



## Welcome Jim Denham, Assistive Technology Specialist



Jim Denham,  
Assistive Technology Specialist

The Council is delighted to welcome Assistive Technology Specialist, Jim Denham, to our staff. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems and a minor in Business from St. Norbert College, and is JAWS Certified by Freedom Scientific.

Although Jim is a Janesville, Wisconsin native, he lived out-of-state for two decades. Jim previously worked as the National Program Associate in technology at the American Foundation for the Blind and has also written for their technology magazine, "AccessWorld." For the past ten years, Jim served as Director of Assistive Technology at the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston.

**continued on page 2**

### Who We Are

The mission of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired is to promote the dignity and empowerment of people in Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired by providing services, advocating legislation, and educating the general public. Inclusivity, uncompromising respect and integrity are our core values as an organization.

## Our Vision

**continued from page 1**

Jean Kalscheur, Director of Education and Vision Services, says she is looking forward to having Jim on board because he will assist the Council in providing a variety of technology services to clients.

“It has become necessary, with the growth of options, mainstream equipment, and apps, to hire someone to keep up with technology trends and to make sure people in the community could more readily learn about their options,” says Jean. “Jim will be training clients to operate their assistive technology devices. He brings a lot of knowledge and experience to the table, and we’re excited to have him on board.”

Jim shares that he applied for the Assistive Technology Specialist position with the Council because it offered him the opportunity to work directly with people that wish to accomplish their technology goals.

“One of my passions has always been helping individuals who are blind or visually impaired make full use of the available assistive technology tools in order to accomplish everyday tasks in an efficient and effective manner,” Jim states. “I find this type of work rewarding, and am thrilled when one of my clients is able to use the skills and techniques I have taught them in order to accomplish a task which was previously unobtainable.”

In his free time, Jim enjoys swimming, playing Euchre, and reading. His favorite novel of all time is “A Painted House” by John Grisham. Jim also likes trying out new recipes with his wife, and his favorite food to grill is steak. ■

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

# Trends in Blind and Visually Impaired Agencies Nationwide Align with Council's Vision Services Offerings

In the first quarter of 2017, the Council participated in a survey conducted by VisionServe Alliance (VSA), which compared current trends among member agencies serving older adults who are blind or visually impaired. VSA is a national consortium of executive directors and CEOs of nonprofit organizations helping people with vision loss. VSA functions as a network for these agencies to come together, share ideas and assist each other in improving services for clients.

Over the past three years, the majority of VSA agencies surveyed noted an increase in the number of referrals of older clients who are blind or visually impaired. The Council's number of referrals through 2016 has remained fairly consistent.

"The aging population losing vision is increasing and will continue to increase," notes Denise Jess, CEO/Executive Director. "The need for vision services is very relevant, especially as the baby boomer population ages."

The national survey results showed that the ranking of sources for referrals, from greatest to least, come by way of an ophthalmologist or another doctor, family member, and self-referral, respectively. According to Council 2016 statistics, referrals from families ranked higher than those provided by other health care agencies, and self-referral ranks lower than it does in other visual impairment-related nonprofit agencies.

**continued on page 11**

## 2017 Officers

Chair:  
Chris Richmond

1st Vice President:  
Annika Konrad

Secretary:  
Rhonda Staats

2nd Vice President:  
Steve Johnson

Treasurer:  
Kathleen Brockman

## Upcoming Events

### An Overview of Amazon Echo and Google Home

**When:** Wednesday, December 6

**Where:** WCBVI Office –  
754 Williamson Street, Madison

**Time:** 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Join Jim Denham, Assistive Technology Specialist, as he presents an overview of the Amazon Echo and Google Home. Learn what each of these products can do, the models available and the differences between them. Jim will demonstrate products from both companies, so you can learn which device is right for you, a friend or family member.

To register or learn more about workshops Jim will be hosting in 2018, go to <http://wcblind.org>. For questions or more information, contact Jim at [jdenham@wcblind.org](mailto:jdenham@wcblind.org) or **608-237-8104**.



### The Big Share

**When:** Tuesday, March 6

**Where:** Online –  
[www.thebigshare.org](http://www.thebigshare.org)

**Time:** 12:00 a.m. – 11:59 p.m.

The Big Share is an online day of giving hosted by Community Shares of Wisconsin for nearly 70 local nonprofits. It is a fun, easy and flexible way to donate to and to learn more about organizations making a difference in our community. To learn more, visit <https://www.thebigshare.org/>.

## Letter from the Board Chair



Chris  
Richmond

As I look back on another year that has come and gone so quickly, I am reflective upon what the Council has accomplished in the past twelve months.

One of our greatest accomplishments in 2017 was celebrating 65 years of providing advocacy, education, and services to blind and visually impaired persons throughout the state of Wisconsin. Along with the celebration of our 65th birthday and store reopening, I am proud of our participation in the "Big Share," another successful Fall Gallery Night, and the board's crafting of our strategic initiatives for the next three years.

I would like to take this moment to thank all of our highly qualified and dedicated staff, volunteers, and board members for making 2017 an exciting year for the Council. I would also like to recognize the Blinded Veterans Association of Wisconsin, the Lions Club International and local clubs, the UW Department of Ophthalmology and Visual

**continued on page 5**

## Updated: White Cane Safety Policy

Any Wisconsin resident who is blind or visually impaired in need of a new white cane is eligible for one free cane every 24 months. Our program does not receive any publicly funded money; all of our canes are provided through generous donations to our White Cane Program.

There are two exceptions as to our 24-month policy.

1.) Those who are under the age of eighteen, or have not yet graduated from high school (but still under the age of 21), may be eligible to receive a free white cane, or when the student has a rapid growth spurt, making the current cane no longer an appropriate length. When this occurs, the student's mobility instructor should send a recommendation to the Council requesting a new cane and its length.

2.) Individuals may be eligible to receive a replacement white cane at our discretion under special circumstances, such as a defective cane or damage to the cane that is not due to the user's error.

If you are a first-time cane user and not listed in our database, you are eligible to receive an additional backup 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.

### continued from page 4

Sciences, Community Shares of Wisconsin, and all of our other partners, vendors, friends, and clients. It is with the help of these individuals and groups that we continue to grow as an organization.

Finally, I would like to especially thank our donors, without whose financial support our work would not be possible.

Moving forward to 2018, I look forward to diving into the execution of our strategic plan, continuing to increase and expand our vision services outreach, and adding assistive technology to our range of services.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful holiday season!

*Christopher Richmond*

# Successful White Cane Day Includes Recognition from State Senator, Assemblyman and Madison Police Chief

A bipartisan White Cane Day proclamation, White Cane Law visibility on Madison Police Chief Koval's blog, and ideas for success moving forward highlight the Council's most recent involvement in promoting the White Cane Law.

Senator LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, one of the legislators visited on Legislative Day in April, presented the Council with a draft Senate White Cane Resolution. Council CEO/Executive Director Denise Jess suggested the possibility of a joint resolution with the Assembly. Representative David Steffen, R-Green Bay, championed the Assembly version, creating a bipartisan effort between the two houses. Several Assembly representatives and senators signed on as co-sponsors.

The Senate Joint Resolution SJR77 and the Assembly AJR80 were read on each floor on Thursday, November 2 and Tuesday, November 7. The list of signing legislators will be shared in the coming weeks. While a



Council staff gather for a group photo with Representative David Steffen (R – Green Bay) in the Assembly Parlor, located inside the Capitol Building.

formal thank you from the Council will be written, reaching out to any of your personal representatives with expressions of gratitude would be important in the relationship-building process.

You can read the proclamation here:  
**<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/proposals/ajr80.pdf>**.

Along with the proclamation in the Senate and Assembly, the Governor's office issued a White Cane Day Proclamation on October 18.

"We have been building relationships with new legislators as well as continuing to nurture ones with people we know to foster understanding of issues that are important to us," Denise states. "Through those conversations, legislators have expressed that they generally know little about White Cane Law, and are realizing the importance of pedestrian safety for everyone. Our conversations open up their curiosity to ask good questions. Receiving the Proclamation from a legislator first—instead of having to ask for one—is impactful because it shows our issues are on their radar and they recognize that The White Cane Law is important."

Along with the proclamation in the Senate and Assembly, the Governor's office issued a White Cane Day Proclamation on October 18.

We also had some excellent visibility regarding the White Cane Law featured on the blog of Madison Chief of Police Mike Koval:  
**<http://www.cityofmadison.com/police/chief/blog/?Id=12756>**.

In his post, Chief Koval also acknowledges the traffic study that Denise requested outside of the Council office, based on our concerns for the safety of staff, clients and visitors when attempting to cross Williamson Street. The statistics he cites from the traffic study are sobering, including the six cars that failed to stop for Denise while she was at the intersection with her cane.

We have detailed plans for 2018 to reach-out to police departments and the Department of Transportation to continue to educate the public about White Cane Safety and the law itself.

Thank you to staff for the incredible work that goes into all of these efforts. Thank you to the board for all of your support and to many of you individually who have helped with White Cane Safety issues in your communities. ■

# Holiday Gift Giving Ideas 2017



## **MOKO Dimmable Light - \$27.00**

MoKo Dimmable LED Desk Lamp, Portable with Rechargeable Battery, Dimmable, Touch Control, Adjustable Arm.

- Desktop LED lamp that is pleasant on the eyes with flicker-free lighting for your kids reading and studying at home or at school, creating warm and soft atmosphere.
- Touch-sensitive control dimmable Lamp, just touch your finger to adjust stepless brightness!
- Fully adjustable design, tilting arm (90 degree flexible) with 180 degree vertical adjustable lamp head give the perfect angle every time.
- Built in 1000mAh rechargeable Lithium Battery (Power Adapter is NOT INCLUDED). With over-voltage, over-charge and short circuit protection to ensure a safe charging experience. It can last lighting 3.5 hours (The strongest light) and 6 hours (The weakest light) in the state of full power, convenient for outdoor use at night.

**You'll find these and more new products in The Sharper Vision Store.** Shop online at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org) and click on the "Shop The Sharper Vision Store" button. Be sure to check out our free catalog! You don't have it? Call now and request one. **608-255-1166** or toll free **1-800-783-5213**.



## **Visolux Digital HD - 7" Hand-held Video Magnifier - \$595.00**

This advanced video magnifier features an extra-large 7" LCD screen with anti-glare coating, an HD camera, and built in stand. The device's unique Dynamic Line Scrolling feature allows the user to scroll side to side on the screen in higher magnification levels without having to move the device. The Visolux Digital HD's built-in HDMI and USB ports allow the user the option to transmit images directly to their computer and live stream to a television screen.

**Don't forget to order your 2018 Calendar!**





## Talking Atomic Clock with Outdoor Temperature - \$55.00

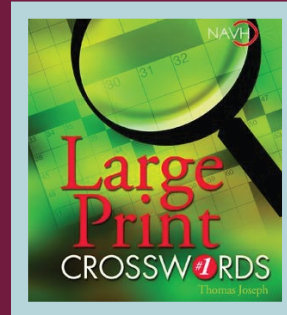
This stylish Atomic Alarm Clock has a wood grain design and can be a wonderful accent piece in any room of your house. This clock is self-setting, so you don't have to worry about resetting at every battery change or daylight savings. Provides verbal feedback during the setup process and speaks the time, date, and indoor and outdoor temperature. With accurate time and temperature offered in an easy to hear package, this clock is perfect for low vision and hard of hearing users.



## Flexi-Vision Floor Lamp - \$145.00

The 20 watt Daylight™ energy saving bulb (285 watt equivalent) reduces glare and improves contrast, allowing you to read and write for longer periods in optimal comfort. It has a multi-swivel system and flexible arm so that you can direct the light exactly where you need it. Raise or lower the height of the lamp, with the centrally located wing nut, as needed while sitting comfortably on your couch or easy chair. The low heat shade and anti-trip cord holders further contribute to the safety and effectiveness of this lamp.

# Stocking Stuffers



Large Print Crossword Book - \$15.00



Super Jumbo Playing Cards - \$3.50



LED 3x or 5x Pocket Slide Magnifier - \$17.50

Compact 5x Mirror - \$7.50



# Board Updates

## Tribute to Bruce Parkinson and Nona Graves

After many years of dedicated service to the Council, Bruce Parkinson and Nona Graves will be leaving the Board of Directors at the end of 2017.

### Bruce Parkinson

Bruce has been on the Board since 2000. He has served on the Council Courier, Legislative, Nominating, and Personnel Committees. He is also Chair of the Scholarship Committee and intends to remain on the committee as a volunteer.

“Bruce brought the perspective of a public school teacher and was very dedicated to the scholarship program,” notes Board Secretary Rhonda Staats. “When he became Board President in 2004, he started a process of change that made board workings more transparent. He always said, ‘If an organization doesn’t grow and change, it’s dead.’”



Bruce shares that it is his association with the board members he appreciates most.

“They’re a marvelous group of intelligent and caring people,” shares Bruce. “And I will miss them.”

### Nona Graves

Nona has been involved with the Council since its inception in 1952. Her most recent tenure on the Board began in 2002. She has served on the Awards, Bylaws, Fund Development, Nominating, and Personnel Committees. Board members often say Nona informally served as the Board’s historian.

“Whenever I’m in doubt about something or need advice, I approach Nona,” states Board Chair Chris Richmond. “Nona has the ability to voice her opinions even when her views run counter to the majority. She’s totally invested in the Council’s well-being, stability, and growth.”



Nona says she appreciated “working with a small group of people with a common concern and with a dedicated group of staff members.”

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“Thank you, Bruce and Nona, for your years of service to the Council,” proclaims CEO/Executive Director, Denise Jess. “Bruce, your clear thinking, kind heart and dedication to excellence have supported us moving forward to be a vibrant voice for the blind and visually impaired community. Nona, your wise advise and deep understanding of the Council’s history have supported us moving forward as well.”

We also wish to acknowledge Kathy Parkinson and Dennis Ameden for giving as much time to the Council as their spouses. Thank you for your dedication and commitment all these years!

## **continued from page 3**

The incidence of referrals coming from eye care professionals has dramatically increased on a national level as well as with Council.

Once a client has been referred to the Council, the Vision Services team works diligently to provide assistance and adaptive techniques with each person on an individual, case-by-case basis. The national survey lists five key areas of services desired by clients, of which the Council is aligned:

### **1.) Independent Living Skills:**

The Vision Services team works with clients within our facility, at their homes or in their workplaces to educate and inform them about techniques and equipment that will help them in their daily lives.

**2.) Low Vision Consultation:** Amy Wurf, the Council's Certified Low Vision Therapist, interviews, assesses visual acuity and demonstrates different techniques and products available in order to get a sense of the needs of each client. This individualized approach helps guarantee clients receive the services and assistance that will best empower them.

### **3.) Technology Training:**

In October 2017, the Council hired Jim Denham, Assistive Technology Specialist, to provide hands-on training and to answer client questions about available technology options.

### **4.) Recreation and Leisure:**

Our Sharper Vision Store features products such as games, crossword puzzle books and other items to ensure our clients can participate in activities for enjoyment and relaxation, no matter their degree of vision.

**5.) Orientation and Mobility:** The Council's Free White Cane program allows any Wisconsin resident who is blind or visually impaired in need of a new white cane to receive one free cane every 24 months. The Council also can provide recommendations to those looking for Orientation and Mobility trainers throughout the state.

"Keeping track of current vision services trends enables us to better assess and meet the needs of our clients," says Jean Kalscheur, Director of Education and Vision Services. "It is also important to gather data about what is occurring nationally. We want to share information and help other agencies serve their clients effectively as well." ■

# Council Extends Education to Other Local Community Groups Regarding Accessibility

In 2017, the Council participated in several mutually beneficial conversations that made a direct impact on the accessibility of businesses in the community. The UW Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Project Home, and The Beacon Homeless Day Shelter are three organizations in Madison that recently approached the Council requesting accessibility feedback and suggestions for their operations.

“It’s exciting that organizations are coming forward and asking us to give input,” says Denise Jess, CEO/Executive Director. “It shows that the needs of those who are blind and visually impaired are on people’s radars, and community leaders are motivated to learn and take action. When other organizations are asking us how to make their environments and processes more accessible, they are seeking to be more inclusive, and assisting them in doing so allows us to live out our core values of integrity, inclusivity and uncompromising respect.”



Since January, Denise has served as a member of the Patient-Centered Steering Committee with the UW Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. She shares that she is thrilled to have been invited to hold the

position because it gives her many opportunities to bring accessibility questions to the forefront. She will soon be doing a UW Health Eye Clinic walk-through with an optometrist and pediatric ophthalmologist to provide feedback on the accessibility of the 2880 University Avenue location in Madison.

“It’s wonderful to have doctors on the committee who care a great deal about accessibility and who want to learn more,” Denise states.

Project Home is a Madison-based organization that provides energy assistance funding, weatherization of homes, home repairs, and accessibility modifications to Dane and Green County residents. They serve the elderly and people with disabilities, in particular, to help them remain in their homes for as long as possible as they age. Project Home approached the Council in spring of 2017 to gain insight on how to provide greater accessibility in their written materials and business practices.



Jean Kalscheur, Director of Education and Vision Services, presented a staff in-service program for all client-serving employees. She discussed the definitions of terms such as "blind" and "visually impaired," and used the simulation goggles to give staff a hands-on understanding of what it is like to have vision loss.

Jean suggested ways to make documentation available to those who cannot read standard-sized print, using "magnification" and "voice over" on the iPad to enable clients to access forms and other documents independently. She taught staff how to serve as a scribe when clients are filling out paperwork and discussed the importance of asking what would be helpful to each person with a visual impairment individually. Human guide techniques were also demonstrated.

Jean recommended that staff empower clients to make decisions based on materials they can explore with senses other than sight.

"I encouraged the staff to give people tactile examples, such as tactile flooring or tile," explains Jean. "If people can feel the textures, it will give them a better idea of what they're putting in their home and empower them to make choices they will care about."

Along with Denise, Amy Wurf, Certified Low Vision Therapist, played an integral role in assisting The Beacon Homeless Day Shelter in providing a more accessible and welcoming environment for those who visit. Some of the implemented modifications include the use of high contrast and large print signs, universally designed bathrooms, and lighting that is bright, yet inviting. The computer monitors in the lab, where guests can conduct



**continued on page 14**

# Fund Development Updates

In summer of 2017, Council staff voted on our auction's new name—Vision for Tomorrow! The Vision for Tomorrow Online Auction was open for bids from November 9-15. We would like to thank all the area businesses that donated more than \$8,000 in items. Thank you as well to all bidders, both locally and across the country, who participated. The proceeds from the auction will go toward a braille embosser.

The Council received grants for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) unit and training. The Alliant Energy Foundation awarded us a \$1,300 Hometown Safety Grant, and the Shopko Foundation awarded us a grant of \$500. Grants included training for every Council staff member. CPR and AED training was provided by The American Red Cross on October 19.

Two "Dining in the Dark" events took place in the second half of the year. One was held at GingeRootz on Tuesday, August 22, in Appleton. The other took place at Vignette Dining Club on Saturday, September 30, in Fitchburg. Both events were sold out and raised \$2,500 for the Council.

## **continued from page 13**

job searches, work on résumés and practice computer skills, are big enough for those who use large print to see the screen.

"The Beacon was very open to any suggestions we could offer," states Amy. "Both Denise and I were impressed with how willing and interested they were to get our input. They really wanted to know how they could make their building more welcoming for people with visual impairments."

By equipping establishments to provide greater accessibility to customers and clients who are blind or visually impaired, the Council strengthens community partnerships with these organizations. We hope these organizations will now feel confident referring clients to the Council if they are in need of services.

The Council would like to thank these organizations for recognizing accessibility needs, reaching out to us for help, and applying many of our suggestions and feedback. It is by collaborations such as these that our communities become more welcoming, inclusive and accessible to all. ■

## Community Connections

### Lakeshore VIP Group, Manitowoc

**When:** Fourth Tuesday of the month

**Where:** Holiday House – 2818 Meadow Lane, Manitowoc, WI 54220

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

Transportation is available. Speakers focus on various subjects. This group open to the public. For questions or additional information, contact Claudia Halonen at **920-553-5424**.

### Lyla Clow VIP Support Group, Ashland

**When:** Second Wednesday of the month

**Where:** Ashland Senior Community Center, 400 Chapple Avenue, Ashland, WI 54806

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

Transportation is available. Speakers (Dr. Bennington, Ophthalmologist) and others, no specific focus, open to the public. Contact Rich Elliker at **715-798-3706** for more information.

### Visually Impaired Support Group, Tomah

**When:** Second Wednesday of the month

**Where:** Senior Citizens Center – 1002 Superior Avenue, Tomah, WI 54660

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Transportation available through senior bus service (Contact Delia). Various speakers dealing with vision loss or senior living.

For questions or further information, contact Elia Duncan, Director of Senior Center at **608-374-7476** or **[lindas.palmer@wisconsin.gov](mailto:lindas.palmer@wisconsin.gov)**.

To learn more about support groups in your community, check out our website at **[www.wcblind.org/low-vision-support-groups](http://www.wcblind.org/low-vision-support-groups)**.

Do you participate in a community group or activity that should be shared in this newsletter? If so, contact Gale Hellpap, Communications Director, for more details! Gale can be contacted at 608-237-8113 or [ghellpap@wcblind.org](mailto:ghellpap@wcblind.org).



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

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Madison, WI 53703

608-255-1166 • 800-783-5213  
www.wcblind.org

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND  
AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED  
POSTAL MANUAL PART 138

## Courier format: What's best for you?

This newsletter is also available in on CD, in Large Print, 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**; [rcubberly@wcblind.org](mailto:rcubberly@wcblind.org).

Please note: Due to processing, braille editions may be delivered 1-2 weeks following the large print edition.

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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, Communications Director, to discuss further — 608-237-8113 or [ghellpap@wcblind.org](mailto:ghellpap@wcblind.org).