

InFocus

SPRING 2015

**SEEING PAST LIMITATIONS
TO OPPORTUNITIES**

MEET CORY BALLARD

Cory Ballard is Vision Forward's Assistive Technology Specialist — he helps people learn to use equipment that has been modified for individuals who have vision loss. Cory's degree in sociology and his special certification in the tools and techniques of assistive technology accommodations make him one of only a few individuals in the area qualified to do this type of work.

On a daily basis Cory conducts one-on-one assessments and provides training to help individuals determine which devices will best assist them in reaching their goals. One of his recent clients was a man who needed assistance reading his mail. Cory helped him use a camera and computer to take a picture of his mail and have it read back to him. Through technology, this man is now able to accomplish a personal task he was previously unable to do.

Cory truly understands the benefits of assistive technology both professionally and personally. He lost his vision at the age of 12. "These devices are so much



Cory Ballard

more than just technology," says Cory. "They mean independence for so many."

At Vision Forward we understand the challenges of vision loss. "We're here to assist, teach and empower you so that your vision loss becomes an inconvenience and nothing more," states Cory.

If you think assistive technology could make the tasks of your life easier, contact Cory at **414-615-0124** or **cballard@vision-forward.org**.

To learn more about Cory's journey with vision loss visit our website at **vision-forward.org**.

OUR **MISSION**

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

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When people learn they have diminishing vision, it's a life-altering experience and the accompanying range of emotions can be overwhelming. Additionally challenging is the fact that the impact of vision loss is different for every person — there is no "one size fits all" approach to coping with the issues imposed by a visual impairment. To this end, we let people tell us what they want and need to lead active, independent lives, and then work together to design individualized programs that help them accomplish their goals.

Vision Forward's newest initiatives for meeting the needs of clients include:

- Expanding our current technology lab to ensure that people of all ages with vision loss have access to and training on cutting edge assistive technology equipment;
- Developing New Perspectives, a six week support series that addresses the social-emotional aspects of vision loss;
- Increasing our services in Waukesha County so transportation isn't a barrier for people; and
- Collaborating with other vision loss agencies to develop and deliver pre-employment training for individuals interested in obtaining or maintaining a job.

We invite you to join us in our mission by spreading the word about Vision Forward to help others successfully navigate the road to independence.



Terri Davis



STRIKE GOLD FEAST FOR THE SENSES 2015

The 13th Annual Feast for the Senses will be held on **Thursday, May 7th** at the Milwaukee Theatre. Last year's event raised \$100,000 for our Children's Program.

Consider joining our sponsors and show your support to help **STRIKE GOLD** with Vision Forward on May 7th! Contact Jenny Hauser, Events Manager, at **414-615-0128** or jhauser@vision-forward.org.



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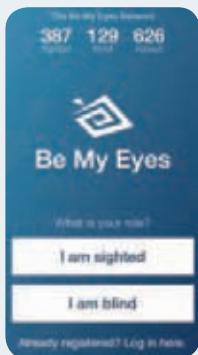


MEET **IAN**

Ian came to Vision Forward with multiple developmental challenges. Through the work our staff has done with Ian and his family he has made extraordinary gains. We are so proud of his progress. Way to go Ian!

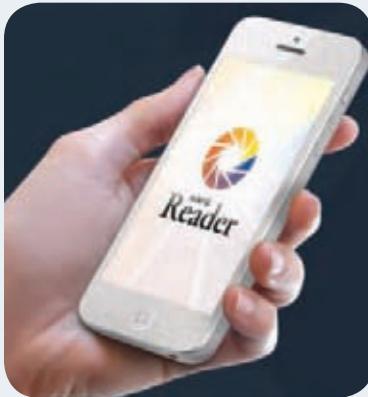
Read more about Ian's story at www.vision-forward.org/program/child

TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT



BE MY EYES APP

With this new app for the iPhone called Be My Eyes, a person who is blind can launch the app and request a sighted volunteer. When a volunteer is connected, the camera and microphone go live, allowing the sighted volunteer access to see and hear what is around the visually impaired person. Be My Eyes is a free download from the iTunes App Store.



KNFB READER APP

This new app, tailored to the specific needs of people who are blind or visually impaired, converts printed text into high quality speech to provide accurate, fast, and efficient access to both single and multiple page documents with the tap of a button on the iPhone.

ODIN VI CELL PHONE

The Vision Forward Store is now carrying the ODIN VI, a talking cell phone that is 100 percent accessible to people with vision loss. It speaks everything that is on the screen, speaks the keys that you press and even prompts you to perform certain functions. Visit the Vision Forward Store today to learn more about this accessible phone.



2015 STORE HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday: 9:00 am – 7:00 pm

414-615-0111

www.vision-forward.org/store

LEAVING A LEGACY **PAT KEATING**

Providing support and services for people with vision loss motivated Patricia (Pat) Keating to leave a legacy gift to Vision Forward Association. As a member and volunteer of Vision Forward Association for 47 years, Pat says, "It's my hope that there will always be a supportive organization for people living with vision loss because it's a good organization and it has meant a lot to me throughout my life."

Pat, the oldest of 12 children, was born blind. She came to Milwaukee from the small town of Thorpe, in central Wisconsin, in 1968 looking for better employment opportunities and secured a 20-year career with the IRS. Pat was happy to discover the Badger Association of the Blind and the affordable, safe living options it offered. She especially enjoyed the social activities and supportive

services the organization offered for people who were blind or visually impaired. "It was my home and I really liked being with others," she says fondly.

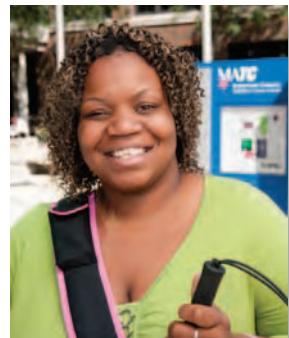


Pat Keating

Pat adds, "I encourage others to support nonprofit organizations where they have a connection."

To learn more about our Legacy Society, please contact Terri Davis, Executive Director, **414-615-0120** or tdavis@vision-forward.org.

VISION FORWARD ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP



Vision Forward has established a scholarship fund to benefit students from Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired looking to pursue a college degree.

For more information and a scholarship application, visit our website at www.vision-forward/scholarship.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Vision Forward's Strategic planning process is currently underway. Thank you to all of you who provided input through surveys, focus groups and meetings. We look forward to updating you on our progress.

SAVE THE DATE!



YOUTH SPORTS CAMP

WHO: For youth entering 6th grade through 12 who are blind or visually impaired

WHEN: Wednesday, July 15 and Thursday, July 16, 2015

WHERE: Marquette University Campus

Youth will participate in swimming, track and field, goalball and much more! The sports will be adapted specifically for youth with vision loss. Please visit our website, vision-forward.org, for details and registration information.

OUR VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Volunteers from Lessiter Publishing

At Vision Forward, a growing number of volunteers are helping us in a variety of ways to achieve our mission. Last year our volunteer base grew from 250 to 486 volunteers, which includes our partnership with the School to Work Transition Program of Milwaukee Public Schools and corporate volunteer groups from United Way Intern Day of Action, Northwestern Mutual, RW Baird, Lessiter Publishing, Manpower and BMO Harris Bank.

Vision Forward is now certified as a Service Enterprise (SE) organization, a designation granted only to organizations that demonstrate that they effectively and strategically engage volunteers at all levels of their organization in order to meet their social mission.

Thank you to all of our volunteers!



**Save the Date:
DINING IN THE DARK**
Sunday, November 1, 2015 • Bacchus Restaurant

**A SENSORY EXPERIENCE
LIKE NO OTHER AND
AN EVENING YOU'LL
NEVER FORGET.**

CONNECTING CLIENTS TO POSSIBILITIES

Technology has become an integral part of our everyday lives. For individuals who are blind or visually impaired, however, technology needs to have a modification or a special built-in feature that enables them to use it. Such equipment is called assistive or adaptive technology, and its purpose is to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

"A big part of our initial training is demonstrating how adaptive technology can assist people with vision loss in accessing information," states Cory Ballard, Vision Forward Assistive Technology Specialist.

"With new clients, we learn about their personal, academic and vocational goals. Then we assess their computer skills and make appropriate recommendations on what technology will best help them accomplish their goals," states Cory.

The assistive technology we utilize for training ranges from low tech, inexpensive devices — voice activated phone, talking answering machine, large print keyboard, glare control monitor — to high tech, more expensive devices — iPad, Jaws software, braille note taker, hand held video magnifier. These specialized devices help people with vision loss access information and connect with others, enabling them to participate fully in school, work and life.



Lauren Nelson, Occupational Therapist/Certified Low Vision Therapist, (left) and Cory Ballard assist Florence with finding the right assistive technology to help her with reading emails and shopping on-line.

"For most people technology makes things easier. For **people with disabilities**, technology makes things **possible**."

MARY PAT RADABAUGH,
IBM National Support Center
for Persons with Disabilities

TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION CENTER



Vision Forward is in the process of creating a technology and education center to ensure that people who are blind and visually impaired have access to the latest advancements in assistive technology. The center will showcase state-of-the-art assistive technology designed for use in classrooms, home offices and workplace settings. "Our staff will demonstrate how simple, inexpensive adaptations can significantly improve a person's ability to be independent," remarks Jacci Borchardt, Program Director.

We will offer programming for children, youth, adults and seniors, allowing them to see how the technology will benefit them in a variety of environments. The center will also be a resource for the community, family members, vision professionals, potential employers and other agencies wanting to learn about the latest technology and accommodations for people with vision loss.

HELP OUR **VISION**
BECOME A
REALITY ►

Consider joining the following supporters and make a contribution to our technology and education center: ROS Foundation, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, Elizabeth Elser Doolittle Charitable Trusts, Industries for the Blind, and the Bert and Patricia Steigleider Charitable Trust. To learn more, contact Tracey Sheasby, Campaign Manager, at **414-615-0120** or **tsheasby@vision-forward.org**.



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



Department of Ophthalmology

The physicians and scientists at the Eye Institute are leaders in performing innovative vision research and applying our findings to enhance the detection, diagnosis and management of eye diseases. Our mission is to improve, restore, and preserve sight. We are proud to support the Vision Forward Association.

www.mcw.edu/ophthalmology

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