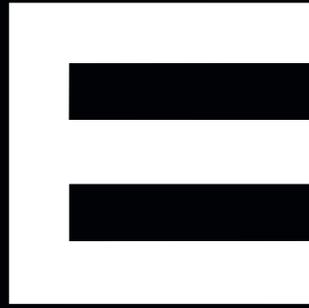
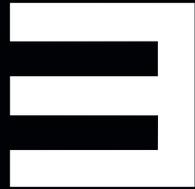


EDUCATE  
ENCOURAGE



ENGAGE  
ENTRUST



# 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired

The mission of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is to promote the dignity and independence of people in Wisconsin who are blind or visually impaired by providing services, advocating legislation, and educating the general public.

## Welcome!

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired (WCB&VI) moved forward with its mission to promote the dignity and independence of Wisconsin residents who are visually impaired or blind during 2014. We did this by: prioritizing the **educational** component of our mission; **encouraging** the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly to promote legislation to ensure the security and safety of people who are visually impaired; **engaging** with others through outreach and collaboration; connecting with established and prospective donors who wish to **entrust** their resources with the Council; and supporting individuals on their journey through significantly changing vision with education and resources about alternative skills, assistive devices, and technology, as well as encouraging their participation in Council programming and events.

WCB&VI is directed by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. For this reason, we achieve our most important goal: continuous, high-quality education and vision services to individuals with significant vision loss. We firmly engage with our target population because we are members of that community. WCB&VI staff and board are knowledgeable and dedicated, and look forward to accomplishing our mission to promote the dignity and independence of people who are visually impaired during 2015 and beyond.



*Rhonda Staats*

Rhonda Staats  
2014 Council President



*Loretta Himmelsbach*

Loretta Himmelsbach  
Executive Director

## 2014 Board of Directors

### Executive Committee:

**Rhonda Staats**

President  
La Crosse

**Gary Traynor**

1st Vice President  
Rice Lake

**Chris Richmond**

2nd Vice President  
Janesville

**Steve Johnson**

Secretary  
La Crosse

**Dan Sippel**

Treasurer  
Eau Claire

### Board Members:

**Nurudeen Amusa**

Milwaukee

**Kathleen Brockman**

Milwaukee

**Neil Ford**

Lodi

**Rosemary Goodrich**

Milwaukee

**Nona Graves**

West Allis

**Josephine Grove**

Evansville

**Tom Jeray**

Madison

**Richard Johnson**

Janesville

**Bruce Parkinson**

Two Rivers

**Chelsea Reilly**

Edgerton

# MISSION OF EDUCATION

▼ *Judith Rasmussen, Program Assistant, and Jean Kalscheur, Education and Vision Services Director, lead “Healthy Cooking Classes for People with Low Vision,” a cooking class at the Willy Street Co-Op in Middleton.*



**In** the summer of 2014, WCB&VI board and leadership staff held a strategic planning retreat where priorities were delineated for the years 2015 through 2018. The adoption of a policy governance model assisted board members and staff in identifying key strengths and improved the definition of the Council’s future. At this time it was discovered that all Council activities and services delivered are predicated on education: through outreach, of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, of legislators, of donors, of Board members and staff, and as a result of collaboration with like-minded organizations. As a result, staffing patterns and work flow were prioritized to maximize WCB&VI’s number one asset – the ability to encourage consumers, donors, and collaborators through our mission priority of education.

## **Key educational programs executed in 2014 include:**

- **“Saving Sight Symposium: Fighting Back Against Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Eye Disease”** was produced in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences.
- Three webinars were offered: **“Depression Among People with Vision Loss: Treatment and Coping Strategies”** presented by Chris Richmond, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Counselor, and Dr. Justin Gerstner, Dept. of Psychiatry UW School of Medicine & Public Health; **“Counting Sheep: Understanding Sleep Disorders”** presented by Dr. Larry Epstein, Program Director of Sleep Medicine Fellowship at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and Dr. Dewey McLin, Director of Medical Science Liaisons at Vanda Pharmaceuticals; and **“Adaptive Products for People with Vision Loss”** presented by WCB&VI staff.
- **“Take Your Pills, Safely!”** focused on educating pharmacists in Dane and Iowa counties with tips for working with consumers who are blind or visually impaired. Additional programs on medication management were presented to residents in Iowa county. A booklet on this subject was distributed in Brown, Dane, Iowa, Fond du Lac, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Racine, St. Croix, Vilas, and Wood counties.
- **Stepping On**, an evidence-based program proven to reduce falls in older people, includes a segment on vision, balance and fall prevention. Staff presented this segment for classes in Columbia, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, Lafayette, Rock, and Waukesha counties.
- **Wisconsin Reads**, a UW-Madison Freshman Reading program, had students reading a book about a man’s experience with vision loss entitled *Cockeyed* by Ryan Knighton. Council members, staff and friends participated with UW students in an experiential learning lab and panel discussion on living with vision loss.
- **“Healthy Cooking Classes for People with Low Vision”** was held at Willy Street Co-Op in Middleton. Dr. Julie Mares from the UW Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences discussed eating wise for healthy eyes. WCB&VI staff members guided participants as they learned food preparation techniques with and without adaptive devices.

# ENCOURAGING ADVOCACY

▼ (from left to right) Council board members Rhonda Staats, Dan Sippl, and Gary Traynor, along with past-President Chris Zenchenko, spend time at the Wisconsin State Capitol speaking on behalf of the blind and visually impaired community with state representatives during the Council's 2014 Legislative Day.



**Initiation** and support of legislation to improve the security and safety of people who are blind and visually impaired has been a vital component of WCB&VI's mission since its inception. Because 2014 was an election year, the Council sent information packets to all candidates running for state office. WCB&VI board members and staff remain available to serve as a resource, and provide lawmakers with the information they may need regarding issues important to people who are visually impaired.

Last year, the Council focused its legislative efforts centered on what was called the Omnibus Bill. This bill draft included sections on pedestrian safety, way-finding, the white cane law, accessible web content and signage, housing discrimination, and guide dog updates to bring Wisconsin laws to ADA standards and to clarify the definition and nondiscrimination policies regarding service dogs.

## 2014 Program Statistics



**9,930** The number of people served by the Council in 2014



**2,151** The number of customers in the Sharper Vision Store



**25,511** The number of unique visitors to the Council website

# ENGAGING THROUGH OUTREACH

▼ *The Council's recreation committee hosted its first-ever canoe trip in Trego, Wisconsin as a way to bring the blind and visually impaired community together for a fun outdoor adventure.*



**The** adoption of a policy governance model enabled the WCB&VI board and leadership staff to better recognize the importance and benefits of outreach. The Council will touch a greater number of people's lives through the cultivation of collaboration with others. Toward this end, the Council is focused on building relationships with groups with a similar mission in mind. Productive relationships currently exist with several groups, including Wisconsin Lions Clubs and the Wisconsin Bike Federation. Outreach is critical for connecting with potential volunteers and to promote a culture of philanthropy. Additionally, outreach remains critical to the recruitment of those individuals who may serve on the board or on the committees that direct the Council's activities.

**2014 outreach efforts include a great variety of social and educational events and activities.** For the very first time ever and with great success, the Council's recreation committee hosted a canoe trip in Trego, WI. Another popular outdoor activity was Ride the Drive where participants rode tandem bicycles with the help of sighted guides through the streets of downtown Madison. Arts and culture were highlighted through the Council's sponsorship of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's Gallery Night and "Bloomsday" narration events. The annual scholarship and awards luncheon events each celebrated successes of both talented students and inspiring adults. The Appleton "Dining in the Dark" event, as well as the Edgerton Euchre Tournament provided an engaging experience along with some fun. The Council's many educational presentations, including the three statewide webinars, Stepping On events, cooking classes and specially requested programs, provided opportunities to branch out to individuals in the communities in which they live.



**1,216** The number of people who received individual support through assistive technology training, in-home vision rehabilitation visits, low vision evaluations, orientation and mobility training and free white canes



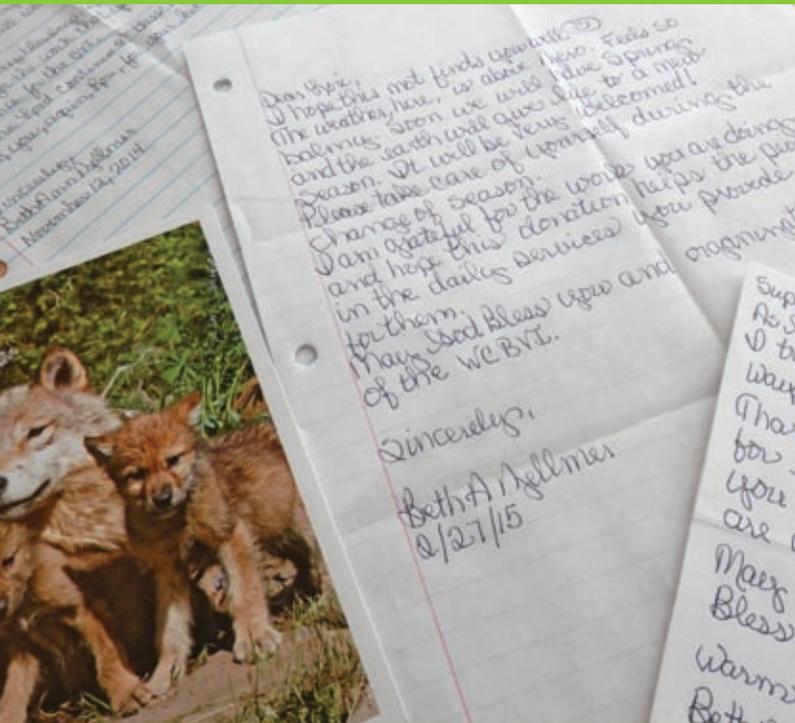
**6,563** The number of people who attended Council-sponsored seminars, programs and presentations



**2,478** The number of volunteer hours donated by friends and supporters for special events, mailings, meetings, publications, committee work, and outreach

# ENTRUSTING RESOURCES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

▼ *Beth Ann Zellmer's beautiful penmanship adorns the letters she sends to Fund Development Director Lori Werbeckes with each gift she mails to the Council.*



**Navy** veteran, Beth Ann Zellmer, learned of the Council through a staff member at the courthouse in Crandon, Wisconsin. “I did volunteer work for the County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO). She was visually impaired and I could help her by delivering messages throughout the courthouse and doing some office work,” recalls Beth Ann. The CVSO was using a larger keyboard and computer screen which were purchased at the Council.

The volunteer position ended a year later when the CVSO retired, but the connection to the Council continues today.

Beth Ann knows her gifts to the Council are appreciated and she knows how the money is being used. “It makes me so happy to know that what I give goes back and is being used solely for the purpose of helping individuals who are blind and visually impaired,” said Beth Ann.

Beth Ann and husband, Harold, live in rural Crandon with their chickens, geese, cat and bees. “This is God’s country,” Beth Ann declares. “We thank the Lord every day for all the blessings He’s given us.”

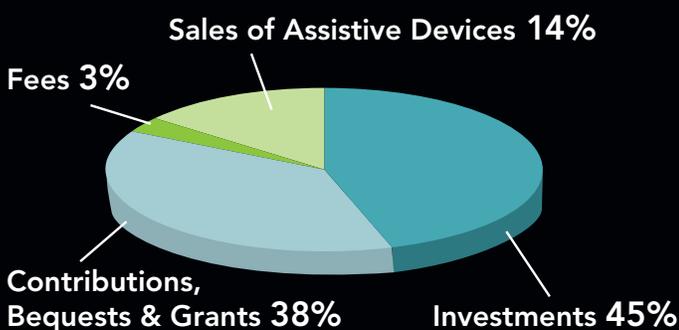
Notes handwritten by Beth Ann accompany each gift to the Council. “I look forward to opening her letters,” says Lori Werbeckes, Council staff member. “It’s such a pleasure to read her notes. Each one shows Beth Ann’s positive attitude and generosity.”

About the Council, Beth Ann says, “I trust your organization and I tell others about you so they will donate, too!”

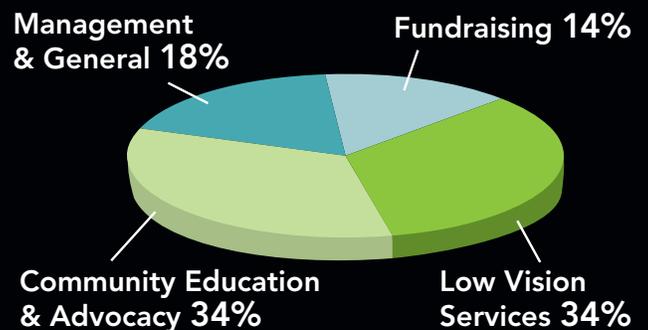
**Thank you, Beth Ann, for your enthusiasm and support!**

## Financials

**2014 Total Revenue: \$1,007,213**



**2014 Expenses: \$1,199,779**



The accompanying condensed financial data and graphical presentations as of and for the year ended December 31, 2014 were derived from the consolidated statements which were audited by Smith & Gesteland, LLP. The data and graphical presentations should be read in conjunction with the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired’s consolidated financial statements and the auditor’s report. Complete copies of these statements are available upon request.

# GROWING OUR LEGACY CIRCLE

## LEGACY CIRCLE

OF THE WISCONSIN  
COUNCIL OF THE BLIND  
& VISUALLY IMPAIRED

**For** more than 60 years, estate gifts to the Council have enabled us to help people with vision loss adjust and adapt to their changing vision. The impact of legacy gifts lives on for years into the future. A gift from your estate promises future generations that the Council's services, educational events, and advocacy will be there for them!

We invite you to join the Legacy Circle by including the Council in your will or by designating the Council as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy, IRA, annuity or other retirement plan. There are many options that allow you to provide for your heirs while still ensuring a gift to your favorite charity. More information can be found on our website at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org) or by calling Lori at 608-237-8114.

### **Thank you to members of the Legacy Circle:**

Anonymous  
Helen Bewick  
Kathleen Brockman  
Ray Cubberly  
Steven Johnson  
Ester Lovelace  
Stan Nelson  
Arnold and Alice Tucker  
Scott and Beverly Verhage  
Chris and Theresa Zenchenko

### **In 2014, we gratefully received bequests from:**

Marion and Albert Deppeler  
Gertrude Gebhardt  
Louis Haas  
Harvey Hansen  
Emil Hunkel  
Claremont Jackson  
Jean Ollis  
Arnold Van Bogart  
Linda Voeks

### **We received gifts in memory of:**

Melvin Christel  
Joan Conrad  
John B. Davis, MD  
John Dufek  
Lorean Gifford  
Helen Harris  
Beverly Kenworthy  
George Kolar  
Kenneth Lengling  
Jean McNary  
Beverly Patty  
John Reusser  
Olive Roberts  
Magda Schultz  
Edward Spletter  
Jerry Vogt  
Veta Wichman

### **Grant funding and sponsorships were received from:**

Alliant Energy Foundation  
American Family Mutual Insurance Co.  
Anonymous  
Associated Bank  
Community First Credit Union  
Courtier Foundation  
The Evjue Foundation, Inc., the charitable arm of *The Capital Times*  
Greater Milwaukee Foundation:

- Carl and Alma S. Greilach Fund
- Catherine and Walter Lindsay Foundation
- William R. and Lois J. Phillips Fund

Gary Goyke and Associates LS & S  
Madison Gas & Electric Foundation  
Mattingly Low Vision  
Milwaukee Irish Fest Foundation  
National Guardian Life Insurance Co.  
Smith & Gesteland  
ThedaCare  
The Vogel Foundation

**Thank you to the many individuals, service organizations and businesses that supported the work of the Council in 2014. The names of these generous folks are listed on our website at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org).**



**Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired**

754 Williamson Street  
Madison, WI 53703-3546

(608) 255-1166  
Toll Free 1-800-783-5213  
Sharper Vision Store (608) 237-8100

[info@wcblind.org](mailto:info>wcblind.org)

[www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org)

