Message from
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Executive Director

Under Governor Brown’s direction, the Oregon Commission for the Blind is ensuring that Oregon’s youth who are blind will be Future Ready! This month we kicked off the Summer Work Experience Program 2018 with an Orientation for all Youth who will be participating in the Summer jobs program. This program brings together youth aged 16-21 from all over Oregon to either Portland State University in Portland or Willamette University in Salem where they experience living independently and working in the community as well as recreational opportunities where they can apply and expand their independent living skills. Oregonians who are blind are getting ready for their future!

This newsletter also celebrates the Grand Opening of Taste Buds Café at the Capitol where Char Hawkins, a vending facility manager from the Commission for the Blind’s Business Enterprise Program is operating the first ever cafeteria in the Capitol that is being operated by a licensed operator who is blind.

If you are ever in the Capitol and looking for a place to grab a bite to eat and want to support an entrepreneur, Char and her staff are ready to serve you!

The Commission for the Blind works through Oregon’s communities to provide resources to support seniors who experience vision loss gain the resources and tools to maximize their independence. One way in which we do that is through connecting with other community providers. Recently we had an opportunity to attend a Health Fair in Southern Oregon to support the community and so they can learn more about how our agency can help individuals who experience vision loss remain independent and active in their homes and communities.

I hope you enjoy reading about OCB’s mission in action!
Manor Health Fair 2018

In Southern Oregon

The Oregon Commission for the Blind is part of the community that provides services and supports to seniors who experience vision loss and their families.

The Medford staff recently participated in a Health Information Fair at Rogue Valley Manor, a continuing care community, intended to provide information to residents and their families. Attendees learned about partners in the community and resources that included health care services, Mercy Flights, eye care physicians, rehabilitation services, and local Law Enforcement.

Did you know? The Oregon Commission for the Blind’s Independent Living for the Older Blind Program helps provide training and resources to residents age 55 and over who experience vision loss?

Our services help encourage Oregon residents with vision loss to participate in their communities, engage in leisure and recreational activities, volunteer, travel safely and maintain a greater level of independence. If you or someone you know is over the age of 55 and is experiencing vision loss that is affecting their ability to live independently and do the things that they enjoy, please consider reaching out to the agency!

Our teachers will come to the individual’s home to do an assessment and discuss services that may assist them in reaching their goals. Any Oregon resident with vision loss age 55 and over interested in receiving services from OCB is encouraged to learn more by contacting any of our offices in Oregon. Call our main # 971-673-1588 to learn the contact for your area.
Char Hawkins Opens Taste Buds Café at the Capitol

The Oregon Commission for the Blind’s Business Enterprise Program is proud to announce that for the first time in the program’s history, there is a vending facility manager who is blind operating the Café in the Oregon State Capitol Building.

Char Hawkins, Owner/Operator of Taste Buds Café, also operates the Cafeteria at the DMV Headquarters in Salem. Char and her staff have been running the Café since April. The space has been updated and freshened up. Her menu features breakfast and lunch options with something for everyone to enjoy!

The Oregon Commission for the Blind’s Business Enterprise Program trains and licenses blind individuals who are interested in operating food service and vending businesses in public buildings throughout Oregon. “I consider the Randolph-Sheppard Act, not the right to work, but a privilege!” says Char.

We know you have choices for a meal but if you are in the Capitol Mall area, please stop by and support an Oregon entrepreneur.

You can follow the colorful banners downstairs to the Café. Hope to see you soon.
2018 SWEP is Coming!

We have officially kicked off SWEP (Summer Work Experience Program) 2018! Students and families have attended orientation and know what to expect for the summer program that begins in June. With two locations, one in Salem and one in Portland, youth from around Oregon will be leaving home and gaining work and independent living skills while tackling new adventures on the job and in the community.

If you are in Portland or Salem, be on the look-out for youth who are blind traveling around the community with their white cane while they go to and from work! Our next newsletter will feature all of the happenings from SWEP 2018.

These young adults are on the path to accomplish great things……watch this space to learn about their adventures!
For over 70 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 people’s 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 Tessa (pictured), success meant earning a license with the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and becoming a valuable member of a solid community of entrepreneurs who are blind.

For the past 12 years, she has run “Tessa’s Coffee Corner” in a county building in SE Portland. This opportunity to run her own business and the income it has provided has allowed her to further her education and become a homeowner.