Contract



Service Contract



Improved Kitchen and Patron's room at CBVI

The CBVI Patron's room and Kitchen was created in 1993 after industrial contracts were shut down and the agency moved strictly to the provision of services. The Patron's room and kitchen had not been remodeled since then, which was over 2 decades ago.

Thanks to a generous grant of \$25,000 from The McLean Contributionship, the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) has been able to completely renovate its old kitchen, including installing all new appliances. The community room, called the Patron's room was remodeled and is being used for life skills classes, access technology training and art classes for clients. It is also a great space for staff trainings and other group needs.

Group and individual cooking classes have already begun, with demonstrations and subsequent hands-on practice with the new appliances, including the micro-hearth, T-Fal Grill, NuWave oven and the new stove and microwave. The Patron's room is now a welcoming venue for these Life Skills classes with ample room to accommodate larger groups.

The project will fill an important need in the blind community. "I can't tell you how many requests we get from our clients who need help working their microwaves or washing machines when they can't see the controls," says Monica Jones, CBVI administrative director. "There are so many shortcuts and helpful techniques that can assist someone in improving their independence skills in the kitchen and home." Learning together in small groups also give clients an opportunity to share techniques they have picked up on their own, and comfort in the knowledge that they are not alone on this difficult journey.

"With the addition of supply cabinets, we now have a neat and organized space for visiting groups, including the Main Line Arts Association, whose volunteers provide art classes for our clients on a weekly basis," Monica added. These dedicated instructors work with our blind & visually impaired clients on Monday mornings, an opportunity the clients look forward to and enjoy immensely. They have created all types of art through tactile touch using clay, paints, glaze, and other art tools. Developing these tactile skills is also

helpful in their daily lives. It is a good therapeutic class for their hands if they have arthritis, as well as their minds.

"All in all, these improvements are already proving to be a better setting for learning and sharing in Life Skills groups, and a pleasure for both instructors and students," says Monica.



CBVI's updated kitchen.



Ford Business Machines Donation

As everyone is aware, 2020 was a tough year due to the pandemic. 2020, or 20/20, was to be the year of vision for our agency with a number of fundraisers and activities planned to bolster awareness in the community and raise money to support the many programs we provide to blind and visually impaired individuals in the community. With the onset of COVID-19, all of those plans were immediately changed and all fundraisers and gatherings were cancelled. To say it was a scramble to write grants and direct mail campaigns during this time is a vast understatement. Many services had to be “re-tooled” to allow for virtual services wherever possible and some services had to be specially equipped with personal protective equipment to avoid putting our staff at risk while in public at grocery stores, banks, and doctor’s offices.

This time was no different for Ford Business Machines, who instead of having their annual customer appreciation event, decided to have each district nominate local charities and put them into a drawing for one of three \$5,000 donations. They chose to help local nonprofits who would be struggling during this time instead of holding a customer appreciation event. Keystone Blind Association was a longtime customer of John Hicks, the owner of Hicks Office Supply be-

fore they merged with Ford Business Machines. John graciously submitted Keystone’s name to the list of deserving charities and we were one of three random winners drawn to receive a \$5,000 donation.

This donation could not have come at a better time for Keystone. Many of our state contracts were temporarily shut down due to the COVID-19 restrictions. At a time when most people were avoiding public spaces and ordering groceries online for delivery, our casework staff was out bearing through the long lines and empty shelves to pick up necessary items for our clients who had no other options to help them. The donation from Ford Business Machines helped all of our service programs continue to run and provided high quality services to both our in- person and virtual clients. We would like to thank the owners of Ford Business Machines including Johnathan Garlow, Justin Garlow, and Joshua Gerson for continuing to support all of the local communities in which they operate and for the funding we so desperately needed during that time! We also want to thank John Hicks for including us as his selection as a deserving charity! We are so thankful for our partnership with them over the years!

Services

Through the stories in our magazine we'd like to share a glimpse of how all these programs positively impact the lives of the people we serve. We hope they will be an inspiration.

	KBA	BCAB	CBVI	MCAB
Access Technology	X	X	X	
O & M	X	X		X
Prevention	X	X	X	X
Specialized Services	X	X	X	X
Vision Rehabilitation	X	X	X	
Low Vision Clinic	X	X		
Keystone Kids	X	X		
Young Adults	X			

Despite the pandemic putting a damper on delivery of services, all four of our agencies were able to continue delivering top notch services to blind and visually impaired individuals across six counties including Mercer, Crawford, Lawrence, Beaver, Montgomery and Delaware Counties. They provided just under 10,000 hours of direct service to clients in areas such as transportation with sighted guide, orientation and mobility services, access technology, and life skills

training and support, among others. In addition to those hours, 3,594 children were screened with our spot screeners to check for vision abnormalities or issues prior to starting kindergarten. While these numbers were down from the prior year due to COVID restrictions in schools, they were still able to get many screenings done and we were able to actually pick up a few new locations to screen in the process.

Specialized Services

Specialized services are provided to individuals who are blind or visually impaired from birth to senior years. These services include transportation with sighted guide, support services (reading mail, check writing, assisting with shopping), life skills education programs, support groups, case management and talking books. Working together with other specialists and departments, these individuals can ultimately continue to maintain their health, independence and participate as a vital part of their family and community. Other programs are available that can target skill building for children and young adults to assure success in the future.



The Power of Online Grocery Shopping

How do you do your grocery shopping? Do you physically go to the store or do you have it delivered? There are many ways to obtain your groceries especially for the sighted. But what if your vision wasn't there? What if you had to depend on others to get your basic food items for the next two weeks or ride the bus and only grab what you can physically carry in your back pack and two hands?

This is what many of our clients have to worry about on a daily basis. Some don't have family or friends to lend a hand when they need it or they don't want to bother anyone. Who do they call? Well, they call us.

Several of our clients wanted to share their grocery ordering experiences both good and bad. Lynn Shields of New Brighton, PA said, "I absolutely love it! Once Jennifer establishes my order online, I can go in and add any items that I may have forgotten about or just click and reorder my favorites. I am more aware of all the items available. I now have more knowledge of products which allows me to make better food choices. Voice Over (which is a screen reader on most Apple products) reads everything about the items which helps me to determine what the better cost is per ounce or pound. I am on numerous Face-

book groups for crock pot & Instant pot meals. Now I can easily search for my ingredients, click and add to cart! So much simpler than searching through the store, locating the items and trying to find the lowest price. Best of all, the agency picks it up and delivers it right to my front door. I hope this continues long after the pandemic. It is easier than trying to get it all myself. I'm happy that I don't have to put anyone else's health at risk by going to the store for me. I am very grateful and appreciative of this service."

Bob Swedron of Baden, PA said "I really like it and it's easier all around! I give Drenda my list, Jennifer places the order, and then they deliver it to my house. It saves time and energy for everyone. It is a big, big help to us. God Bless you all for the service."

The only complaint so far has been the issues with items being out of stock, but that is the case all around the country. Some were leery about doing "online" ordering. Now they sing a different tune which is more upbeat and positive.

Our agency provides many services, but the need for obtaining groceries safely has increased due to the pandemic. Our clients reached out to us for help and together we made it happen.



(Left) Drenda, BCAB Life Skills aide waits for a grocery order (Right) Bob, BCAB Client with his grocery delivery.

Orientation & Mobility

One young child's vision problems caused delays in walking, talking, and episodes of furious tantrums. There is nothing more stressful or worrisome for parents than when their young child mysteriously ceases to reach major developmental milestones. This confounding situation often throws the family into a panic as they desperately search for a diagnosis and treatment.

That was the case just a few years ago with Emily, now six years old, and her parents Laura and Walter from Jenkintown, PA.

At first, Emily reached the typical developmental milestones. She began talking at nine months, which delighted her family, but her articulation was poor and she experienced episodes of extreme anxiety. Emily then completely lost her ability to talk at 15 months. "I was so scared that she would never speak again," said mom, Laura.

Compounding her parents' anxiety, Emily's walking was significantly delayed. So when she began walking at 23 months, her balance was off.

At first glance, it appeared that Emily's difficulty walking resulted from a condition affecting her legs. And her loss of speech was a complete mystery. "Emily threw crazy tantrums in public. It was so unbelievably frustrating! I had many moments of deep self-doubt."

Surprisingly, Emily's diagnosis had nothing to do with the problems with her legs or her speech! Emily was born with ocular motor apraxia associated with Joubert Syndrome which means that she can't visually scan like other people; especially when things are moving fast in front of her. This condition of the eye can cause intense anxiety, tantrums, speech and gross motor delays.

At age three, Emily was referred to the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (IU) and certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Elaine Hendricks, at the Montgomery County Association for the Blind (MCAB). Together this team worked hard to get Emily ready for mainstream kindergarten. Elaine has helped Emily learn to visually scan her surroundings at the playground, in school, and at the mall. Emily's confidence is growing! And her ability to keep up with her peers is improving.

Laura has some advice for other parents whose children are disabled in any way. First, work with the medical professionals to uncover the correct diagnosis. "I was persistent with the doctors and therapists," said Laura. "I knew my daughter better than they did. If I thought they were going in the wrong direction, I'd tell them."

Laura has learned to fight for her child. And she admits to becoming a better person herself as a result of it. "Go to bat for your kid," she says, "no matter what his or her version of ok is."



Elaine, MCAB certified O&M specialist (right) with Emily (left) as her mother looks on.

Prevention of Blindness

Eye Health and Safety Education

One of our goals is to help prevent an individual from ever becoming a client in the first place. To accomplish this, we offer, free of charge, a wide variety of prevention of blindness & eye safety programs to local communities. Preschool vision screenings are provided to children 2 to 6 years of age to detect most forms of visual dysfunction, so they can be addressed and treated before a child enters school. Here are a couple recent success stories from our POB department:

Staff screened a 4 year old male from West Middlesex at Creative Pre-K Counts. The child's results showed a vision abnormality. A referral packet was sent to the parents that contained an explanation of the screening results, the Vision Screening Summary printout, and an Examiner's Report for their eye care professional to complete and return to KBA following the examination. Their optometrist's report confirmed our findings with a diagnosis of suspect amblyopia (lazy eye), hyperopia (farsightedness), and high astigmatism in both eyes. He prescribed corrective lenses. The mother was very grateful, and brought her son to visit KBA so our staff could see his new glasses.

The staff also screened a 3 year old girl, a vision abnormality was detected at that time, and she was referred for an eye exam. The ophthalmologist returned the Examiner's Report confirming our screening results with a diagnosis of refractive amblyopia (lazy eye). He prescribed eyeglasses for the child.

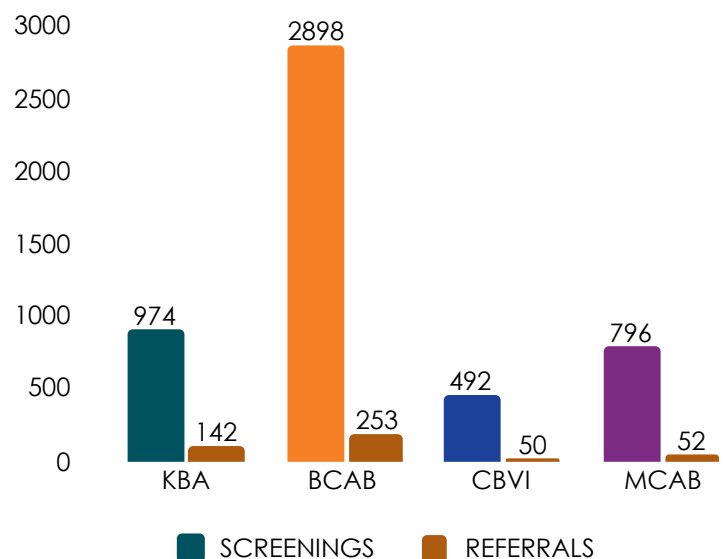
The visually impaired mother of a two year old was concerned that her child may also have a vision impairment, and brought her in for a vision screening. Our staff was pleased to report that the child's results were all within range for her age.

These are just a few of the stories our POB Specialists encounter on a daily basis.



Shirley, Keystone Director of Prevention Services screens a 2 year old for any vision abnormalities.

Children's Screenings & Referrals



Access Technology

Imagine it! No smart phone. No computer. Could you do your job efficiently? Online banking, e-mail, social media, online shopping, all of this gone. All of these conveniences can disappear for someone with vision loss, that is, unless they know about Access Technology (AT).

Here's the good news! Several solutions are available for enhancing visual and auditory access on your computer or smartphone. Screen magnification and screen reader solutions are available for Windows and Macintosh platforms. Solutions on smartphones and other mobile devices offer usage of simple gestures such as swiping, tapping and twisting to afford easy ways to utilize such devices. The ZOOM Magnifier

and Voiceover Screen Reader utilities are available for Apple iOS devices and the Magnification and TalkBack utilities are onboard Android devices. That is only the tip of the iceberg. Accessible apps are available that clearly identify and relay color, money, hard-copy info, and bar code information for relay of ingredients, cooking instructions and prices. Facial recognition and navigation apps are ideal in group settings, unfamiliar buildings, and in the community.

We are very fortunate to have instructors available across our agencies to guide and teach people these skills in order to enable them to maintain or regain employment, as well as enhance the level of independence at home and in the community.

Suddenly Virtual

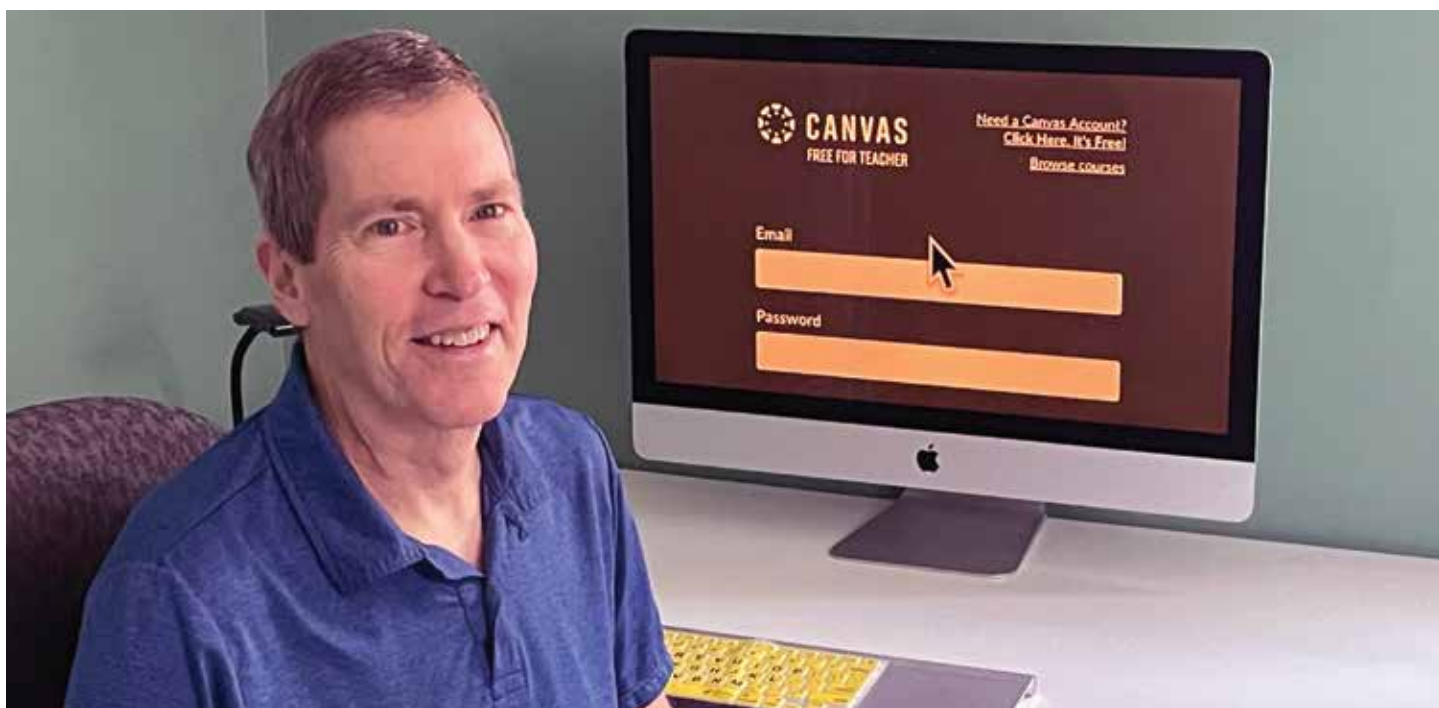
The unanticipated, rapid shift to performing employment duties via virtual methods during the COVID-19 pandemic introduced an extra level of complexity and confusion for even the most skilled, non-disabled individuals. For a large group of disabled individuals, who were otherwise very comfortable with completing duties at physical workplace locations, the absolute requirement to transition to using virtual modality to maintain productivity quickly became overwhelming. As lockdowns progressed, popularity expanded for various mainstream virtual workplace scenarios. This, in-turn, increased demand on disabled individuals to learn how to effectively and efficiently implement assistive solutions within unfamiliar virtual environments. For low vision and blind individuals there is often a sharp learning curve regarding assistive technology implementation within unfamiliar interfaces; needless to say, virtual workplace solutions created an even greater curve for many. Jean Tucker, Accounting Department Manager - Carroll Engineering, copes with Macular Degeneration and Curt Woolford, Mindfulness Consultant/Trainer – Private Practice and Adjunct Faculty - St. Joseph's University, copes with Oculocutaneous Albinism. Their pandemic experiences truly exhibit the power of assistive technology combined with self-discipline and perseverance serve as awesome job retention aids.

The work-from-home arrangement began seamlessly for Jean. Having received CBVI AT services in years past to address a progressively worsening visual impairment, Jean continued usage of the ZoomText program, a large peripheral monitor and a video magnifier device in order to complete her work duties. While incorporating these same solutions within the suddenly new home arrangement, Jean managed to learn newly introduced virtual and remote employment tools, while also making effective use of local programs. Pandemic-induced trouble came when Jean realized that ZoomText would not function within the remote desktop protocol (RDP) environment. Jean had no visual supplementation available within the remote interface. An accounting manager unable to access account information is similar to bacon without eggs... it's just not ideal at all. Jean swiftly took action in pursuing AT services in hopes of determining a resolution. CBVI AT specialists were able to identify and recommend the necessary adjustments for Jean's AT arrangement. An alternate AT solution, Dolphin Supernova, was implemented combined with a clarity-enhanced peripheral monitor and a more capable video magnifier device, all of which resulted in increased functionality for Jean. Despite 2020 beginning on an awful note with the pandemic and the unfortunate decline of her vision, Jean's AT and perseverance continued

to allow her to look forward to progressing into her 14th year of successful employment with Carroll Engineering. Virtually Visit Jean and Carroll Engineering: <https://carrollengineering.com/>

The work-from-home arrangement was not initially welcomed by Curt. CBVI AT specialists were familiar with Curt's progressively worsening visual impairment and related needs based on past service encounters. Recent encounters revealed that Curt was very accustomed to in-person employment duties including delivery of mindfulness consultation, training and teaching services. The in-person scenarios permitted Curt frequent breaks to alleviate eye fatigue and burnout. When working in-person, casting his vision towards something different or even just closing his eyes for short periods of time were simplistic ways that produced immense eye relief results. Conversely, virtual methods were not very accommodating for visual breaks. Computer usage for Curt was constant, and while virtually engaging with clients, colleagues and students, minutes turned quickly into hours without even realizing. The inadvertent overtaxing of his eyes ultimately would result in extended recovery time being necessary. Hence, significant delay in completing employment duties and meeting deadlines often occurred. The inability for Curt to divert or rest his vision while attempting to interact with his computer was near impossible. Although he was using an

OS-integrated screen magnifier and a speech selection feature which assisted to supplement his visual impairment, these features still required constant use of his eyes. Due to the instantaneous pandemic-driven virtual requirements, Curt soon acknowledged that he required additional supplementation that demanded little to no usage of his eyes. He also acknowledged, the requirement for assistance in learning how to utilize alternative solutions. Consultation between Curt and CBVI AT specialists led to expert identification for immediate screen reader solution, implementation, and use. Development of a virtual college course curriculum, usage of e-mail and other employment duties were areas in which Curt received training and guidance relating to screen reader inclusion. In addition, Curt learned a variety of timesaving, no-vision-required keyboard commands that eliminated the need for visual mouse usage. Although there remains a significant amount of further screen reader and related non-vision skill development for Curt, the services he has received thus far have afforded him the ability to increase the frequency of much required rest for his eyes. Curt remains extremely motivated in sustaining his 21+ year career in private practice in assisting and educating others with reducing stress and overcoming obstacles, including, but not limited to, those relating to the pandemic or disability. Virtually Visit Curt Woolford: www.curtwoolford.com/



Curt, CBVI Access Technology client, Mindfulness Consultant/Trainer

WE ARE HIRING



APPLY NOW!

Career opportunities across the state of Pennsylvania!

Did you know that Keystone, along with our network of partners, is one of the largest employers of the visually impaired and disabled in the state of Pennsylvania and offers a variety of career opportunities?

We have both state and federal contracts that provide services and support to government agencies. These contracts require a large workforce, which means careers are available for blind and visually impaired individuals or those with other disabilities who often have trouble finding jobs. Some of these career opportunities include Photo License Technicians, Case Work Staff, Production Workers, Janitorial, and Floor Technicians. We also employ Seasonal Snow Plow Operators and Landscape Maintenance Laborers.

All of these opportunities and more, may be found at: www.keystoneblind.org. Be sure to check each posting carefully, as some positions may require certain qualifications per contract. These listings are being updated daily, so be sure to check the site often to see what we have available. We are always accepting applications, even when there are no current job listings.

Vehicles

Join us in keeping our fleet of vehicles healthy. We have been very fortunate over the years to obtain occasional grants for vehicles, unfortunately our fleet continues to age and rack on the miles and there just aren't enough grants available to meet our growing need. Our maintenance department does a phenomenal job of keeping our vehicles in good repair, but they can only do so much when these vehicles are needed extensively day in and day out, many at 20,000 miles a year. As vehicles are no longer deemed viable for this use, they are semi-retired and used as a back up or in departments whose needs are less and local. Of course some just bite the dust.

HOW DO WE USE VEHICLES?

Vehicles are needed to deliver almost every service we provide to over 700 clients in the 6 counties under our network. This includes transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, life skills

classes, and other essential services. In addition to these, our Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, and Access Technology Specialists travel to client homes, school, or work settings to provide the training they require. Prevention workers also require a vehicle to access schools, senior centers, health fairs, and many other venues to provide vision screenings, eye health and safety education, and outreach.

WE NEED YOU!

Help us kick off our vehicle drive by making a monetary donation today, or consider donating a vehicle. The average cost of a new vehicle today is \$30,000 and your donation in any amount will help us be successful in fulfilling our replacement plan. Good used vehicles are also welcome. You can make a monetary donation online to any of our agencies or contact Dale Myers at 724-347-5507 Ext. 238

BCAB - \$11,000 Donation



West-Aircomm has an employee volunteer group called WAC Cares. Each year this group selects a "spotlight" charity to support throughout the year. They hold special events in order to fundraise and offer volunteers when the organization needs help.

On January 2, 2020, BCAB received an email from Ashley Grove from West-Aircomm Federal Credit Union informing us that for 2020 they wanted to support BCAB as their spotlight charity! It was decided that money raised during the year would be used to help purchase a new vehicle for BCAB since their

2005 van had been pulled from service.

Throughout the year they held fundraisers such as a t-shirt sale, dress down days and direct donations from West-Aircomm customers. Unfortunately because of Covid they were not able to participate/volunteer for any BCAB events and vice versa. In spite of all the challenges and limitations of Covid 19, they were still able to raise \$11,000! We are currently looking for a vehicle that will meet the needs of our clients to utilize these funds.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Donate a vehicle if you or a family member can no longer drive or are deceased.

Donate your vehicle for a tax write off instead of trading it in.

Donate money towards the agency vehicle fund of your choosing.

Braille Buzz & a Kazoo!

In December of 2020, the Keystone Services Department was contacted by a teacher from Wilmington Area Elementary School regarding a boy in her Kindergarten class who is visually impaired and wanted to get some help for his parents.

Julie in our New Castle office contacted the teacher to see how we could help. The teacher stated that the only thing this little boy named Derek wanted for Christmas was a Braille Buzz and a kazoo! Braille Buzz is an instructional tool for braille learners ages two to five. This device encourages practice with braille characters and phonics which is similar to other devices that teach print writing. Derek's parents weren't able to financially purchase the Braille Buzz for him. Julie then contacted the Lions Club of New Castle and gave them the story to see if they would be willing to purchase the device for the little boy. Later that same

day, they sent me an email stating they would be able to cover purchasing the device and all they would require would be a thank you note from the parents and a picture for their scrapbook.

The device was ordered on 12/21/20 with the shipping being "6-8 weeks" out. Julie then contacted Derek's parents (Josh and April) to let them know what was going on and to inform them that Derek would be getting the device, just not in time for Christmas. Julie received it and contacted April and setup the late Christmas delivery. HE WAS SOOOO EXCITED!!! His mom hadn't told him that he was getting it and let me tell you, when he finally figured out what was in that bubble wrap, he got up and started jumping all around wanting mom to put batteries in it so he could start using it!



(Left) Derek plays with his new Braille Buzz while his mom looks on. (Right) Braille Buzz



Bioptic Driving

The surrounding states of New York, New Jersey, West Virginia, Delaware, and Ohio all allow specific visually impaired individuals the ability to qualify for a restricted driver's license while using a bioptic telescope. Pennsylvania will now join these states in allowing bioptic telescope driving as well; this law went into effect 09/27/2021. This law allows PennDOT to issue a restricted driver's license with a new driving category allowing driving with a bioptic after completing a rigorous program.

The criteria for obtaining this restricted license is a best corrected visual acuity of 20/200 through the carrier lens, binocular visual fields through the carrier lenses of 120°, and color vision is required to be able to determine traffic light colors, pavement markings, road signs, etc. Once the bioptic telescope has been prescribed and has been used by the individual for three months, during which time a "passenger in car" assessment has been made, the potential driver may apply for a learner's permit and will require formal "behind the wheel" training and subsequent practice (especially for novice drivers). Following a final driving readiness check, the individual will take a driver's test and, if successfully completed, will have a driver's license with restrictions similar to that of drivers with "less than 20/70 combined vision but at least 20/100 combined vision with best correction." Additionally, these drivers will need to be examined annually to make sure they continue to meet all the criteria for restricted bioptic driving in Pennsylvania.

Keystone will be actively involved with bioptic driving through our low vision clinic with the guidance of Dr. Paul Freeman. In order to be involved in bioptic driving, staff had to do a seven hour training program through PennDOT where they learned the structure of the eye, the most common eye diseases, the basics of bioptic lenses, and how to work with low vision patients with a bioptic. Our organization will be involved in a patient's first experience of being in a car with a bioptic. Keystone will provide the first 10 hours of passenger in the car driving with patients that have the required eyewear and vision. This is not currently covered by any funding source, but those involved in creating the program are working on finding funding sources for our patients. Currently this is an out of pocket expense for patients. This is an important stepping stone for potential drivers to ensure they are ready to go receive their learners permit and move on to a certified driving instructor where they will begin with "behind the wheel" driving. If a patient is deemed unsafe, this process can be reevaluated or extended in the patient's best interest and the safety of all on the road.

If you are interested in being assessed to determine eligibility or if you have any further questions, you can contact Jenn Lilly at Keystone.

IDEAL Transition Program

Students with disabilities often have not been exposed to many skills that non-disabled peers have. Many students need habilitated to help them in the future be able to compete with others to attain or retain careers. Without specific skills, students with disabilities may fall through the cracks and not be as productive as they hope to be. Students are able to obtain these skills through programs that are focused on a student's goals while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of that student and building on them. Our program is called IDEAL, which stands for Individualized Development through Experience Assessment, and Learning.

Ideal is a four week residential program that provides students with the skills necessary to be successful adults in the future. This program is designed to help students ages 14 to 21 to transition from the safe environment of high school to college, work, or inde-

pendent living environments. Activities of Daily Living are an essential foundation for students to be independent, successful adults. As this foundation is formed, the students are then able to focus on their goals for the future. We have two major tracks in the IDEAL program. The first track, is career exploration. Some students are not interested in additional education, so they then need to explore what their other options are. In this track they explore what their interests are, what jobs may suit them based on their interests, and what skills they need to obtain the career they desire. The other track focuses on college readiness. In this track, the students do similar tasks such as explore what their interests are, decide what career they would like to pursue, and research the steps they will need to take to get the technical training they need to obtain that career. Regardless of which track the student decides to explore, each student will get an individualized program with five core classes. These classes include communications, home management, computer access technology, orientation and mobility, and vocational assessment.

In communications, students learn all aspects of verbal, non-verbal, and written communications. In this class, the students work on braille skills, handwriting skills, letter writing, typing, budgeting, math skills, etc. With these skills, students use tools to help them accomplish tasks such as writing guides. In home management, students learn all tasks related to managing their home which includes cooking skills, cleaning skills, personal hygiene, clothing care, personal finances, and leisure activities. In computer access technology, students will learn aspects of windows systems, apple products, and other assistive technology devices. Students will learn products that best help them with their personal goals; whether it involves using a screen reader, screen magnifier, applications on systems, using their phone or tablet as a tool, or utilizing independent products. As part of orientation and mobility training, students learn how to use their white cane efficiently and talk mobility skills such as street crossings and public transportation. While performing these mobility skills, the student is also taught skills to help maintain orientation in familiar and unfamiliar spaces. The last area of IDEAL involves vocational assessment in which students will explore their



interests, hobbies, job readiness skills, career development skills, and interview skills.

Outside of the structured classroom setting, the students also learn skills in socialization, community resources, and independent living throughout their time at the program. Students learn how to socialize with peers of common interest while living in a dormitory setting. Each student is encouraged to be as independent as possible in the dormitory and respect the other students living in the space. In the evenings, students have time to socialize and have fun while learning valuable social skills. Throughout the week, the students go grocery shopping, out to dinner, participate in activities that teenagers might enjoy, as well as activities to broaden their experiences. Many times these activities are driven by the requests of the group of students.

Recently, we have found that the most common tool that students use are their phones and their tablets. We have decided that we need to help these students have access to the most valuable tools they can put in their tool kits. We received a grant to get

iPads for each student to take home with them after completion of our program. On these iPads, we downloaded applications that will help students in different skill areas. For example, a student may have a color identifier on their iPad to help them identify their clothing. A goal of this program is to make sure that students have as many tools as possible when they leave the program.

The IDEAL program is important to help build a foundation for students to become successful and productive adults. Many students do not get the opportunity to fine tune skills they will need in the future without programs like IDEAL. If you have a student who you feel will benefit from an individualized program such as this, please contact Program director Jenn Lilly by phone: 724-734-5158, by email jennlilly@keystoneblind.org or Monica Jones by phone: 610 874-1476 ext 161, by email mjones@cbvi.net



Annual Events

The Keystone network of agencies is challenged each year with raising money to help support the programs and services for blind and visually impaired individuals throughout our community. Not only do our fundraisers benefit our agencies and the programs and services we provide, but they play a big part for of our sponsors as well. By becoming a sponsor of one our events, it creates a great opportunity to get your name out into the community and let them know

you believe in giving back. We are very lucky to have so many wonderful businesses in the area that support our organization year after year. Each agency in our network is tasked with running a fundraiser that fits with their demographic population and interests of the community. For updates on our various events, please follow our social media pages to get updates when events are announced.



The Keystone Blind Golf Scramble is held in June every year. The five-person scramble helps make it one of the largest golf scrambles in the area every year.



The CBVI Vision Bowl event was held on August 26. Participants learned about vision loss and had fun supporting the agency at the same time.



BCAB's Golf Scramble is their biggest event and is growing every year. Held in August, it's a popular event for golfers looking to get out for a fun event as the summer comes to an end.



The Keystone Sizzler for Sight is held the first Thursday in October. In addition to the food, the HUGE basket raffle draws large crowds every year.



Employee Spotlight

Bill - Site Supervisor

My name is Bill and I am the Site Supervisor of Site H in Great Bend, PA. I have been employed by Keystone Blind Association for approximately 10 years. I was born and raised in Windsor, New York. My wife of nearly 45 years, Cindy, and I moved to PA about 20 years ago. My favorite time is spent with my wife working in the yard and garden or just relaxing on the patio. We raised 3 sons and now our 3 beautiful and brilliant grandkids spend the weekends with us. They keep us young!

I have had a varied work history from early factory jobs to being a nursing student. I have worked doing road construction, home construction and landscaping. My last endeavor involved partnering with an old friend working on home heating repairs (furnaces and tanks), which is where I met my future boss, William. After my partner passed, I heard the Welcome Center was hiring and here I am.

My responsibilities at the site include doing our payroll, making sure our supplies are ordered and stocked for our cleaning needs, taking applications, interviewing prospective employees, and handling in-house problems, whether personal, plumbing, or whatever. It is our teams responsibility to keep our site, clean, disinfected, and safe for our visitors, which could not be accomplished without the hard work of my fellow attendants. We function as a team, so each shift runs smoothly into the next, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

I would say my biggest challenge was the same as the rest of the country: the COVID Pandemic. We were shut down for approximately a month. Coming back was a scary situation. Keystone made sure we were supplied with any and all supplies we needed to keep us and the public safe. With consistent mask wearing, constant cleaning, and of course our vaccinations, we are coming through this together.

The best part of this job is the people I work with. There is only about a dozen of us, but we are a close group. We may have an occasional squabble over small things, but "families" are like that. No matter what, we have each other's backs. From the main of-

fice in Hermitage to our District manager, to William Warner, any questions, company news, or problems we may encounter, they are there for us at a moments notice.

I enjoy the traveling public and different walks of life I see everyday. I have met people from China, Japan, Russia, Germany, England, Ireland, Australia and many more countries. We may be visited by touring nuns, Friars, Mennonite, or Amish groups. We have been visited by a group of Catholic Priests, Jewish and Muslim groups, even Buddhist Monks in Saffron robes. We see Mercedes Benz cars with Hawaiian plates, as well as the unfortunate living in their cars. You never know what a day may bring. As always, compliments from the public on our hard work are always heart-warming.



Bill sits in his office at Site H.

Keystone Tools



Keystone Vocational Services provides employment opportunities for local blind and visually impaired persons to assemble and package a line of industrial-grade fiberglass digging and striking tools for sale to the federal government. Keystone also offers these tools to state governments and the general public.

**Please visit our store at
3056 East State Street, Hermitage PA 16148
724-347-5501
www.keystoneblind.org**





Employee Spotlight

David - Landscape Maintenance

History and Background

I was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania and have lived in Linesville, PA for the last 27 years with my foster parents on a 311 acre farm.

How long have you worked for The Center for the Blind and Disabled?

I have been employed with The Center for the Blind and Disabled for one year.

What are your job responsibilities?

I meet my other team members in the morning at Rest Area Site 20. We load all the equipment and connect the trailer to the truck, then perform a safety check on the truck and trailer. We provide the landscape maintenance services at several rest area sites on the western side of the state. My responsibilities include the policing of the grounds, mowing and trimming, clearing all paved surfaces of lawn debris after each mowing, planting of the spring flowers, mulching of the landscape beds, keeping them weed free, pruning of the shrubs, and spring and fall cleanup.

What challenges do you have?

Staying Focused.

How has the Center for the Blind and Disabled helped you overcome your challenges?

The agency has helped me overcome challenges by putting together a team of helpful people. My coworkers have worked with me and helped out whenever necessary, which creates a good working environment and everybody works together as a team. Everybody has been very nice and respectful to me. I know help is only one call away and always available. I have learned the best way to stay focused is to work closely with my coworkers and listen to their instructions and ask questions. My job responsibilities have taught discipline and helped me to stay focused.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy working outdoors and traveling to the different rest area locations. We find it very rewarding to hear all of the compliments we receive from the public about how nice the sites are maintained and the good job that we are doing. I also like Payday!

What surprised you the most when you started here?

How nice everyone is. I have not been treated very nice by my past employers and supervisors, so this has been a welcome change.

Employee Spotlight

Gary - TPM Supervisor

Gary is the supervisor of the most recent acquisition of rest areas under the Total Property Management (TPM) contract for PennDOT District II-0 in western, PA. There are four site locations where he oversees the site staffing and operations in Lawrence County and Allegheny County while performing all his other responsibilities as a district supervisor, but let's start from the beginning...

He was born in Watertown, NY. His family, which includes six other siblings, moved to Akron, OH for a short time before settling in Mercer, PA where he currently resides. At a young age, he delivered papers and later picked up a job at Howard Johnson's and BP before he received training in Commercial and Industrial Maintenance.

Gary has a long 21 year history with Keystone Blind. He was first hired as an attendant at the Grove City sites in July of 2000. At that time, he worked under a supervisor who would later become his mother-in-law. He worked in Keystone's vending department for a period of time before he became a lead attendant and then went on to become the supervisor for the Grove City sites until November, 2009 and is currently the TPM Supervisor for District II-0. Gary is also assisting on the implementation of an electronic time clock reporting system that KBA is initializing for facilities managed in the state.

One thing Gary enjoys most about his job is his contact with the public. He is attentive to any comments he can utilize to improve conditions to make their travel experience more enjoyable. He applies this same interest in his site employees wanting to get to know them better to promote and maximize team support. Challenges for supervising the essential services of the rest areas during the pandemic have been ongoing, but Gary believes in order to succeed, hard work is required and communication between management and the workforce is key. He gives cred-

it to having good lead attendants and an attendant workforce that takes pride in their work to form a good crew. Gary acknowledges that PennDOT working with us during the extended beltway project in Bridgeville is just one example of a good, coordinated effort.

When Gary has some off-time, he enjoys the outdoor sports of hunting and fishing. He also enjoys watching football...being an avid fan of the Cowboys. His wife Crystal and several of his family members worked at the rest area sites over the years. He coached softball and served as a board member on the cheerleading squad in support of his three daughters' activities. Gary is now looking forward to his involvement in his soon to be 1 year old grandson's activities...Wesley adores his granddad!



Gary and his grandson Wesley

A Rough Road Leads to Success...



(Above) An attendant keeps Site E clean in the early days of the TPM contract. (Below) Governor Robert Casey (left) visits Site E in 1993



In August of 1985, the Mercer County Blind Association (later renamed Keystone Blind Association) entered into a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to perform the cleaning maintenance of the rest area site on the east-bound lane of I-80 in West Middlesex.

This rest area, known as Site E, was one of 9 sites operated by PennDOT District I, whose regional office was located in Franklin. Site E was the “seedling” site for all 34 of the PennDOT rest area sites that were to become contracted to MCBA/KBA and BCAB and the prototype for the Total Property Management (TPM) contract. This contract would incorporate all 9 sites of District I into a single contract and would later expand to 13 sites, adding a contract with PennDOT District II in Bridgeville, PA.

Site E was the association’s first endeavor into cleaning maintenance and was contracted through the Pennsylvania Industries for the Blind and Handicapped, a partner agency working with Pennsylvania Department of General Services (now known as Unique Source). The Pennsylvania State Use Law allowed for any of its state-contracted services to be awarded to any agency for the handicapped or disabled as long as 75% of the employees performing the service were blind or disabled and the contract performed at the ‘low bid price’ (the lowest bid as received from typical cleaning maintenance companies.).

It was under these conditions that Jonathan Fister, the CEO of the MCBA at that time, contracted with PIBH (currently UniqueSource) and PennDOT to enter into his vision of a greatly expanded role for MCBA in Mercer County and the state of Pennsylvania. Though inexperienced in cleaning maintenance or the additional line items in the contract which included electrical, plumbing, lawn, refuse removal, water and sewage treatment, Jonathan relied on his skilled comptroller, Paige O’Hare and trusted his intuition in hiring Ron Banjak as the agency’s Contracts Manager.

The operation of the site would prove to be a challenge for the agency. Not only was PennDOT skeptical



Milan, Site E Lead Attendant empties trash in 2019

that handicapped people could perform the services of professional cleaning companies, the agency had to fulfill the service at the lowest bid price received. Added to this was the cost of the 8% commission that was charged by PIBH. The final difficulty, that of finding enough qualified disabled people to perform the service, was greatly alleviated by Pat Simon who worked for the Pennsylvania Department of Social Services. Her many employee referrals proved to be invaluable to the success of the agency's new venture. MCBA/KBA would later go on to be one of the largest employers of handicapped and disabled people in the state of Pennsylvania.

As the contract progressed through its term, the success of the agency in this endeavor was proven through the high ratings PennDOT received from the public for site cleanliness and related services. Comments such as "this is the cleanest site I've seen in

my travels through the country" were common. The agency eventually took on all 9 rest area sites in District I. PennDOT was so pleased with the agency's performance that all 9 sites were incorporated into a single expanded services contract including maintenance in September of 1999, called Total Facility Management (later changed to TPM - Total Property Management). In October 2009, TPM further expanded to PennDOT District II with the addition of four sites. TPM now services 13 sites in the six counties of Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Venango, Lawrence and Allegheny. It is the only contract of its type to include maintenance in Pennsylvania.

Special thanks to Ron Banjak, consulting editor and former (retired) Contract's Manager

Shredding Upgrades

A few years back, Keystone recognized the need for safe and reliable document destruction services in an era where identity theft has become prevalent and took the initiative to grow our document destruction business. At the time, we operated vans that utilized wheelchair lifts to load the shredding totes. We operated a ribbon-cut Allegheny Shredder and standard bailing system that we had owned since 2010. While we were providing a great service to our customers, we were not adequately equipped for substantial growth.

A decision was made to invest in new machinery which could crosscut material, making it even smaller and indecipherable. This has turned our document destruction business into something that is showing great opportunity for our company, employees, and our customers. In a very short five years, we have seen many of our service vehicles updated and out fitted with hydraulic lifts designed specifically for the weight of the totes and large pallets of shredding we receive from our customers. Our primary service vehicle has also been updated with a four-camera DVR system that allows for some additional security when the product is in transit to our building.

The fleet of vehicles is certainly not the only improvement we have made in the past couple of years. Along with the new 20 HP cross-cut shredder acquired in 2020, we have also been able to provide additional security measures within our facility. We have been able to update our camera system to ensure all points of egress are under video surveillance. The partnership with the company that provides our card-access system for the building came next and we had an additional security monitoring system installed within the shredding area. We worked with a local customer of ours that specializes in fencing to have an eight-foot-tall chain link fence installed around the primary shredding area to add yet another layer of security.

All of the improvements, while important to our goal of becoming NAID certified in document destruction, could not have happened without the need for the improved service and growth of our customer base. Many of the upgrades were made possible by a grant from the A. J. and Sigismunda Palumbo

Charitable Trust. We continue to see new customers monthly. Some customers utilize us for our bulk service in which we continue to be one of the cheapest per pound rates in the area. Others have signed on with us for routine pickups of shredding through our office services program (found on the next page). We have seen exponential growth from financial, medical, and law practices and they have helped us with our mission of providing employment opportunities to the visually impaired and/or disabled.

Everything that we do within our document destruction service has an even higher purpose. To our customers, it provides a financially savvy outlet to destroy necessary documents that are past their retention time. Our company provides employment opportunities to those who otherwise would be unable to find a job with the accommodations and training we provide. Lastly, we are trying to do our part in helping the environment. Over the last five years, we have kept over 1.2 million pounds of paper from hitting a landfill and helped it be introduced into the recycling world where it is typically de-inked, turned to pulp, and produced into new paper.

As we push forward on providing a great service to our customers, employees, and the environment, we ask that the next time you are in need of document destruction services to please consider Keystone as your provider. We would be happy to discuss what may be the best option for your situation and add you to our list of customers that make a difference within our mission. For more information call, 724-347-5501, select option 2, and then select option 1.



SHREDDING

LARGE OFFICE

Holds over 200 lbs.

Volume Capacity	95 gallon
Length	35.4 inches
Width	27.3 inches
Height	45.6 inches

Perfect for companies who generate a large volume of paper.

If your company produces 10 – 12 file boxes per month, this program is for you.

\$39.95

Per Tote, per pick-up



MEDIUM OFFICE

Holds 100 – 150 lbs.

Volume Capacity	65 gallon
Length	32.2 inches
Width	25.3 inches
Height	41.8 inches

Perfect for companies who generate a medium volume of paper. If your company produces 4 – 6 file boxes per month, this program is for you.

\$29.95

Per Tote, per pick-up



SMALL OFFICE

Holds about 80 lbs.

Volume Capacity	30.2 gallon
Length	16 inches
Width	21.5 inches
Height	36 inches

Perfect for companies who generate a small volume of paper. If your company produces 2 – 3 file boxes per month, this program is for you.

\$14.95

Per Tote, per pick-up



FOR MORE INFO, OR TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT, CALL 724-347-5501 x273
WE PICK UP YOUR DOCUMENTS!

Or, if you prefer, you can bring your documents to us. We offer "Free Pickups" in our local area. However, we have an "out of area" minimum charge of \$50* for anywhere further than 40 miles from our Hermitage, PA location.

(*any bulk service pickup 264+ lbs. will be charged at the \$0.19/lb. rate.)

Document destruction of boxed/bagged documents is \$0.19/lb.

Employee Spotlight

Alma - PEMA Janitorial

What a day to remember, when Coronavirus (Covid-19) became a pandemic. PEMA (Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency) was placed into full activation after the Governor and the Secretary of the PA Department Of Health initiated a state-wide medical emergency due to the Coronavirus outbreak in PA, across our nation and the globe. What is a PEMA activation?

PEMA Activation summed up is “All Hands on Deck”, almost every PA Agency or department is ordered to report to the PEMA facility and take their seat in the command center, which holds about three hundred personnel. This activation was much different than any other. We now had four activation centers:

1. PEMA
2. Dept. of Health
3. The Office of the Governor
4. PA National Guard

These departments encompass about 300-400 additional people, above the 300 regular PEMA staff all in a 65,000 square foot building, with sixteen restrooms, two full locker rooms with showers, seven conference room being converted into command centers, four breakrooms and offices. Any spare rooms were converted into sleeping quarters, which required cleaning after food services that served three meals a day along with snacks.

What does an activation mean for Keystone Blind Association? Not only do we have to provide our regular contracted services, but we had to provide custodial service to the additional staff in the activation areas throughout the PEMA Building and to include additional disinfection cleaning 24/7, with only 10 staff members. With the state shutting down, we were able to bring an additional 10-15 staff from oth-

er locations including rest areas and from as far as 45-50 miles away to help in the effort. This activation was like no one had ever seen or experienced. There would be activation training through the years for nuclear power plants, weather events, disasters etc... but never a Pandemic. This manual was being written and re-written by the minute over and over again. Our routines and cleaning practices changed by the second. Staff was being stretched to their limits, some working 40 to 80 hours a week, forgoing their social security limits, some still working their full time jobs and leaving their families in the midst of a pandemic. There were additional activations for weather and civil unrest in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC as well as for the 2021 Presidential Inaugural Events. These employees are the unseen and unrecognized front line essential workers we hear about in the news.

There is one particular employee I would like to introduce and her name is Alma Ferguson. Alma was hired and worked at our Dixon University site just a few miles away from PEMA.

When the University shut down, Alma was one of the four KBA staff from Dixon who transferred to PEMA. After things began to settle down with Covid-19 in the late summer of 2020, Dixon University re-opened with limited KBA staff. Alma returned to Dixon. In Late November of 2020, Dixon closed permanently and the contract was discontinued. Alma along with the other three staff members returned to PEMA. The lead worker at PEMA stepped down in the early part of 2021, and Alma was promoted to Lead Worker.

Alma is the mother of four grown adult daughters that she raised on her own. She also has 14 grandchildren, 5 of whom she is helping to raise. Alma has

been with KBA since September of 2018. Alma attended East Pennsboro Area High School, in Enola, Cumberland County. Alma in, her younger days, ran a small farm and worked full time in the meat room at Karns, a local Grocery Store. She also cleaned for local hotels and worked for a construction company remodeling homes. About 15 years ago, Alma was diagnosed with arthritis and stenosis of the spine along with respiratory issues non-COPD. “With the arthritis and stenosis of the spine, it makes it hard to do my job, but I am motivated to push through. I am the lead worker at PEMA. My job consists of payroll, scheduling daily assignment of work, activation schedules, training staff, and ensuring the requirements of the

contract are fulfilled including carpet and floor care. The site can be very challenging at times and overwhelming, but that’s what motivates me. I love a challenge! I enjoy my job and like working for KBA. They are a good company to work for.”

Covid-19, was very stressful and had many challenges, as everything was constantly changing and some days I did not know which end was up or down going from 300 PEMA staff to around 500 activation staff along with the Department of Health and the Governor’s Office being set up here. But we got through it and the activation just ended in mid-June 2021. I love my job and appreciate the opportunity to work for KBA at the PEMA facility.



Alma Ferguson, Keystone Lead Worker at PEMA.

Employee Spotlight

Anthony – Photo ID

Anthony is a Photo ID employee for Center for the Blind and Disabled at the Langhorne Site outside of Philadelphia. He has been with the agency for two years and is responsible for taking driver's license center photos and personal ID photos. Anthony was born in Atmore, Alabama but moved to Florida shortly thereafter where he lived for 10 years. He then moved to Louisiana, but has lived in a number of different states since then including South Carolina, New York, and New Jersey. He loves living in Pennsylvania the most because we have all four seasons and feels the people are the nicest in Pennsylvania. He enjoys working to stay busy and it gets him out of the house while still earning a paycheck.

Anthony is no stranger to working hard as he joined the Navy at the age of 17 and retired from there at age 25. He worked in the engine room of the ship for years. He has since worked as a maintenance supervisor at a power plant and as a commercial dry-wall installer before coming to Center for the Blind and Disabled. Anthony has been a double amputee since the age of 51, which presented him with some challenges, however since he received a new wheel chair this spring he is doing great. He is now able to go for exercise around his housing development. In his spare time, Anthony enjoys spending time with his son and two beautiful granddaughters who are his whole world!

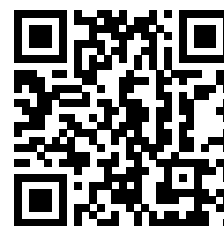
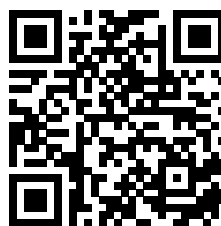
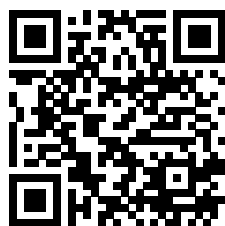
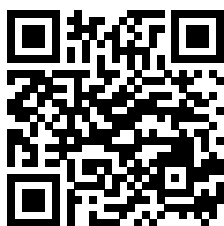
Anthony is thankful for being able to work at the photo ID center and enjoys helping people. He was surprised at how easy the job was once he was trained and likes to stay busy all day.



Anthony, Photo ID employee for CBD at the Langhorne Site

Donate ONLINE

To make an online donate to the agency of your choice, scan the code below that agency's logo.



Enclosed is my Donation:

☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other _____

Make checks payable to **Keystone Blind Association**
Donate Online at www.keystoneblind.org or we can charge your card:

Card # _____

CVV Code _____ Expiration Date ____/____/____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Thank you for your generous donation!

(Return this form with your donation to Keystone Blind Association)

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State
by calling toll free, within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please remember us in your will.

Our Vision Works

35



3056 East State Street, Hermitage, PA 16148

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SHARON, PA
PERMIT #82



3 Ways to Donate!

- **Online Donation** Quick, Easy and Safe!
- **Checks can be** made payable to **Keystone Blind Association** and mailed back to KBA to the address below.
- **Credit Card** Please fill out the info on the back of this card, cut it off on the dotted line, and mail it back to KBA.

3056 East State Street, Hermitage, PA 16148
724-347-5501 • keystoneblind.org