

In Focus

FALL 2015

"THE WORDS THAT changed my world."

Vision Forward Association has been providing early intervention services for young children, ages newborn to six years, since 1967. We have long known that vision loss has a pervasive effect on early childhood development, making it critical for infants to receive services as early as possible. The following is a poignant and heartening account by Stormi Schmidt, the mother of a child receiving services through our Children's Program, who shares the story of her son Lelyn.

The pediatrician and nurse came in and said that they had called down to the clinic to have the eye doctor come over and evaluate Lelyn since he still had not opened his eyes.

So around 5:00 p.m., they came and took Lelyn out of the room. We sat there in complete suspense not knowing what was about to happen.

We had my whole family in the room when the eye doctor came back in with her partner and all she kept saying to us was "He's a healthy baby, he's a healthy baby." Finally, I looked right at her and told her to get to the point: "Why has Lelyn not opened his eyes?" She got very quiet.



Lelyn

Then the words that changed my world came out of her mouth: The doctor had tried opening Lelyn's eyes, but the opening was so small that she couldn't verify if there were globes behind his lids.

Overwhelmed by what was just said, I made everyone leave the room, as I could feel all the walls closing in on me, and I broke down. *What? He doesn't have eyes? How is this virtually possible? I've never heard of this ever happening. What do you mean? She must be wrong. She doesn't know what she's talking about,* is all I kept thinking.

As a parent, you have all these hopes and dreams for your child. You never think that something could happen, but I guess I was naive.

You can read all the books, do everything right, have all the tests come back perfect and, guess what? Something still can happen and it is completely out of your control.

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OUR **MISSION**

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

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's that time of year when change is all around us — the falling temperature, the changing leaves, the transition back to school, the loss of a dear friend. Change is constant, happening daily in all of our lives.

Here at Vision Forward we embrace change because we know that it often brings new opportunities and possibilities, as well as transitions that help us adapt and regain balance. Change also is necessary for us to be able to support and meet the varying needs of our clients.

This issue of our newsletter celebrates some positive changes that impact those with vision loss. On our cover, Stormi Schmidt shares the story of her son Lelyn and how our services have helped him learn to live in a world he cannot see. Our new Technology and Education Center (TEC) will provide individuals of all ages with access to and training on assistive technology that can help them learn new ways of doing things. And the implementation of Universal English Braille (UEB) will bring international braille consistency and help people continue to read and stay connected, advancing the state of literacy.

We know that change can be challenging and frightening, but so can vision loss. Our services work with change to help remove the fear and negative impact of losing vision. Our goal is to help clients make adaptations that allow them to achieve success and continue to live lives that matter. What could be more important?

We invite you to immerse yourself in the stories of change and success we share in this newsletter and to come visit us to experience firsthand the positive results. We look forward to seeing you.



Terri Davis

Dining in the dark

Sunday, November 1, 2015

BACCHUS Restaurant

DINNER SPEAKER

Dan O'Connell, Vice President/Partner
Cardinal Capital Management, Inc.

For more information visit
www.dininginthedarkmke.org

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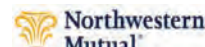
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VISION FORWARD TRANSITIONS TO NEW BRAILLE FORMAT

In November of 2012, the members of the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) voted to adopt Unified English Braille (UEB) to replace English Braille American Edition in the United States. UEB will be implemented on January 4, 2016.

UEB offers a more accurate representation of print materials and will now be universal across the world. UEB is designed to include support for specialized math and science symbols, computer-related symbols, foreign alphabets, and visual effects (bullets, bold type, accent marks, etc.).

Vision Forward is transitioning our braille communications and braille instruction to meet the UEB criteria. Contact Claire Egan, School Age Manager, at **414-615-0104** or egan@vision-forward.org with questions related to UEB.



Hadley School for the Blind

has developed a new course, "Transitioning to Unified English Braille," to teach students the new UEB code. The course is now available in braille, large print and online and is offered at no cost for the sighted professional through the end of 2015. Learn more at www.hadley.edu.

LEAVING A LEGACY

BOB SCHLYTTER

Vision Forward lost a cherished friend, Robert (Bob) O. Schlytter, on September 8, 2015. Bob was a true visionary who influenced the community through his engaging smile, genuine kindness, charm and generosity. Bob invested much time with Vision Forward, immersing himself in our mission to provide services to those with vision loss. He was a man who lived by his often spoken phrase "Get it done," and he went out of his way to help others.

Bob was great at connecting people with causes and introduced many of his friends to Vision Forward. He also served as an advisor on our capital campaign, made our Mobile Store Van a reality, and strongly supported our new

Technology and Education Center (TEC). Bob's legacy will live on and his generosity will continue to touch the lives of people he never met — individuals who are blind and visually impaired — for many years to come.

Thank you, dear friend.
You will be missed, but never forgotten.



Bob Schlytter

LELYN CONT'D

After about an hour or so after everyone left, Lelyn's delivering pediatrician came into the room with papers in his hand. He asked how we were doing, and you could tell he truly cared about what was going on.

He stated that he had done some research and handed us these papers that said the word "Anophthalmia" as the headline.

Anophthalmia? I had never heard the word in my

entire life, so we read on. Then there were those words again: "No Eyes" ...

To complete Stormi Schmidt's story and to find out about Lelyn's remarkable progress and how he's doing today, please visit our website at vision-forward.org.



Join us for a Vision Forward Store special event

MULTI-SENSORY MONDAY

November 16, 2015 • 9:00 am – 7:00 pm

Author **Phil Di Meo** will sign copies of his book, “Binoculars: Masquerading as a Sighted Person.” Enjoy special promotions and the debut of this year’s holiday chocolate selection. Learn more about the Vision Forward Store at www.vision-forward.org/store.

#GivingTuesday AND #Seethingsdifferently

Support organizations like Vision Forward with **#GivingTuesday**. It’s a 24 hour fundraising event where charities, families, businesses, community centers and students around the world will come together for one common purpose: to celebrate generosity and to give.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to learn more about how you can support Vision Forward and **#seethingsdifferently**.

SAVE THE DATES!



TEXAS HOLD ‘EM

POKER TOURNAMENT

Saturday, December 5, 2015

Western Racquet Club, New Berlin

FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Thursday, May 5, 2016

Harley-Davidson Museum, Milwaukee

For more information, please contact Jenny Hauser, Donor Manager, **414-615-0128** or jhauser@vision-forward.org.

VISION CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

Vision Forward was honored to host the Vision Connections Conference at the Medical College of Wisconsin on October 17. The day was filled with great information, resources and connections for many individuals living with vision loss.

Special thanks to our conference speakers: Dr. Kimberly Stepien, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Eye Institute; Thomas Perski, Chicago Lighthouse For People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired; Sarah Joy Krueger, PhD and Luke Scriben, Chicago Lighthouse



For People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired. Thanks also to Vision Forward staff Dr. Heather Hinson, Optometrist; Cory Ballard, Assistive Technology Specialist; and Lauren Nelson, OTR, Certified Low Vision Therapist. Participants heard representatives from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, IndependenceFirst, WI FACETS and Brainport, and enjoyed our many exhibitors.

Thanks to our partners at the Medical College of Wisconsin, you can access the recorded presentations on our website at: vision-forward.org/news-events/community-events/vision-connections-conference/

DREAM PROVIDES YOUTH WITH VISION LOSS

SPORTS OPPORTUNITIES

When Ian Kloehn, a senior at Marquette University studying Biomedical Science, approached Vision Forward last fall with an idea for a youth sports camp, staff were eager to collaborate with him and begin planning.

Being legally blind since birth, Ian had benefited from a similar camp when he was young and never forgot the impact it had on his life. He dreamt of providing this same type of opportunity for other youth. His vision coincided with the goals of the Youth Program at Vision Forward: providing meaningful opportunities for youth of all ages who are blind or visually impaired so they can have the same experiences as their sighted peers.

With the support of Vision Forward and Ian's inspiration and commitment to giving back, this past summer youth with vision loss participated in a variety of sports, including swimming, track and field, self-defense and goal ball.

Vision Forward and Ian are already making plans for the 2016 Youth Sports Camp in July. Look for details this winter on our website. To learn more about opportunities for youth with vision loss, please contact Claire Egan, School Age Manager, at **414-615-0104** or **cegan@vision-forward.org**.



Ian (lower right) with camp participants and volunteers.

"My son had a great time at the camp and really enjoyed it. I think it was important for him to see other kids are like him since he often feels like the only one with vision loss. The counselors and staff did a great job with all the kids. Thank you so much for putting this camp together!"

PARENT OF A YOUTH PARTICIPANT

FIRST SCHOLARSHIP WINNER!

Kaitlyn Siekert, a sophomore at Edgewood College, was selected to receive the 2015 Vision Forward scholarship.

Kaitlyn has faced and overcome numerous challenges in her life due to her disabilities. She has persevered throughout the years and is on a path to achieve her dream of becoming a Child Life Specialist — a career she chose because of her personal experiences with the Child Life Specialist

"I promise to be a good investment
with your gift."

KAITLYN SIEKERT

that was assigned to her family when she had childhood cancer.

Vision Forward congratulates Kaitlyn and wishes her future academic success.

This scholarship is awarded each July to an individual from Wisconsin who is blind or visually impaired and looking to pursue a college degree. For more information and a scholarship application, visit our website at **www.vision-forward.org**.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH AT **www.vision-forward.org**

Visit us after December 1st to view the new site!



912 North Hawley Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213

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If you, your organization, or someone you know would benefit from receiving this publication, please let us know.

InFocus is available in alternative formats, such as braille, audio CD and email.

Contact us at **414-615-0120** or **info@vision-forward.org**.

Visit our website at **vision-forward.org**



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SAVE THE DATE!

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

**Grand Opening of Vision Forward's new
Technology and Education Center!**

Due to the generosity of many of our individual, corporate and foundation partners, this winter people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired can access to the latest advancements in assistive technology at our Technology and Education Center.

We invite people with vision loss, family members, employers, teachers and other agencies to visit the Technology and Education Center on **February 2nd** to see how innovative technology is creating opportunities for people of all ages living with vision loss.

Contact Tracey Sheasby, Campaign Manager, at **414-615-0120** or **tsheasby@vision-forward.org** if you



would like to donate or help cover the costs of items still needed for the Training and Education Center:

Training and Education Center Wish List

- Desktop Magnifiers - \$2,000
- New iPad Pro with Apple Pencil - \$1,079
- Talking Scientific Calculator - \$500
- Talking Home Phone - \$150
- Writing Guides - \$35