



Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired

754 Williamson Street
Madison, WI 53703

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

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FALL 2016 Friends Newsletter



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Blind & Visually Impaired

Speaking about Changing Vision

Are you looking for an experienced, outgoing speaker who can talk about issues related to changing vision? The Council organizes a Speakers Bureau that consists of staff, board members, and friends of the Council who can speak about a variety of subjects related to vision. You can explore the list of topics on our website at www.wcblind.org/speakersbureau.

Contact our Director of Community Relations and Marketing Gale Hellpap at **608-237-8113** or by email at ghellpap@wcblind.org to learn more about our talented speakers and what they can offer your organization.



Stay Connected

Would you like to keep up with the Council's events, news, and current trends related to blindness or vision loss? We would love to send you "On Sight," our free, monthly e-newsletter. Please send an email to Justin Lemke at jlemke@wcblind.org or call **608-237-8119** to join our mailing list. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@TheCouncilWI), and find many resources at www.wcblind.org.

Finding Help and Increasing Independence Through Vision Services and Sharper Vision Store

For more than 30 years, Janet Sylvester has experienced problems with low vision due to myopic degeneration. It wasn't until recently that she happily discovered the many valuable resources provided by the Council's Vision Services Team.

Janet was delighted to learn that the Council offers services that help people with vision loss manage everyday tasks safely and independently.

Janet was first introduced to the Council about two years ago, when she purchased a talking clock from the Sharper Vision Store.

"I think that was about the best invention I've ever seen," she remarked. "I no longer have to keep asking my husband, 'What time is it?'"

In June of this year, Janet, a Cross Plains resident, attended an informational meeting at the Northwest Dane Senior Services Center. There, she met Education and Vision Services Director Jean Kalscheur and Low Vision Therapist Amy Wurf.

"I talked to both my sister, who has macular degeneration, and my brother-in-law, who has glaucoma, and they both came to the meeting," Janet recalls. "Jean and Amy showed us lots of resources, and that's how I became involved with the Council."

After the meeting, Janet had a thorough low vision evaluation with Amy and an in-home visit from Jean. Reading magazines is one of Janet's favorite pastimes, so Jean gave her a machine that allows her to listen to periodicals on tape. Jean

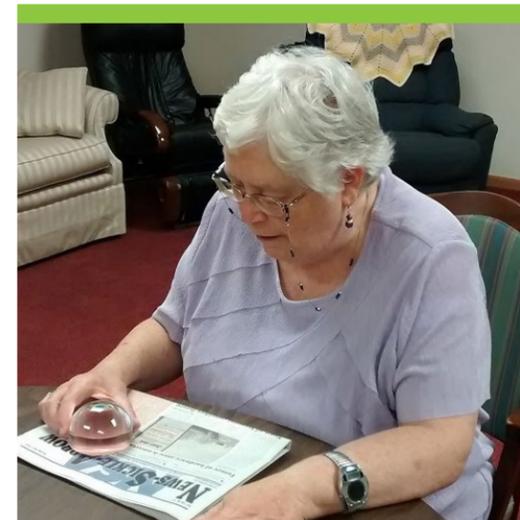
also provided a dollar bill reader, and she plans to set up an audio system that will help Janet read the local newspaper.

Janet was delighted to learn that the Council offers services that help people with vision loss manage everyday tasks safely and independently.

"I really didn't know what was available, and I didn't know that the Council has people there who can help," Janet said. "Just through word-of-mouth, I think it will get around that there are resources available. I had just been going through life like I had been — having my husband and kids read money for me and not knowing that there are professionals out there who can help me do these things for myself."

Janet plans to keep using the Council's resources. She's committed to letting friends with vision loss know about the tools provided by the Vision Services Team and the hundreds of products available in the Sharper Vision Store.

"I rely on friends and neighbors, too," Janet said. "They are really a big help to me." We think she has found a winning combination that can assist her in remaining mobile, connected and active! ■



Janet Sylvester finds reading so much easier and more enjoyable now that she has received tools and training from Council staff.

Upcoming Council Webinars and Events

Friday, October 7

Fall Gallery Night, Madison

Join us as we feature work created by artists who are blind or visually impaired. In conjunction with the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA), the Council will display artwork at its office, 754 Williamson St. in Madison, from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Artists will share stories about their work, challenges and inspiration. Complimentary refreshments provided.



Don McCall will display his intricately carved birds at Gallery Night.

Thursday, October 27

Saving Sight Symposium, Madison

Are you interested in learning about the latest advances and treatments for Macular Degeneration? UW Health ophthalmologists, along with an expert group of speakers, will discuss current research, important issues, tools, and solutions for those facing vision loss from this eye disease. Visit www.wcblind.org to register.

Wednesday, November 2

Webinar – Adaptive Products: Staff Favorites

The Sharper Vision Store features hundreds of valuable products for persons with vision loss. During this free webinar, Council staff who use these products will show you their favorites.

Thursday, November 10 –
Wednesday, November 16

Online Auction

Bid on great items, from event tickets to restaurant deals and more. Proceeds will enable us to expand our educational outreach to elementary school children.

For more information check the Events tab on our website, Facebook and Twitter or call 1-800-783-5213.

Online Auction Supports Educational Outreach to Children

This year, the Council held two presentations to teach elementary school children about blindness and visual impairments.

The Council received wonderful feedback from teachers and students, and want to reach out to more schools. You can help by bidding in our online auction from November 10 to 16.

During the school presentations, Program Assistant Judith Rasmussen shares her story about being blind and overcoming challenges. An elementary school teacher in Lodi remarked, "You did a wonderful job. My students and I enjoyed it very much. It was really nice of you to provide brailled name cards for everyone."

Teachers find these interactive presentations ideal for curriculum topics like blindness, Helen Keller or Louis Braille. Each program can be designed around the teacher's specific goals and lesson plans.

Proceeds from this year's online auction will help us offer more of these programs and purchase talking calculators, beep balls and brailled children's books.

You can bid on any of the nearly 100 items, like gift cards to the Green Owl Café, Target and Pottery Barn, game day tickets, and events at the Overture Center. Items will be available to view after November 1 at www.biddingforgood.com/wcbvi. Join the bidding fun from November 10 to 16! ■



Judith Rasmussen, Program Assistant at the Council, shows adaptive products she uses in daily life.

Greenville Lioness Club Supports the Council's Mission

The Greenville Lioness Club has supported the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired with generous financial gifts for more than a decade. During the course of those years, club members have raised and donated nearly \$7,000 to enable Council staff to work side-by-side with fellow Wisconsinites who are blind or visually impaired.

Marcia Knapp, secretary and member of this club for 10 years, explained how the Lioness Club determines who is to receive funds each year.

"Members bring ideas to the board. The board decides (which organizations should receive funds), and it can be different organizations each year. Our members truly believe in what the Council does. To hear stories from Bruce and Kathy Parkinson makes us feel good about how our donations are used," Marcia said.

Council Board member Bruce Parkinson and his wife Kathy travel each year to Greenville for the Parade of Checks. The Lioness Club distributes these gifts to as many as 25 organizations annually. The Parade of Checks allows Lionesses to connect with each organization, and it encourages recipients to learn more about each other.

Marcia explained, "We look to support organizations that have the same beliefs as our Lioness Club."

The club generates money for gifts primarily through its two annual community events: The Catfish Races and Annual Fall Fair. Club members devote hundreds of volunteer hours to help ensure their success. You can learn more at <http://www.greenvillelions.org>.

Thank you to the generous spirit of the Greenville Lioness Club!

Celebrate White Cane Safety Day on October 15

Saturday, October 15, is White Cane Safety Day. For many individuals who are blind or visually impaired, the white cane provides independence, mobility and greater access to everyday activities.

The Council recently prepared a resource toolkit to assist organizations in commemorating White Cane Safety Day.

Using this informative guide, organizations can formulate an event, plan a celebration, or inform their communities about the importance of the White Cane Law.

The resource toolkit can work for clubs, schools, low vision support groups and service organizations who work with or support people with low vision or blindness.

A grant from an anonymous foundation and the Shopko Foundation enabled us to create and distribute the toolkit.

To order a free toolkit, call **608-237-8114** or lwerbeckes@wcblind.org.



Council Board President Chris Richmond, right, honors retiring Executive Director Loretta Himmelsbach during a luncheon celebration at Union South on the UW-Madison campus on July 30.



Denise Jess, who will become the Council's CEO/Executive Director on October 1, talks about her excitement for the future of our organization at the July 30 luncheon.

