

# When We Were Sixty-Four...



"Send me a postcard, Drop me a line, Stating point of view,  
Indicate precisely what you mean to say..."

– from "When I'm Sixty-Four" by The Beatles

## 2016 Annual Report



Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired

## Greetings!

2016 brought exciting changes for the **Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired**. Founded in 1952, the Council has a rich history of providing services, promoting legislation, and educating the public to uphold the dignity and independence of people in Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired. This 64-year legacy of excellence provided a solid foundation for the Council's change in governance, leadership, and development of our core values.



**Chris Richmond**  
2016 Board Chair

The Council's founders, nineteen individuals who were blind or visually impaired, believed that the experience of blindness was key for creating an organization that could wisely and compassionately address the needs of those with vision loss. Nevertheless, recognizing that in today's world working collaboratively with those who are sighted is beneficial in enhancing the Council's mission, the Council board of directors voted unanimously in 2016 to amend the Articles of Incorporation in order to allow up to three sighted individuals with a connection to visual impairment a chance at a seat on the board.

As the board amended the Articles, they also undertook the development of the Council's core values of **inclusivity, uncompromising respect, and integrity**. These values both highlight the Council's current practices and hold us to a high standard in all of our activities, from our mission-directed work, to honoring our donors and volunteers, and to appreciating our collaborative opportunities with other organizations.



**Denise Jess**  
CEO/Executive  
Director

The latter half of 2016 saw leadership changes to the Council. As Executive Director Loretta Himmelsbach prepared for her retirement, Denise Jess joined the staff as Assistant Director with the expressed intent of becoming CEO/Executive Director. A three-month overlap between Loretta and Denise provided a smooth transition during which Denise developed a keen understanding of the Council's daily operations.

Everyone on the Council's talented staff, the dedicated board of directors, and our many friends and partners are proud to stand on a firm foundation of outstanding commitment and service. We continuously work collaboratively to promote a fulfilling quality of life with and for people experiencing vision loss throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher Richmond".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Jess".

## 2016 Board of Directors

### Executive Committee

**Chris Richmond**  
Board Chair  
Janesville

**Steve Johnson**  
1st Vice President  
La Crosse

**Rhonda Staats**  
Secretary  
La Crosse

**Kathleen Brockman**  
Treasurer  
Milwaukee

# A Creative Community of Inclusivity

Creating artwork is often solitary, whether carving wood, practicing music, or taking photographs. It can be hard to find a sense of community. It is often uncommon for the exhibition of these same artistic mediums to be displayed at one event. Both occurred for the five artists who are blind and visually impaired at the Council's 2016 Gallery Night.

On Friday, October 7, 2016, artists Don McCall (woodcarving), George Wurtzel (woodworking), Judith Rasmussen (ceramics), Mike Morris (photography), and Elena Santin (photography), gathered to display their art at the Council office.

Madison-based acoustic guitarist Ken Lonnquist, who is also visually impaired, performed throughout the evening.

"Providing music in conjunction with other artists who deal with visual impairment is my way of joining in community with others," says Ken. "We share similar struggles and joys. I found the shared stories of fellow artists inspiring and touching."

George Wurtzel states that, although he is blind from Retinitis Pigmentosa, he hasn't allowed that to stop him from pursuing the work he loves.

"If I had vision, I don't think I'd be a better craftsman. I want to be judged by what I do as a craftsman, not be told that I'm amazing because I can't see," he says.

Participating in Gallery Night made Ken feel like part of the 'circle' of a community.

"The Council is important because it is a resource and a support mechanism for people with vision loss, and at Gallery Night, they brought together members of the community of artists who are visually impaired," says Ken.

The Council takes part in Gallery Night each fall in partnership with the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. Join us on Friday, October 6, 2017 for what is sure to be another outstanding event!



## Board Members:

**Nurudeen Amusa**  
Milwaukee

**Rosemary Goodrich**  
Milwaukee

**Nona Graves**  
West Allis

**Karen Heesen**  
Janesville

**Tom Jeray**  
Madison

**Richard Johnson**  
Janesville

**Annika Konrad**  
Madison

**Sharon Knauf**  
Madison

**Bruce Parkinson**  
Two Rivers

**Chelsea Reilly**  
Edgerton

**Dan Sippl**  
Eau Claire

**Tom Peralta**  
Richland Center

# By The Numbers

**36,434**

People served by the Council in an **inclusive** fashion



**2,419**

Volunteer hours donated by our friends and supporters for advocacy, special events, mailings, meetings, publications, committee work, and outreach to **affect change**



**91**

People received computer technology training or advice to better establish **independence**



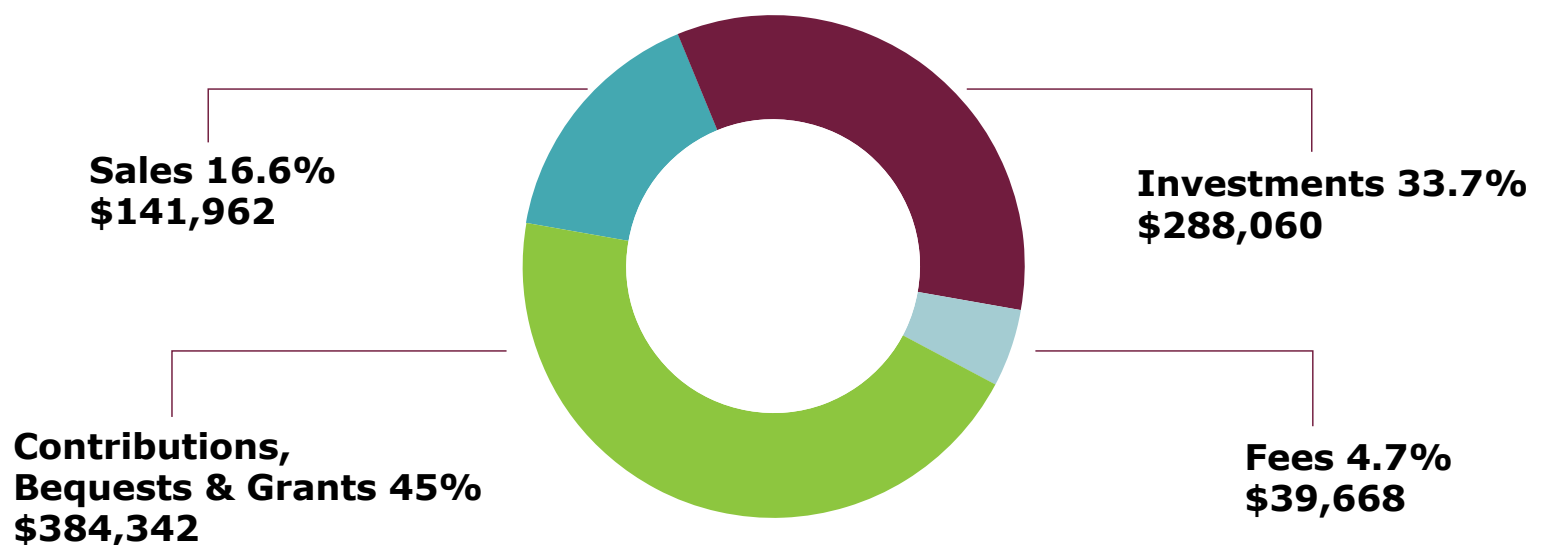
**471**

White Canes distributed throughout Wisconsin for individuals to experience their **transformational journey** towards better mobility and for identification



## Financial

**2016 Total Revenue: \$854,032**



The accompanying condensed financial data and graphical presentations as of and for the year ended December 31, 2016 were derived from the consolidated statements which were audited by Smith & Gesteland, LLP. The data and graphical presentations



# Council Activities in 2016

5,091

People received **education** through Council-sponsored seminars, programs and presentations



81

Low vision evaluations administered with **dignity** by seasoned professionals



2,109

Customers shopped our Sharper Vision Store and were treated with **uncompromising respect** by a knowledgeable and dedicated staff



1,004

Council donors whose financial gifts were used with **integrity**



392

Rehabilitation training home visits by our **vision services** team

## Statement

**2016 Total Expenses: \$1,177,208**



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.

# Providing Products with Uncompromising Respect



Imagine going to the movie theater, and all you can see is bodies moving around on the screen, devoid of details. This is how Kathy Boatman has experienced the cinema for the previous six years as she's gradually lost her eyesight. Until, that is, she purchased a pair of Max TV glasses from the Sharper Vision Store. These comfortable glasses magnify objects to twice their normal size, and are ideal for distance viewing.

"I went to see Beauty and the Beast in the theater with my family, and decided to bring the glasses along," says Kathy. "For the first time in six years, I could see the faces of the actors. I could see colors and detail. The glasses are awesome."

Kathy says devices such as the Color Identifier have helped her regain independence and enjoy hobbies. "I love solving crosswords. It's easy to find large print crossword puzzle books, but not all of them have darker print which is easier to read. Your store has those. It's great to be able to sit down and solve a crossword again."

Kathy says when she's needed assistance figuring out which device would work best for her, store employees have been very helpful. "All I have to do is ask," she says. "When I leave, I'm always really excited about everything I've bought, and I'm always telling people about the neat low vision equipment at the store. Keep up the good work!"

## Transition with Integrity

Change can bring about unanticipated anxiety for an organization, the least of which is an uncertain future. On October 1, 2016, the Council welcomed Denise Jess as its new CEO/Executive Director. Communication and careful planning enabled the transition to occur while keeping the Council unified to its mission and goals.



"The transition plan itself was designed to honor the integrity of the Council," says Denise. "Integrity means being honest, highly ethical and undivided. Integrity allows us to stay centered on our mission and helps to instill trust. Leading with integrity means even in tough situations, we speak honestly and with compassion."

During a 3-month period, outgoing Executive Director Loretta Himmelsbach and Denise worked closely together. Denise's role started as Assistant Director, with the expectation she would become CEO/Executive Director upon Loretta's retirement on September 29. The overlapping period allowed Denise the opportunity to learn the Council's policies, routines and rhythms, while being able to consult with Loretta. It also allowed her time to transition from my role as a Board officer to a paid leadership position.

"I'm glad about how we did the transition," says Board Chair Chris Richmond. "I think it was seamless; there weren't any problems in communication or gaps in leadership."

# Leaving a Lasting Legacy

The **Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired** established the Legacy Circle for those who have named the Council in their will or as a beneficiary of any planned gift. The Legacy Circle honors those who have chosen to make a gift which will benefit recipients of the Council's services long into the future.

Planned gifts perpetuate your values long beyond your lifetime. Stewarding these gifts so that future generations of people with vision loss will be served with uncompromising respect has been, and continues to be, a priority.

Every estate gift to which we are entrusted is handled with integrity so as to preserve the values of the person who gifted it to us. Thank you to the following people who have notified the Council of their intent to make a gift from their estate:

Helen Bewick  
Kathleen Brockman  
Ray Cubberly  
Anonymous  
Loretta Himmelsbach  
Anonymous  
Steve Johnson  
Ester Lovelace  
Stan Nelson  
Anonymous  
Arnold & Alice Tucker

Scott & Beverly Verhage  
Chris & Theresa  
Zenchenko



**THANK YOU to the following organizations and individuals who generously supported the Council's work in 2016. Your financial gifts have changed lives throughout Wisconsin! All donor names are listed in our Annual Report at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org).**

## **We gratefully received bequests from:**

Lorraine Bowen  
Fiona Calder  
Harold Clark  
Zellorean Field  
Emil Hunkel  
Claremont Jackman

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

Kenneth Baumann  
Nellie Berget  
Jerry Bever  
Eva Jo Blanche  
Stephen Bobusch, Sr.  
Mike Bollig

Lorraine Bowen  
Joanne Braun  
Elaine Brown  
Rose Caley  
Frances Cronick  
Paul Cuccia  
Shirley Diedrich  
Jean Earleywine  
Ellinor Ebert

William English  
Beryl Flyte  
Eleanor Garbelman  
Robert Goetzke  
Phyllis Gorski  
Lester Haen, Sr.  
Glenn Hartman  
Eda Hoffland  
Shirley Irgens  
James Jensen  
Darrell Kangas  
William Karl  
Sandra Kotloski  
Lois Kruse  
Darold Kusch  
Russ LaFrancis  
Minna Lahn  
Eldon and Eileen Loehrke  
Lester Loken  
Jackie Macaulay  
Jackie Mathes  
James McCarthy  
Agnes Meyer  
Eila Myers  
Stan Nelson  
Hermod Olson  
Kay Olson  
Ray Olstad  
Steve Potratz  
Prakasit Pratoomtong  
Beverly Radke  
Jean Redders  
Mary Jane Reese  
Judson Schiebel  
Otto Schlageter  
Bobbie Schuler  
Marie Sharpee  
Nancy Shermont-Denton  
Dolores Smith  
Albert Smithback  
Elizabeth Stastny  
Evelyn Steare  
Don Stegeman  
Michael Stolper  
Stella Stone Berven  
Donald Strasser  
Agnes Stuefen  
Melvin Thiel

**Continued on next page**

Grace Verhagen  
Joyce Vogt  
Rose Marie Ward  
Jess Will, Jr.

**We received gifts  
in honor of:**

SarahElizabeth  
Baguhn  
Marcia Beseler  
Brenda Brubacker  
David Buchholz  
Tim Davis  
Diane Firkell  
Alvin Friemark  
Loretta  
Himmelsbach  
Phil Ingwell

Denise Jess  
Sylvia Johnson  
Mary Laurie  
Bennett Lehman  
Willie McCarville  
Carolyn Neerhof  
Brent Perzentka  
Leon Rosen  
Elaine Rountrey  
Pat Rum  
Ann Salazar  
Sheboygan Evening  
Lions Club  
Kate Siekert  
Margaret Sommers  
Amy Wurf  
Bernice Wurst  
June Zimmerman

**Grant Funding  
and Sponsorships  
were given by:**

Adaptive Technology  
Resources  
Alliant Energy  
Foundation  
Associated Bank  
Anonymous  
Courtier Foundation,  
Inc.  
Enhanced Vision  
Gary Goyke and  
Associates  
Greater Milwaukee  
Foundation:  
• Carl & Alma S.  
Greilach Fund

• Catherine &  
Walter Lindsay  
Foundation  
• William R. & Lois  
J. Phillips Fund  
Industries for the  
Blind, Inc.  
Madison Gas &  
Electric Foundation,  
Inc.  
Anonymous  
Smith and  
Gesteland, LLP  
Vanda  
Pharmaceuticals  
The Vogel  
Foundation

**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.**



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)

