



**Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired**
Expanding visual horizons



2012 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

What a grand celebration our 60th anniversary year was! As with all milestones, we celebrated with friends and family throughout the state and in novel venues. We explored new adventures that took us beyond our own comfort zones. With our mission of promoting the dignity and independence of people in Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired, we wanted to commemorate our anniversary with “out of the box” opportunities.

An amazing five-year journey culminated in March when Governor Scott Walker signed into law Act 124, the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act of Wisconsin. Students now attending post-secondary schools are guaranteed accessible textbooks within two weeks of request.

Technology took a front seat in 2012 with our Healthy Vision Webinars offered in late 2012 and reaching more than half of the counties in Wisconsin! Our new website and our new Information and Referral section went live in June. You will see a considerable depth of knowledge shared on our web page. An electronic newsletter, “On-Sight,” was inaugurated this year, and our social media presence increased. Please “like” us on Facebook to receive the latest information about what you can do to maintain healthy vision.

With the high prevalence of e-readers, we offered opportunities for people to learn more about electronic ways to read through our Bloomin’ Literature project. Working closely with the Wisconsin Library Association, we provided valuable resources to a wide range of people who have vision loss. The Living Well with Changing Vision Resource Fair in Eau Claire was successful in helping older adults learn adaptive ways of reading and accessing other valuable information.

For some, a good old-fashioned, face-to-face symposium is the best way to share information. Our Macular Degeneration Symposium, offered biennially in partnership with the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, welcomed more than 450 people from around the state. Attendees learned about the latest medical advances in this age-related disease.

Our 60th anniversary event at Lambeau Field in Green Bay was impressive. Former Green Bay Packer Bill Schroeder, who graciously told his story of overcoming adversity to the audience, handed the Council’s nine scholarships to post-secondary students. Our final 60th anniversary event at the Madison Children’s Museum, was a fun, tactile way to enjoy and play with the exhibits. At this event, we presented our top awards, Louis Seidita Award, the Exceptional Accommodation Award, and the Outstanding Legislative Partners Award.

Relive these moments as you read our annual report or experience them for the first time as you peruse the information included here. It was a fun, busy and exciting year as we celebrated together!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Zenchenko".

Chris Zenchenko
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Loretta Himmelsbach".

Loretta Himmelsbach
Executive Director

Expanding access to information through technology

A redesigned Council website makes finding vision information and resources simpler and less time consuming. We added an extensive and easy-to-access Information and Referral section where individuals can learn about caregivers, healthy vision, support groups, employment, adaptive technology equipment, educational resources, and much more.

We launched our first educational webinars “Eat Wise for Healthy Eyes” and “10 Top Websites for People who are Blind or Visually Impaired” in 2012. Each program drew professionals who work with adults as well as individuals who live with partial or complete vision loss.

This year, we introduced “On Sight,” a monthly electronic newsletter that keeps supporters, friends, donors and volunteers connected to the Council. To increase its accessibility, we also provide this publication in audio format.

Through our Facebook page, we share updates on timely vision research, tips for healthy vision, new adaptive items from the Sharper Vision Store, event announcements and invitations, and inspiring stories about individuals who have overcome the barrier of vision loss to pursue their personal and professional dreams.



With our redesigned website, it's easier than ever to access numerous vision resources and read Council publications.

“On Sight” is a free, monthly e-newsletter that connects constituents with Council programs, events and updates.

Council webinars are free and full of helpful information about vision health and how to live well with vision loss.



Our Facebook page allows us to share timely information, vision research updates, inspiring personal stories, and event invitations.



Expanding educational opportunities through legislative advocacy

Legislative advocacy is the cornerstone upon which the Council was founded in 1952. In 2012, our 60th anniversary year, we celebrated not only our history but also the passage of the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act of Wisconsin.

This legislation requires publishers to make textbooks and other educational materials available in alternative formats to college and university students with print-related disabilities. We spearheaded this bill and worked collaboratively with legislators, publishers and numerous supporting organizations, including the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, Disability Rights Wisconsin, and the State of Wisconsin Council on Veterans Programs.

Representative Joe Knilans, who helped introduce this legislation, commented, "I am very proud to be a leader on this bi-partisan proposal. I believe the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act of Wisconsin is ultimately a bill that will set the ground work to create future jobs for this state."

Our hope is that this legislation will provide a nationwide model for other states to provide accessible materials for post-secondary students, including veterans.



The Sharper Vision Store contains hundreds of assistive products that make everyday tasks easier and safer.

Expanding the ability to live safely and independently at home

The Sharper Vision Store, located at 754 Williamson Street in Madison, carries more than 1,400 products for individuals with blindness, vision impairment or changing vision. Consumers can find clocks and watches, phones, sunglasses, modern technology, lighting, magnifiers, kitchen utensils, games and items to enhance healthy living. No matter where individuals live in Wisconsin, we are happy to help them find the right product for the right task.



A telephone with helpful details like larger numerals helps ensure that callers can stay connected to friends, family and community resources.

Satisfied store customer Barbara Stark commented, "The Sharper Vision Store's reasonable prices and excellent customer service really impress me. Store staff are so knowledgeable and helpful, and they can tailor products to my needs."

In 2012, we helped 2,200 individuals find products that promote independence.

Expanding educational horizons for people of all ages

Kelsi Watters of Cameron, Wisconsin, was delighted when she received a Council scholarship in 2012. She knew this financial support would help her pursue her goal to become a religious counselor. After a lot of research and soul searching, Kelsi decided to attend Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota.

To prepare for college, Kelsi and her vision and mobility specialist had many long talks about the opportunities and responsibilities involved. She familiarized herself with certain places on campus, like the chapel, dorm, dining room, and her classrooms. "It was important for me to negotiate the campus sidewalks because they are shaped more like the spokes of a wheel than like the more typical straight sidewalks."

Kelsi is the first student without vision to attend Saint Mary's in about 20 years. "I don't consider myself 'blind.' I consider myself a person without vision." She feels that the term "blind" implies that one is not paying attention or being open to all the possibilities that exist in spite of one's vision loss.

To help her with the academic dimension of college life, Kelsi receives classroom materials in a format that is accessible for her, and she meets regularly with the disability services coordinator. Teachers and students e-mail WORD documents to her so she can convert them to her BrailleNote.

In addition to her class load and working at the university switchboard, Kelsi is involved in service groups on campus, the Liturgical Choir, and her dorm's Living/Learning Community.

At first glance, you would never know that **Dora Kuehner** is 101 years old. Her smile is bright; her gestures are full of energy and enthusiasm; and her eyes light up when you engage her in conversation—especially when the topic is her trusty iPad.

A gift from family members, the iPad has made it possible for Dora to continue to enjoy some pastimes that are precious to her—reading the Bible daily and staying connected with the world through her local newspaper which she used to receive in print format until it became too difficult to read. With assistance from the Council's Vision Rehabilitation Teacher, Jean Kalscheur, Dora can now access the newspaper online. Dora commented, "It makes me feel so happy to be able to read the paper this way. In the past, I often read just the headlines because they were in larger print. Now, I'm reading the news more in depth and enjoying the greater connection with what's going on."

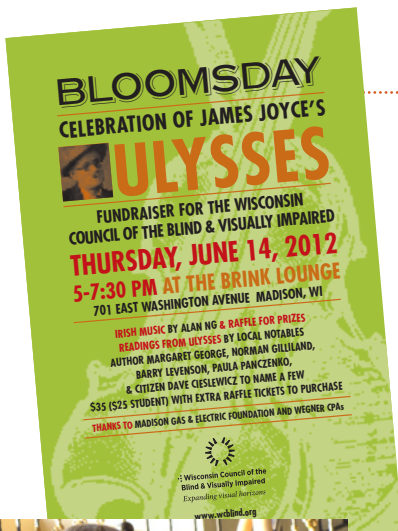
Dora learned about the Council through Marshall Flax, our Certified Low Vision Therapist. He met with Dora for a low vision evaluation after her ophthalmologist told her, "I've done all I can for you." Marshall not only taught her how to maximize her remaining vision (Dora has dry macular degeneration), but he also registered her for the Talking Books program that has provided countless hours of reading pleasure. "Marshall," Dora reflected, "has such empathy and patience. He took the time to understand my particular vision situation, and then, he tried every technique and tool possible to help me see the best I can with the vision I have. I felt like he cared deeply for me as an individual."



Kelsi Watters (third from right in plaid shirt) used a 2012 Council scholarship to begin studies at Saint Mary's University in Minnesota. Her goal is to become a religious counselor.



When she received an iPad from her family, 101-year-old Dora Kuehner contacted the Council to help her access the newspaper online.



*Bloomsgday featured staged readings from James Joyce's masterpiece novel, **Ulysses**, by Madison notables including Norman Gilliland of Wisconsin Public Radio.*

Expanding access to literature and other important information

Individuals with vision loss cherish their independence and ability to continue to enjoy favorite pastimes, including reading. During 2012, we hosted events and workshops that highlighted accessible literature and some of the new technology that makes this possible.

On June 14, we held our second annual "Bloomsday" event to celebrate great literature and increase awareness of the work we do on behalf of individuals who face vision challenges. We recognized the literary gifts and contributions of *Ulysses* author James Joyce who was almost completely blind when he died.

In partnership with Dane Arts, we participated in their crowdfunding project called **power2give**—an online cultural marketplace designed to connect donors with projects that spark their passion. "Bloomin' Literature: Let's Read!" raised more than \$2,500 for us to purchase e-reader devices for our Vision Services staff to do individual training and conduct "Bloomin' Literature" educational events.

"Bloomin' Literature" was made possible thanks to a grant from Dane Arts and additional support from the W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation. We joined forces with the Dane County Library System and the Madison Public Library to provide a hands-on program for librarians, staff from programs and services for older adults, caregivers, parish nurses and professionals who work with individuals who have changing vision. Attendees learned about local library resources, the Talking Books program and digital book options.

Expanding awareness through collaborations and partnerships

In March 2012, we collaborated with the Wisconsin Restaurant Association when they hosted an annual expo in Milwaukee that drew 6,000 attendees from across the state. We developed the new brochure "Welcoming Tips When Diners Have Visual Impairment" to help restaurant owners and staff create a positive dining experience for guests who are blind or visually impaired. At our booth, we featured vision simulators to help attendees better understand the needs of individuals with vision loss. We also included items from the Sharper Vision Store that can enhance lighting and menu reading.

We also partnered with the University of Wisconsin Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences to offer "Macular Degeneration Symposium: Innovations 2012" in October. Age-related macular degeneration robs many older adults of some vision. Education is an important tool for raising awareness of current



The Macular Degeneration Symposium included a variety of exhibits with the latest in video magnifiers, computer aids and other products to help with changing vision.

research, treatments and resources. The event included an expert panel of speakers who discussed important issues, skills and solutions for people with this disease and their families. A variety of exhibits displayed the latest in video magnifiers, computer aids and other products to help individuals live well with changing vision.

More than 450 people from around the state attended the symposium. One participant commented, "This is a fine service for an entire group of people who can otherwise feel isolated. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about resources and people who can be of help."

As part of the Wisconsin Library Association's statewide meeting, we presented the workshop "Reading with Changing Vision" in October. Librarians learned about a variety of issues that challenge people who have vision loss, and we offered a number of resources they can offer their patrons to help them remain connected to reading. The presentation also included demonstrations of e-readers, audio systems like the Talking Books program, and tools for text magnification.



An appreciative audience of more than 450 people listened to experts who discussed the latest advances in and treatments for macular degeneration.

Expanding on our first 60 years



We celebrated the Council's 60th anniversary with a variety of events and programs around the state.

In April, we teamed up with the L. E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire to offer "Living Well with Changing Vision," a free resource fair for the public. The schedule included demonstrations of the library's new accessible technology equipment, information about its Home Delivery Service, and details about the Talking Books Library, guide dogs,

and local vision support resources. Displays of adaptive products and interactive presentations provided additional tips and tools to help individuals remain independent, active and connected.

August found us at Lambeau Field in Green Bay for our annual scholarships and awards presentation. Nine students received a \$1,500 scholarship. Grins were wide as former Green Bay Packer Bill Schroeder handed them out. We presented our Partnership Award to the Association of American Publishers who supported the passage of the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act of Wisconsin. Our Corporate Appreciation Award went to Associated Bank for its generous support of Council events. Pat Gafney and Steve Witcraft were recognized with Outstanding Service awards for the work they have done in the community to make a difference in the lives of people with vision loss.



A Living Well with Changing Vision Resource Fair in Eau Claire included displays of adaptive products, demonstrations of accessible technology and interactive presentations on how to remain independent and connected.



Lambeau Field in Green Bay was the exciting and colorful setting for our annual scholarships and awards program.



"60 Years, Still Young at Heart," the Council's culminating anniversary event at the Madison Children's Museum, found guests connecting with their "inner child."



Play time at the Madison Children's Museum after the Council's 60th anniversary program. Human Gerbil Wheel, anyone?

Our culminating anniversary event, "60 Years, Still Young at Heart," took place at the fun and colorful Madison Children's Museum. The evening included guided tours of the museum, "play time," dinner, and an awards program. We presented the Outstanding Legislative Partners Award to the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System. La Crosse County received our Exceptional Accommodation Award, and Karen Heesen happily accepted the Louis Seidita Award for her longtime volunteerism on behalf of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

As part of our year-long celebration, we encouraged individuals and groups to sponsor a "60 for 60" service project to raise awareness of the Council's programs, services and legislative advocacy. In the spring, students at Madison's Edgewood College provided classmates with free pizza, gave a presentation about our organization's work and distributed educational pieces about vision resources. Participants then made their way to the gym where they formed a human "60." The event planners, who called themselves "The Fab 5" received many positive comments from their peers who appreciated learning about the challenges of vision loss and the help that is available.



Anniversary guests at the Madison Children's Museum enjoyed a variety of colorful and creative activities and games.



Council Board members enjoy a demonstration of an exhibit by museum staff.

Expanding our Legacy Circle allows you to support present and future needs

We are most grateful to our donors who contribute annually. Many of the gifts are modest, but these donors know that it is possible to give a more substantial amount through their estates. Your legacy gift can make a difference, too. Continuing your yearly gift and naming the Council in your will supports the immediate needs of the individuals we serve and helps ensure that people who turn to us in the future will receive the services, training and advocacy that will enrich their lives and enhance their independence. What a life-giving legacy!

You can give to the Legacy Circle through many options.

Here are a few:

- Bequest in your will
- Designation of the Council as a beneficiary in your life insurance, IRA, Annuity or other retirement plan
- Stock gift
- There are many options that allow you to continue to provide for your heirs and still leave a charitable gift. Please discuss these opportunities with your financial planner or attorney.

To make a Legacy Circle gift or for more information, please contact the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired, 754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI, 53703-3546, or call our Fund Development Director at 608-237-8114. Thank you!

LEGACY CIRCLE

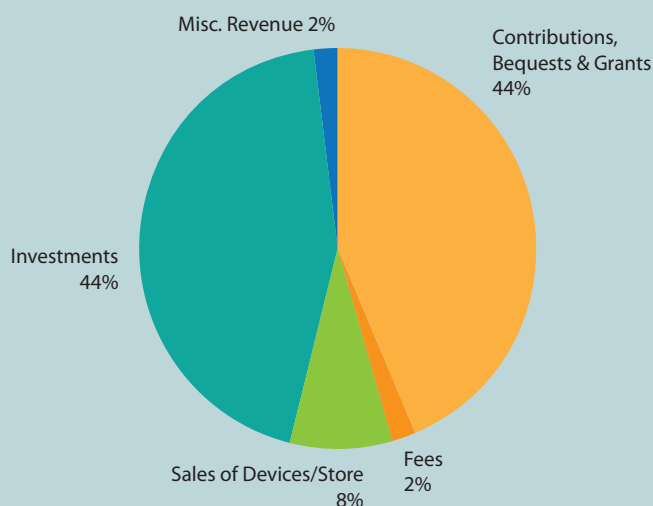
OF THE WISCONSIN
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Here is what Kathy B., one of our donors, said about why she decided to leave a legacy gift to the Council in her estate plans:

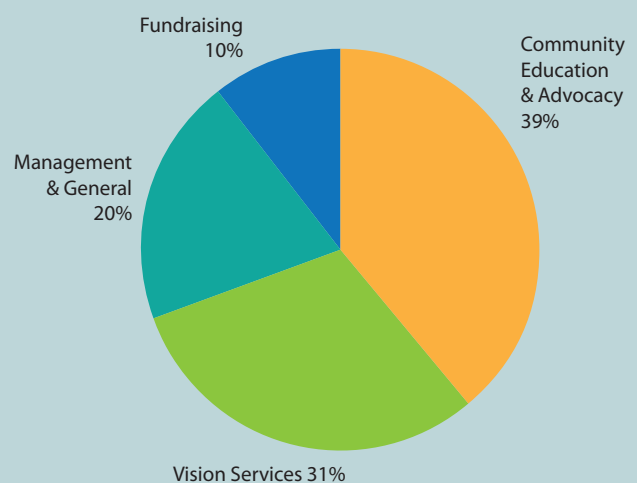
"I feel it is important to invest in the future after I am gone and to give back to the community that serves people who are blind or visually impaired."

Financial Summary

2012 Revenue: \$1,292,829



2012 Expenses: \$1,091,047



The accompanying condensed financial data and graphical presentations as of and for the year ended December 31, 2012 were derived from the consolidated statements which were audited by Smith & Gesteland, LLP. The data and graphical presentations 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.

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Blind & Visually Impaired
Expanding visual horizons

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