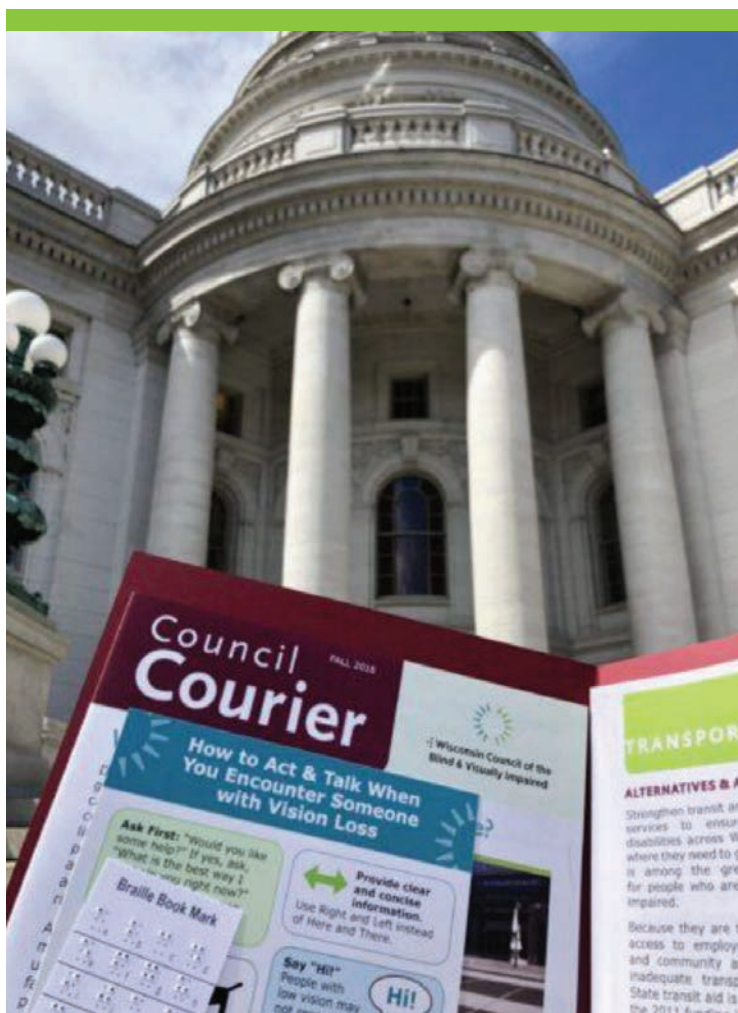




Everyday Advocacy: Make Your Voice Heard on Issues That Matter to You



A safe, walkable community. A well-placed bus stop. An equal opportunity to cast your ballot.

Each of these issues remains central to the Council's advocacy efforts, and a top priority for people across Wisconsin who are blind or visually impaired.

Yet many people hear the word "advocacy" and immediately think of lobbying state legislators. State lawmakers are certainly an important part of the picture, but often the greatest opportunities for sparking change through advocacy happen at the local level. This is where you can work with others to make an impact right where you live.

Simple Steps to Get Started

A local advocate can be anyone who is concerned about the

health and welfare of their community. But these residents aren't only concerned; they are actively seeking solutions.

Council Awards and Scholarships

Excellence Awards Recipients are Making a Difference

Our 2021 Excellence Awards recipients range from two retired nurses who volunteer their time providing eye screenings in schools to an organization going above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired.

- **Community Volunteer Service Award for Dedicated and Exemplary Volunteer Service: Doris Dolph and Sally DeVriend**

Retired nurses Doris Dolph of Waukesha and Sally DeVriend of Pewaukee were nominated by Robert Best for their efforts to promote eye care through free screenings in the Waukesha School District.

The pair most recently checked the eyes of more than 1,900 children from 4K through fifth grade at 13 elementary schools. Close to 300 of those students were referred for further eye testing.

- **Community Giving Award for Financial and Organizational Support: Lake Wisconsin Lions Club**

The Lake Wisconsin Lions Club of Lodi was nominated by the Council's Gratitude Work Group.

Our Gratitude Work Group credits emotional and personal connections with the club as reasons for its long-term support. Group members believe those connections are why the partnership between the Lions and the Council is so strong.

- **Public Policy Award for Advancing Legislative Priorities: State Transportation Secretary Designee Craig Thompson**

State Transportation Secretary Designee Craig Thompson was nominated by the Council's Advocacy Work Group for his efforts to highlight the needs of non-drivers in Wisconsin's transportation planning.

Members of our Advocacy Work Group recognize that the Secretary has shined a light on the impact transportation policy has on the non-driver population.

- **Lifetime Service Award for Long-Term Exemplary Achievements in the Blind and Visually Impaired Community: Rhonda Staats**

Rhonda Staats was nominated by Patty Slaby for her years of service and dedication to promoting dignity and empowerment of people who are blind and visually impaired.

The La Crosse woman has been involved in numerous organizations, and is making a difference locally, including in an Amish community where she worked to build understanding and acceptance of vision loss. Rhonda also serves on the Executive Team of the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities.

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The programs you're reading about in the Courier are made possible by generous gifts to the Council. Please consider mailing a contribution in the enclosed envelope or donating online at WCBlind.org/donate. Your gift will help someone in Wisconsin as they adapt to life with vision loss. Thank you!

Council Awards and Scholarships continued

Scholarship Recipients Share Lofty Goals



Scholarship winners, from upper left in order listed below.

Their goals are exciting, ranging from physical and music therapy to teaching and nursing.

Ten outstanding high school and college students with low vision were chosen to each receive a \$2,000 scholarship toward continuing their education this year.

The Council awarded scholarships to these students:

- Saree Behm of Janesville is majoring in early childhood special education at UW-Whitewater and plans to be a teacher.
- Grace Caine of Lowell attends UW-Whitewater, majoring in instrumental music education. She wants to be a band director.
- Lindsey Fritz of Madison is studying nursing at Madison College and plans to be a nurse practitioner.
- Kaitlyn Hippe of Milwaukee attends Calvin University, where she majors in Chinese and Spanish. She plans to be an interpreter.
- Brandon Klas of Cedarburg attends UW-Whitewater for business entrepreneurship. He wants to be in management or operations with a car-related business.
- Luka Santin of Madison majors in jazz and contemporary improvisation at Lawrence University, with plans to work as a certified music therapist.
- Elizabeth Thompson of Madison is attending Madison College and plans to major in education, with a specialty in vision impairment. She wants to work in special education.
- George Tuttle of Drummond attends Carroll University with a major in healthcare administration. He plans a career in physical therapy.
- Joseph Tuttle of Drummond is an agriculture education major at Purdue University. He wants to be a high school agriculture or biology teacher.
- Shayna Wederath is from Clintonville and attends UW-Stevens Point with a major in psychology. She plans to work in rehabilitation therapy.

Congratulations to all the recipients of these awards and scholarships! The Council is grateful to Associated Bank and NeuGen for scholarship event support.

Letter from Executive Director Denise Jess



Denise Jess

Autumn Greetings!

This summer marked my fifth anniversary as the Council's executive director. As I reflect on these years, I am moved by the deep commitment of my colleagues on the staff and board, the generosity of our volunteers and donors, and the rich diversity of our community partners. While our feet are firmly rooted in the Council's foundation and history, we stretch our arms out to expand the Council's reach with new ventures and relationships. Promoting the dignity and empowerment of Wisconsinites living with vision loss is at the core of everything we do.

In keeping with our traditions, we proudly honored five Excellence Award recipients and ten academic scholars. We transformed our signature events, like the Low Vision Fair, Gallery Night and the Macular Degeneration Symposium, into virtual events enabling safety and access for all. We stretched into new aspects of our advocacy work and built a vibrant online low vision support community. We were able to launch all of these exciting adventures while maintaining our commitment to excellence in serving clients in our Sharper Vision Store and vision services activities.

I look forward with much joy and gratitude to the anniversaries we have yet to celebrate together, including the Council's upcoming 70th anniversary in 2022. Stay tuned to learn more about that in the months to come. For now, enjoy reading this fall issue of the Council Courier.

Warm regards,

Denise

2021 Sharper Vision Store Gift Guide

The Council's Sharper Vision Store is a one-stop shop for adaptive products and other useful items to improve your life. From games to personal care items to the latest helpful gadgets, you can find the perfect gift here. Try products in person during business hours or view hundreds of items online at WCBlind.org/Store. You can also order by phone at **800-783-5213**.

Games & Hobbies

Tactile Rubik's Cube

\$26.00

This classic brain teaser has been modified with different tactile markings for each color on the cube. **RT284**



Bold Print Skip-Bo Card Game

\$11.00

Enjoy this fun family sequencing card game. Players use strategy to create sequenced stacks of cards in ascending order. **RL420**



Tactile Othello Game

\$18.00

Enjoy the classic strategy board game Othello with helpful tactile features. **RT282**



Simon Micro Series Game

\$17.00

Take your favorite retro game on the go with the Simon Micro Series game. Enjoy this compact version of the classic Simon game. **RT242**



Hoyle Super Jumbo Playing Cards (Bridge Size)

\$3.50

These bridge-sized playing cards have numbers and suit symbols that are 1" tall for easy identification. Bridge cards are slimmer and easier to hold than standard size cards. **RL404**



Green Handheld Needle Threader

\$4.00

This green handheld needle threader will assist with your sewing by automatically helping you thread your needle. **HS220**



Lighting & Magnification

Round 3X Magnifier on a Lanyard \$15.00
Perfect for shopping, the black lanyard keeps the magnifier handy without the need to dig in a purse or bag. The magnifier has LED lighting and 3X magnification. **MX760**



Brightech LightView Portable Magnifying Lamp \$27.00
This Brightech LightView Portable Battery Powered 4X Magnifying Glass with Bright LED Light, Stand & Clamp is a must-have for painting, sewing, crafts, reading, and more. **LT130**



DeepLite LED Desk Lamp with Flexible Gooseneck \$20.00
The compact, portable DeepLite LED Desk Lamp with Flexible Gooseneck comes with three levels of brightness, and is battery operated with touch control. **LT135**



Lighted Nail Clipper with Magnifier \$24.00
This compact, lighted nail clipper comes with 4x magnifier and LED light to help illuminate the work area. The base of the device also has an attached nail file. **HM605**



LED 5x Lighted Mirror \$55.00
This versatile lighted mirror with 5X magnification is exactly what you need for a variety of tasks, including makeup and personal grooming. **MX950**



Office & Stationery

2020 Pens, Bold and Slimline \$1.50
Whatever your writing preference, we have the pen for you. These pens write dark black lines with ink that does not bleed through the paper and dries quickly. **WG728, WG700**



Signature Guide \$12.50
This signature guide has a flexible, stretchy string that helps you write in a straight line. It has a non-slip backing to prevent slipping. Measures 4 x 2 inches. Great for writing checks! **WG632**



Various Locator Dots \$3.50
Self-adhesive locator dots and bump-ons can be used as tactile reference points on keyboards, light switches, telephones, appliance knobs and more. We have a variety of sizes and styles to choose from. **HL106, HL116, HL115**



Portable Lap Desk \$30.00
The lap desk is a flat surface with a wedge-shaped bean bag cushion on the bottom. The small foam beads allow it to conform to any lap, and it can easily hold papers or folders so you can use a magnifier at the same time. **BK150**



Shopping List Paper \$5.00
This shopping list paper features wide spaced bold lines. Great for preparing organized lists before running your errands. This gummed pack of 100 sheets measures 4.5" inches wide by 11" tall with lines a half inch apart. **WP130**



Watches & Clocks

Talking Keychain Clock **\$12.50**

The Talking Keychain Clock is ideal for life on the go, displaying and announcing the time in a clear voice. This clock also has an alarm that announces the time when it rings. Available in English or Spanish. **TT211, TT211S**



Sleek Talking Clock **\$15.00**

This small, desktop clock shows the time in easy-to-see digits. The clock displays and announces the time and temperature in English. The hour number measures 1.5" and the minute numbers measure 1". It does not have a backlight. **TT215**



Spanish Speaking Watch **\$10.95**

This sleek, lightweight, black four-button, watch announces the time in Spanish in a clear and loud female voice. **TT418**



Small and Medium Silver Watch **\$43.50**

This talking one-button watch is among the easiest watches to use. Choose between male and female voices. The watch offers alarm and chime functions. The white dial provides high contrast, and the expansion band guarantees you can wear this watch comfortably. **TT411, TT410**



Silver Talking Watch, Choice of Band **\$20.00**

A sleek, silver talking watch with a digital read-out of the time. The large speaker is located on the front, so the clear female-voice announcements are easy to hear. Available with either an expansion band or a leather band. **TT402, TT402L**



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Consider these steps to start your advocacy efforts at the local level:

- Identify an issue you or your neighbors are passionate about and learn the basics behind the problem.
- Determine the desired outcome.
- Connect with your local elected officials (town or county supervisors, city alders or councilpersons, school board members, etc.) to introduce yourself and get to know them.
- Learn about opportunities to offer input about your chosen issue, such as regular committee meetings or public hearings.

The Council's Executive Director Denise Jess believes the more you get involved, the more you'll get to be known and trusted, and your input valued. You may even be asked to serve on a committee or commission, where your views can be part of the formal policy making process.

"It is very important for those of us with vision loss to get involved in our communities," Denise says.

"Our voice matters. In my work on various commissions, committees and task forces in the city of Madison where I live, I know I'm helping shape a community that is more welcoming, accessible and inclusive for all of us."

Learn more about the Council's advocacy at <https://wcbblind.org/>

"Our voice matters. In my work on various commissions, committees and task forces in the city of Madison where I live, I know I'm helping shape a community that is more welcoming, accessible and inclusive for all of us."

— Executive Director
Denise Jess

John Foulks Retires from the Council Board of Directors

John Foulks of Fond du Lac recently retired from the Board of Directors. The entire Council family is grateful to John for his years of service to the organization.

John served as the board's second Vice President and gave his time to the executive committee and various work groups. He participated regularly in the Council's Legislative Day.

"John saw the Council's work as vital for people living with vision loss," Executive Director Denise Jess says.

"He always offered his support and encouragement in these efforts."

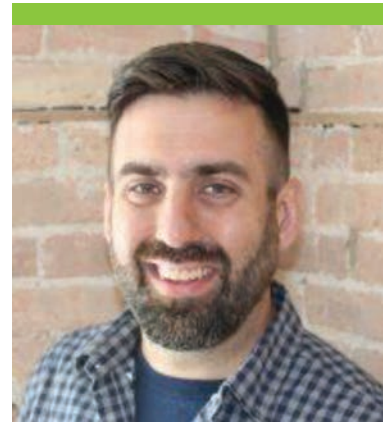
Fellow board member Dan Sippl says John had personal reasons for working on behalf of people who are blind.

"John lost his eyesight to diabetes, which slowed him down for a few years. But he quickly became an asset for those with vision loss," Dan says.

John is also a board member for the Randolph Sheppard Program, a nonprofit that provides people with visual impairment the opportunity to manage vending operations at rest stops, cafeterias, snack bars, and similar sites across the country.

John's contributions to the Board will be missed.

New Customer Care Specialist at the Sharper Vision Store



Greg Schmidt is the new customer care specialist at the Council's Sharper Vision Store.

The Madison man comes to the store with years of retail experience, most recently at Habitat for Humanity ReStore. He's now enjoying getting to know our Sharper Vision customers.

"Many of the store's visitors are making appointments, which means I get to spend quality one-on-one time with them," Greg says.

Greg Schmidt
"But no matter how I work with a customer here, in person or on the phone, I really like being able to support their needs. I can't envision doing anything else."

Greg is originally from Milwaukee and graduated from the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. He designs comics and books for kids during his off hours. Greg married his high school sweetheart, and the couple has one child.

New Team in the Communications Department



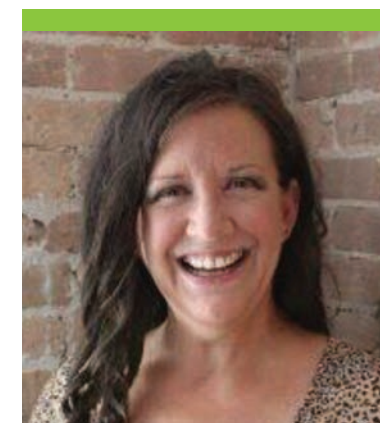
Bob Jacobson

Bob Jacobson and Teri Barr are the new members of the Council's communications team.

Bob joins the staff as communications director. He brings more than 20 years of experience in nonprofit communications to the Council, including staff positions with organizations involved in child advocacy, community development and philanthropy. Bob has also served many other nonprofits over the years as a freelance writer, editor and communications consultant. Most recently, Bob worked at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, overseeing provider communications in the Division of Medicaid Services.

Originally from Detroit, Bob holds a degree in sociology from Michigan State University. "I'm delighted to be back in the nonprofit sector and thrilled to be at the Council, an organization that understands the importance of strategic storytelling in pursuit of our mission," Bob says.

"It's a privilege to support the work Council staff performs every day to empower people who are blind and visually impaired to live well and with dignity."



Teri Barr

Also joining the Council's communications department as a part-time content writer is Teri Barr. She's an award-winning TV and radio journalist and is currently also a business news podcast host.

Teri grew up in Northeast Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh for Radio-TV-Film, Journalism and Political Science. You may remember her work as a TV news anchor in Wausau, Green Bay and Madison. She moved around the country during her television career too, but Teri is happy to be home.

"I believe in using your talents to make a difference," Teri says. "Working at the Council is honoring my goals of sharing inspiring stories and leaving the world a better place because of it. I'm finding the staff, partners and clients feel the same. It's a special place to be."

Grants Provide Personalized Low Vision Products



It's a primary goal of the Council to provide life-changing tools to people who are adjusting to vision loss. It is also important to include training in the use of those tools.

Thanks to grants from the Madison South Rotary Foundation, the Evjue Foundation and an anonymous funder, the Council's Vision Services staff is meeting these goals. Twenty-two people received Personal Low Vision Kits this year.

"Without this type of support or financial

assistance, many of these people cannot afford to purchase the variety of items they need to continue with their daily living tasks," Council Fund Development Director Lori Werbeckes says.

Each personal kit ended up being unique and individualized based on the client's needs. Kits included items like reading magnifiers, lighting, cooking utensils, talking watches or clocks, large print calendars, and talking thermometers or pedometers.

The Council also provided low vision evaluations and in-home learning on use of the tools.

"Adaptive products for blindness are not covered by Medicare or supplemental insurance, so most of these kits were prepared for low-income seniors who are experiencing a loss of vision," Lori says.

"We are so grateful for this supportive funding."

Join The Council for These Free, Virtual Events



• Virtual Low Vision Support Group, Meeting Monthly

Our Low Vision Support Group is a safe place for you to talk with others who are visually impaired or caring for someone with low vision. This free support group is facilitated by Council Vision Services staff and meets online via Zoom the second Monday of each month.

Sign up now to get the link or call-in number for the next meeting by contacting Brent Perzentka at 608-237-8112 or by email at BPerzentka@WCBlind.org



• Access Technology Classes, Meeting Monthly

The topics of our access technology classes range from taking photos with your phone to using delivery service apps and online grocery shopping. Open to everyone, a new "how to" is shared free, online via Zoom, every month.

Sign up now to get the link or call-in number for the next class by contacting Jim Denham at 608-237-8104 or by email at JDenham@WCBlind.org



• SAVE THE DATE: Gallery Night, Friday, November 12

Our annual Gallery Night highlights the amazing art created by people from across Wisconsin who are visually impaired. Paintings, photos, sculptures and more will be featured during this free, online virtual event.

You can learn more about Gallery Night, view last year's virtual exhibit, and watch last year's virtual event on the Council website at <https://wcblind.org/events/gallery-night/>



Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired

754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703
608-255-1166 • 800-783-5213 • WCBlind.org

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

Make an appointment for vision services or a Sharper Vision Store visit. Vision services include vision rehabilitation, low vision evaluations and access technology training. Store appointments are perfect for finding the right adaptive equipment for you or a loved one. To book an appointment, call 1-800-783-5213 or email us at **info@WCBlind.org**.

Contact Us

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