

The Voice

Oregon
Commission
for the Blind

Vision-Opportunities-Innovation-Choices-Expertise

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Message from Dacia Johnson, Executive Director



Each day our agency hears from a citizen in Oregon who has become blind and is looking for ways to regain their independence. For some, this means acquiring new skills that allow them to return to work. For others, this means learning how to perform everyday tasks safely and effectively without the use of vision.

For many Oregonians, it is about understanding that being active does not have to stop after vision loss and that the possibilities for living a full and productive life can be expanded through the process of rehabilitation.

I am pleased the state investments in the agency in the next two-year budget will allow the agency to grow our teaching resources to address the need for seniors who experience vision loss who desire to develop skills essential to remain living independently in their homes and communities. We will also be able to increase support and expand the opportunities for entrepreneurs who are blind and operating small business food service and vending facilities in public locations.

This newsletter shares information about a recent training event for individuals who are deaf-blind and their support service providers, as well as information on collaborations and partnerships that help demonstrate the agency's mission in action. Thanks for your interest in the Commission for the Blind!

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



OCB's Website is a Model for State Government

The Oregon.gov portal has a commitment to accessibility of the websites within state government. Through a partnership with the State of Oregon E-Governance Board and E-Government Portal Advisory Board, OCB's team was able to provide insights and expertise early on in the process into usability of websites based on the layout and formats. Upon completion of our new website, testing was conducted, and the agency has learned that our website passed for accessibility for the following:

- Dyslexia
- Low vision - excluding the template flaws of the header and footer
- Gross and/or fine motor impairments that often occur with acquired brain injury, Asperger's Syndrome, Autism, Fibromyalgia Syndrome, Lupus, and Multiple Sclerosis.
- Hearing-impaired
- Physical deficits that may include ambulation, balance, fine motor skills, strength, and endurance.
- Cognitive deficits involving language and communication, information processing, memory and perceptual skill challenges, ADHD - ADD
- Visual perceptual deficits and color blindness
- Epilepsy

Our thanks to the State of Oregon E-Governance Board and E-Government Portal Advisory Board and to NICUSA for their partnership and collaboration on this important project! Check out our website at www.Oregon.gov/blind.



HKNC Confident Living Program

A recent comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals who are deaf-blind in Oregon identified the need for specialized training for individuals who are aging and experiencing a combination of vision and hearing loss. In addition, there was a training need for Support Services Providers. Support service providers (SSPs) relay visual and environmental information, act as sighted guides and facilitate communication for people who are deaf-blind, using the deaf-blind person's preferred language and communication mode. SSPs enable deaf-blind persons to access their communities and connect with other people, reducing communication barriers that otherwise would result in social isolation, incapability to live independently, and inability to participate as citizens within mainstream society.

The Oregon Commission for the Blind, in partnership with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults and the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind conducted a training seminar May 11-15, 2015 where participants obtained information and an introduction to skills in the following areas: Coping with vision and hearing loss, elder law issues, emergency preparedness, community integration and developing community resources, sharing life experiences with peers, exploring leisure activity options, enhancing independent living skills, enhancing communication skills, and experiencing new technology and self-advocacy. Six individuals, including two spouses, provided SSP services during the week.

The training seminar greatly expanded the participants' understanding of the tools and resources that can greatly increase one's independence. Upon the event's conclusion, individuals set their own personal goals to identify next steps.

Improving the Travel Experience for Visitors on the Interstate

The Oregon Travel Experience recently celebrated the rededication of the French Prairie Rest Area. This northbound Interstate 5 facility located just south of Wilsonville, has over two million visitors each year.

As part of the Oregon Travel Experience's Mission, they have refurbished the travel kiosks and now offer the traveler a digital and print experience of accessing information about gas, food, lodging, tourism attractions, historic sights and museums.



The French Prairie rest area has new and improved vending facilities that are operated by Jerry Bird, Owner and Operator of Jerry Bird's Vending Service, a member of the Oregon Commission for the Blind's Business Enterprise Program. The improved site was recently visited by Eric Morris and Art Marshall, OCB staff involved with the Business Enterprise Program. "The rest area is very much improved," said Eric. "It has gone from having little to offer to an updated and comfortable place to stop and a great way to welcome visitors coming to the Portland area. If you are out and about this summer, stop by the French Prairie Rest Area's new travel information kiosk, purchase a beverage or snack and support a business person who is blind."



Eric Morris and Art Marshall



That All May Read



National Library Service
for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

NLS is a free braille and talking book library service for people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page. Through a national network of cooperating libraries, NLS offers books the way you want them: in braille or audio formats, mailed to your door for free, or instantly downloadable.

NLS works to ensure **that all may read** by providing eligible patrons access to NLS materials regardless of age, economic circumstances, or technical expertise. Explore the tabs using the menu on the left. Share the gift of reading, and spread the word about NLS so **that all may read**. For more information, go to: www.loc.gov/ThatAllMayRead

WATCH FOR SWEP IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER!

What happens when you put transition aged youth on the campuses of the School for the Deaf in Salem and Portland State University? SWEP Happens!! The Oregon Commission for the Blind's Summer Work Experience (SWEP) provides residential and work experiences for teens and young adults who are blind. These experiences create an expectation and enthusiasm for employment and living a full and productive life as these young Oregonians transition into adulthood. The next newsletter will highlight some of the incredible experiences that are currently underway in SWEP 2015!!

Stay Tuned!!

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