



Vision Forward

Association

Annual Impact Report
April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024





“Every day when I walk through the doors, I feel like I’m truly making a difference. I feel really inspired by the role that I play, but I also feel inspired by our staff and their commitment to the work.”

Jacci Borchardt, CEO

as quoted in Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel article August 11, 2023

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for the future. As a person with a visual impairment and a former client of Vision Forward, I know firsthand the value of our services. The tools and techniques I learned from the team at Vision Forward have been instrumental in positioning me where I am today, as the leader of this impactful organization.

We have seen unprecedented demand for our programs, highlighting the critical role we play in the community. Our commitment to using resources responsibly is unwavering. As you review our Annual Impact Report, you will see that we maintain a careful balance between innovation and sustainability, maximizing every dollar to enhance our services and achieve our mission.

Vision Forward prides itself on being cutting-edge and current. Our expert team continually seeks out the latest advancements and best practices to stay ahead of the curve. This approach not only keeps us relevant, but also ensures that we provide the highest quality services to those we serve.

We cannot do this alone. Partnerships in the community and donations from our supporters are the lifeblood of our organization, enabling us to respond to the need and enhance our programs. Thank you for standing with us and believing in our vision. Together, we are making a significant difference, and I am excited about what we will achieve in the year ahead.

Jacci Borchardt

CEO, Vision Forward Association

If you have any questions or would like to come for a tour, please contact me at jborchardt@vision-forward.org or 414-615-0121.

Jayquan Jaeger

Last year was a pivotal one for Jayquan Jaeger as he graduated from Robert M. La Follette High School in Madison and prepared for the next step in his life journey. Coupled with his excitement about entering UW-Madison as a freshman was a nervousness about how he was going to cover his college costs. Born with a thick cataract in his right eye and glaucoma affecting both eyes, Jayquan learned about Vision Forward's scholarships from his high school Teacher of the Visually Impaired.

Through Vision Forward Jayquan was awarded **The Arthur L. Ebert Scholarship**, what he describes as a "very meaningful" source of financial support.

With this scholarship, Jayquan is studying Vocal Performance and Theater at UW-Madison. In addition to a strong academic schedule, he has been able to dive into college activities including being part of the theater production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and the musical Wine in the Wilderness. Jayquan also has enjoyed meeting new people, while singing with Fundamentally Sound, a student-run a cappella singing group.

Asked for advice he would give to other young people living with vision loss, Jayquan says, "Find people who are willing to understand and accommodate. Even if it's just one or two people who can help, it's better than trying to do it on your own. Go out and do stuff. I promise, it's more fun."



Honoring a Family Member by Investing in a Future Generation

The Arthur L. Ebert Scholarship at Vision Forward was established by his granddaughter Julianna Ebert and her husband Frank Daily to honor the late attorney as a tribute to his dedication to family as well as his life of service.

To learn more about ways to honor a family member while creating opportunities for others, please contact Susan Eggold, 414-615-0126 or seggold@vision-forward.org.



Dining in the Dark



Vision Forward is grateful for the generosity of all of our 2023 Dining in the Dark partners and guests! You helped us raise an all-time high of **\$202,476.00** in support of our mission.

PRESENTING PARTNER

Ibvi (Industries for the Blind and Visually Impaired)

LUMINARY PARTNERS

Beyond Vision
Hiller Ford

VISIONARY PARTNERS

The Bostracks
HR Sherpaz
Medical College of Wisconsin Eye Institute
Dee Mellor & Gary Day
Milwaukee Eye Care
Mitchell & Cathy Marks
Retina & Vitreous Consultants of Wisconsin
Rick & Lisa Roszkowski
David & Paula Strelitz
Sun Life / Denta Quest

LEADER PARTNERS

Associated Bank
First Business Bank
O'Leary & Anick
PNC

GUIDE PARTNERS

CTaccess
CureMD
Healthfuse
R&R Insurance

21st Annual Braille Games



Vision Forward co-hosted the 21st annual Braille Games in May 2023 with our partners at **ABLE (Audio Braille Literacy Enhancement)**, the **Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library** and the **Milwaukee Public Museum**.

27 school-aged students took part in this astronomy-themed event at the Milwaukee Public Museum.

Thank you to the New Berlin Lions



The New Berlin Lions provided support at events in 2023-2024 including the **Meet and Greet in May 2023**, the **Milwaukee Milkmen Game in August 2023** where Vision Forward was the featured non-profit, and Vision Forward's annual **Dining in the Dark gala in November**. Pictured left are Lion David Abstetar and Pete Shannon.

Fulfilling a Lasting Legacy



Robert A. “Bo” Brandt was an adventurer who loved the arts and enjoyed traveling the world. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and upon returning home dedicated more than 40 years of his life working at Muzak, a well-known provider of background music. He retired as the company’s Vice President. Known for his love of music and his extensive music collection, Bo was also known for his kindness. He lived with his mother who had macular degeneration, an eye disease that causes blurred or reduced central vision in the macula, affecting one’s central vision.

Bo’s kindness in his life carries on even after his passing in 2013 through the generosity of money set aside in his estate to honor the memory of his mother. Managed by Bo’s cousin Joanne Truelove, Vision Forward has been an annual recipient of critical dollars that are part of the Renaissance Charitable Foundation. Bo’s generosity and the commitment of Joanne Truelove to Vision Forward’s mission provide a lasting legacy for clients experiencing the loss of vision due to macular degeneration.

71%
of our adult clients had annual household incomes of less than \$50,000

22%
of our adult clients were age 85 or above

Thank you to all our Foundation donors!

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Albert J. and Flora H. Ellinger Foundation | Forest County Potawatomi Foundation | Sunrise Foundation Fund | Ladish Company Foundation | PPC Foundation | The Catholic Community Foundation |
| Brewers Community Foundation, Inc. | Gardner Foundation | Herb Kohl Philanthropies | Lavelle Fund for the Blind | Racine Community Foundation, Inc. | The Cudahy Foundation |
| City of Wauwatosa Department of Community Development | George F. Moss Foundation | James and Christine Jensen Foundation | Margaret Wiegand Trust | John and Gladys Franco Fund for the Visually Impaired | The ROS Foundation |
| Cousins Subs Make it Better Foundation | Greater Green Bay Community Foundation | Jerome J. and Dorothy H. Holz Family Foundation | Marjorie L. Christiansen Foundation | Ralph Evinrude Foundation | The Thomas C. and Trudy Dinkel Fund |
| Davidson and Harley Fund | Greater Milwaukee Association of Realtors Youth Foundation | Jewish Community Foundation | Melitta S. and Joan M. Pick Charitable Trust | Renaissance Charitable Foundation | The Townsend Foundation |
| Dr. Harry J. Heeb Foundation | Greater Milwaukee Foundation | Bomzer Family Donor Advised Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation | Nicholas Family Foundation Trust | Saint John’s Communities Foundation | The Windhover Foundation |
| E.C. Styberg Foundation | Carl and Alma S. Greilach Fund | Irving L. Chortek Charitable Fund in Memory of Robert and Jennie Chortek Donor Restricted Fund | Olive I. and Eunice J. Toussaint Foundation | Scott & Peggy Sampson Charitable Fund, Inc. | Turek Charitable Trust |
| Elizabeth Elser Doolittle Charitable Trusts | Charles and Mary Maglio Family Fund | Krause Family Foundation | Otto Bremer Trust | Silverman (Francie Luke) Foundation | We Energies Foundation |
| Emil Ewald Family Foundation, Inc. | Dr. Samuel S. and Anne W. Blankstein Family Fund II | | Patrick and Anna M. Cudahy Fund | Stackner Family Foundation | Weyco Group Charitable Trust |
| Evan and Marion Helfaer Foundation | Elvita E. Clementi Fund | | Paula Hunkel FBO Emil Hunkel Memorial Trust | Streich Family Foundation | |
| | | | Peck Foundation, Milwaukee LTD | | |

Opening the Door to New Possibilities



Chris Lechner

“It’s incredible how small my world was,” Chris Lechner says about the way he felt when he lost his vision due to diabetic retinopathy in his early thirties. In early 2022, guitar lessons at Vision Forward helped to open up that world. At those lessons Chris was invited to consider more training at Vision Forward. He thought, “I’m taking to this. Maybe I can do more,” and says, “It was a nice, happy snowball effect after that.”

Before he lost his sight, Chris loved working with technology and building computers. After losing his vision he says he “could barely use a cell phone.” Then he met Luke Scriven, Vision Forward’s Assistive Technology Specialist, and “took to it like a fish takes to water.” Chris learned how to use JAWS, software that turns computer text into speech output. With training on phone technology, Chris is now back to helping set up phones and computers for others. With Luke he also learned to use a Pearl OCR (optical character recognition) camera to read his own mail.

In August of 2023 Chris reentered the work world. He is now part of a team that assembles items for the military at ibvi, a Milwaukee-area non-profit that creates and grows employment opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired. ibvi has become more than a workplace for Chris. He and a group of co-workers formed a band in March of this year playing a variety of musical styles, including classic rock covers. By the end of March, the group was preparing to play for the April ibvi work banquet. ▼

During his training at Vision Forward, Chris worked with Rose Visser, an Occupational Therapist whose specialized training helps clients with an array of daily living skills. He received training on the PenFriend Voice Labeling System, which he uses to label his musical equipment and important documents. He also learned many cooking adaptations and says one of his favorite dishes to cook now is eggplant parmesan.

When asked about his experiences learning to adapt to the loss of vision and being willing to connect with Vision Forward, Chris said, “There’s always hesitation. It’s incredible how small my world was, and my world opened up after that.”

“I’m just having so much fun with life now. Not only have I gained skills, but confidence, honestly.”



Chris and his supervisor, Denise Kube, pause their work for a photo at ibvi.



A Critical Partner of Vision Forward

In 2023-2024 ibvi:

- ▶ Hosted Vision Forward staff members Erica Weise, Social Worker, and Cory Ballard, Director of Adult Rehabilitation Services, for training on **Positive Interactions**, a presentation designed to promote positive interactions between sighted and visually impaired/blind staff, and **Screen Reader Basics for Sighted Staff**, a presentation designed to provide sighted employees who oversee visually impaired/blind employees the skills needed to support their staff.
- ▶ **Provided funding to purchase needed adaptive devices** for clients on a limited income as well as **support for Vision Forward’s children and adult services** and the Technology and Education Center.
- ▶ Served as **Presenting Sponsor for Dining in the Dark**, Vision Forward’s signature gala fundraiser.
- ▶ **Created a special fund** to ensure that individuals without a funding source and limited financial resources can access life-changing services.

Developing Foundational Skills for Future Success

Leyla Petkovich

She seemed to be healthy newborn when Leyla was brought into this world in 2020 by Noelia and Jovan Petkovich. As the months went by, though, something didn't seem quite right. At the encouragement of friends, Noelia and Jovan visited an eye doctor, and it was there that they were surprised with a diagnosis of aniridia, which occurs when the eye's iris doesn't form.

Thankfully Leyla's parents were able to get connected with Vision Forward to begin in-home training to help Leyla use her other senses to learn and grow. Last fall Leyla entered Vision Forward's preschool. Because of Vision Forward donors, the family was able to establish a tuition rate that allowed them to access services they knew would be life-changing for their family.

In the preschool classroom Leyla has gained confidence and actively plays with and is a helper to her classmates. She loves music and enjoys working with scented play dough. Because much of speech and language development depends on watching facial expressions and lip movement, speech in children with vision loss is often delayed. Kyla Murphy, a Speech Language Pathologist at Vision Forward, has worked with Leyla to develop speech typical of her age group so she can share her ideas, communicate her needs and socialize with her peers.

As Leyla's father Jovan says about Vision Forward, "It helps to know that they are teaching our children the skills necessary for them to overcome their disability so they can lead independent and productive lives when they are older."

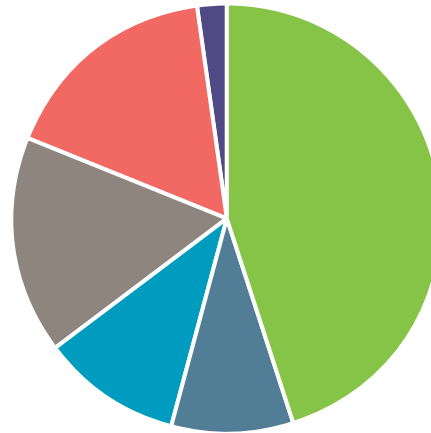
In collaboration with the Department of Health Services, Vision Forward conducted a pilot in 2023 for a new vision screening tool for babies and toddlers in 10 counties, so children like Leyla don't have a condition that goes undiagnosed and early intervention can begin as soon as possible. The screening tool was released statewide in 2024 to help identify vision loss in children.





Financial Overview April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

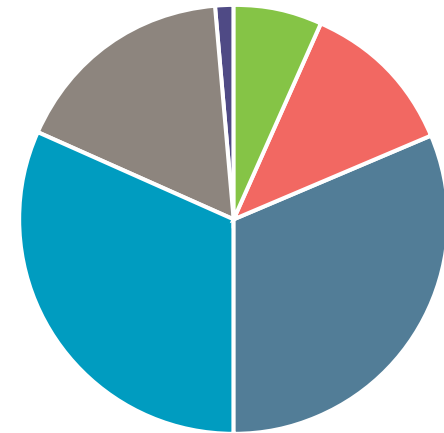
Revenue



■ Philanthropy	\$ 1,628,519
■ Adult Programs	325,313
■ Children & Youth Programs	381,592
■ Vision Forward Store	585,251
■ Investment Return, Net	606,861
■ Other Income	70,557

Total Revenue \$ 3,598,093

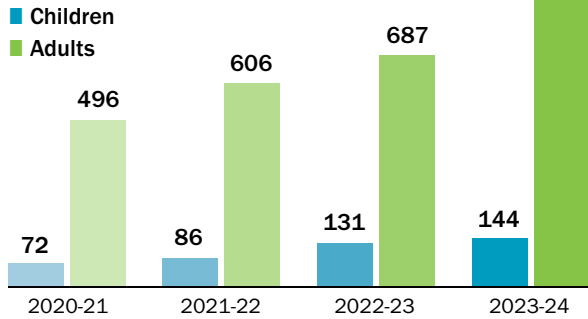
Expenses



■ Administration	\$ 243,419
■ Fundraising & Special Events	421,655
■ Adult Programs	1,105,153
■ Children & Youth Programs	1,112,672
■ Vision Forward Store	597,726
■ Other Expenses	47,764

Total Expenses \$ 3,528,388

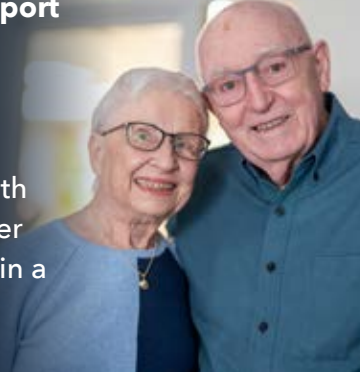
Total Clients Served



Emotional Support

453

adults spoke with our social worker or participated in a support group.



Vision Forward Store

1,276 unique customers found needed products at the Vision Forward Store.

Store profits help to subsidize our programs and services.

Children Served

57% are children of color.



Community Outreach

We connected with 4,000 people with vision loss, their family members, and eye care professionals through our community outreach events and programming. A record number!

Routine Eye Care

179

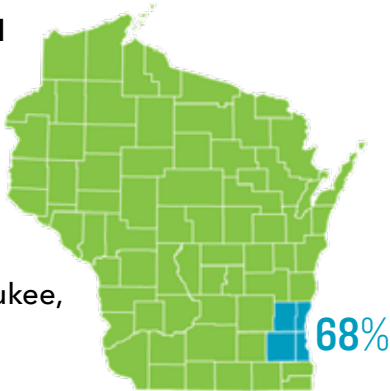
comprehensive eye exams were provided.



Children Served

32%

live outside the 4-county area of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha.



Birth to Three

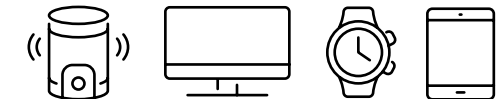
98%

of parents/caregivers gained skills and confidence in caring for their child with vision loss.



Technology

215,000 people viewed video content to learn about the latest technology that can help make tasks of daily living easier with vision loss.



Message from the President



As President of Vision Forward's Board of Directors, I have had the privilege of working with the Board on a strategic planning process to develop a Framework for the Future. This framework reflects the Board's commitment to the future sustainability of

the organization, moving forward in ways that are mission-focused, innovative and financially responsible. The need for Vision Forward's services is evidenced by the record numbers of people served last year, all the way from infants to seniors, and covering all corners of Wisconsin and beyond. Serving these growing numbers is possible only with the incredible partnerships we have with community stakeholders and businesses, as well as the generosity of the many donors who make supporting Vision Forward a priority.

Thank you for taking the time to review this past fiscal year through our Annual Impact Report. It is our donors, volunteers, staff and community partners who make our mission possible. Under Jacqui Borchardt's strong leadership as CEO and with the support of an active Board of Directors, you can be confident that the lives of people of all ages affected by the loss of vision will continue to be positively impacted.

With gratitude,





A blue ink handwritten signature of David Lobo.

David Lobo
Board President



MISSION

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

-  @VisionForwardAssociation
-  @Vision-Forward-Association
-  @VisionForwardWI
-  @VisionForward

Vision Forward
912 N Hawley Rd
Milwaukee, WI 53213
414-615-0100

vision-forward.org