

The Voice

Vision-Opportunities-Innovation-Choices-Expertise

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Message from Dacia Johnson, Executive Director



The Commission for the Blind's strategic plan has created a laser focus for the agency around client independence and timely service delivery.

We are focused around effectively and efficiently helping Oregonians who are blind get and keep jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families; training Oregonians in the alternative skills related to blindness such as adaptive technology, white cane travel, braille and activities of daily living; helping seniors with vision loss live with the highest levels of independence and self-sufficiency so that they can remain independent in their homes and be active in their communities, and licensing and supporting business owners who operate food service and vending operations in public buildings and facilities throughout the state.

This newsletter features partnerships that help make connections for seniors, networking with employers and new business opportunities. I hope you enjoy reading about the great examples of the agency's priorities in action!

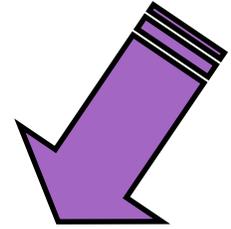
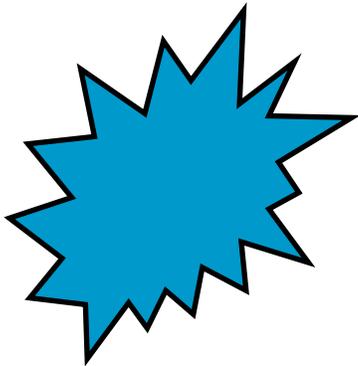
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dacia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**CHECK OUT OUR
NEW WEBSITE!**

www.oregon.gov/blind

The Oregon Commission for the Blind has a new website utilizing the new E-Government Portal. The agency worked in collaboration with the E-Government Portal Advisory Board to utilize our website redesign process as a learning opportunity to improve the overall accessibility of the E-Government Portal for users who experience vision loss.

The goal was to organize information and resources in ways that improved the customer experience. In order to improve access to the agency, our new website has an online portal that allows individuals to connect with agency programs and services.



**OCB Selected to
Participate in
Evidence Based Practice
Learning Collaborative**

As an agency committed to great client outcomes Oregon Commission for the Blind is excited to announce its acceptance into the Vermont Progressive Employment Model Collaborative.

OCB was one of only four Vocational Rehabilitation agencies nationwide to be admitted to the program.

The collaborative will provide a venue for OCB to communicate with other Vocational Rehabilitation agencies about research-based best practices and put those practices to work. The model harnesses collaborative data collection, analysis, and client counseling in order to create employment outcomes which will benefit both Oregonians who are blind as well as employers across the state.

Strengthening Programs Through Partnerships

Partnering with community based organizations throughout Oregon is an integral component of the Commission for the Blind business model.

Blindskills, Inc. is the publisher of DIALOGUE magazine and an invaluable partner to the agency as both a referral source and a resource to provide supports and services that compliment services available from the agency. Blindskills, is a non profit 501C(3) and a resource for individuals who may be seeking information about vision loss, resources, tools and techniques related to vision loss. In response to the needs of the community, Executive Director Marja Byers has expanded the services to include a second support group.



Marja Byers

The two support groups provide individuals who are blind with an opportunity to connect with other individuals, share ideas and lend support as they adjust to the changes vision loss brings to their lives. The support groups meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month at Blindskills, located 680 State Street in Salem. Check them out at www.blindskills.com.

Business Enterprise Program expands opportunities for Oregonians who are blind.

Licensed blind manager Steve Jackson, pictured, in the Commission's newly acquired Bonneville Power Administration headquarters cafeteria. The cafeteria located in Portland, is the largest in Oregon's Business Enterprise program. The BPA headquarters complex has over 2,300 employees. Licensed blind managers in the Business Enterprise program operate food service and vending facilities throughout the State of Oregon.



SWEP Program



Sierra Burgess 2014 Portland SWEP Participant

As we approach spring, it is not too early to be thinking about SWEP, our high school transition Summer Work Experience Program. Last week we held a Luncheon and Information Session for employers to learn more about SWEP and the opportunities for them to partner as a host worksite for our high school transition students.

The Luncheon was quite a success on multiple levels. We were grateful to meet so many new employers who were willing to take time out of their busy schedules to learn about the Oregon Commission for the Blind and SWEP. We are excited to see new businesses such as Starbucks, Bonneville Power Administration, OHSU as well as community representatives from other local businesses.

And of course, we were delighted to see OMSI there, representing as a host employer from last year. Two SWEP students from last year presented in front of the employers, describing their work experiences as well as the transformations and growth they both gained from SWEP. One comment that both students stated was that SWEP helped them to break out of their shells. They both agreed that because of SWEP, they had gained the confidence to stand in front of a crowd and speak. These words remind us of the value and impact SWEP has on our youth.

The lunch was provided by the training center students, which gave them the opportunity to not only practice their cooking skills in the kitchen, but gave them the opportunity to engage with our guests by preparing, setting up, and serving. By the end of the Luncheon, we had a captivated and inspired audience! We are all looking forward to what this summer brings and we are thankful for the participation of our community business partners!

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**OREGON
COMMISSION
FOR THE
BLIND**

“Expanding Opportunities for
Oregonians with Vision Loss”

Do you know that Blind Oregonians...

Have jobs, careers and participate in their communities

Engage in leisure, recreational, and volunteer activities

Travel independently, read, and experience life to the fullest

For over 50 years, the Oregon Commission for the Blind has been a resource for visually impaired Oregonians, as well as their families, friends, and employers. We have nationally recognized programs and staff that make a difference in peoples lives every day.

Our vision is to achieve full inclusion of visually impaired people in society. Towards this aim, we help people make informed choices about their individual goals and plans.

These aspirations ultimately lead to successful employment, independent living, and social self-sufficiency. For Cecelia (pictured), success meant learning skills that al-



lowed her to keep her job as a forensic scientist and be come an expert witness on DNA fingerprinting.