A little vision goes a long way.

2015-2016 Annual Report

Vision Forward Association

Dear Friends,

Our strategic plan for 2015-2016 addresses the prediction that by 2030 the rates of vision loss will double along with the country’s aging population. This information has a direct impact on Vision Forward and the services we provide. As a result, to better accommodate the needs of our current clients as well as future clients, this year we developed the following:

Technology and Education Center (TEC) that offers access to and training on the latest advancements in technology designed for people with vision loss.

Youth Sports Camp that provides opportunities for kids to experience recreational and sporting activities with adaptations, enabling them to compete individually and as part of a team.

Vision Connections Conference in collaboration with the Medical College of Wisconsin Eye Institute that addresses the medical aspects of vision loss as well as current research and technology.

Our Board of Directors is working diligently to raise Vision Forward’s profile in the community and position the organization for the future. Additionally, our staff of highly trained vision loss experts is working with the medical and educational communities to strengthen and expand our programs to ensure they meet the needs of all age groups. Their collective work has made this a transformative year at Vision Forward!

Our accomplishments would not be possible without you, our donors and supporters.

As we continue to prepare for the future, your feedback, support, and belief in our work is vital. If you are looking for additional ways to further our mission, please: refer us to someone with vision loss, volunteer, educate others about our services, like us on Facebook, or host a third party fundraising event. If you have other ideas we would love to hear from you.

Thank you for all you do to support individuals in our community who are blind or visually impaired. You truly are making a difference.

Sincerely,

Mike Aprahamian, Board President

Terri Davis, Executive Director

By 2030 the rates of vision loss will double along with the country's aging population.

American Foundation of the Blind

OUR MISSION

Empower, educate, and enhance the lives of individuals impacted by vision loss through all of life’s transitions.

Through life’s transitions…

Vision loss is something that alters the course of your life. Whether you are a parent who has been told by your doctor your baby is blind or an older adult who has had to face the diagnosis of macular degeneration, the vision you had for your life has changed. Vision Forward meets individuals where they are at on their journey of vision loss. We answer questions and help people develop the skills to build the life that they want for themselves.

At Vision Forward our belief is a little vision goes a long way. Every day we see people with vision challenges learn new skills and ways of accomplishing their goals, maintain their independence and enjoy the many activities of daily life.

The services we provide are made possible through the support of our donors. Gifts of every level enable us to provide specialized help in a variety of ways — teaching children and adults to learn braille, travel safely and independently, how to use assistive technology and to adapt their daily tasks — regardless of a person’s or family’s ability to pay.

We want to reassure people that they are not alone and that they have a voice and a choice about how they want to live their lives. We work to empower and educate individuals and their families about vision loss, as well as the social and emotional aspects that come with losing one’s vision.

“People say that visual impairment is a disability, but I don’t understand that because I can do everything they can do!”

2015 Sports Camp Participant

Tiffiny, Dawn and Lori

“When you go through this you have no idea where to turn or how to navigate this life. It was a difficult journey in the beginning. We couldn’t have survived without the support we found at Vision Forward. The staff were amazing — they were like family! And this is a lifelong relationship. Our kids are going to receive services from Vision Forward for the rest of their lives.”

Living successfully is important at every age.

Having vision loss should not impede a person’s ability to function in daily life. We help people gain the confidence, strength, and skills to choose and pursue their dreams and goals, whether that be the child learning to walk, a teenager swimming for the first time or an adult getting to work independently. Through Vision Forward people come to “see” the exciting possibilities that exist for them and the power they have to make choices.

Chase and Karter

Chase and Karter were born unexpectedly at 27 weeks, weighing only 1.5 pounds. These two babies were born with Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) and had serious physical challenges; their mother April, who had two children at home, faced overwhelming emotional and coping challenges. She had endless questions about the medical condition and treatment options for her twins. Feeling alone and scared, April turned to Vision Forward for assistance, and our therapists and teachers helped her make sense of it all. Together they developed a program of services to help her boys thrive. As a family they’ve made tremendous progress: The boys have almost completed their program of therapies and April has learned many treatment techniques she can do at home to assist in their growth and development.

Naomi

Jasmine, Naomi's mother, says, "When Naomi started in Vision Forward’s Birth to 3 Program, we thought she was totally blind. To our surprise she quickly went from not tracking things with her eyes to reaching out for her bottle and turning her head towards the person who was talking to her. A whole new world has opened for her. She's making such progress and is full of confidence."

Anthony

“After losing my vison in my 20’s, I thought ‘Why me so early in life?’ The doctors did everything they could for my eyes, but they didn’t teach me how to deal with vision loss. It was hard for me to ask others for assistance, but I knew it was time to stop running and get the help I needed. One of the things I loved to do was cook. Through my training at Vision Forward I learned new ways to operate in the kitchen and how to work safely. I’m back on the stove cooking and I’m happy. I’m very proud of myself. I can’t stand not doing anything now that I’m ready to do everything.”

Alex

Our new Technology and Education Center (TEC), which opened in February, helps people like Alex use the latest technology designed for people with vision loss. From the beginning of Alex’s journey at Vision Forward he was open and had a positive attitude. He was able to quickly master his new assistive technology which was instrumental for him to complete his degree in social work and be able to pursue his goal of helping others.

Rachel

“Losing my vision was very depressing to me. There were several years that I stayed home and isolated myself. Coming to Vision Forward has brought hope to my life and an understanding that I’m not alone in this adventure I’ve been forced to live.”

The People We Serve

CHILDREN & YOUTH

208 children & youth received 7,665 hours of service

Gender

41% female

59% male

Age

0-2 38%

3-5 37%

6-10 19%

Greater than 10 6%

Ethnicity

White, Non-Hispanic 55%

Black, African Amer. 27%

Latino, Hispanic 15%

Other 3%

89% showed progress in skills leading to independence

Clients came from 139 zip codes in Wisconsin

1,001 customers found solutions through the Vision Forward Store

Hawley Ridge Apartments provides safe and affordable housing for 76 individuals.

Through our Mobile Store and outreach we connected with 1,472 people in the community.

Transportation is a significant barrier for visually impaired individuals. Our vans logged

18,000 miles transporting individuals to receive services from Vision Forward.

ADULTS

390 adults received 2,362 hours of service

Gender

66% Female

34% Male

Age

Under 40 13%

41-70 35%

70 + 52%

Ethnicity

White, Non-Hispanic 78%

Black, African Amer. 15%

Latino, Hispanic 5%

Other 2%

91% developed skills for independent living

Statement of Activities   
Year Ending March 31, 2016

OPERATING REVENUE

41% Contributions & Grants

10% Bequests

6% Trusts

10% Adult Vision Rehabilitation

3% Property Management

11% Vision Forward Store

17% Children & Youth Services

2% Other Programs

OPERATING EXPENSES

23% Adult Vision Rehabilitation Services

3% Property Management

14% Vision Forward Store

38% Children & Youth Services

2% Other Programs

3% Information & Referral

10% Philanthropy

7% General & Administrative

184 individual volunteers contributed a total of 10,039 hours valued at $222,263 to enhance the lives of individuals impacted by vision loss.

Source: independentsector.org

Pictured above are just a few of our many fantastic corporate employee volunteers. Left, Robert W. Baird & Co. volunteers spruced up our facility. Right, Employees from ManpowerGroup hosted our Festa Italiana event for adults.

Vision Forward Association

912 Hawley Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213

(414) 615-0100

vision-forward.org

View the pdf version of this report, including a full list of our donors and information on our event sponsors, at vision-forward.org/our-impact/ annual-reports/

Return Service Requested

Helping people with vision loss build the life they want.

2016 Leadership

Vision Forward Association Board of Directors, 2016

Michael Aprahamian President

Nona Graves Vice-President

Tim Harris Treasurer

Kathy Brockman Secretary

Cindy Alioto

Brett Bostrack

Matthew Kickbush

Stephen Raclaw

Ruthiea Renfro

Robert Richter

Joseph Skotarza

Vision Forward Foundation Board of Directors, 2016

David Strelitz President

James Dobrinska Vice-President

Kathy Brockman Secretary

Erich Schwenker Treasurer

Brett Bostrack

Terence Lynch

Christine Stone

BAB Properties, Inc. Board of Directors, 2016

Joseph Schwenker President

Kevin Pasqua Vice-President

Robert Richter Secretary

Erich Schwenker Treasurer

Douglas Brodzik

Scott McLaughlin

Ruthiea Renfro

Jerry Selber