



2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT





OUR MISSION

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



The principles of our mission—empower, educate and enhance—are at the core of every decision we make and every service we provide. Individuals across all spectrums have met their specific needs around vision loss through the training, education and support services that are made possible by our donors.

Every day we see clients succeed, and it is thrilling; when we see clients pay forward what they have received, it is truly inspiring. Recently, a client informed us that due to unemployment he could not afford to pay for services. Generous donor dollars made a significant impact by allowing him to receive the essential services needed from us at no cost. As a result, when this client gained employment, he was so thankful that he made a financial gift to be used to help others receive the services they need. Another client who lost her job due to a visual impairment was also able to receive services from us. In gratitude, she has given back by volunteering at Vision Forward. This “pay it forward” approach empowers not only the giver, but also the receiver, ensuring that a single gift can continue to have a positive impact indefinitely.

The power of donor support, whether financial or volunteerism, is witnessed daily at Vision Forward. Without it, we would not exist. As we conclude our 99th year of service to the community, I want you to know that your gifts continue to have a powerful impact on people we serve, and they are continually being paid forward. Thank you for believing in our mission and making a difference in the lives of individuals living with vision loss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terri".

Terri Davis
Executive Director

“I was thrilled when my eye doctor told me about Vision Forward. I feel like without this facility, I would just be sitting at home, feeling sorry for myself.”

Vision Forward Store Customer



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

“We became connected to Vision Forward through a friend whose daughter benefited from the children’s services. It was quite an impressive story. Over the years, we’ve realized how very important Vision Forward’s mission truly is and believe vision concerns are present for everyone. Why not choose Vision Forward?”

Mitchell & Cathy Marks, supporters for over 10 years, pictured with members of their family at the 2019 Feast for the Senses.

Thank you to all our donors for your gifts that make a difference in the lives of people of all ages living with vision loss. For a complete list of our donors, please visit our website at vision-forward.org/2019annualreport

Empowering People at Every Age

Aria's Story

“They’ve given my family a better understanding of Aria’s condition and potential which has helped us all.” Janissa, Aria’s mother

“What did we do wrong?” Neil and Janissa questioned with a sense of guilt and hopelessness when Aria, their six month old daughter born with Joubert Syndrome, was experiencing multiple developmental delays. The syndrome, a rare condition, often results in abnormal eye movements, low muscle tone, and delayed speech, language and motor development. These challenges were evident as Aria was unable to lift her head properly or push up with her arms when on her tummy.

This diagnosis left Aria’s family with a lot of questions. They were grateful when Aria’s team at Froedtert Hospital referred them to Vision Forward for help. Soon after, she began services with the Vision Forward staff on early intervention techniques.

Aria worked with determination as exercises were introduced to strengthen her muscles. Gradually she

started to push up when on her tummy, sit, crawl and even walk with a walker. One day, to her parents’ surprise, she began cruising along a wall in their home.

At three-years old, Aria continued to amaze her family when she started in the early education classroom. She continued to receive vision services and medical therapies, and now had the opportunity to engage and interact with other children. To further her communication with friends and teachers, speech therapists began to teach Aria sign language and help her articulate several words.

“The staff at Vision Forward are a tremendous resource for children like Aria experiencing vision problems,” remarked Janissa. “They provided very personalized services to our family and their caring and supportive approach has made them like a second family to us.”





Ava's Story

“They really saved my life! Everyone is truly helpful, sympathetic and knowledgeable.” Ava

Ava noticed that she was having trouble seeing. Her doctor informed her that her changing vision was the result of elevated pressure and bleeding in her eyes, complications of her diabetes. Despite several surgeries her vision continued to deteriorate.

Over the next six years Ava had to face the fact that she no longer had enough vision to do the work necessary for her to continue her 30-year career as a nurse. The loss of her job left her isolated and scared. She recalls, “I cried a lot and felt sorry for myself. I really did not think I was going to make it.”

Erica Weise, Vision Forward Social Worker, remembers, “When we began working with Ava, she was suffering... she was frustrated and angry over the loss of her vision. A pivotal point for Ava was during a heart-to-heart conversation about being a victim. It was as if a switch was turned on, Ava strongly stated she did not want to be a victim and her attitude towards her blindness changed.”

Ava became more open to starting her journey of regaining her independence. “Everything I learned helped me see that there was hope,” remembers Ava. Step by step she discovered new ways to live her life through a variety of sessions with the Vision Forward Adult Rehabilitation Team. Her participation in one of the support groups connected her with others in similar situations, helping her see the possibilities.

Ava praises the staff at Vision Forward. “They really saved my life! Everyone is truly helpful, sympathetic and knowledgeable.”

Today, Ava feels like she's getting her life back through exercising and socializing with neighbors at a local senior center and mentoring others at Vision Forward who are also facing vision loss. Ava states that she, “wants to continue to help others.” Seen as an inspiration, Ava exemplifies the courage, inner strength and drive to overcome life's obstacles. •



548 adults were served through 2,565 hours of direct service



234 children & youth were served through 11,923 hours of direct service

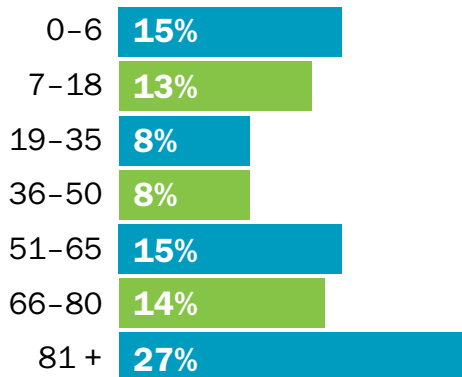


971 people found product solutions at the Vision Forward Store



2,642 people learned about resources through outreach

We Served Clients of All Ages

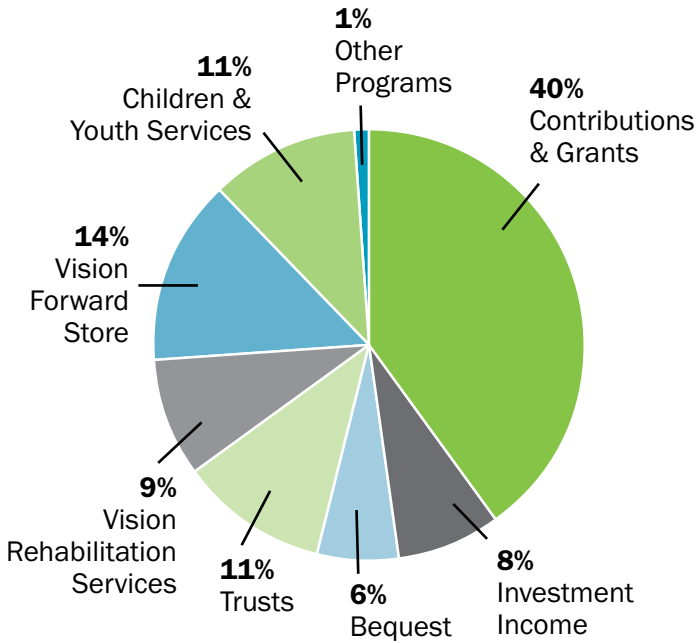


89% of adult clients feel more positive about living with vision loss

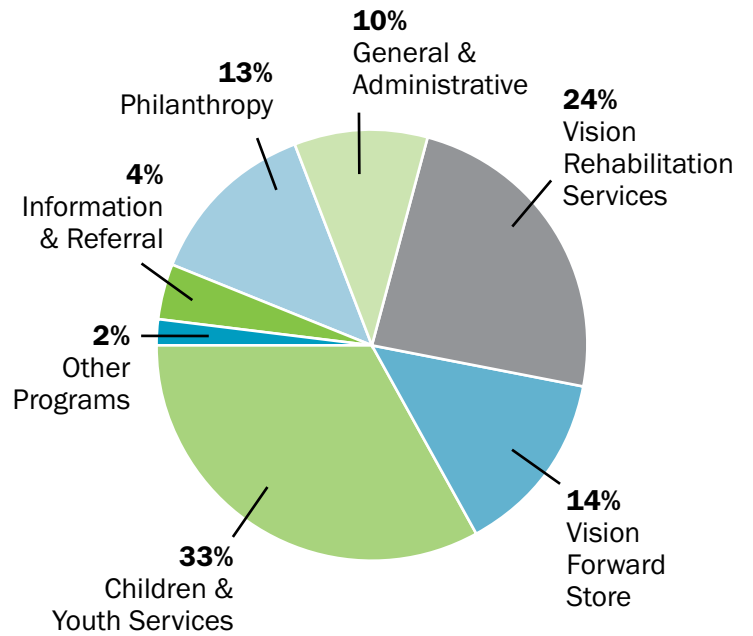
85% of children demonstrated improvements in skills for independence

Statement of Activities YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2019

OPERATING REVENUE

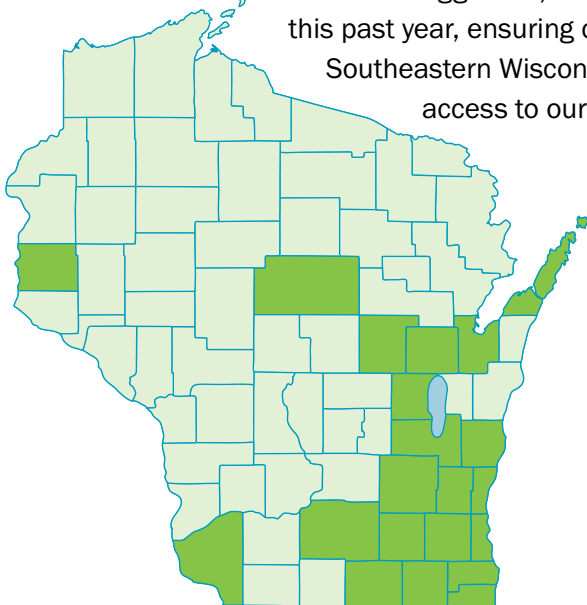


OPERATING EXPENSES



Our Statewide Reach

Our efforts to support individuals throughout the state continue, as we served clients in **23 counties** (two out of state) and **127 zip codes**. Our drivers also logged **19,200 miles** this past year, ensuring clients in Southeastern Wisconsin have access to our services.



Dining IN THE Dark



Crocker Stephenson, with his wife Jeanne

As our 2018 event speaker, **Crocker Stephenson**, national award-winning journalist, shared his experiences about the impact of losing his vision.

“Vision Forward has fostered hope and taught me the skills I’ve needed to adjust

to my vision loss. The staff is so kind. If you or someone you love — no matter how young or old — are confronting vision loss, this is the place to go to find resources, support and education.”

Thank You!

All of the work and successes highlighted in this report would not have been possible without the support of our donors. Every donation to Vision Forward leads to life changing support and services. Thank you for your contribution to our mission.

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Vision Forward Association is truly grateful for every gift, in whatever amount, which helps support our vital work. Every effort has been made for accuracy. Should there be any errors or omissions, we apologize and ask that it be brought to our attention by calling the Philanthropy Department, 414-615-0120.

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Tribute gifts are made in honor of or in memory of someone who has added special meaning to a donor's life. Vision Forward Association is pleased to honor the following people, along with their generous family and friends.

IN HONOR OF

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Tricia Breimon
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By including Vision Forward in their estate planning, this past year the following individuals provided support past their lifetimes for people who are blind or visually impaired.

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Mae E. Demmer Charitable Trust
Paula Hunkel FBO Emil Hunkel Memorial Trust
Jerome Jungbluth Revocable Trust
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Wilfred Schultz



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