

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



Vision Forward's services continue and our commitment remains strong despite the unparalleled challenges of the past year. The pandemic has imposed widespread change, altering the way people live their lives and how the world does business, so we continue to learn and move forward, adapting as we go.

From the start of the pandemic, our number one priority has been the health and safety of our clients, members, volunteers and staff while keeping the viability of the organization in focus. Although our physical doors were closed for about ten weeks in the spring of 2020, our virtual doors were always open. Through platforms such as Teams, Zoom, FaceBook Live, and webinars, we were able to continue providing direct services virtually to everyone who needed assistance. We can say with confidence that as our "new normal" evolves, it includes better and more innovative ways to provide programs and services to people living with blindness and visual impairment.

You, our supporters, were integral to our ability not only to survive the pandemic, but also to thrive in spite of it. Your partnership ensured that individuals with vision loss were able to access both virtual and in-person services over the past year, helping them persevere through this huge disruption of life. We are tremendously grateful for your commitment to our mission and for your positive impact on the people we serve. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Stay safe and well.

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BOARD PRESIDENT

Terri Davis
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Virtual Events



More Than Meets the Eye

More Than Meets the Eye, a series of free, virtual sessions, are held regularly to create awareness about the effects of vision loss on everyday life. In just 20 minutes, participants have an opportunity to hear powerful, firsthand stories of how various vision issues have impacted the lives of some of our clients.



Dining in the Dark at Home

Our signature Dining in the Dark event went virtual in 2020! In lieu of restaurant dining, participants were encouraged to choose a meal to order or prepare and eat under blindfold in the comfort of their own homes. Dining in the Dark at Home brought together more than 100 people of all ages from across the world to experience just a taste of what people with visual impairments face on a daily basis. Five-year-old McKinley and her family were featured, allowing guests an intimate glimpse of the family's journey from fear to hope.



Vision Connections Conference

The 2020 Vision Connections conference was held as a virtual, interactive webinar with Prevent Blindness Wisconsin. This free conference had 60 virtual attendees who gained information about vision health, low vision, and assistive devices. Vision Connections was made possible by a grant from the Irving L. Chortek Charitable Fund in memory of Robert and Jennie Chortek Donor Restricted Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation along with the Racine Community Foundation.

“Dining in the Dark was a great way to get the word out. I enjoyed the personal stories and . . . doing this online allows many more people to participate in the event. You are increasing the public’s awareness.”

**Guest at 2020
Dining in the Dark at Home**

“The virtual conference was nice as I no longer live in Milwaukee and would be unable to attend future live events.”

2020 conference attendee

Virtual Services



Children's Program

Establishing telehealth services for young children with vision loss was critically important to providing continuity in their learning and skills acquisition over the past year. Virtual services also gave parents and caregivers an opportunity to learn the direct coaching model and promote carryover to the home of what was learned in the classroom or therapy room. As a result of virtual guidance and parental coaching, two of our Children's Program participants started walking on their very own through telehealth services!



Support for Seniors

A group of older adults who are all either blind or visually impaired began meeting virtually at the start of the pandemic. Led by our social worker, this group provides seniors with dedicated time to discuss issues, learn strategies and support one another, resulting in people who feel more connected during times of isolation. Meeting virtually allows more people to participate in the group, including a snowbird during winter months!



Music Therapy

Our Music Therapist provided virtual music opportunities for all ages during our pandemic closure. Children and their families were able to engage in a music group through Facebook Live and enjoy some of their favorite songs from the classroom, and adults were able to receive free guitar or ukulele lessons for personal enrichment. Music is a powerful way to stay connected!



Tec Talk Live!

These free events, hosted virtually by our assistive technology experts, provide viewers with live demonstrations of assistive technology products, followed by an open question and answer session. The informal presentations offer an opportunity for guests to get a real experience of assistive technology devices without ever having to leave the comfort of their homes.

.....

“Tec Talk Live! provided demonstrations of the topics discussed at a pace that was easy to follow, with ample verbal description for participants who are visually impaired.” Tec Talk Live! attendee

Shalene: Overcoming the Odds



Shalene lost her vision at the young age of 24 due to a condition called pseudotumor cerebri. After coming to terms with this devastating loss and the dramatic changes it imposed on her life, Shalene sought help from Vision Forward. In a very short time, she learned how to safely cook, clean, use public transportation, navigate the community, and use technology designed for individuals with visual impairments.

When Shalene realized that vision loss did not diminish her capabilities, she enrolled in college. To support her on her journey, our orientation and mobility specialist joined her on campus to help her learn to get around and find all her classes. After she graduated and secured employment, our assistive technology specialist went to her workplace to assist her in learning to use a screen reader and voice recorder, and to help educate her co-workers on how to best support her.

Today, Shalene is the proud mom of four-year-old Madison who has autism. In her position as a Peer Support Specialist, Shalene is using her education and experience to make a difference for others in the community. Shalene's resolve and tenacity have helped her move beyond her vision loss, enabling her to accomplish anything she desires. She is truly an inspiration! •

.....
“Vision Forward has been a very great asset in my life.”

SHALENE

78%
 of all clients served
 were adults.

70%
 of adults were
 age 60 and above

Ephraim: Seven Years of Spunk!



As Ephraim makes his way into the building and down the hall, he greets friends and teachers along his route, offering a cheery hello. He is a very welcome member of the classroom, as his playfulness and keen sense of humor make the day fun for everyone.

As sprightly as he is today, Ephraim's early days were not so carefree because he was born with a hole in his heart, limited vision and other developmental challenges. In time, with the aid of heart surgery, prescription glasses, and a variety of therapy services—music, occupational, physical and speech-language—Ephraim began to meet his milestones. And he hasn't stopped impressing people since!

Ephraim's sweet and social nature makes him a joy to have around. He likes to talk

and sing and play with his friends, just like most kids his age. He also enjoys doing art projects, especially painting with lots of color! Ephraim is preparing to attend a new school this fall, and we are so proud of all he has accomplished. He may have had a slow start in life, but Ephraim has developed the spunk and tenacity to be successful wherever he goes. •

83
children and youth were
served through
5,599
hours of direct service



Bill: Good Will Ambassador



Long-time Vision Forward donor Bill Radonski is an ideal friend. He's someone who does not wait to be asked, but rather calls to inquire about needs and how he can help. And he has helped a lot.

Bill's 58-year involvement with the Lions Club is what initially connected him with Vision Forward's mission of serving people who are blind and

visually impaired. Over the years, he has supported Vision Forward not only as a donor, but also as a volunteer. Bill has prepared food for Christmas parties, played Santa Claus, orchestrated cookouts, and helped satisfy wish lists through his local Lions Club and his own personal giving . . . all things he says he enjoys doing.

He takes great pride in his support of Vision Forward. "I trust you all like I trust my family," he says.

The greatest joy in Bill's life is his family. He and his late wife Arlene raised six children, and he now has ten grandchildren. He says having a cohesive, hardworking family—and food!—are his life's passion. For the last 27 years of his career he ran a catering business, frequently providing meals for Vision Forward events. Through a wave of laughter he states, "Family and food . . . that's my life . . . and it's fun!"

Bill's signature hat, a special gift his wife had made in Montana for his 60th birthday, makes him easy to recognize around the community. And like his hat, Bill's heart is big as well, overflowing with kindness and generosity whenever there is a need.

In his typical gracious way, Bill approaches every day with gratitude. He shares that waking up each morning feels like a miracle and that he could scream with delight that he has another day. Now that is appreciation! •

During a pandemic
year, our volunteers
were still able
to give

548

hours of services
valued at \$15,634*

*Independent Sector

.....
“I trust you all like I trust
my family.”

BILL
.....



Kris: Paying it Forward

Kris is a positive, upbeat volunteer who takes on any task she is given with a smile. She can often be found in our volunteer office conducting quarterly phone surveys that help determine the effectiveness of our services. When Kris calls clients to inquire about services received or products purchased, she very naturally connects with them, putting them at ease to share honest responses and feedback. Her affable nature is truly an asset!

Although born blind, subsequent surgical procedures have made some improvement to Kris's vision, allowing her to better see colors and detect people's faces. But blindness has never hindered Kris. She had a successful career as a medical transcriptionist for 42 years, and then retired from her call center work in 2017.

Kris demonstrates genuine respect and professionalism with our clients and customers, listening and responding from the vantage point of someone living with blindness. She has a true pay-it-forward approach to life, volunteering as a way to give back and help make the world a better place. Her kindness and compassion even led her to make check-in calls to Vision Forward members during the height of the pandemic just to see how they were doing!

We are truly grateful for Kris's kind heart and selfless spirit. •

“It's my turn to give back. I'm proud of who I am and how I turned out, and I couldn't have done it without the people that helped me.”

KRIS

Vision Forward volunteer

More than
50
volunteers
submitted over
100
video and audio
book recordings for
children with vision
loss during the
pandemic

Vision Forward has been successfully serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired for more than 100 years. The heart of our daily work is realized through the following programs and services:

Vision Rehabilitation Services

For Adults

- Low Vision Clinic
- Technology Training
- Orientation and Mobility
- Activities of Daily Living
- Support

For Children

- Special Education
- Vision and Sensory Training
- Music Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech-language Therapy
- Functional Vision Assessments
- Youth Program

Community Outreach

Vision Forward Store

All programs and services are **provided regardless of an individual's or family's ability to pay**

All **treatment plans** are created to **address the unique needs** of each person seeking assistance

Our transportation services travel an **80-mile radius**, bringing clients to and from services safely

Statement of Activities

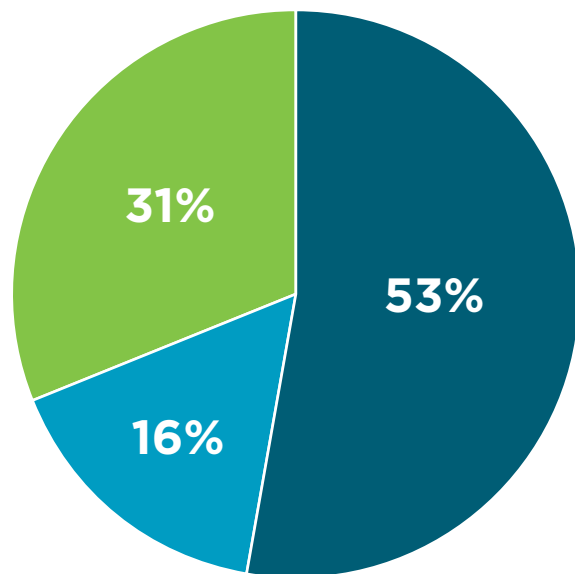
YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2021

Total Assets **\$ 7,238,120**

Total Liabilities **\$ 252,872**

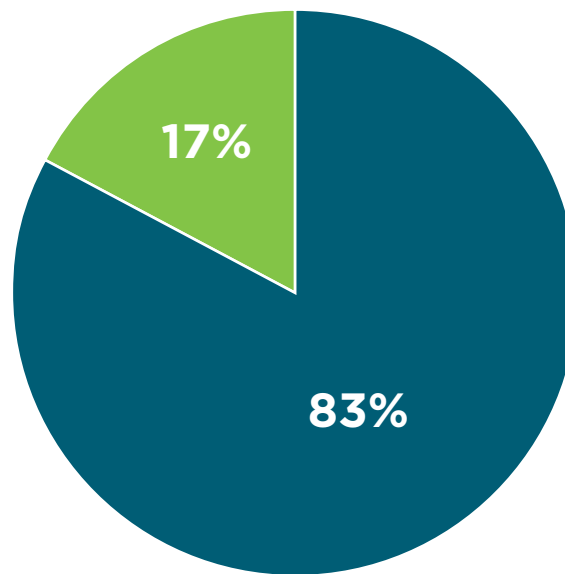
Net Assets **\$ 6,985,248**

REVENUE



■ Contributions
■ Programs & Services
■ Other

EXPENSES



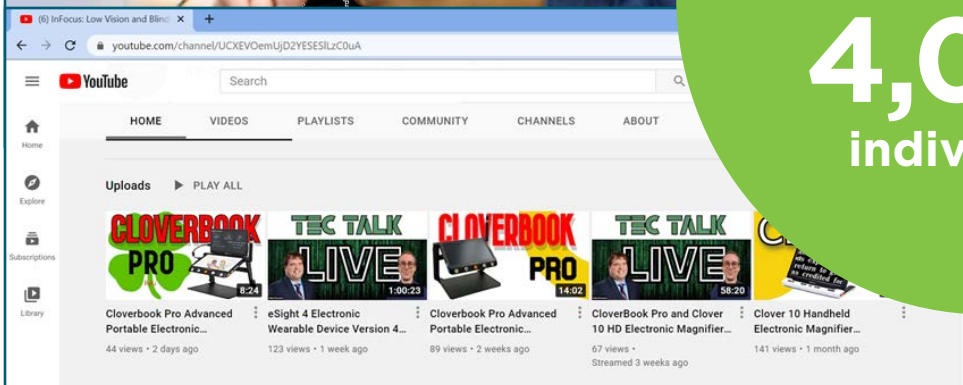
■ Programs & Services
■ General & Administration

46%
of children and

50%
of adults served
came from a
household with an
annual income of
less than \$25,000

1,809 hours

of direct service provided to adult clients,
helping them learn to live successfully with vision loss



46,677 views

of our 52 informational videos that were released
on our YouTube channel

112

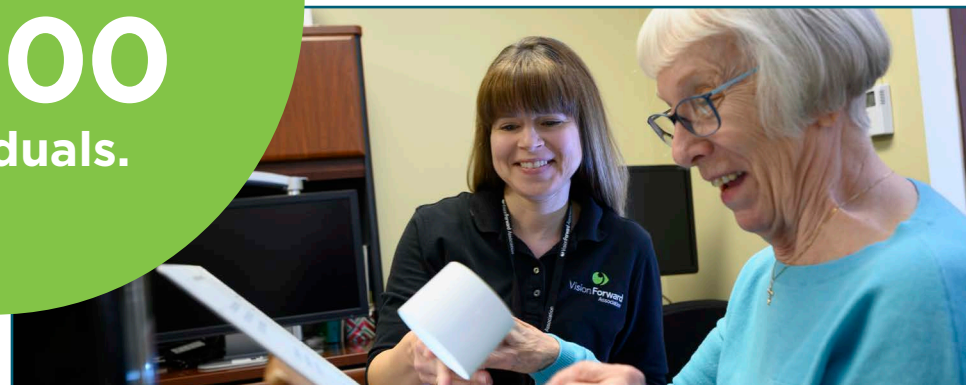
zip codes served, including four of the eight
highest poverty zip codes in Wisconsin



Despite the
pandemic, we served
more than

4,000

individuals.



2.5 times

more Vision Forward clients have age-related
macular degeneration (AMD) than any other diagnosis

Thank You!

The generosity of our donors over the past year was significant to our ability to continue providing direct services, both virtual and in-person, despite the ongoing pandemic.

Your commitment to our mission makes a positive and life-changing impact!

IN-KIND DONATIONS OF COVID-19 SUPPLIES

Vision Forward received in-kind donations of bleach, child and adult face masks, children's toys, face shields, floor markers for social distancing, gloves, hand sanitizer, infrared thermometers and sanitizing products to help us ensure the safety of our building space, clients and staff during the pandemic.

Thank you to the following organizations for generously donating one or more of these critical supplies:

Beyond Vision

Concordia University

Ronald McDonald House Charities

United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous (36)

Elaine Adams

Frances J. Adams

Scott Adams

Nona Graves and
Dennis Ameden

Kathy Anderson

Steve and Barb Anderson

Leonard and Nancy
Aprahamian

Awilda Aranda

Isabel L. Bader, Ph.D.

Cory and Jessica Ballard

Ronald Ballard

Linda and Neal Bardele

Katie and John Barry

Paula and Paul Bartel

Eugene and Marilee Bass

Georgia Batterman

Carol and Donald Bauer

Lee Beitzel and
Jill Ritterbusch

Antoinette Berceau

Howard Berliant

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Corey Boldt

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Charles Bomzer, M.D.

Jaclyn Borchardt

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Frank Dailey

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Jerry and Patricia Fellows

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Kevin and Jill Fitzgerald

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Stanley and Janet Fox

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Jeffrey Kalenak, M.D.,
and Kathleen Muldowney

Craig and Wendy Kasten

Patricia Keating

Kathleen Kehm

Vision Forward Association is truly grateful for each gift in support of 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 at 414-615-0117.

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Kim Zbichorski
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Beyond Vision
Delta Gamma Fraternity Milwaukee Alumnae Chapter
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Hales Corners Lions Club
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Stackner Family Foundation
Streich Family Foundation
Townsend Foundation
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Weyco Group Charitable Trust

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Generous family and friends have honored the following people:

IN HONOR OF

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Darlene Williams
Jaclyn M. Borchardt
Thomas Anderson
Brett Bostrack
Janette Huber
Bridget Coffey
Lisa Williams
Terri L. Davis
Lisa M. Gingerich
Vanessa and Andrew Nerbun
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Dena R. Fellows
Jerry and Patricia Fellows
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Karin Hiller
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Drs. Barbara E. Moser and Eric Kaplan
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Terri and Michael Davis
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Caroline C. Karr
Barbara A. Sarauer
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Kate Searing
Elsie Brown
Chris Lese
Virginia Butenhoff
Jenny Butenhoff and
Jeff Nowak
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Steve and Sabrina
Schwenke
The Signatry The Kepes 5
Fund
Marilyn Starck
Jacquelin Wecker

Thelma Lalvani
Valerie Fender
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Mary Lou Meurer
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Larry and Lynn Powalisz
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and Juliana Galst
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Jill Tarnoff
Sylvia Uler
Jane Hosni
Christian Visser
Rose Visser
Zemira and Thelma
Susan A. Lobo
Adam Zepp
Christine Zepp
Josephine Zepp

BEQUESTS

*The following individuals
provided support beyond
their lifetimes for people
who are blind and visually
impaired:*

Estate of
Mary Frances Bullamore
Emil Hunkel Memorial Trust
Mary Houtkamp Trust
Lorraine A. Kelly
Revocable Trust
Nancy Lee Tapper
Revocable Trust

*Deceased

MISSION

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

VISION

All individuals with vision
loss have reached their full
potential to lead active,
independent lives.



912 N. Hawley Road
Milwaukee, WI 53213
(414) 615-0100
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