



Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired



**Growing From Independence
to Empowerment**

Annual Report 2017



Denise Jess, CEO/Executive Director, and Chris Richmond, Board Chair at the Council office.

Anniversaries offer us opportunities for reflection. Last summer, as the Council celebrated our 65th anniversary, we took time to honor our history by developing an archive. Looking forward, we recognized a need to change our mission statement from “independence” to “empowerment.”

Our first 65 years were devoted to promoting the dignity and independence of people who are blind and visually impaired. Our predecessors laid a path for forward-

thinking legislation, a vision services model and education to enhance independence. To honor and preserve this history, board and staff together have embarked on an archive project. While still in its early stages, the project brings together Council historians and volunteers eager to learn about the Council.

Moving forward, we recognize that the blindness and visually impaired community continues to grow in its diversity and expectations. Elders are experiencing vision changes and sight loss in large numbers. Many working-age adults seek fulfilling employment, accessible transportation and want to be fully integrated into their communities. Many young adults see vision impairment as one of the aspects of self, along with gender, race, and orientation.

A board member urged us to consider a more inclusive mission statement. We, as a staff and board, concluded the word empowerment captured this changing landscape, with the mission to “promote the dignity and empowerment of the people of Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired.” It encourages us to hold the bar of excellence high for living our mission and building on the incredible work that has laid this foundation on which we now stand.

Join us on our exciting journey of the next 65 years as we continue to grow the Council’s reach and influence!

Sincerely,

Denise Jess Christopher Richmond

COVER PHOTO

Alison Fortney is a photographer from Milwaukee who is visually impaired.

Executive Committee

Denise Jess
CEO/Executive Director
Madison

Chris Richmond
Board Chair
Janesville

Annika Konrad
First Vice President
Madison

Steve Johnson
Second Vice President
La Crosse

Kathleen Brockman
Treasurer
Milwaukee

Rhonda Staats
Secretary
La Crosse

Members at Large

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Milwaukee

Sharon Knauf
Madison

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Edgerton

Bruce Parkinson
Two Rivers

John Foulks
Fond du Lac

Tom Peralta
Richland Center

Nona Graves
West Allis

Michael Sallaway
Holman

Karen Heesen
Janesville

Dan Sippl
Eau Claire

Troy Hergert
Milwaukee

Kelsey Tiradani
Madison

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442 white canes were distributed at no cost to individuals throughout the state



83 people were empowered with assistive technology



110 people participated in low vision evaluations to optimize existing vision

1,843 customers shopped at the Sharper Vision Store and were treated with uncompromising respect



Gifts from **1,130** donors were used with integrity

In-home rehabilitation visits helped **447** people live safely and with dignity



Inclusive educational programs reached

4,837 people

1,056 volunteer hours were donated for advocacy, outreach, special events, and board/committee work



SHARPER VISION STORE

At an open house held on July 13, we introduced the new retail floorplan with hands-on stations replicating the home and office environments where many of the store's products will be used. We shared the day with many longtime friends and were pleased to welcome new friends.



Denise Jess and Brent Perzentka cutting the ribbon at the Sharper Vision Store open house.



Jim Denham helping a student explore a HIMS BrailleSense Polaris.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

In 2017, we added an assistive technology specialist to the Vision Services team. Jim Denham helps clients find technology that is right for them from computer software to iPhones. As products and applications continue to expand, having a specialist available to introduce new products to clients is invaluable.

LOW VISION EVALUATIONS

In 2017, the Council continued to grow working relationships with Madison eye care professionals. Referrals from local clinics help promote the Council's empowering services.



Webinar panelist Carol Doolin.

COUNCIL WEBINARS

WCBVI webinars give people a chance to learn skills from home. In the “Providing Health and Social Services” webinar, panelists shared personal experiences from interacting with healthcare providers and suggested ways staff could better serve patients experiencing vision loss.

The November webinar gave registrants a tour of the new learning environments in the Sharper Vision Store. It also featured several magnification options and the new OrCam glasses. About 110 people participated in the 2017 webinars. Find upcoming webinars online at wcblind.org or view past webinars on the WCBVI YouTube channel.



An exhibitor talks with Low Vision Fair attendees.

LOW VISION FAIR

At the 2017 Low Vision Fair in La Crosse, participants visited vendors and learned about adaptive techniques and equipment.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Low vision support groups, senior centers, Lions Clubs, and students learned about Council services via presentations throughout the state. Council staff present to diverse audiences throughout the year. Education requests can be directed to Jean at jkalscheur@wcblind.org.



Second grade students explore a brailled children's book.



Council staff members and supporters at the White Cane Safety Day Proclamation signing in the State Assembly.

WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY PROCLAMATION

Being at the Capitol initiated relationships with legislators and encouraged Senator LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) and Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) to introduce legislation making October 15th White Cane Safety Day. The resolution passed in both the Senate and the Assembly, with Council staff and supporters in attendance.

The Council continued to advocate for the following legislative priorities:

1. Transportation
2. Employment
3. Education
4. Civil Rights/ADA
5. Healthcare

Advocacy is done in two ways: by building relationships with legislators and by educating the public to take action. Learn more under What We Do on wcblind.org.

PROMOTING CONTINUING EDUCATION

Nine post-secondary Wisconsin students received \$2,000 scholarships in 2017 based on their outstanding academic achievements and community involvement. The students, who are blind or visually impaired, are from all areas of the state and range from college freshmen to graduate, PhD and law school students.

2017 scholarship recipients: Kimberly Guerrero, John Harrison, Annika Konrad, Hunter Lemerond, Kaitlyn Siekert, Samuel Sosa, Lakota Tuft, Sean Whalen, and Mia Zutter.



Scholarship recipients shown along with Council board members and staff.

GROWING OUR LEGACY CIRCLE

An abundance of loyal donors and dedicated individuals, along with the wise stewardship of the many gifts we received, made the first 65 years of the Council possible. Estate, or legacy, gifts to the Council have provided the ongoing funding necessary to offer the tools and education to empower those with vision loss.

Legacy gifts provide both immediate and long-term benefits. A gift from your estate promises future generations that the Council's services, education and advocacy will be there for them.

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. You can create a legacy gift for the Council while still providing for your heirs.

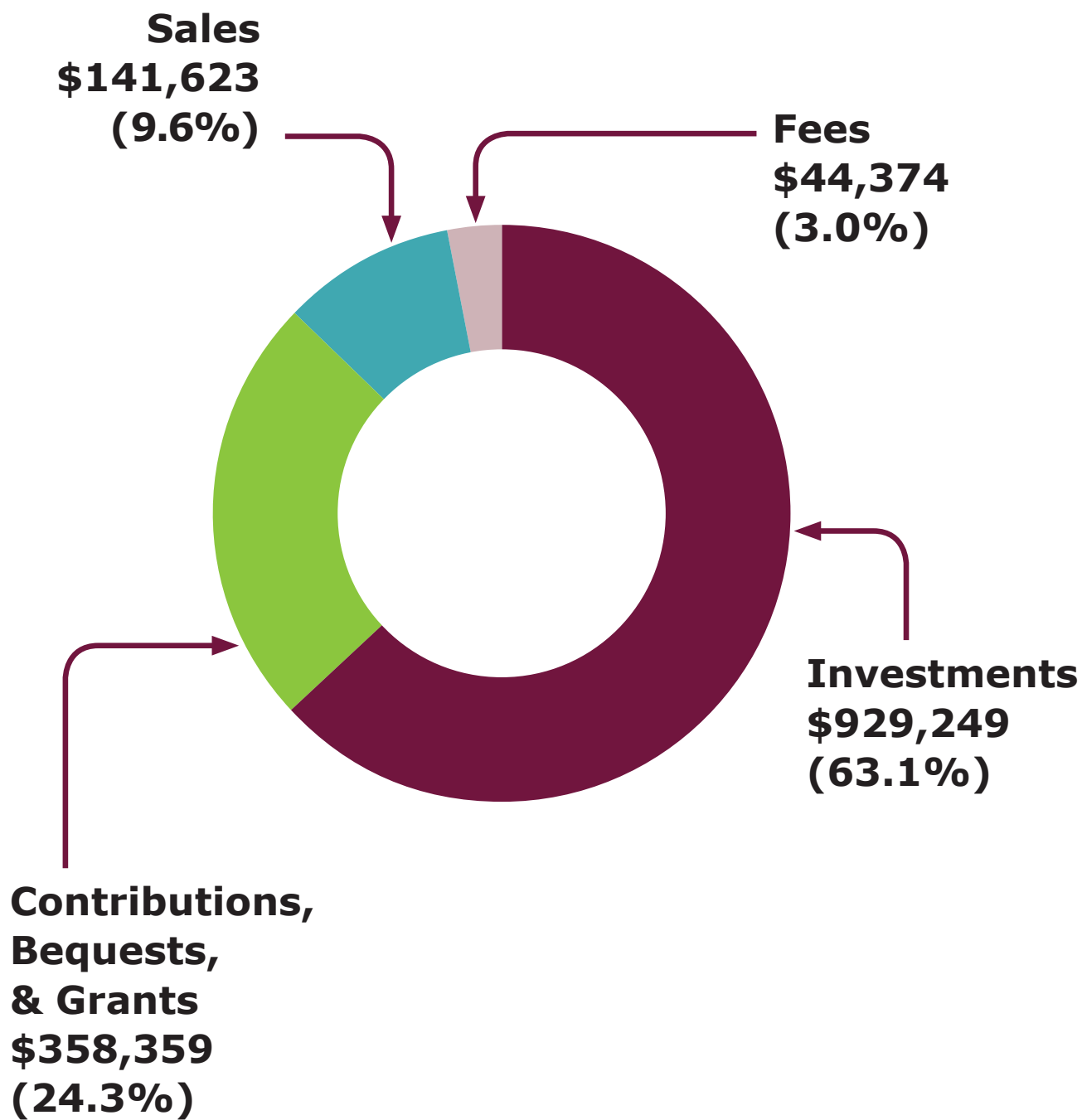
Find more information at wcblind.org.

Legacy Circle Members

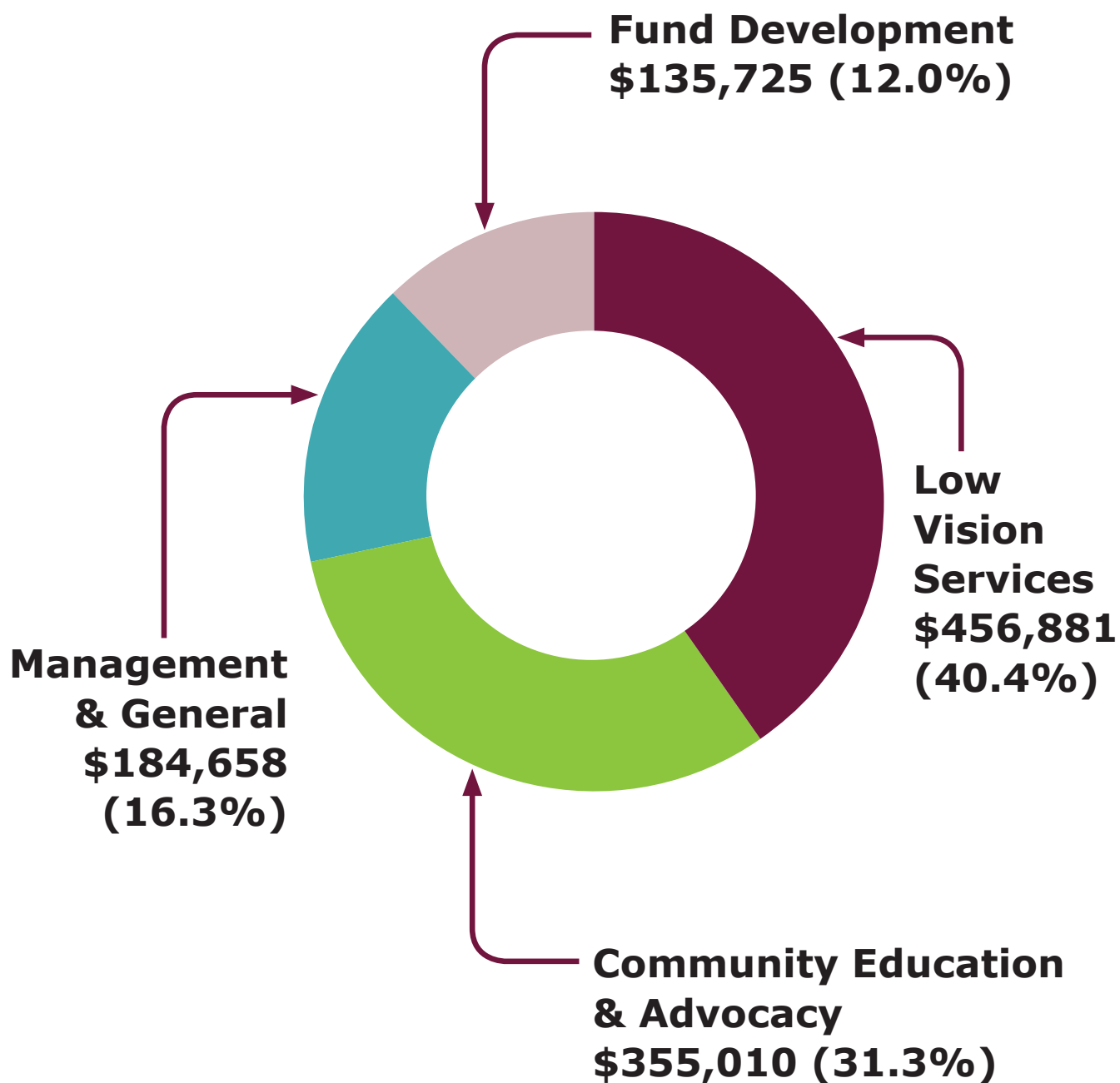
Helen Bewick	Marjean Kuschel
Kathleen Brockman	Ester Lovelace
Ray Cubberly	Stan Nelson
Anonymous	Anonymous
Loretta Himmelsbach	Arnold & Alice Tucker
Anonymous	Scott & Beverly Verhage
Steve Johnson	Chris & Theresa Zenchenko

Remember the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired with a gift in your will.

Total Revenue: \$1,473,605



Total Expenses: \$1,132,274



THANK YOU

**to the following organizations
and individuals who
generously supported
the Council's work
in 2017.**

**We gratefully received
bequests from:**

Helen Bewick
Marcella Culp
Marion & Albert Deppeler
Emil Hunkel
Claremont Jackman
Mayme & Virgil Solberg
Dean Wilke



Guests attending Dining in the Dark at GingeRootz Asian Grille are encouraged to use senses other than sight in their dining experience.



Volunteers and visitors at Gallery Night intently listen to one of the five artists who displayed their work at the Council. All artists were visually impaired.

Friends of the Council contributed \$500 or more in 2017

Carol Adams	Lomira Lions Club
Anonymous	Anonymous
Claire Box	Daniel McNeely
Shirley Carlson	Tom Peralta
Richard & Tracy Clark	Sargento
Clear Vision Midwest–Steve Wehrle	Michael Schmidley
Chris Doering	Tracy Schoenrock
Gerald & Betty Fuller	Spooner Trego Lions Club
Goetz Graefe	Marvin Strehlow
Nona Graves & Dennis Ameden	Telecom Pioneers
Harker Heating & Cooling	Catherine Tesar
Loretta Himmelsbach	Gale VandeBerg
Rosemary Himmelsbach	Lori & Mark Werbeckes
Anonymous	Margaret Williams
Jean Kalscheur	Barbra Winter
Debra Kane	Mary Wrzesinski
Candice Koehn	Terri Young, MD
Anonymous	Daniel Zacharias
Marvin Levy	

**Your financial gifts
have changed
lives throughout
Wisconsin!**

Sponsor, Matching, and Foundation gifts advanced our mission

Alliant Energy Foundation
Amazon Smile Foundation
Associated Bank
Courtier Foundation, Inc.
Department of Veterans Affairs
FM Global Foundation
Howard Frankenthal Family Foundation
GingeRootz Asian Grille
Give Back Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
• Carl & Alma S. Greilach Fund
• William R. & Lois J. Phillips Fund
Guidestar K Foundation
Herb Kohl Philanthropies
Ho-Chunk Nation
Industries for the Blind, Inc.
Johnson Keland Management
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Anonymous

National Mutual Benefit
PayPal Giving Fund
Racine Community Foundation
• John & Gladys Franco Fund
Shopko Foundation
Smith & Gesteland, LLP
Sub-Zero Wolf Foundation
Thrivent Financial
Vignette Dining Club
The Vogel Foundation
David G. & Nancy B. Walsh Family Foundation
Waukesha County Community Foundation
• William M. & Michele A. Holcomb Family Fund
WEA Trust
White Cane Day Celebration

**For a complete
list of donor names, visit
wcblind.org.**

FALL GALLERY NIGHT

Friday, October 5, 2018

5:00pm – 8:00pm

Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired
754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI

MACULAR DEGENERATION SYMPOSIUM

Wednesday, October 10, 2018

8:00am – 1:00pm

Alliant Energy Center
1919 Alliant Energy Center Way, Madison, WI

WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY

Monday, October 15, 2018

All day – Statewide

VISION FOR TOMORROW ONLINE AUCTION

November 8 through November 14, 2018

biddingforgood.com/wcbvi

Check the Events page of wcblind.org
to find an event near you.





•∴ Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired

Mission: to promote the dignity and empowerment of the people in Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired by providing services, advocating legislation and educating the general public.

Core Values: Inclusivity, uncompromising respect and integrity.

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