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Keep in Touch

Here We Grow Again

By Jonathan Fister, CEO

Keystone recently announced that we are acquiring the former Bolotin's Furniture facility on East State Street in Hermitage. The reason for the acquisition is simple...we are out of space. Keystone moved to the Stambaugh Avenue quarters in 1990 to address the need for additional space. Within a few years, we had to acquire another facility to house our production center. After going through several production facility moves since then, we made the decision to reunite the production, services, and administrative functions into one facility. This was easier said than done. The decision to move to larger quarters was made over two years ago. The problem was, where should we go?

We have looked at dozens of potential locations in the interim and just had not found a property that meets our needs. That was until the Bolotin's property became available. It is the right size, has the right layout for administration, services, and production, and is located in the heart of the business/commercial district of the community.

This move will be the first time in the history of

Keystone that we will be where the public can see us from a main thoroughfare instead of driving into a residential area to track us down. Our new quarters are on the main bus route and within one block of the busiest intersection in the county. We will have the opportunity to have signage telling people when we are having low vision clinic, life skills programs, or sales on our many manufactured products. The visibility will change the perception of who Keystone Blind Association is in the community. We have long said that we are the best kept secret in Mercer County. Now, we won't be a secret anymore.

The board, staff, and our clients are very excited about the move. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the transition to new quarters will be smooth and seamless. We are daydreaming, of course! As with any move of this magnitude, there will be bumps and glitches. We ask for your patience as we go through this transition time. Like our friends in the construction industry say, "Short term pain for long term gain". We hope to see you in our new facility sometime this year. ☺

The agency will be conducting a capital fund drive to assist in the acquisition of the new facility, as pictured below.



One person can change history. Judge Michael Wherry is a person who changed Keystone's history. When Mike passed away recently, I couldn't help but reflect on what he did for Keystone.

In 1990, the Keystone board was in the midst of a dispute regarding the future direction of the agency. It was a contentious time. Mike, who was an attorney at the time, became involved at the request of several clients and attended a crucial and defining meeting of the board. His calm demeanor and grasp of the issues helped the board choose the philosophy that has guided us from that day forward. It is because Mike saw a need to help people come together and rally around a cause that was bigger than their own personal issues that eventually established the groundwork for the future development of Keystone's programs and operations.

As a criminal defense lawyer, Mike was involved in every sensational case in Mercer County. He was the first Public Defender for Mercer County courts and always believed that every individual was due the very best representation regardless of circumstances. He tried 200 cases before a jury, handled 2,500 criminal cases and had been primary defense counsel in more than 90 homicides. His techniques for casting doubt on evidence presented by prosecutors led to new laws and criminal court procedures in Pennsylvania. Mike mentored an entire generation of lawyers who specialize in litigation.

In 1992, he was appointed to the bench as Mercer County Judge, then ran for election and secured a 10 year term and served until his retirement as senior Judge.

Financially successful in law and real estate, Mike often neglected sending invoices. One year, he never sent another bill past March and, when asked why, said he "had already made enough money to take care of my needs for the year." Keystone never got a bill for saving our organization from possible collapse. God Bless Michael Wherry.

In a similar vein, there are several others who have had a significant impact

on Keystone. One is a young woman who has been at my right hand for the last three years, Stephanie Finnegan.

Stephanie has accepted a position with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture as a graphic designer. She leaves us with a legacy of a coordinated plan for promoting the Keystone brand. She has been instrumental in raising the standards of all our communications (including this newsletter). We wish her the best and will sorely miss her enthusiasm and creativity. Good Luck Stephanie!

We had a couple of members recently rotate off the Board of Directors that also deserve special mention. Tony Paglia, longtime board member, served in a variety of capacities, always bringing a fresh perspective to important topics.

And, Tresa Templeton. I think Tresa brought more passion and dedication to the board than any member in my memory. She has worked tirelessly on our golf scramble, transformed the "Sizzler" into a raging success (in memoriam to her husband, Perry), served as an officer, chaired committees and has been the agency's most recognized cheerleader. We are putting Tresa on notice that although she was required by the rules to rotate off the board, she is not off the hook. Stay tuned for future episodes featuring Tresa as she continues her wonderful tradition of service to Keystone.

I close with a thank you to all mentioned above for what you have done for our organization. Each of you in your unique way contributed to the growth and development of the agency. We are indebted to each of you.

Cordially,



Vista

Vista is the official publication of Keystone. It is published four times per year. Digital versions are also available at www.keystoneblind.org

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Keystone is:

Keystone Blind Association
Keystone Vocational Services
Keystone Independence Management
National Foundation for Blind Children

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Executive Vice President of Operations

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Vice President of Facilities & Operations

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Senior Vice President of Services

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Laurie Staph

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Vice President of Human Resources

Melissa Means

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1230 Stambaugh Avenue,
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724-347-5501

kba@keystoneblind.org

Welcome Aboard!

In January 2015, Keystone welcomed Christian Skibinski to the Operations Department as our Acquisition and Logistics Specialist. Christian joins us with 13 years of experience as the Operational Manager at Halls Safety Equipment, Inc. in Grove City, PA. As part of Procurement operations, Christian will focus on relationship management, coordinating shipping, monitoring inventory, and researching new products and suppliers. Christian brings a broad range of knowledge and experience to our agency, and we look forward to having him on our team.

We also welcome Cristina Rains to the Photo ID Program! Mercer resident Cristina Rains joined KBA as the program manager in January to oversee the 5 centers in western PA and 2 in the Philadelphia area. Cristina was forever changed by a close family member who lost vision and she felt compelled to give back and help people through her work. She holds a bachelor's degree in HRM from Geneva College. She and 14 year old daughter Madeline keep busy, and in her "spare" time, Cristina is busy planning her May 2015 wedding!

In addition, we welcome Aaron Schwab as the new Director of Communications. Aaron joined Keystone in March. He holds a degree in Graphic Design from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and has over 10 years of experience. Aaron will be taking over the newsletters for Keystone and our affiliate agencies, all of the marketing and event materials, and other important design and administrative tasks. Aaron is extremely talented, and we are excited to have him on our team!

If you see or talk to Christian, Cristina, or Aaron, make sure to give them a warm welcome! ☺

DID YOU KNOW?

JUNE IS CATARACT AWARENESS MONTH

Twenty-two million Americans are affected by cataracts. A cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens that leads to decreased vision. The lens is important because it focuses images onto the retina at the back of the eye. The image is then processed and sent to the brain. As a cataract matures, it often causes glare, as well as diminished contrast and color sensitivity. Over time, if left untreated, cataracts lead to decreased vision. The good news is the risk of developing cataracts can be reduced! Remember to wear sunglasses, especially in the summer months when ultraviolet radiation is the strongest, as direct exposure to ultraviolet radiation can cause cataracts. Also, if you smoke, try to quit, and if you consume alcohol, do so in moderation, as both activities can increase your chances of cataract formation.

Source: <http://www.friendsforsight.org/resources/eye-health-awareness/item/11-cataract-awareness-month-june-2014>

Communications Director Change

By Stephanie Finnegan

When I took a position at Keystone as Administrative Assistant, which transitioned into Director of Communications, I wasn't aware at the time of the positive impact it would have on my life. My three years at Keystone have been an incredible opportunity for me, not only to be part of an amazing organization dedicated to helping people with visual impairments in the community, but also to grow as a professional.

It has been an honor to put my own stamp on this newsletter, as well as our other publications. I hope you have enjoyed reading the articles and seeing the changes the *Vista* has gone through during my time as Editor/Creative Director. I am proud of the product we have sent out to the community. I give a sincere thank you to all of the staff members who have taken time to write articles for the *Vista* and proofread. (Especially when it was down to the last minute!)

I will truly miss everyone I have worked with on a daily basis here at Keystone - you became like another family to me. I am excited to give the reins over to Aaron Schwab, who will be taking on the duties of Director of Communications. As I start my new journey in South Carolina, I will always look back with fondness at the wonderful time I had here at Keystone! ☺

CPR Training

Last October, employees at the Delaware Water Gap Welcome Center attended a CPR training class. The class was sponsored and provided by Supervisor Roger Westgate. All of the participants successfully completed the course and received certification. The site has also been equipped with CPR masks/face shields in the event of an emergency.

Keystone is proud that our employees are ready to assist the traveling public, even in an emergency! ☺



1st Row: Connie Fish, Naomi Lepes
2nd Row: Bethanne Kralik, Joe Lepes, Jean Paul Bennett
Not Pictured: Monique Hughey

Talking with Tulip

By Tulip, Guide Dog



It has been a rough winter, but I am delighted that spring has finally arrived!

As my Sandie and I were watching the news on February 2nd, we noticed the groundhog bit the weather man's ear! Those groundhogs just cannot be trusted, either in predicting when spring will arrive or not taking a bite of a tasty morsel when placed close to their mouth.

The good news is summer is closer than it was 3 months ago, which is a plus!

My Sandie's tulips are beginning to show their heads, and soon they will be in bloom. Sandie's favorite color is yellow, and one of her favorite flowers are tulips, so when she received me as her guide dog she was surprised and very pleased to receive a "yellow Tulip". When the prospective graduates go to the campus, they are not told the name of the dog they are about to receive, which is why it was such a pleasant surprise.

I was born at the San Rafael California campus of Guide Dogs for the Blind. When I was able to leave my mom, I was transferred to the Boring, Oregon campus. It was there that Sandie and I met in the spring of 2007. When Sandie left her home she said to her husband, "I will not see my tulips in bloom this year", not realizing she was about to receive her very own "Tulip".

My friend and occasional playmate Sneakers crossed over the rainbow bridge this past winter. Sometimes when I go out in my yard I think she might still be waiting for me, but unfortunately that is just wishful thinking. I do miss her. Occasionally there are bunnies in my yard, but they do not want to play. They think I am going to hurt them and so they run away. Maybe one day they will realize that I can be trusted and be willing to play with me. That too might be wishful thinking.

When I am in my yard I watch the deer as they wander through. A large portion of the yard is fenced in and that is when I stay. The larger animals cannot get in unless the gate is left open and they wander in. The smaller animals can still find ways to get in, of course. My Sandie keeps hoping a skunk does not wander in and I try to make him a playmate. I do not think either Sandie or I would like that! I have never had contact with a skunk, but from what I have heard, I do not think I want to arrange a play-date.

Spring activities are happening here at KBA - golf scrambles, hike for sights, and client picnics. I am ready for whatever is on the schedule and looking forward to seeing all of you at these events. ☞

Donate Online!

➡ www.keystoneblind.org ⬅

We offer a secure online donation service that accepts MasterCard and Visa.

Planned Gifts Can Offer Tax Benefits To Donors

By Thomas A. Dill, Esq.



Estate planning tools such as bequests, IRA asset allocation, Charitable Gift Annuities (CGA), and Charitable Remainder Trusts offer significant tax incentives to donors. For example a bequest is 100% deductible from a donor's estate and can reduce potential estate taxes. A CGA offers the donor a tax deduction and can potentially sidestep capital gains taxes. Certain planned giving vehicles also enable the donor to ensure that his or her heirs will be financially provided for, alongside supporting a charitable cause.

Please check with your tax advisor or your attorney to prior to changing the beneficiary on your IRA.

Please contact Tom Dill, Esq. at Keystone Blind Association at 1230 Stambaugh Ave. Sharon, PA 16146 724 347 5501 for further information. ☞

Rest Area Ramblings

By Marie Ditz & Susan McKinnis



Thanks for all the rest areas who made it through the brutal beginnings of the year in spite of staffing shortages, snow, sleet, and ice!

Congrats to Roger and Antonia Westgate on the birth of their great-grandson in Florida last December - welcome E.J. Wilmont!

We wish a happy first birthday (in January) to Alivia, the granddaughter of Cheryl Cropp, Lead Attendant at the Edinboro rest areas!

We extend our sympathy to Pat and Ed Harnish on the death of Pat's sister. ☞

Where in the World Am I?

A guide for parents

By Kathie Preece,
COMS/Teacher for the Visually Impaired

"Where in the World Am I?" contains many concepts and skills that can be taught through play activities by parents, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists or Early Childhood teachers.

Purchase online at www.keystoneblind.org

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724-347-3711 • 981 Division Street, Sharon, PA 16146
Monday - Friday, 7:30 AM - 4 PM



KBA Calendar of Events

LSE: Life Skills Education | **CEP:** Children’s Education Program | **TIC:** Technology Information Club
PSVS: Preschool Vision Screening | **GCA:** Glasses Cleaning/Adjust | **AVS:** Adult Vision Screening
GVAS: Glaucoma/Visual Acuity Screening

APRIL

- 2 – Low Vision Clinic with Dr. Freeman
- 4 – Young Adults Event; TBA
- 5 – Happy Easter!
- 8 – LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM
- 14 – Support Group/FLIP Bingo; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 15 – PAB Agency LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 11:00 AM -12:00 PM
- 16 – Prince of Peace Food Bank; 9:00 AM
- 21 – Coffee Talk Support Group; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 22 – Earth Day
- 28 – Support Group; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 30 – Salvation Army Food Bank; 9:00 AM

MAY

- 2 – Young Adults Event; TBA
- 7 – Low Vision Clinic with Dr. Freeman
- 10 – Happy Mother’s Day!
- 12 – Support Group/FLIP Bingo; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 13 – LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM
- 16 – Armed Forces Day
- 19 – Coffee Talk Support Group; 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- 20 – PAB Agency LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- 21 – Prince of Peace Food Bank; 9:00 AM
- 25 – Memorial Day (Agency Closed)**
- 26 – Support Group/FLIP Bingo; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 28 – Salvation Army Food Bank; 9:00 AM

JUNE

- 6 – Young Adults Event; TBA
- 9 – Support Group/FLIP Bingo; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 10 – LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 10:30 AM -12:30 PM
- 14 – Flag Day
- 16 – Coffee Talk Support Group; 1:00 - 3:00 PM
- 17 – PAB Agency LSE Video Conference (All agencies); 11:00 AM -12:00 PM
- 18 – Prince of Peace Food Bank; 9:00 AM
- 21 – Happy Father’s Day!
- 23 – Support Group/FLIP Bingo; 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- 25 – Salvation Army Food Bank; 9:00 AM

There are no Support Group meetings on the 1st and 5th Tuesdays of the month.

Keystone Kids Upcoming Events

By Louise Johnson

April 25: Science Center

In April, we will be going to the Carnegie Science Center with the new Sports Center. We will leave KBA at 9:00 A.M. to get to the Science Center around 11:00 A.M. We will have lunch at the Riverview Café and explore the Science Center. We will leave the Science Center at 3:00 to head back home. We will arrive at KBA around 5:00 P.M. The Science Center is located on 1 Allegheny Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15212. The phone number is 412-237-3400.

May 9: Greenville Symphony

In May, we will go to the Greenville Symphony. It will be from 10:45 to 4:30. The phone number is 724-588-9580 or 724-971-5907. This is a sensory experience event arranged by Kathryn Thompson. We will begin with the children on stage with the musicians, able to explore the instruments. Then the orchestra

will rehearse. At 12:30, they will provide lunch for us. Then they will have a workshop with the students, prepared especially for students with visual impairments. The event will end with the concert.



June 18: Idlewild

On Thursday, June 18, we will all head for a fun-filled trip to Idlewild. We will leave KBA (1230 Stambaugh Ave, Sharon, PA 16146) at 9 AM and return back at KBA at 9 PM. We look forward to a fun day in the park and the Soak Zone.

Please contact me at 267-908-6507 to let me know if you are coming and if you have any questions. Please call ahead of time so that I can arrange transportation for you! ☺

Young Adults Upcoming Events

By Jenn Lilly

Keystone’s Young Adults program is for socialization and learning experiences for visually impaired high school seniors to those around 35 years of age. This group will meet the first week-end of each month.

April 4: Olympic Fun Center

We will be going roller skating at The Olympic Fun Center in Hermitage, PA.

May 1: Keystone Lock-In

We will have a game night and sleep over at the agency.

June 6: Bowling Trip

We will be going bowling. The location is TBD.

For additional information, please contact Jenn Lilly at 724-347-5501 ext. 248. ☺

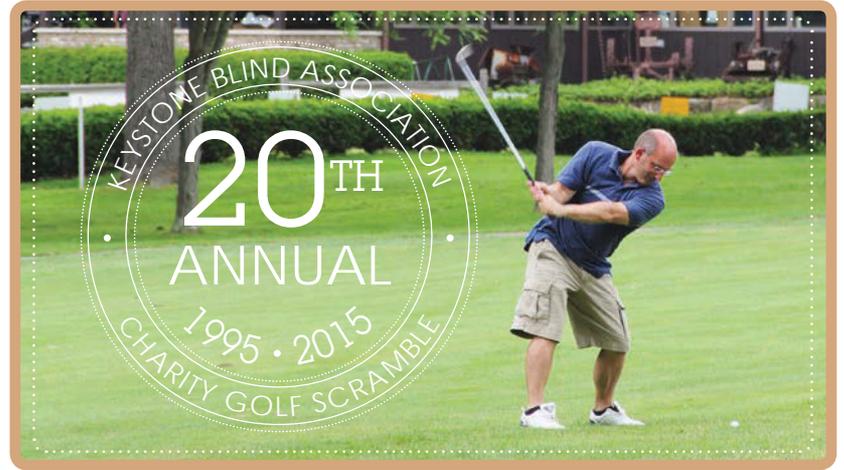
20th Annual Golf Scramble

By Maureen Perod

Spring is here, which means the golfing season will soon begin! Keystone Blind Association will be holding our 20th Annual Charity Golf Scramble on Monday, June 1, 2015. KBA's 5-person scramble will take place at Tam O'Shanter of Pennsylvania with a shot gun start at 11:00 AM. You can help to make our 20th year a huge success by entering a team, sponsoring a hole, or donating an item for a door prize.

All proceeds from KBA's Charity Golf Scramble remain right here in our local community to help KBA provide quality programs and services to your family, friends, and neighbors who are blind or visually impaired.

For more information on how you can participate in this year's 20th Annual Charity Golf Scramble on Monday, June 1, please contact Maureen Perod at 724-347-5501 or visit to www.keystoneblind.org.



TOP Team KBA had a great time on the course last year.

ABOVE In the 2014 scramble, Team Ferrara snagged first place with a score of 56!

I would like to participate in KBA's 20th Annual Golf Scramble.



Please sign me up for the following:

- \$1,000 Elite Sponsor** [Your company logo will appear on a snack bag given to each golfer, printed materials, an 18" x 24" sign and banner displayed at registration, and prominent ad placement in program book]
- \$500 Major Sponsor** [Your company name will appear on printed materials, an 18" x 24" sign and banner displayed at registration]
- \$100 Hole Sponsor** [Your company name on a 18" x 24" sign displayed at a hole on the course]
- \$500 Team Entry Fee (\$100/golfer)** [Includes 5-person team, greens fees, carts, lunch, dinner, and refreshments on the course]
- \$100 Single Entry Fee** [Includes greens fees, cart, lunch, dinner, and refreshments on the course]
- General Donation \$ _____**

Name: _____

Company Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please cut out and send back to Maureen Perod at KBA by **May 14, 2015**
ELITE SPONSORSHIPS ARE DUE BY APRIL 30, 2015

Keeping Up With the Snow

By Jonathan Fister

Keystone is responsible for clearing the snow at 34 interstate rest areas across the Commonwealth, as well as at the Ebensburg and Allentown Reserve Centers. In northwest Pennsylvania, that not only includes clearing sidewalks, but also all of the vehicle parking areas. Dale Myers is Keystone's Maintenance Supervisor, and is in charge of keeping the entire snow equipment fleet running. We sat down with Dale to talk about what it takes to maintain the winter equipment for numerous locations.

Keystone: How many snow blowers and plow trucks are you responsible for?

Dale: There are 26 snow blowers spread around at various sites. They all come in here for maintenance. Our contracts say we must have a snow blower on the sites at all times. That's why I have 2 at a few of the northern sites – if one breaks, they have another one they can use until I can get up there to repair the broken one. We have 6 snow plow trucks that can be called out any time of the day or night. If there are repairs needed, that has to happen day or night as well.

Keystone: What's the key to keep these machines running?

Dale: Maintenance. Keeping the rotors cleaned, the oil changed, and keeping the housings from getting worn out. The auger will get clogged with wet snow, which will shear the pin. In theory, if you hit a rock, the pin will break first instead of the auger. With the plow trucks, which are equipped with salt spreaders, a typical problem would be the salt getting moist and not coming out properly. We then have a get a wrench and start moving the auger back and forth to get the salt loosened up. For the blades on the front of the truck, the bottom cutting bar has to be changed about twice per year. We have occasionally had the hydraulics freeze, which meant we couldn't raise the blade. We had to jack it up, attached chains to it, and bring it back to our shop to warm it up. After it's been warmed up, we have to change the oil out and make sure there is no other moisture in there.

Keystone: Are there problems with starting the snow blowers or plows in the cold weather?

Dale: You have to choke them first. The blowers are all in good



The 2015 GMC 2500 plow truck is used regularly during the winter at Keystone and serves as a backup.

enough condition that they'll start after 2 or 3 pulls. All of our rest area attendants are using these machines and some of them don't have the strength to keep pulling, so we have to make sure they're running well.

Keystone: Do you keep pieces from broken snow blowers to repair other ones, like a used part supply?

Dale: Yes, exactly. When one has the motor worn out, I keep the rest of the blower for parts. If there's one where the housing is destroyed, I'll take the motor off of that one and put it on a good housing.

Keystone: How do these snow blowers get here for repair?

Dale: Either myself or my crew has to go get them. I could be driving up to Erie on very short notice in a snow storm to take a replacement blower up for the attendants to use while I'm repairing the broken one. If I can't fix it on the site, I'll bring it back to the shop to work on. We have three snow blowers in reserve that I can switch out at the sites.

Keystone: Are there certain types of blowers that you try to stay away from that may have caused problems in the past?

Dale: The ones with the bells and whistles that have electric motors which do the work for you, where you can turn a crank or move the chute by hand. I like the ones that are more manual, because there are fewer parts and things that can go wrong.

Keystone: Do all of the plow trucks and snow blowers come back in here at some point for an inspection?

Dale: Yes, on the trucks we'll take the blades off and put the salt boxes away. We'll bring in all of the blowers, drain the gas, go over them and tag them for what they'll need for the next season. Then we store everything.

Keystone: What do you like most about what you do?

Dale: I work with good people. I've been working with cars and mechanical things since I was a teenager, so it's like second nature to me.

In addition to all of the snow equipment maintenance, Dale and his three crew members maintain the lawn mower equipment that is used during the summer months at the various rest area sites and reserve centers, do vehicle work and inspections on over 66 agency vehicles and trailers, and also keep the office and production buildings maintained. 



Dale checks over the various snow blowers that are kept in reserve at Keystone.

Shredding Services

By Karen Bly

In today's fast-paced, data-packed world of technological advancement, Keystone Blind Association continues to offer Document Destruction / Paper Shredding as a vital service to local residents and area businesses. Although electronic data storage is trending, paperwork is still a necessary part of our lives. Keystone provides a safe and secure method for disposal of sensitive paperwork. The shredding program not only benefits our local community, but it also provides employment opportunities to blind and disabled workers who may not have been able to find employment elsewhere.

Recognizing an increased need due to identity theft concerns and strict HIPAA regulations, Keystone purchased an industrial-grade shredder, conveyor, and baler system in 2010. This equipment has allowed handicapped individuals to work independently and maximize the flow of shredding and recycling. With this equipment, employees can shred and bale upwards of 2,000 lbs. per day. Keystone sells the bales of shredded paper to an area paper recycler; each bale weighs approximately 1,000 lbs. In 2014, employees shredded over 200,000 pounds of paper, making substantial gains in the document destruction/paper shredding market.

Document Destruction takes place at our production facility on Division Street in Sharon, PA. Keystone offers free

pickups for local customers. Keystone is happy to service clients ranging from individual walk-in customers with a few boxes/bags to regular business customers who are part of our monthly tote program. Our customers include residents and businesses from Mercer, Lawrence, Crawford, and Butler Counties in PA and Mahoning and Trumbull Counties in Ohio.

If you would like more information about our Document Destruction program, please contact Dean Kappas, Plant Manager, at 724-347-3711. [R](#)



THE PROS

Mobility Devices - Guide Dog vs. Cane

By Luann Cade

As an Orientation & Mobility teacher, I am asked quite often what the difference is in using a guide dog versus a long cane. Let's explore the options. A mobility cane is long, white and red in color, with a tip on the end. They are made of various materials, usually aluminum. Some fold, usually in 4-5 pieces, to the size of an umbrella. It has an adjustable cord inside that allows them to collapse for convenience purposes. This allows the client or student to hold the cane with them, when not using it, as when they ride in a form of transportation such as a car, bus, train, or subway. It allows them to throw the cane in a backpack, cane holster, or large purse or tote, while sitting in class or eating at a restaurant.

When open, the long cane's main purpose is to detect obstacles in one's pathway, changing texture surfaces, and to detect drop-offs, including steps, curbs, or any uneven surfaces. It also provides a form of identification to the general public that the traveler is visually impaired. The user must learn to rely on the cane to detect obstacles waist down, and utilize other safety techniques such as protective and trailing techniques for safe travel. They may also hold the cane for identification purposes, when traveling by sighted guide.

A guide dog is raised and trained at a certified guide dog school. There are several guide dog schools to choose from across the country. The dogs are raised from puppies and trained by the guide dog school. An O&M teacher does not train the

guide dog, and does not teach an individual to travel with one. An individual cannot have their own personal pet trained to be a guide dog, as many people ask. The traveler must apply and be accepted into the school of their choice. The individual must then attend a training program, at the guide dog school, for several weeks. Once there, they are matched up with a guide dog, and complete training together. Once training is complete at the school, an O&M can then work with the traveler and guide dog on learning necessary routes at home.

The guide dog's main purpose is to travel around obstacles, and stop at any drop-off. The traveler provides commands, to which the guide dog responds. The guide dog is a working animal, and must have a daily walking routine, be well taken care of, and get along well with others (including pets) in the household. This should all be taken into consideration, before choosing a guide dog. One's health and walking pace and abilities are all essential in the decision process. In addition, safe cane techniques are a must, and usually an O&M instructor's recommendation is requested by the issuing guide dog school, before instruction will take place.

As you can see, there is much to consider when choosing a travel aid. If anyone is considering either a cane or guide dog and would like further information, please feel free to contact our O&M department at KBA. We would be glad to help! [R](#)

Computer Vision Syndrome

By Paul B. Freeman, O.D.

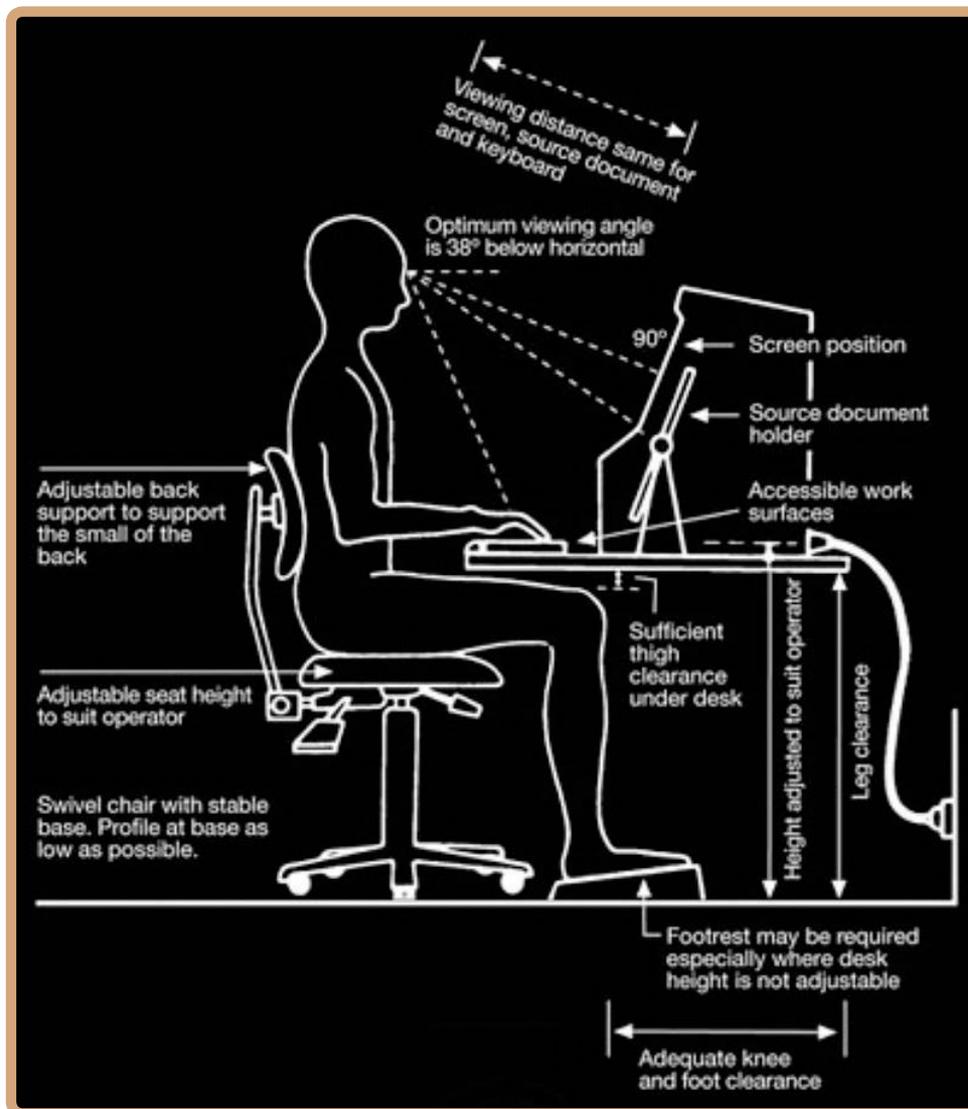
In the last Vista (Winter 2015, Volume MMXV, Issue 1), I discussed the concern of possible damage to the eyes due to specific wavelengths emitted from electronic devices. And while the jury is still out on that topic, there can be some functional discomfort that results from prolonged, typically uninterrupted, use of electronic devices such as a computers, tablets, e-readers, or even cell phones. This has become known as Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), and describes symptoms which include general eye and overall physical discomfort, blurry or double vision, headaches, and sometimes even dry eyes. These symptoms can be related to the print size and contrast on the electronic device, the ergonomics of inadequate lighting, glare on the screen, viewing distance, or poor posture, or the need for lenses to correct for farsightedness, nearsightedness, or astigmatism. Additionally, sometimes inadequate near focusing, poor eye muscle coordination, or difficulty converging can create discomfort. So how can these symptoms be minimized?

First and foremost, a thorough ocular health and vision assessment should be done to determine if there is a medical reason for the functional discomfort being experienced, or if corrective lenses (glasses or contact lenses) are warranted or need to be updated to maximize visual clarity. The eye doctor might also do tests for convergence and divergence abilities, the ability to maintain binocular fusion, and focusing control. Then, should there be deficits in any of those skills, special glasses for close work may be necessary to reduce the visual strain, or vision therapy (eye exercises) might be recommended to improve on the efficiency of eye movements and focusing. That being said, periodic breaks will also go a long way to help rest the eyes and reduce these symptoms. In a children's book I co-edited in the 1980s, I wrote that "after 20 to 30 minutes, stop what you're doing, get up and move around. This helps you to relax and gives your eyes a rest."⁽¹⁾ Although that was recommended for reading books, the recommendation still makes sense today.

Next, the environment might be arranged to minimize discomfort and can be done as follows. It would help to have a comfortable chair so that feet rest flat on the floor. This is a recommendation that I made in my children's book, but can also be found currently on websites like the Mayo Clinic and the American Optometric Association site.^(2, 3) For using a keyboard or mouse, your hands should be slightly below your bent arms. The placement of the monitor (according to the American Optometric Association) should be approximately 20 to 28 inches from the eyes and about 15 to 20° below eye level (the top of

the monitor should be just slightly below eye level). Finally, the computer should be positioned so that the screen does not reflect glare. A quick way to determine that is by holding a mirror facing you. Whatever you see in the mirror will in some fashion be reflected by the screen. If it is a window, light source, or otherwise light or bright object (even your clothes), it could create glare on the computer screen. When ambient glare sources are difficult to control, there are filters that can help minimize this.

And finally, after all this, don't forget to blink. Unlike looking at a book where most people blink when turning a page or even while on the page, being mesmerized by information on a computer can sometimes minimize blinking, and for those who are susceptible, can lead to



Source: <http://www.lidkea.com/services-computer-and-vision.html>

dry eyes.

Realizing that electronic media is ubiquitous in our society, it is important to develop good visual habits when using these devices. Following these simple guides can help to optimize comfort when using electronic media. But what about those who have a visual impairment? We'll talk about that in the next Vista. ☞

1. *Captain Goodnight's Coloring Book*, Paul B. Freeman, OD, and Michelle Gernat, BS, Eyecare Communications, 1980
2. www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living...ergonomics/art; last accessed 2/5/2015
3. www.aoa.org/caring-for-your-vision/protecting-your-vision; last accessed 2/5/2015



We Gathered in the Spirit of Christmas

By Bob George

Have you ever received a phone call that when you hung up, you immediately thought to yourself, "The kindness of people never ceases to inspire me"? I received one of those wonderful calls this past December.

Just-Us, is a self-advocacy group in Meadville, comprised of developmentally disabled adults. One of their aides called me and advised me that group desired to throw a Christmas party for the clients of the Keystone Blind Association. It was impressive to me to learn that they thought of KBA with this kind gesture. The group is made up- of members from the following agencies in Meadville: Erie Homes for Children and Adults, Supports, Child and Family Connections, and UCIP. You will agree that it is quite impressive to have members from such a variety of agencies working on a common goal. One common thread is that Joshua Trypus, a member of Just-Us, is also a client of KBA's.

I was so touched by their thoughtfulness, and impressed by the group independently deciding to do something kind for us.

They picked the date, the time and the place. They had already presented the idea to their contact at the Cornerstone Church, who was very supportive of the concept, and agreed to have the event there, assuming that we would agree. After canvassing our clients, I reported that we did. The clients were as touched as I was, and excited about the Christmas party.

The Just-Us group went into action. They paid attention to every detail. We arrived at the church hall to Christmas music filling the room. They had set up all of the tables, complete with

table cloths on them, in anticipation of our arrival. Each table was adorned with centerpieces that were creatively hand-made snowmen.

Once everyone was comfortably seated, the Just-Us group began their Christmas magic by asking all of us from KBA what we would like to eat and drink, so that no one would have to leave their table. That, in itself, was a display of kindness.

As soon as everyone had finished with lunch, a representative from the Just-Us group led us as we all sang Christmas carols. That transitioned nicely into the leader asking all of us to share Christmas stories that stood out in our lives. What a treasure trove of personal stories that uncovered! We laughed, smiled and even got choked up a few times. Great fun was had by all.

As everyone got ready to leave, there was an announcement that the centerpieces were a gift from the Just-Us group to the KBA clients. The centerpieces had a surprise in store for our clients. The body of the snowman was made up of a stack of three baby food jars. One was filled with marshmallows, one with cocoa for hot chocolate and one with peppermint candies. What a great idea with it being a chilly time of year. Nothing goes better with a cold day like a nice piping hot cup of hot chocolate.

KBA sends out our sincerest thank you to all of the members of the Just-Us group for paying attention to the details and providing us with such a fun holiday afternoon! 🎅

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.”

Helen Keller, 1929

Calendar of Events

LSE: Life Skills Education | TIC: Technology Information Club



✧ APRIL ✧

- 10 – Food Stamp Day
- 15 – Support Group Meeting; KBA Meadville Republican Room; 10:00 AM
- 20 – TIC Meeting; Wesbury in the Chapel; 10:00 AM
- 22 – LSE Video Conference; KBA Meadville Office; 10:00 AM
- 30 – B.S with Bob; KBA Meadville Office Republican Room; 10:00 AM

✧ MAY ✧

- 6 – Support Group Meeting; KBA Meadville Republican Room; 10:00 AM
- 12 – Food Stamp Day
- 18 – TIC Meeting; Wesbury in the Chapel; 10:00 AM
- 20 – LSE Video Conference; KBA Meadville Office; 10:00 AM
- 25 – Memorial Day (Agency Closed)**

✧ JUNE ✧

- 4 – Support Group Meeting; KBA Meadville Republican Room; 10:00 AM
- 11 – Food Stamp Day
- 11 – LSE Video Conference; KBA Meadville Office; 10:00 AM
- 15 – TIC Meeting; Wesbury in the Chapel; 10:00 AM
- 17 – LSE Video Conference; KBA Meadville Office; 10:00 AM
- 25 – B.S with Bob; KBA Meadville Republican Room; 10:00 AM



Heather at the Helm

By Ann Peterson

Heather Winters is now the Office Manager at KBA's Lawrence County office. She will be the person to call to schedule appointments and to answer questions about services. Heather will also schedule support groups, life skills classes and other events tailored to the needs of individuals who are visually impaired in Lawrence County. She is posting a schedule on the office door at 2304 Wilmington Rd., New Castle (in the same plaza as Nick's Auto Body), with new office hours so that the public will be aware of when she or Louise Johnson will be available to discuss services, purchase items, or answer questions.

Heather has been working in the Casework Department at Keystone's main office for a year. Although she misses working with people in Mercer County, she enjoys meeting new folks in Lawrence County! Heather's number at the New Castle office is 724-301-9230. ☞



Kitchen Devices Life Skills Program

By Kathy Buskirk

On January 27th, clients from KBA's Lawrence County Office attended a Life Skills Program entitled "Latest/Greatest Kitchen Devices: Using the Microwave." Four devices for use in the microwave were introduced including fabric cooking bags, the Tupperware Stack Cooker, Rangemate Multi-cooker and the "Stonewave" microwave cooker. Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Kathy Buskirk demonstrated the use of the Stonewave microwave cooker to cook sausage stuffed peppers. Demonstrating the other devices, chocolate caramel cupcakes, taco dip and baked potatoes were prepared.

Life Skills Programs are offered to clients, providing information and education to compensate and adjust to vision loss and assist with maintaining independence in their homes and may include a wide variety of topics such as community resources and programs, demonstrations of adaptive aids and devices, health and safety education, legal issues, financial planning, etiquette issues and methods of mobility. A client interested in furthering this education in such areas of home management, personal management, low vision, communication, mobility by learning adaptive techniques/adapting their own equipment, a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist or Orientation and Mobility Instructor from Keystone Blind Association can schedule an assessment and set up a plan of instruction reflecting the individual's visual and personal needs. ☞



Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Kathy Buskirk shows clients how to use the Stonewave microwave cooker.

Calendar of Events

LSE: Life Skills Education | TIC: Technology Information Club



✧ APRIL ✧

- 14 – TIC Meeting; KBA New Castle Office; 11:30 AM
- 27 – Support Group; KBA New Castle Office; 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

✧ MAY ✧

- 12 – TIC Meeting; KBA New Castle Office; 11:30 AM
- 18 – Support Group; KBA New Castle Office; 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

✧ JUNE ✧

- 9 – TIC Meeting; KBA New Castle Office; 11:30 AM
- 22 – Support Group; KBA New Castle Office; 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM



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