



Greetings from CEO/Executive Director Denise Jess!



CEO/Executive Director Denise Jess

I recently had the privilege of spending four days with other CEOs from agencies serving those who are blind or visually impaired from around the country. As we introduced ourselves, many highlighted the age of their organizations; 40 years, 60 years, 100 years. I experienced a swell of pride, when introducing the Council, reflecting on our 65th anniversary of service, our rich and unique history, the strength of our current board and staff and the ripe potential of our future.

As I moved through those four days, forging new relationships, based on shared interests and mutual support, I further contemplated how anniversaries

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Who We Are

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

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are based on positive and productive relationships. The original 19 directors of the Council certainly understood this as they brought together other agencies to form a strong voice for the people of Wisconsin who are blind or visually impaired. A cornerstone of the Council's relationships with people served, donors, legislators and other organizations, has been based on integrity and uncompromising respect.

Today, we are called to continue to nurture these relationships, while cultivating even more diverse ones to fulfill our mission of service. As I approach my first anniversary of being on staff, I'm pleased to see us actively engaged in board recruitment of diverse candidates, including extending an invitation to up to three sighted people; people with a deep connection to blindness and visual impairment. Increased diversity on the board offers a valuable perspective and connections to help us grow. We continue to place much value on our relationships with the array of statewide and national organizations, serving our visually impaired communities, volunteer service organizations like Lions Clubs and our compassionate donors.

Our Vision

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired will be the premier organization serving people who are blind and visually impaired statewide. Through internal excellence and effective collaboration with other organizations we will:

- Establish a statewide presence in Wisconsin with a focus on underserved areas and population
- Facilitate comprehensive education and training for consumers, professionals, and the public
- Increase opportunities for training and preparation related to meaningful employment among people who are blind and visually impaired, and
- Act as a link to services, advocacy, technology, and information promoting the independence and enhanced quality of life of people who are blind and visually impaired and their families

We continue to explore our existing relationships to discover new ways to bring mutual benefit to all involved. These include Community Shares of Wisconsin. CSW is a member-based philanthropic organization dedicated to creating a more fair

Our Values

Inclusivity, uncompromising respect and integrity are the core values that guide the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired in fulfilling our mission and vision in serving the greater blind and visually impaired community statewide, while fostering long-term relationships with our partners, sister organizations, donors, policy-makers and the general public. Our values also guide the development of our goals, policies and procedures as well as influence our relationships between and among our Board of Directors and Staff.

Inclusivity — As people who are blind or visually impaired, we understand the experiences of being in a minority group and at times face adversity or discrimination. Therefore, the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired affirms our commitment to actively seek and welcome diverse people, experiences and perspectives and to foster inclusivity. We affirm that practicing inclusivity creates opportunities for greater innovation, sustainability and mission-focus,

responsive and person-centered programs and services.

Uncompromising Respect — We affirm the dignity and worth of all individuals and groups in how we treat each other, even in times of disagreement and conflict. We acknowledge and affirm all people traveling with us on this life journey of blindness or visual impairment, including those facing rapidly changing vision. We further recognize that each individual and family must take their own path on this journey in an atmosphere of genuine support and compassion, allowing for constructive feedback, growth-centered risk-taking and creativity.

Integrity — We affirm our unfailing integrity in all individual and organizational actions in stewardship of the Council's precious human, financial and capital resources. Our goal is to say what we do and do what we say, both within the organization and outside of it, which we exemplify by the highest standards of ethics, honesty and trustworthiness as we live our mission.

and just world and preserving the environment. Relationships with CSW help us in our fund development and have wonderful potential to connect us with groups serving people of color, people who are economically compromised and other

individuals or groups who may benefit from Council services while helping us spread the word of our mission. Through our relationship with CSW, the Council has just been invited onto the Dignity of Work Coalition, dedicated to removing barriers to

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Upcoming Events

Sharper Vision Store Grand Re-Opening and Council Open House

When: Thursday, July 13

Where: WCBVI Office –
754 Williamson Street, Madison

Time: 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Join the Council staff and board in celebrating the Grand Re-Opening of our Sharper Vision Store following months of renovations! We will also be offering office tours and birthday cake as we celebrate our 65th anniversary in 2017.

Dining in the Dark

When: Tuesday, August 22

Where: GingeRootz Asian Grill -
2920 N. Ballard Road, Appleton

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Dining in the Dark allows guests an opportunity to experience dining on a multi-course meal without using their sight. Advance reservations are required and can be made by calling GingeRootz at **920-738-9688** or by emailing **info@gingerrootz.com**.

Fall Gallery Night

When: Friday, October 6

Where: WCBVI Office -
754 Williamson Street, Madison

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Join the Council as we participate once again in the annual Fall Gallery Night coordinated by the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. We will feature artists that are visually impaired with an array of unique talents and who create works for purchase. Enjoy light refreshments, conversation and music!

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work for disenfranchised groups.

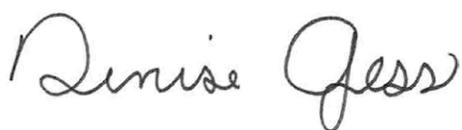
We continue to foster and strengthen our relationship with eye care professionals through the University of Wisconsin Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Services, the McPherson Eye Research Institute and the William S. Middleton Veterans Hospital. Through various projects and initiatives, we strive to provide a stronger continuum of care, especially with those experiencing changing vision due to injury, disease and age-related changes.

New relationships are exciting too! As a result of the Sierra Club as tenants in our building, we've grown to understand our shared needs related to public transportation alternatives statewide. Through this relationship, the Council is now represented on the newly formed Transportation Equity Coalition, along with several justice and equity organizations, those with environmental interests and the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups. This coalition is gaining momentum, with hosting a transit summit in Milwaukee in December, presenting transit as an equity issue at a recent conference at the University and various media opportunities, as well as sponsoring an upcoming fall conference.

Our relationship with a new public affairs firm, Blumenfeld and Associates, opens doors to new relationships with legislators and state agency representatives, while attending to previous ones.

I invite each of you to help be a relationship builder for the Council. How has the Council benefited you over the years? What excites you about our work? Who can you share this with in your circles of influence? Who might you recommend to serve on a committee or on the board itself? Would you consider becoming a writer for The Outlook from Here blog or know someone who'd be an excellent contributor? Are you interested in volunteering? Keep a lookout for more information to come about our efforts to revitalize the Council's volunteer program.

While it is said that it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a strong and engaged community to nurture an organization. Thank you to each of you who have helped and continue to help build a strong, vibrant Council, dedicated to promoting the dignity and independence of the people of Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired.



White Cane Policy

Any Wisconsin resident who is blind or visually impaired may be eligible for one free white cane every 24 months. If you are a first-time cane user and not listed in our database, you are eligible to receive an additional back-up cane within the first two years of receiving your first one at half the retail cost. Available canes include the Ambutech adjustable support cane, Ambutech folding mobility cane and Ambutech folding ID cane.

You may be eligible if your vision is less than 20/70. According to Wisconsin State Statute 47.01 and the United States Code, 42 USC 1382 c(a)(2), legal blindness is defined as central visual acuity not greater than 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses or a visual field that subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees. Call **1-800-783-5213** or **608-255-1166** to learn more.

2017 Officers

Chair: Chris Richmond

1st Vice President:
Annika Konrad

2nd Vice President:
Steve Johnson

Secretary: Rhonda Staats

Treasurer:
Kathleen Brockman

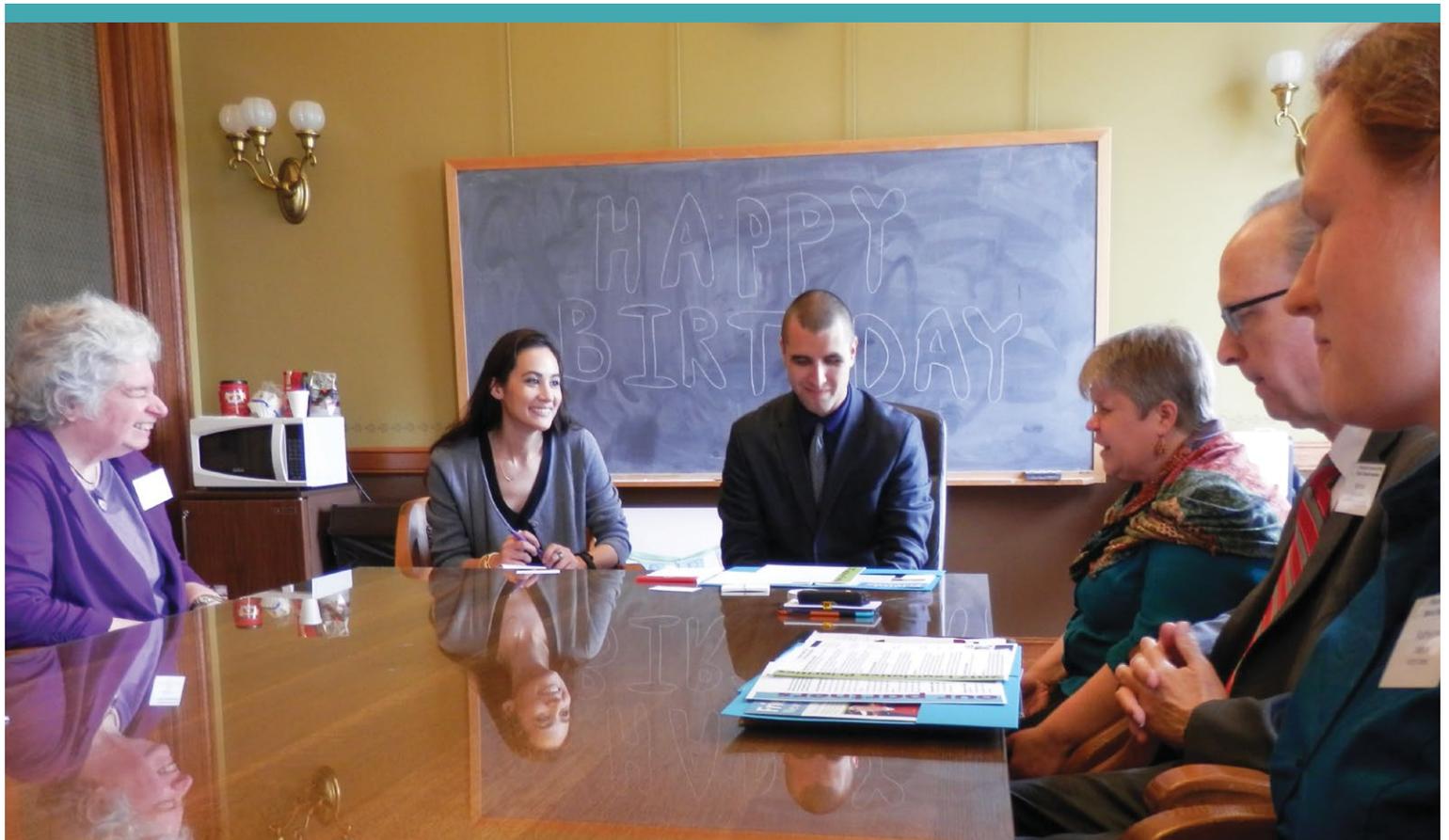
Five Legislative Priorities Established for 2017

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired was founded in October 1952 with the principle of carrying out legislative advocacy on behalf of blind and visually impaired Wisconsin residents. In late September 2016, the Legislative Committee determined the Council's current legislative priorities, with the Board agreeing upon them at its November meeting. These priorities unify all individuals involved with Council legislative

efforts in making requests for increased funding and services, which enable us to participate equally as productive members of society.

1. Transportation

We advocate for and support legislation which provides additional funding to strengthen transit and transportation services to ensure that people with disabilities across the state can get where they need to go.



Rhonda Staats (far left) joins Denise Jess, Michael Blumenfeld and Katherine Watson in conversation with aids (center) from the office of Senate President Roger Roth (R – Appleton) during Legislative Day at the Wisconsin State Capitol on April 11th.

This priority is important because, without affordable, efficient and effective methods of transportation, visually impaired Wisconsinites cannot participate in other facets of the community, such as getting to work, school, or doctor's visits.

2. Employment

We advocate for and support legislation and initiatives to increase competitive employment for people with disabilities. This priority gives visually impaired people access to jobs which are satisfying and pay a living wage, allowing visually impaired people to participate in the economy and live as productive members of society.

3. Education

We advocate for and support legislation and investments in Wisconsin public schools. This priority is important because investments in public schools benefit all students, including students with disabilities.

4. Civil Rights/ADA

We advocate for and support legislation that prevents discrimination and promotes full community inclusion of people with disabilities. This initiative is important because it holds businesses and employers accountable when they discriminate, and informs them of best practices to prevent unintentional acts of

These priorities unify all individuals involved with Council legislative efforts in making requests for increased funding and services, which enable us to participate equally as productive members of society.

discrimination. Such legislation gives people with disabilities recourse and support when they encounter discriminatory actions, and promotes full community involvement.

5. Healthcare

We advocate for and support legislation that protects and strengthens health coverage for people with disabilities. Like all Wisconsin residents, people with disabilities need equal and affordable access to healthcare.

These priorities were first presented during Legislative Day on April 11, 2017 to state representatives in connection to the proposed 2017-2018 State Budget. All Council supporters are encouraged to feel empowered to take part in continuing and expanding the legislative conversation. Follow our publications and social media content for up-to-the-minute calls to action. ■

Office Undergoes Remodel to Provide Improved Experience for Customers and Staff

Imagine going into a store and being able to try products before buying them. This experience is one of the changes customers of the Sharper Vision Store will notice resulting from the Council's recent remodeling project.

"We want people to know how they will use our products in their homes," says Brent Perzentka, Store Manager. "We want them to be able to experience how the

products we sell will fit into their daily lives."

The remodeled store will feature living simulations set up as kitchen, bathroom basin, sewing table, living room and office environment. Adaptive products will be available for demonstration and customer use.

"The idea is to make the store an interactive educational experience,



Reception area before construction began in March.

as opposed to going into a normal retail store where you would just go in and buy something,” says Brent. “You can see how the product would work in your own environment before buying.”

The remodel will also feature a waiting area for clients of the Low Vision Eye Clinic, a clear line of sight and access to the wheelchair ramp, a bench in the vestibule for those waiting for rides, and a display featuring works created by visually impaired artists.

The renovations, which began on March 27 and concluded April 28, cost \$50,000. Barnett

The remodeled store will feature living simulations set up as kitchen, bathroom basin, sewing table, living room and office environment.

Architecture drew up the plans, and Bauer & Raether Builders, Inc. did the construction. Although the construction work is complete, it will be a few more weeks before the simulations and artwork are installed. An open house is scheduled to take place on July 13. Watch our publications and social media for further details! ■



Reception area after the completion of the project in late April.

Board Updates

Welcome New Board Members!

John Foulks — John works as a vendor in the Randolph-Sheppard program. He has been blind for 17 years, due to diabetes. He resides in Fond du Lac and is a big fan of rock and roll.

Troy Hergert — Troy has worked at Vision Forward in Milwaukee for 22 years. He lives in Milwaukee as well. He has less than 10 percent usable sight due to retinitis pigmentosa. Troy enjoys playing guitar, is a first-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and he likes to read sci-fi novels.

Michael Sallaway — Michael is the only sighted board member currently serving with the Council. He lives in Holmen and works as a Vocational and Rehabilitation Counselor for Native Americans and is a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Kelsey Tiradani — Kelsey is a teacher of the blind and visually impaired in the Madison School District. She first got involved with the Council when she was diagnosed with Stargardts disease 19 years ago. Her hobbies include staying active, going to the Union, and boating.

Farewell to Gary Goyke

After devoting more than 30 years of service, Gary Goyke decided to step away from his role as lobbyist with the Council in December 2016. Prior to his departure, Gary shared that the future of his career is more about transition rather than retirement. He plans to continue to work in public policy while living out his passion for helping others.

The Council celebrated Gary's long tenure at the February Board Meeting with a special breakfast reception. We wish him continued success and thank him for his support!

Welcome to Blumenfeld and Associates

For the past 30 years, Michael Blumenfeld has been running Blumenfeld and Associates as a non-

partisan government relations and public affairs firm. They have worked with dozens of organizations and businesses, primarily in the areas of healthcare, transportation, education, civil rights and discrimination. Their goal is to "successfully bridge the divide between their clients and state government."

"We are so incredibly excited to be working with Michael and his team," states CEO/Executive Director Denise Jess. "He will be a very important partner to work with in supporting our legislative committee."

All legislative questions and inquiries can be directed to Denise, who will then work with Michael and his team. Denise can be contacted at **djess@wcblind.org** or **608-237-8103**.

Speaking to Seniors Delivers Significant Educational Opportunity

The Council's Certified Low Vision Therapist Amy Wurf and Director of Education and Vision Services Jean Kalscheur give presentations to senior groups to provide education on age-related eye conditions as well as information about available

Council services. Presentations are often given to residents and staff at Senior/Independent Living Apartments, low vision support groups, and senior centers. Eye care professionals serving the aging population also have access to similar presentations.

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Jean Kalscheur presents a program to seniors at a Parkinson's Support Group meeting in January.

“We want to make people aware of the range of services the Council can provide to assist them in this journey, and that there are other resources for assistance available.”

–Amy Wurf

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“A diagnosis of a vision impairment can be overwhelming and people don’t always understand what the diagnosis means or what is available to them,” says Amy. “Sometimes just seeing what kind of light can help, or large playing cards, or a big button phone, or how to identify money helps them feel better and more in control. We also want to make people aware of the range of services the Council can provide to assist them in this journey, and that there are other resources for assistance available.”

Presentations typically consist of a PowerPoint on a projector screen, with large print handouts. Jean and Amy often bring along products for demonstration during the speech.

“People like it when I bring the vision loss simulation goggles with me,” says Jean. “The idea is to make the presentations as

interactive as possible. If it’s a small enough group, we’ll take a more discussion-based, question-and-answer approach. Pictures are helpful in getting our points across, too.”

“Sometimes we are asked to speak to groups that are open to the public, and some groups are only for residents of a facility or existing members of a support group,” Amy says.

To learn more about vision services or to schedule a presentation for your group, call the Council at **(608) 255-1166**. Ask to speak to either Gale Hellpap or Jean Kalscheur. After attending a presentation, you will be equipped to help yourself or your loved-ones with potential eye problems, and expose the myths and misconceptions people have about their aging eyes. ■

Council to Hire Assistive Technology Service Provider

This is a 32 hour/week position based at the Council's office, located in Madison. Primary responsibilities include:

- Provide vision rehabilitation services that address an individual's visual, physical, cognitive, & psychosocial abilities related to training & integration of existing & emerging technologies.
- Assess, set goals & teach technology-related skills to adults with vision impairments.
- Develop on-going assistive technology training programs for small groups of adults with blindness & low vision.
- Market assessment & training opportunities to outside groups such as vocational rehabilitation programs & senior centers.
- Prepare & deliver presentations to community groups.
- Participate in activities & events sponsored by the Council.
- Provide telephone or in-person consultation to individuals for the acquisition of assistive technology devices.

To learn more, go to <http://wcblind.org/who-we-are/employment-opportunities>.

Staff Updates

Adam Grassnickle — Adam joined the Council in March of 2017 as a program assistant. Prior to joining WCBVI, he attended UW-Whitewater where he studied history and politics. As program assistant, he assists with IT, staffing the front desk, store assistance, and coordinating events.

Katherine Watson — Katherine is currently a contracted writer working with the Marketing and Community Relations Department. She started working with the Council in February and her contract will extend through the summer. Katherine's work includes writing for all Council publications (On Sight, Friends and Courier), as well as projects as assigned (press releases, social media and promotional materials).

We said farewell to three staff members earlier this year. Publications and Social Media Writer **Kevin Damask** moved on to focus on his full time job in New Lisbon. Program Assistant **Tim Davis** is now operating a full time vending business with the Business Enterprise Program. Program Assistant **Chad Nelson** has moved to Minneapolis, MN to participate in the comprehensive programs offered by Blind, Inc.

Community Connections

Madison Veteran Low Vision Support Group

When: 4th Thursday of each month through November

Where: First Unitarian Society of Madison – 900 University Bay Dr

Time: 10:00 a.m.

The purpose of the group is to offer a place for visually impaired veterans to meet with each other, find resources available and discuss issues related to vision loss. There is no cost to attend, and refreshments will be provided. To attend, please contact Amy Wurf at **608-237-8107** or **awurf@wcbblind.org**.

Eau Claire VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) Support Group

When: 2nd Wednesday of each month

Where: St. John's Housing Dining Room — 815 Chapin St., Eau Claire (1 block from Perkins)

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The Eau Claire VIP Support Group is a wonderful emotional support and educational group serving low vision, people who are blind or visually impaired in the Chippewa Valley area.

Family members and caregivers are welcome to attend as well. For questions or additional information, contact Norene at **715-835-3496** or **nstrappa@sbcglobal.net**.

Sun Prairie VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) Support Group

When: 2nd Wednesday of each month

Where: Colonial Club, 301 Blankenheim Lane, Sun Prairie

Time: 1:00 p.m.

The Sun Prairie VIP Support Group meets to discuss vision, the aging eye and eye disorders. All are welcome to come and discuss personal and visual concerns. Family members and caregivers of those with visual impairments are encouraged to attend as well. Presentations by professional providers of eye care and various resources will be offered. There is no charge for attendance and you need not be a member of the Colonial Club to join in these meetings. For questions or further information contact facilitator Arnold Tucker, RPh., Retired at **608-333-7654** or **alnarnie@gmail.com**.

Do you participate in a community group or activity that should be shared in this newsletter? If so, contact Gale Hellpap, Director of Community Relations and Marketing, for more details! Gale can be contacted at 608-237-8113 or ghellpap@wcbblind.org.

White Cane Appeal

Reading through these pages, I hope you sense the passion and commitment we feel for the important mission of the Council.

Our legislative priorities stem from the most basic needs of our clients and customers. The store revitalization will create interactive areas for experimenting with new products. We provide educational opportunities for those with vision loss and those who are sighted.

New and current board members embrace these ideals and are excited to move the Council forward.

As a donor, or someone who is considering a gift, we want you to see that your contributions are being used effectively. Your gift will make an impact for someone who may be having a difficult time adjusting to a new way of life due to vision loss.

Know that your gift to the White Cane Fund will help us put over 500 canes into the hands of people who will use them for identification, to get to work or school, to walk to their neighbor's house, or to travel to other parts of the world.

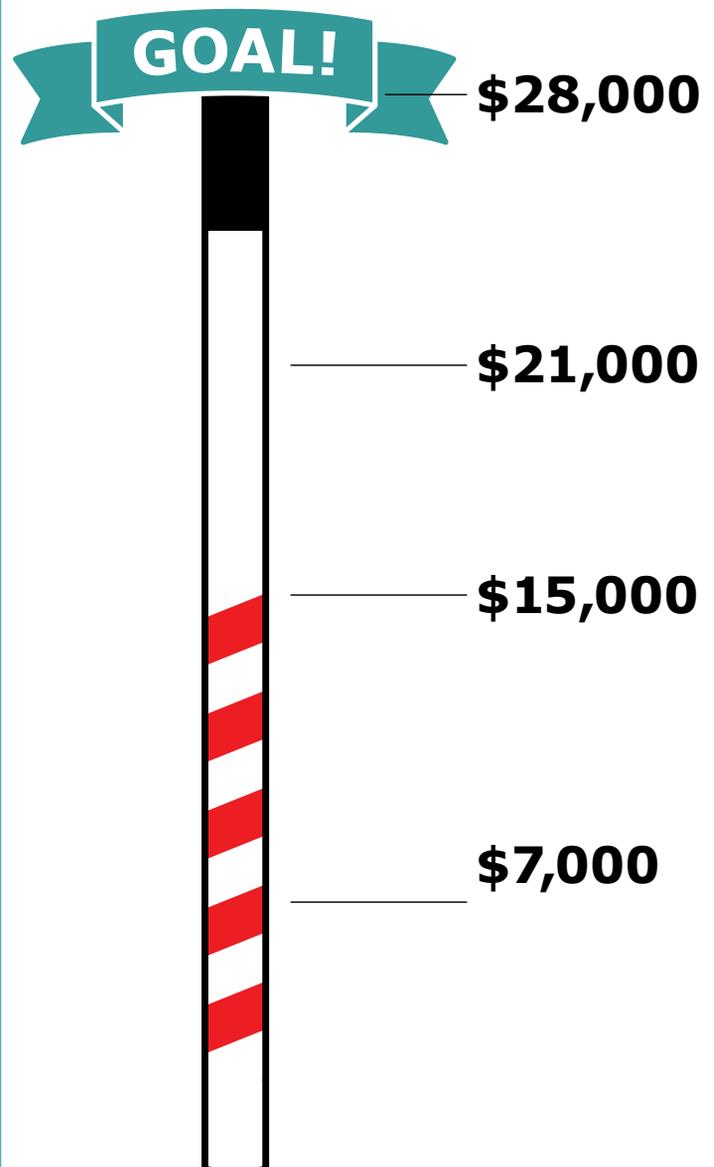
We are over half way to our goal of \$28,000! Please consider

sending a gift in the enclosed envelope or doing so online at www.wcblind.org.

Your financial support is needed and appreciated! Thank you! ■



Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired





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

754 Williamson Street
Madison, WI 53703

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Courier format: What's best for you?

This newsletter is also available in on CD, in Braille, or via email. If you would prefer to receive the Courier in one of these other formats, please contact Ray Cubberly at **608-237-8109** or **rcubberly@wcblind.org**.

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Do you have exciting news or an update you would like to share with our readers? We would love to share your story! Contact Gale Hellpap, Director of Community Relations and Marketing, to discuss further — 608-237-8113 or ghellpap@wcblind.org.