



ANNUAL REPORT
APRIL 1, 2021 – MARCH 31, 2022



At Vision Forward, we are very deliberate in fulfilling the three key elements of our mission, which are to empower, educate and enhance the lives of individuals with vision loss. Our mission also includes a strong commitment to provide our services through all of life's transitions, be they small or great, and whether they occur early or later in life.

Featured among these pages are the stories of three adult clients who each share a unique transition to vision loss. Not one was born blind, but all lost vision in the prime of life. And each is currently living successfully, having established new ways of discovering and accomplishing purpose while giving back to the community.

As demonstrated in this annual report, one of the greatest assets for people with vision loss is assistive technology (AT) designed especially for those who have vision challenges. AT is empowering people with vision loss to lead more productive and independent lives in a world where information is often presented and accessed visually. The extensive training we provide is helping to open up new opportunities for those we serve, creating limitless possibilities for engaging in school, work and life.

As we look back on another year of accomplishments, we celebrate all of you who partnered with us in our mission to enhance the lives of those who are blind and visually impaired through empowerment and education. Together we are building a community that will be more inclusive and accessible to all who are living with vision loss.

We truly appreciate you!

Scott Marr

BOARD PRESIDENT

Terri Davis

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Leadership

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Events

Dining in the Dark



Dining in the Dark was once again an in-person event in 2021, hosting 228 guests for a special mission-driven evening of dining under blindfold at the Italian Community Center on Thursday, November 4th.

The event, emceed by WISN 12 news anchor Toya Washington, featured one of our clients, Brittney Hodson, who shared her story of losing vision rather suddenly and how it impacted her life. You can read more about Brittney in our client spotlight (page 6). Dining in the Dark supporters contributed more than **\$132,000** for Vision Forward's programs and services.

Vision Connections



On Thursday, September 30th, 77 working-age adults connected virtually to Vision Forward's annual Vision Connections event where they were inspired by a panel of nationally-recognized technology experts, including Vision Forward's own technology team, on cutting-edge hardware, software and phone apps. Vision Connections was made possible by a grant from the Irving L. Chortek Charitable Fund in Memory of Robert & Jenny Chortek of the Jewish Community Foundation of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation and from the Racine Community Foundation.

DEI Summit



All Vision Forward staff were fortunate to be able to participate in the positive-impact, three-day virtual summit *How To Be An Ally*, conducted by local power couple Deanna Singh and Justin Ponder of Uplifting Impact. The summit is designed to help people develop the skills to positively talk about and take action on racial equity in their places of employment as well as in their communities. Attendance was made possible by a generous grant from ibvi, Industries for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Technology Creates Possibilities



Luke Scriven, Assistive Technology Specialist, works with Cory Bettinger on his keyboarding skills.

“For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible.”

IBM Training Manual

Look in a dictionary and you will see Assistive Technology (AT) defined as any item, piece of equipment, software program or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. Meet someone who is blind or visually impaired and you will see simple examples of AT being put to practical use including a magnifying glass, a watch that speaks the time with the push of a button, or a bright orange, raised sticky bump dot that is used to mark a key button on a remote control. More complex examples of cutting-edge AT might include computer software that speaks text aloud, a specialized cell phone app that provides information from the bar code on food packaging, or a device worn like a pair of glasses that can magnify a TV screen or a street sign.

Vision Forward not only sells a wide variety of AT tools, but also provides training on them to help people with vision loss better communicate, more easily manage their everyday lives, and stay connected with the world around them. Our two AT experts on staff, Cory Ballard and Luke Scriven, have both earned the designation of Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist (CATIS). In addition to providing training, our staff offer hands-on demonstrations that allow people to experience firsthand the effective use of different products, which in turn helps them make good decisions when purchasing a device that best fits their needs. •



During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, our technology team provided 848 hours of one-on-one technology services. We also produced 38 instructional videos, which had a total of 91,750 views on our YouTube channel and 8,450 total hours of watched content.

Children's Program



Isaac and Melanie engage in cooperative play, building their communication and social skills.

Our Children's Program has been serving children, ages newborn to six years, who are blind and visually impaired for 55 years. Last fiscal year, we provided more than 7,031 hours of direct service to young children with vision loss, including those with additional disabilities, helping them build a strong foundation of skills on which to learn and grow.

YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system, awarded our Children's Program a top five-star rating. Our commitment to quality puts us in the top 15% of centers. Our specialized vision teachers and therapists (music, occupational, physical and speech-language) make us one of a kind in Wisconsin. ►

91% of children receiving services demonstrated improvement in their social-emotional skills.

Children's Program, continued

According to Wisconsin Babies Count, the percentage of **children in Wisconsin who do not get access** to a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and/or an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) is **four times greater than the national average**. Vision Forward's new initiatives to provide services throughout the State of Wisconsin are filling this gap •



ABOVE: Occupational Therapist Wendy Helms-Orndorf works with Adia during a therapy session designed to increase her flexibility and mobility so she can better integrate into classroom activities.



ABOVE: Janet Fox, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, works with Donny on the cognitive skills of hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills and math concepts, all part of school readiness.

“Since working with Vision Forward, we have seen more progress than we could have imagined with Hadley. We continue to get the tools and resources from them to make an easier and more accessible future for her.”

LAYCI, Mother of Hadley

Brittney Hodson: Perseverance Is Key



In 2016, Brittney Hodson was living her best life in Onalaska, Wisconsin. A snowboarder, jeweler, wife, and mother of an active toddler, her life was full.

Then, Brittney was diagnosed with *pseudotumor cerebri*, a condition that occurs when pressure inside the skull increases for no apparent reason, causing the optic nerve to swell. In her case, the swelling stole her vision.

For Brittney, blind at age 29, life lost its purpose. She was sure she'd never work again and worried she'd never be happy. She felt her life was over.

Fear, anxiety and loneliness became Brittney's constant companions. She didn't want to do anything because she was afraid she couldn't. But when she got connected with local vision rehabilitation and orientation and mobility services, life began to change.

First came a job with Kwik Trip as a call center representative in early 2020, which gave her renewed purpose. Then came training with Cory Ballard, Director of Technology at Vision Forward, on JAWS (Job Access With Speech) to help her with specific work tasks. ►

“Cory makes things easy . . . he makes things visual for me. I'm really grateful for his help.”

BRITTNEY HODSON

Vision Forward Client

Brittney's story, continued

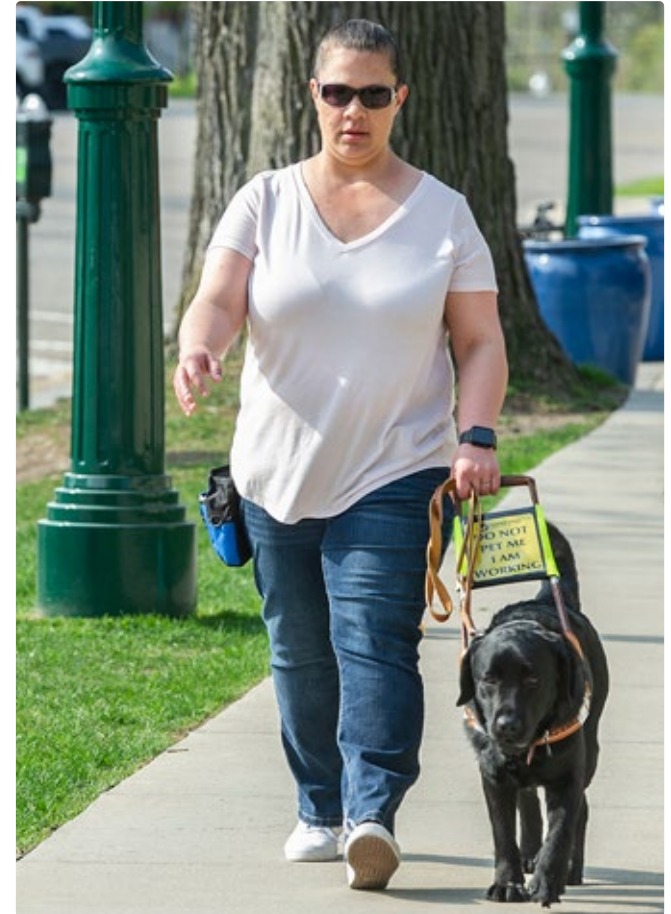
JAWS is a computer screen reader program for Microsoft Windows that allows users who are blind and visually impaired to read the screen either with a text-to-speech output or by a refreshable Braille display. Brittney learned keyboard shortcuts within Microsoft Office, including Word and Outlook, to make her job easier and to make her more efficient.

Now, six years after losing her vision, Brittney feels she can do pretty much anything with a little modification . . . and the help of her new guide dog, a black Labrador retriever, named Gracie. Gracie accompanies her everywhere, giving her a stronger sense of independence and confidence as she ventures on her own into new surroundings.

With Gracie at her side, Brittney is once again socializing and finding the joy in life. Her motto moving forward is “Never give up,” and we can’t wait to see where it takes her next! •



In Wisconsin, the CDC reports that more than 100,000 people have blindness or severe difficulty seeing even with glasses.



99% of adults reported an overall positive experience with adult vision rehabilitation services.

Johnson Beamon: Just a Matter of Time



When Johnson Beamon began having vision issues at age 17—not seeing very clearly, bumping into floor signs at the grocery store, struggling to drive at night—his mother took him to an ophthalmologist. The diagnosis was *retinitis pigmentosa* (RP), a group of related eye disorders that cause progressive vision loss. And three different doctors all delivered the same news: he had three to six months of vision remaining so he should do and see all the things he wanted before his vision was gone for good.

Johnson was devastated. He fell into a deep state of despair, feeling there was no hope. Without vision, he felt life had nothing to offer.

But when the six-month mark arrived and he still had vision, it gave him pause. He felt a slight glimmer of hope, so he continued to move forward, living as though nothing had changed.

Over the years, Johnson's eye disease progressed. Although he was able to work and get around, his family and friends recognized that he needed to get help and learn different ways of coping. Johnson's brother, a U.S. postal worker who delivered Vision Forward's mail for a time, encouraged Johnson to schedule an appointment for services.

Johnson reluctantly called Vision Forward and got connected with our social worker, Erica Weise, who invited him to participate in a group session. But Johnson never showed up. ►

Johnson's story, continued

When Johnson called again a year later, he was finally ready . . . ready to continue preparing himself for the day when his eyesight would be completely gone. He enrolled in all our adult services programs to take advantage of his remaining sight. He learned to navigate safely with a white mobility cane, use technology and other assistive aids, read braille, and access support from others.

Although it took more than 25 years to secure the help he really needed, Johnson is now on the way to achieving his dream of a career in counseling and social work. His goal is to work in the field of vision loss and use his own experience with RP to help others navigate their individual journeys.

Johnson has a message for others experiencing vision loss:

“Just because you have a disability, that does not mean the end of life. It might be the beginning of something brighter. Don't give up—there's an abundance of life left to live!”

JOHNSON BEAMON

Vision Forward Client

96% of adults demonstrated progress and/or achievement of their individual goals after receiving services.



The Moser-Kaplan: A Family Affair

Zoe Kaplan is a familiar face around Vision Forward and a very welcome one at that. Since 2016, she's been volunteering her time to help with projects that enrich our programs and services. She likes doing a variety of tasks, such as preparing mailings, assembling packets, and braille materials for those who are blind. Sometimes Zoe fills the halls of Vision Forward with the sweet smell of freshly baked cookies, which she generously shares with staff.



But volunteering isn't Zoe's first experience with Vision Forward. She initially came to us for services after she lost her vision due to a brain tumor at the age of 15. With the sudden onset of blindness, Zoe's parents, Dr. Barbara Moser and Dr. Eric Kaplan, began looking for help on how to teach and guide Zoe on adapting to life without vision. They wanted to make sure they taught her the right strategies from the beginning, because Zoe, who also has autism, finds it hard to relearn things in a different way. The staff at Vision Forward had a lot of insight and expertise to share, offering the entire Moser-Kaplan family a game plan on how to move forward. ►

Dr. Barbara Moser, Dr. Eric Kaplan, Caitleen Kahn, Zak Kaplan, Zoe Kaplan, Isaiah Kaplan and Lori Gibson

“Vision Forward was there for us at the most harried time of our life, when no other organization was able to provide us with the help that you did. Vision Forward fulfilled a need that no one else could.”

DR. ERIC KAPLAN

Zoe's Father

The Moser-Kaplan, continued



Zoe Kaplan, with her aide Sarah Moran, volunteering at Vision Forward.

“I like to help out and do the best that I can.”

ZOE KAPLAN

Vision Forward Client and Volunteer

To complement the services she received at her high school, Vision Forward provided Zoe with additional training in braille, adaptive daily living skills, computer usage, and orientation and mobility (wayfinding and white cane travel). Zoe also became a master of household tasks such as washing dishes, folding towels and baking tasty treats.

After graduating from high school, however, a typical nine to five job wasn't the best fit for Zoe, so she and her family began looking for suitable volunteer opportunities. They inquired at Vision Forward, and we jumped at the chance to have Zoe join our team. Zoe enjoys helping with a variety of different projects and especially likes to engage in teamwork. She employs her sense of perfectionism to ensure that tasks are done thoroughly and without error.

Zoe says she feels a sense of belonging at Vision Forward, and she feels good about completing the jobs she's given.

Zoe's parents are impressed at how much independence she has gained through her volunteer experience. They share that Zoe takes on responsibilities at home, such as washing the dishes after every meal. They feel the skills Zoe has learned have brought greater meaning to her life and made every day more enjoyable.

Barbara and Eric have been generous supporters of Vision Forward since experiencing firsthand the difference our services have made in Zoe's life.

“You've been an ongoing part of our life since Zoe became blind,” adds Barbara, “and you've added to the meaning of Zoe's life.”

Vision Forward is grateful for the generosity of spirit demonstrated by the Moser-Kaplan family as they give back in ways that demonstrate their shared beliefs and values. What a powerful way to positively impact those who are blind and visually impaired! •

Vision Forward has been successfully serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired for more than 103 years. The heart of our daily work is realized through the following programs and services:

Adult Vision Rehabilitation Services

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

Children's Program

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

Youth Program

- Music Lessons
- Rainbow Day Camp
- Braille Games
- Braille Challenge
- Beep Baseball

Vision Forward Store

From high tech products to simple everyday items, the Vision Forward Store offers adaptations through a variety of items to help people with changing vision or no vision live independently and safely.

Community Outreach

Presentations and demonstrations to local groups and organizations help create awareness of vision loss and services available for those living with it.



Mary Lindemann, Store Coordinator, works with Venetta Pottinger in the Vision Forward Store.

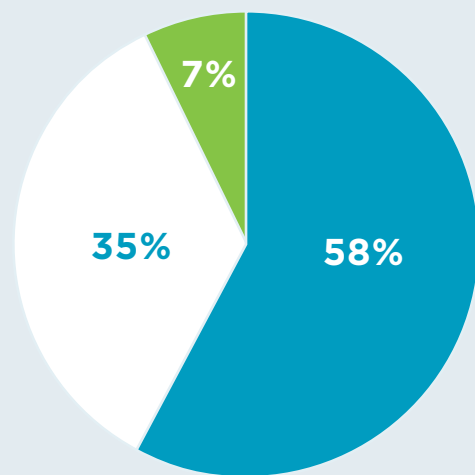
**1,229 unique store customers
purchased products that made
accomplishing everyday tasks easier.**

Statement of Activities

YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2022

2022 OPERATING REVENUE

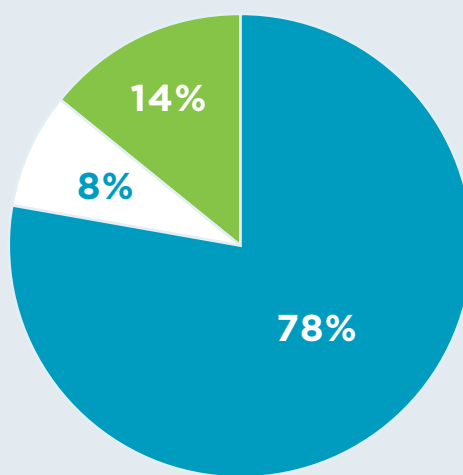
2022 EXPENSES



■ Philanthropy 58%

□ Programs 35%

■ Management & General 7%



■ Programs 78%

□ Management & General 8%

■ Philanthropy 14%

21% of children and 48% of adults served came from a household with an annual income of less than \$25,000.

Support Revenue

Contributions & Grants \$ 1,422,034

Program Revenue

Vision Rehabilitation Services 487,491

Vision Forward Store 447,365

Paycheck Protection Program 183,443

Special Events 137,006

Other Income 1,927

Total Operating Revenue 2,679,266

Gain on Disposal of Equipment 31,506

Investment Income (Loss) 97,895

Total Revenue \$ 2,808,667

Operating Expenses

Vision Rehabilitation Services \$ 810,399

Vision Forward Store 560,236

Enrichment 45,646

Children's Program 1,006,786

General Administrative 237,344

Philanthropy 445,449

Total Operating Expenses \$ 3,105,860

Change in Net Assets (297,193)

Net Assets - Beginning of the Year 6,985,248

Net Assets - End of the Year \$ 6,688,055

Enhancing Lives



More than
4,000
individuals
received services
that enhanced
their lives.

606 adults received over
2,573 hours of direct service.

198 people had contact with our social worker,
helping them prepare for their vision loss journey.

**Top Five Diagnoses
of Vision Forward's
adult clients:**

1. Age-related Macular Degeneration
2. Glaucoma
3. Retinitis Pigmentosa
4. Diabetic Retinopathy
5. Stargardt Disease

91% of parents or
caregivers will use
the skills learned
from the program to
care and advocate
for their child.

Thank you, Volunteers!

We couldn't accomplish our mission of serving individuals with vision loss without help from our generous volunteers.

Thank you to all our volunteers for the tremendous value you add to Vision Forward!

As a wise person once noted:

“Volunteers don't get paid; not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.”

Last fiscal year, 114 volunteers provided 2,172 hours of time and talent, a contribution valued at \$65,051. (Independent Sector)



Volunteers from Baird and U.S. Bank help spruce up our outdoor children's playground.



Students from Divine Savior Holy Angels volunteer to help members at a weekly bingo session.



Volunteers from GMR Marketing do spring cleanup of our outdoor space.

Thank You!

Donors are the lifeblood of Vision Forward. Through generous gifts, they have transformed thousands of lives, making life-changing services both accessible and affordable for those who are blind or visually impaired. We are tremendously grateful for every individual and organization who chose to make a difference for those we serve.

We are truly honored by your generous and committed partnership!

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous (21)
Elaine Adams
Eleanore and Dean Alioto
Julie L. Allen
Daniel K. Allison
Karen Anderson
Kathy Anderson
Thomas Anderson
Louise Angel
Esther Arnold
Isabel Bader, PhD
Cory and Jessica Ballard
John and Katharine Barry
Paula and Paul Bartel
Eugene and Marilee Bass
Carol and Donald Bauer
Evan Beine
Lee Beitzel and
Jill Ritterbusch
Howard Berliant
Douglas Berry
Bonnie and Brian Boettcher

Lynne and
Charles Bomzer, M.D.
Gladys Boos
Jaclyn M. Borchardt
Richard and Marilyn Borree
Brett and Kathy Bostrack
Karen Rose Bradley
and John Weber
Paul and Bertie Brauch
Richard Brecher
Nancy Breckenfelder
Joan Brenk
Douglas P. Brodzik
and Deborah Sobczak
Nate Bruckschen
Barbara Bullock
Mary Jo Burgoyne
Barbara and
Thomas Burton, M.D.
Patrick T. Butler
Jean Butzen
Aileen Cardona
Rhiannon Carmichael
Sherry Carpenter

Christine Cheng
Joan and Thor Christensen
Rita Clark
Todd Clemens
Kathryn and Charles Collins
Susan and
Thomas Connor, M.D.
Jeffrey and
Deborah Costakos, M.D.
Nick and Andrea Costello
Pat and Patty Crain
Jeffrey and Cathy Croatt
Claire Cukla
Rodney Cunningham
Ed and Eileen Curley
Bonita Dailey
Michael and
Catherine Melesky Dante
Richard D. Davenport, M.D.
Terri and Michael Davis
Antony D'Cruz
Brandy and Nick De Leo
Karol Dean
and Ralph Cataldo

Richard and Jane Dean
Norma J. DeMeyer
Dennis and Mary Depcik
Sally DeVriend
Carla Dew
Judith Dietz
Jo Dobner
James and Marcy Dobrinska
John and Verna Doering
Scott Downs
Joan Drapp
Irene M. Dryden
Thomas and Merci Duffy
Lindsay Duncan
Julianna Ebert
and Frank Daily
Sylvia Eckstein
Jason Edmonds, M.D.
Susan and Greg Eggold
Nancy Eisenreich
David and Elizabeth Ellis
Kelsey Ellsworth
Jennifer Emch

Janet Erntson
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Jerry and Patricia Fellows
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Julie and Michael Glynn
Elayne M. Goldstein
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Steve Gramling
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Korina Harman
and Mike Pritchard
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Jesse Harmon
Holly Haskin
Catherine Heberlein
Catherine and
Thomas Heinen
Cole and Carly Helm
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Joe Hickey
Karin and Jay Hiller
Susan Hiller
Karen and Darren Hillock
Wendy and Marc Hirsch
Dan and Erin Hoffman
Jeanette Holmquist
Robert E. Hughes
Stephanie and
Patrick Hutchinson
Jean and Russell Hutchison
Leonardo Imaña

Vision Forward Association is truly grateful for each 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 at 414-615-0117.

James and JoAnne Janowiak	John and Susan Krezoski	Chris and Melissa Marschka	Linda Murzyn	Kathleen Robinson	Thomas Shambau
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		Marie Mullarkey			Linda M. Sweetman

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

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Richard and Kay Yuspeh
Christine C. Zepp
Josephine Zepp
Suzanne F. Zimmer

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Beyond Vision
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Dinkel Fund of Thrivent
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MSI General Corporation
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Muskego Lions Club
Network for Good
New Berlin Lions Club
Oak Creek Lions Club
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PNC
Prospect Lions Club
of New Berlin
Public Service Commission
of Wisconsin
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Saint Vincent Pallotti Parish
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*Generous family and
friends have honored the
following people:*

IN HONOR OF

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Kari Pietsch-Wangard and
Stewart Wangard

Cory Ballard
Darlene Williams

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Cynthia Streicher

Adam Zepp
Christine Zepp
Josephine Zepp

BEQUESTS

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

Cedric H. Jaggard
Carol Schwartz
Nancy Lee Tapper

Moving Forward

Vision Forward is dedicated to assisting individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired so they may learn to function independently in all types of environments. We will continue working to ensure that people have the information they need to make important decisions about how to live successfully with vision loss and how to gain the services and support they need to fully participate in life.



To accomplish this we will engage in the following efforts:

Access.

We will continue to work with people who need our services, regardless of their financial resources.

Technology.

We will continue to offer demonstrations and training on cutting-edge assistive technology designed to help individuals with all levels of vision loss accomplish the tasks of everyday life. Assistive technology can make a significant difference in success at school, at work and in life.

Community Awareness.

We will disseminate information about the services we have available to those living with vision loss and network with local eyecare specialists and community organizations to spread the word. We will also continue providing outreach presentations to the community in an effort to educate and inform the public about vision issues and the services available to those living with vision loss.

How You Can Help

Make a referral

Refer someone living with vision loss to Vision Forward.

Come for a tour

Visit our facility and see firsthand how Vision Forward positively impacts the lives of individuals with vision loss.

Give a gift

Support Vision Forward's life-changing work by making a donation.

To put your contribution to work today, make a secure, online gift at vision-forward.org/donate.

Follow us on social media

 @VisionForwardWI

 @VisionForwardAssociation

Volunteer

Join us to volunteer through meaningful, rewarding projects that support our clients, staff and the entire Vision Forward community.

Thank you from Zander and everyone at Vision Forward!



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

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