

NORTH CAROLINA

Department of Health and Human Resources

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

Turning Challenges into Opportunities

As part of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) strongly supports the department's mission, which is, in collaboration with its partners, to protect the health and safety of all North Carolinians and provide essential human services.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a long and rich history of providing specialized and individualized services to persons who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. Established in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, the NC Lions Foundation, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind and others, DSB offers an array of programs and supportive services funded with Federal, State and County resources. The Division provides services statewide, covering every county in the state, through staff located in seven district offices, through third party agreements with local Department of Social Services offices and County School systems, and through the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.

Vision loss can occur at any time and to anyone, completely overturning life as it was previously known. People may be unable to find a job, to continue to work, to care for themselves, to organize their home, and even function in their normal role within the family. Vision loss can have devastating financial costs in addition to the emotion and psychological costs. Losing one's livelihood to vision loss is shattering. A single year of blindness for a working age American costs the federal government approximately \$12,000, which is less than the income that may have been earned if working.

With services available through programs at DSB, along with their partnership with a variety of other programs across the state, individuals of all ages who experience blindness, significant vision loss or a combination of vision loss and hearing loss can

obtain the required assistance for their needs related to vision. Gaining the skills necessary to remain independent is the foundation for quality of life, and obtaining, maintaining, or returning to work is a vital part of this need to many people.

N.C. DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2013 - 2014

Ed Summers, Chairperson, Recipient of DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services

John Marens, Vice Chairperson, Director of the Client Assistance Program

William Miller, Statewide Independent Living Council

Celeste Hunt, Director of a Project carried out under Section 121 of the Rehabilitation Act

Brenda Savage, N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions

Vacant, Parent Training and Information Center

Verdina Gillette-Simms, Parent of a Child with a Disability

Blair Bergevin, Advocacy Group for Persons with Disabilities

David Barnwell, Representative of Business, Labor, and Industry

Beth Butler, Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

William Tubilleja, Department of Public Instruction

Vacant, Community Rehabilitation Services Provider

Ex-Officio Members

Eddie Weaver, Director, Division of Services for the Blind

Erica McMahon, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Division of Services for the Blind

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

As the Chairperson of the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council, I am honored to present the 2014 Annual Report for the Council and the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind. The theme for this annual report is "Turning Challenges into Opportunities." In these pages, you will find many examples of North Carolinians with visual impairments who have turned challenges into opportunities. In addition, I would like to share a few challenges and opportunities that have been on the top of my mind during my first year on the Council.

I believe that the most pressing employment challenges faced by North Carolinians with visual impairments are rooted in the same challenges faced by all North Carolinians. Specifically, the forces of technology and globalization continue to rapidly change the business environment. At the high end of the labor market, individuals with marketable professional or technical skills are in high demand. The high wages earned by these skilled professionals reflect the fact that the demand for their skills is greater than the supply. However, traditional middle-class jobs have been squeezed as businesses struggle to compete with the lower costs of production found in developing countries. As a result, there is a greater supply of candidates for low-skill low-wage jobs.

Within this challenge lies opportunity for all North Carolinians with visual impairments. For example, North Carolina is home to some of the finest universities in the world. Our universities are capable of equipping youth with visual impairments with professional and technical skills that are marketable to the business community. They also offer adults continuing education opportunities that are highly relevant to the current employment environment. Three of our finest universities are Duke, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina. Between these universities lies the Research Triangle Park which is a world-class research hub. To the west lies Charlotte, this is a major global financial center. These areas are home to many businesses with a strong demand for employees with professional and technical skills.

I think the most pressing challenge for the Council, the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind, and partner agencies is to create the programs, services and environment that enable North Carolinians with visual impairments to realize their full

potential in this global and highly-technical 21st century knowledge economy. I look forward to working with you to make it happen.

Ed Summers, Chairperson

North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I would like to welcome you to the 2013-2014 Annual report of Services for the Blind. As you read this report, you will see this year's theme "Turning Challenges into Opportunities" repeated many times from the blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind consumer success stories on the pages that follow.

Each of these consumers had their own individual challenges, and with the assistance from our highly specialized and trained staff, they turned these challenges into personal opportunities. The opportunities available to our consumers to meet their challenges can be accomplished through the array of services that consumers can receive. Some of the services available include assisting with employment services of job placement, training through post-secondary education and vocational training, services to transition aged students, independent living skills training (including the intensive Rehabilitation Center training), assistive technology, orientation and mobility, and other services.

I hope you enjoy reading about our successes and about the many programs and services this agency offers. Helen Keller sums up this year's theme with the following quote:

"Be of good cheer. Do not think of today's failures, but of the success that may come tomorrow. You have set yourselves a difficult task, but you will succeed if you persevere; and you will find a joy in overcoming obstacles. Remember, no effort that we make to attain something beautiful is ever lost."

Eddie Weaver, Director

N.C. Division of Services for the Blind

2014 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Each year, the Division of Services for the Blind, in cooperation with the Rehabilitation Council, conducts a *Consumer Satisfaction Survey* of people who completed rehabilitation programs for the fiscal year. DSB sent 671 surveys and 133 were returned completed.

Here is what our consumers had to say:

Did DSB staff...

- treat you with courtesy and respect: most or all the time – 98.5 percent;
- telephone calls are returned promptly: most or all of the time – 95.8 percent;
- appointments scheduled in a timely manner: most or all of the time – 93.2 percent

Did your DSB Rehabilitation Counselor...

- provide information about your eye condition and how it may affect your employment: most or all the time – 81.2 percent
- discuss your job skills, abilities and interests with you: most or all the time – 82.7 percent
- if needed, refer you to other programs for assistance: yes – 54.1 percent

(25.6 percent stated such referral was not necessary)

When developing your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)...

- your counselor and you discussed your options together, then you chose your job goal or you chose your job goal alone: 75.2 percent (14.3 percent did not answer the question)
- your counselor provided information about the services you would require to be able to obtain, regain or maintain your job: 33.8 percent (47.4 percent indicated that they researched such information on their own, 8.3 percent did not answer this question, and 9.0 percent stated they were not sure)
- your counselor and you discussed options and you chose the services you required to reach your goal: 57.1 percent (14.3 percent did not answer the question)

Overall, were you satisfied with the services you received from DSB?

- overall rating of experience with the Division as satisfied: 91.5 percent
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DSB VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Persons with blindness or visual impairment who want to work may be eligible for Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation (DSB VR) services. DSB provides vocational rehabilitation to help individuals obtain, maintain, or regain employment. All services provided by this program are geared toward gainful employment that will result in self-support and independence. Eligible persons develop an individualized plan of services to help them reach their vocational goal which may include guidance and counseling, medical, training, and job search and development services that best suit their individual vocational needs.

DSB's *Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors* and specialized *Transition Rehabilitation Counselors* serve as counselors and case managers for persons requesting vocational rehabilitation services. They are responsible for providing and coordinating the services necessary to go to work. Teamwork with specialists in specific areas – DSB *Business Services Representatives, Community Employment Specialists, a Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, Assistive Technology Instructors, a Vocational Evaluator* and various *Rehabilitation Center staff*, as well as *Deaf-Blind Specialists* who work with persons with both blindness and hearing loss – is coordinated through the DSB VR staff. In addition, all support staff in the area and district offices, as well as the team of administrators in the State Office, strive to find ways to assist persons achieve successful employment outcomes. Services are coordinated with DSB *Social Workers for the Blind, Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Nurse Eye Care Consultants* as needed.

Accessible services are planned according to each person's employment goals and needs. Some services provided are based on economic need, while others are provided regardless of income. These services may include:

- *Guidance and Counseling services*, such as vocational/career counseling, job retention counseling, adjustment to vision loss counseling and supportive counseling;
- *Training services*, such as vocational and/or job specific or academic training, orientation and mobility services to teach individuals safe travel skills (use of a sighted guide and white cane, and safety techniques to travel independently), on-the-job training, supported employment or work adjustment job coaching;
- *Independent living training* at the residential training DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind or through local staff;

- *Assistive technology* required for the vocational goal, such as low-vision evaluations and equipment purchase, assistive technology evaluations and purchase of equipment, video magnification (CCTV) evaluations, or training in use of the equipment either locally or at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind;
- *School to work services*, such as counseling with students beginning at age 14 as they plan their future and providing the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) program at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, Youth Mini-Centers, various specialized programming for youth;
- *Job placement services*, such as job matching, job search skills training, work experiences, job modification, and follow-up services; and
- *Medical services* that are required for eligible persons to obtain, maintain, or regain employment, such as diagnostic eye examinations, eye glasses or other types of corrective lens, eye treatment, eye care education and eye surgery.

DSB VR Business Development and Placement Services

To improve the employment outcomes of persons with blindness, visual impairments, or deaf-blindness, DSB supports the dual customer approach – consumers *AND* businesses are welcomed as customers of DSB services. Business services, such as work observations, on-the-job training, and job modifications address the recruiting and hiring needs of employers with attention to supporting businesses' bottom lines.

A major initiative over the past year has been to increase the number of Unpaid Work Experiences provided to consumers in an effort to increase a client's work experience which would positively affect their resume and job application appearance, general confidence in their ability to work, opportunities to meet and work with area employers, knowledge of the world of work and how they fit into it as well as working knowledge of their assistive technology, orientation and mobility skills, and other supports that may be used by them in the workplace to increase success. This program has been used widely by the DSB Transition Program, and its use continues to increase among the adult population and has met with much success. Of direct job placements made, 14% were done through the use of work experiences. Clients have reported that they have gained confidence and valuable work experience that has helped to shape their job goal and for some, has resulted in gainful employment. This is a tool that will continue to be used to assist clients in meeting their goals.

DSB VR OUTCOMES FOR FY 2014:

- **DSB has achieved 560 successful employment closures**
- **70% who exited the VR program after receiving services achieved successful employment.**
- **98.5% people entered wage earning employment.**
- **Over 10% entered employment as a result of DSB VR direct involvement with community employers through the DSB Business Services Program.**
- **\$8.79 per hour average earned income.**
- **\$ 10 million-plus in earned income returned to the economy.**
- **\$ 1.5 million approximated income taxes paid.**
- **\$ 1.34 million in Social Security taxes paid as a result of this income.**

Unpaid Work Experiences and Internships are training tools that can provide unique opportunities to place consumers in positions with businesses, permitting the individual consumer an opportunity to gain valuable work skills and the business an opportunity to consider the individual for employment.

Internships- The Perfect Tool for Success

Crystal Fulp tells her own story as a VR Consumer

“ I’ve been working with the North Carolina Services for the Blind (NC DSB) Vocational Rehabilitation program for the last eight years. I know that sounds like a long time, but when you’re living in it, eight years goes by pretty quickly. I began working with them in high school. In fact, my Social Worker for the Blind referred me to them when she discovered that my dream was to go to college. You see, I’m from a small town and never really believed that college was in the cards for me. College is challenging when you’re a normally functioning person, but I thought college for someone like me (visually impaired) was next to impossible. In short, I thought it was a pipe dream; however, my Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor from DSB soon changed my point of view....

I’ve always been a very goal-driven person. I set both short and long-term goals and then I work hard to achieve them, however, I was all but prepared to take college completely off the table for many reasons. For one, college is expensive. A college education does not come without a heavy expense, and I knew I couldn’t handle that on my own. Other issues for me were assistive technology and mobility. Assistive

technology is a must have for anyone with a disability, but it also comes with a high cost. Mobility was another big issue for me, of course it was the lesser of the other two evils, but I was concerned about it nonetheless. For me, those issues represented a trinity of challenges that I never thought I could overcome.

I realize that these issues seem small and that everyone has to deal with them, but I didn't think I could overcome them, which is why I'm glad my first Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor helped me to believe otherwise. She was a very patient and compassionate woman who really seemed to empathize with me on a meaningful level. That isn't something that one encounters very often, so it's wonderful when they do. She truly made me believe that those obstacles could be overcome. She educated me on the benefits that a relationship with NC DSB had to offer me. Not only would they provide financial support (for school and assistive technology), but they would also connect me with the services that I needed to become successful (orientation and mobility services). The only thing I had to do in return was to follow their instructions and work towards sustainable, full-time employment. I was absolutely ecstatic! That simple conversation marked a huge turning point in my life because it was the first time that I really believed that things could be different for me, that I could be successful.

Now, eight years later, I can say that I'm in a really good place. With DSB's constant support I was able to complete college and landed a wonderful internship in the Human Resources department at Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind. This was yet another turning point for me because the internship was huge for me both professionally and personally. Not only was I able to grow and develop as a professional, but I was able to do it with people who truly understood my challenges and helped me reach my fullest potential. When my internship concluded, the organization went on to offer me a full-time position. It was the culmination of everyone's hard work (both mine and DSB's), but it was also only the beginning.

I know that reaching out to state and government agencies is never easy, but NC DSB is not like any other agency I've ever encountered. These people truly care and will help you reach your potential as long as you meet them halfway and do your fair share.

This is an agency that you can share your dreams, hopes and fears with in a safe environment that is free from judgment. They also teach you that anyone who puts in the work can be a success. Just remember that success is measured in many different ways, so, as long as you achieve your goals and dreams, then you've become successful."

More VR Examples of Success

Shannon, Customer Service Representative, Hewlett Packard

Shannon's beautiful smile reflects a happiness that comes from many years of hard work and dedication to achieving her goal. Shannon is now 26 years old and has been working with DSB through the Transition Program since 2002 when she was only 14 years old. She attended Guilford County Schools and was an active participant in the DSB VR Transition Program over the years participating in Youth Mini-Centers, Job Clubs and Workshops, the summer programs at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, and various Unpaid Work Experiences as well as additional transition specific activities.

When working with the Youth Mini-Center in her local area and to a greater degree with the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, Shannon participated in classes and activities structured to assist her with her study skills, independent living skills, assistive technology and Braille skills as well as career/job development skills to assist her as she made the transition to live on her own as an employed individual. Shannon worked in an Unpaid Work Experience at the NC Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped where she learned to perfect her customer service and computer skills. While there, they continued to give her opportunities to learn new tasks as she was able and expressed interest. All these programs were structured to assist Shannon in obtaining her independence and the work skills needed to live her dreams of becoming an independent and self-sufficient young lady.

Shannon entered college and career specific training with the assistance and counseling and guidance of DSB staff and services and with the use of various assistive technology equipment and orientation and mobility training. She had many challenges along the

way with her own eye health, her family dynamics and otherwise, but she did not let any of that keep her from pursuing her goal.

Shannon worked diligently throughout her academic training, job training and DSB work experiences. Teachers and employers all reported to DSB VR staff that they were very impressed with Shannon's work and her friendly demeanor with staff and others. In early September, Shannon pursued an opportunity through Hewlett Packard (HP) that was afforded to her through her graduation from the Customer Service Program at the Statler Institute as sponsored through DSB. Shannon used all of the skills she learned while working with DSB, inside and outside of the classroom, to reach her goal. With the assistance of the DSB VR Program Services, her DSB Counselor, Community Employment Specialist and the Statler Training Center, Shannon was hired by HP in El Paso, Texas, where she continues to be successfully employed today!

Letter from a DSB VR Consumer:

"DSB has supported me in achieving my educational goals. My first DSB counselor, Sandy Foster, provided me resources such as the adjustment to blindness program at the Governor Morehead School (Rehabilitation Center for the Blind) in Raleigh. While in the program at GMS, I worked very closely with the staff members and other professionals who provided services and/or classes. Because of the exposure to the many opportunities for blind and visually impaired persons, as it pertains to employment and/or careers, I was able to define the goals I wanted to set for myself. I was introduced to assistive technology that best suited my individual needs. The training I received; training with JAWS, the college prep program, self-awareness-advocacy, etc., helped prepare me for the obstacles I would have to overcome in college as a person with a visual impairment.

I also worked very closely with Paul Loveall (former Assistive Technology Consultant) in identifying assistive technologies that would meet my needs as a college student. He was more than helpful whenever I had a problem with my software or hardware. He was able to identify problems with a computer or software that could cause problems

with screen readers and address the problem before the software or hardware would be issued.

Erica McMahon, my current DSB counselor, has worked with me for the past 3 years during my time in graduate school. She has been very helpful in providing me with needed equipment, resources and services in the pursuit of my degree.

Erica, along with Sandy Foster, stands out to me the most as outstanding counselors. They both have been professional, caring, and personally supportive over the many years I have worked with DSB. If it were not for DSB, I'm not sure what I would be doing now.

I will be graduating on December 11, 2014 with a Master of Science degree and an Educational Specialist degree in College Counseling and Student Development in Higher Education. I'm currently working with DSB in my employment search and am following up on some job leads."

Best regards,

John E. Dyson, MS/Ed.S

DSB ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

There are six Assistive Technology (AT) Consultants and one Rehabilitation Engineer who are located across the state in the district offices to provide technology assessments and services in a person's job site, school setting, or home. Four Assistive Technology Instructors are available to provide small group instruction and assistance to individuals across the state. Modifications may include making a change in lighting, adapting telephones, installing safety measures, adapting computer equipment and Braille displays. Services are provided until the best modification is found and the individual is capable of performing the tasks needed.

Technology Resource Center: Located at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is the Technology Resource Center, which has adaptive equipment for large print, speech, and

Braille access. The Center has equipment such as computers, software, scanners, a variety of closed circuit TVs, and Braille equipment that are available for demonstration and evaluation. The Center provides training on the use of adaptive technology.

Rehabilitation Engineering Services provide services to persons who require AT to be successful in post-secondary training, to obtain jobs where modification is required, or to maintain jobs that require modification or modification updates. These services are made available to program participants who require AT to achieve employment outcomes. Each office has a selection of equipment for evaluation and training purposes. The AT Consultants conduct assessments, recommend equipment, facilitate the purchase procedure, deliver and set up the equipment either in the home or at a job, and follow up to make sure the equipment is being used as designed. The AT Instructors are available to guide persons in learning the maximum operation of the adaptive equipment.

DSB VR Assistive Technology Outcomes for FY2014

- 571 persons were served by the Assistive Technology program

DSB AT Supports Success Story Beyond Expectation

This year, Tyrone has achieved his highest aspiration...he has passed the Bar! He is now Attorney Tyrone Davis! However, it did not all happen overnight. Although he has been legally blind since the age of nine, he has never hesitated to pursue his goals. Tyrone has worked with DSB since 1998 as a high school student in Forsyth County. Despite his vision loss, he ran cross-country and track in high school, and received a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Masters of Public Administration from North Carolina State University. Through constant encouragement and strong support from his family and his DSB VR Counselor, he went on to obtain his law degree through the Elon University School of Law. He developed an interest in environmental issues during his time as an undergraduate, which led to a fellowship with the Environmental Defense Fund in 2010, placing him at Elizabeth City State University. Tyrone's intention was to help the university reduce its energy use and greenhouse gas

emissions through a variety of energy efficiency projects. His recommendations while at the University showed them how to achieve savings of more than \$31,000 a year, resulting in nearly 200 metric tons of carbon emissions reductions annually.

Tyrone gives a lot of credit for his success to the Assistive Technology he was given through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program with DSB. He states that without this technology he would not have been able to access his textbooks and various other school-related communications and assignments. Tyrone also received tuition and fees assistance as an undergraduate student, Orientation and Mobility services which assists those that are blind or visually impaired and wish to travel independently and safely in any environment as well as college search and job search services. In February of this year, Tyrone was invited by First Lady Michelle Obama to sit in the First Lady's Box Seats at the Presidential State of the Union address.

In an interview with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Tyrone explained why he was invited to attend the State of the Union address:

"The Council on Environmental Quality was looking for possible stories to highlight, and EDF passed along a group of Climate Corps stories, including mine," Davis said. "The Council thought my experience as a fellow with Elizabeth City State University in 2010 aligned with some of the President's themes for the State of the Union. Last Friday I received a call inviting me to be one of the First Lady's guests at the address. It was unreal to hear those words. I'm thinking, 'I'm free for this!'"

Tyrone obviously is not finished making his mark on the world and DSB is proud to be a small but an instrumental part of his great success. We look forward to hearing about more of his accomplishments in the future.

DSB BUSINESS ENTERPRISES PROGRAM

Gross sales from all foodservice facilities amounted to \$10,386,387 during fiscal year 2014; for fiscal year 2013, total sales were \$10,860,608. The gross profit percentage for this year was 58.3% compared to 56.1% for last year. Net proceeds paid to operators totaled \$2,991,153 during this period compared to \$2,819,035 paid during

2013. Guaranteed Minimum Return for the year was \$58,163 compared to \$41,536 for 2013.

During this state fiscal year a minor renovation was completed at the Gaston County Courthouse and a major renovation was completed at the I-40 Johnston County Rest Area. The new Dix Grill facility was opened. Vending machines were installed at the 82nd Headquarters at Fort Bragg and the Granville and Iredell County Rest Area facilities.

There were vacancies at the Winston-Salem and Raleigh Federal Buildings, Mount Mitchell Restaurant, Spruce Pines Correctional Center, the Mecklenburg County Courthouse and DSS, the Davidson County Rest Area, the Agriculture, Albemarle, Century Center, Revenue, and National Guard Headquarters, ESC/Kendall Complex and Dix Grill facilities in Raleigh. Six operators entered the program, and four left for a total of 71 operators at the end of the fiscal year. There were 80 facilities at the end of SFY 13/14.

BE Operator Sharon has been the operator at the Winston-Salem Federal Building since Nov. 2013. DSB is in the process of installing our first Micro Mart (MM) at her facility. The MM concept allows more products to be offered than just a standard vending machine location. This is more of a convenience store set-up and customers can pick up and pay for their product without an actual cashier or Blind Operator on site. Of course this concept is only viable in very secure environments such as the Federal Building. Vending repairs were \$83,948 for fiscal year 2013 compared to \$104,847 for the same period last year.

DSB SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION SERVICES

School to Work Transition Services is a coordinated set of services provided to high school students with vision disabilities by a DSB VR counselor designed for successful movement from secondary school, to post-school activities, to successful employment outcomes. Services can start as early as age 14 and may include vocational counseling, career exploration, postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated

employment (including supported employment), independent living, or community participation. Services are coordinated to meet the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and include counseling, community experiences, development of plans for employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

DSB Transition services are available to all students with visual disabilities in North Carolina. In 13 school systems, specialized third-party agreements have been established, and specialized programs are in place to serve students at Governor Morehead School for the Blind and for Durham County Schools. These programs provide a DSB VR Counselor and Community Employment Specialist trained to work with students as well as with school systems to enhance the students' opportunities in their home communities. These students participate in activities such as summer jobs, World of Work (WOW) internships and other summer programs, available mini-centers for learning independent living skills, recreation programs that included learning to surf, kayaking or canoe trip with overnight campout. Students in transition programs have input in the type of summer program that are developed in their community through the programs' career clubs that meet throughout the year.

Students who require education after high school to reach their vocational goal receive assistance from a DSB VR counselor in planning and obtaining this training. The counselor can assist in locating a vocational or post-secondary training site with classes to prepare them for their job goal, in identifying financial resources to cover part or all of the costs of the training, possibly including financial assistance from DSB, and in obtaining assistive technology that will be required to complete the training. The counselor continues to work with the student throughout the post-secondary program to ensure success.

Students planning to go to work after high school receive assistance in job exploration, job seeking, job development and placement from the DSB community employment specialist and counselor. If the student requires extra one-to-one assistance,

specialized job seeking and training programs such as community-based work adjustment or supported employment is available to help in many of the cases.

DSB Transition Services include summer programs for students who are blind or visually impaired in collaboration with DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind's Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital for Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) programs in Raleigh. This program includes offers three focus areas: a World of Work (WOW) work internship program, training on independent living skills and career exploration for younger youth, and a college preparation program for older students.

The WOW program provided paid internships in jobs in which the student expressed an interest. The SAVVY program provided an opportunity to explore career interests, as well as specialized classes in Braille, safe travel, technology, and daily living skills. The college prep program included topics such as how to be a better advocate for themselves, visits to a disability service office both at a four-year college and a community college, introduction to various forms of assistive technology that could be useful to them while in college, information about different learning styles and study skills, and introduction to some daily living skills needed to survive in a dorm setting. The Mini-Centers in the students' home communities were the result of collaboration between transition staff and the independent living staff, with assistance from orientation and mobility staff and assistive technology personnel. The program included basic cooking, which included developing a shopping list and the purchase of the food and preparation; budgeting; doing laundry; use of public transportation systems; and information about self-advocacy.

The goal of the transition program is to work with the student as early as possible to assist him/her in the development of independence and a career path of his/her choice, and to be successful in reaching his/her goal of competitive, integrated employment.

DSB VR School to Work Transition Outcomes:

Total Students ages 14-24 active with DSB: 511

Total Students in the specialized Transition Programs: 268

Students in summer work experiences and training programs: 48

DSB SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported Employment is designed for persons with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred. With the assistance of supported employment services, these persons are able to obtain competitive work in integrated work settings, receive specialized on-site training to learn the job, and then have ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment is a way to move people from dependence on a service delivery system to independence via competitive employment.

DSB VR program provides supported employment services for the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment. Services include assessment, direct job placement, intensive individualized on-site job training and coaching, and extended follow-up on the job site with the person and the employer to ensure a good job match. Supported Employment services are purchased from 7 private non-profit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) serving all 100 counties in North Carolina. *Job coaches* are employed by the facilities to provide specialized on-site training to assist the employee with a disability in learning and performing the job. The job coaches work with the employer for training of their staff for development of *natural supports* for these persons at the job site. Natural supports are provided by supervisors and co-workers, and include such things as mentoring, friendships, socializing at breaks and/or after work, providing feedback on job performance, or learning a new skill when required. These natural supports are particularly effective enhancing the social integration between the employee with a disability and his/her co-workers and supervisor. Natural supports are more permanent, consistently and readily available, and greatly facilitate long-term job retention.

DSB VR Supported Employment Outcomes for FY2013

- 7 individuals received services in community-based assessments, job development, placement, job coaching and training;
 - 5 individuals were placed in competitive, integrated employment and are continuing in successful employment.
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DSB COMMUNITY-BASED WORK ADJUSTMENT

The N.C. Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) created a community-based work adjustment training program in 2010 with services purchased from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). It is an outcome-based program involving a brief situational or community-based assessment, work adjustment plan development, job placement services, and job coaching services.

This program is designed for eligible persons who are ready to go to work but require intensive job placement services and initial on-the-job supports to be successful in employment. All services such as medical, adjustment to blindness, low vision and access technology, safe travel skills training (outside learning safe travel at the job site), and training services must be completed prior to referral for this service.

This program does not provide extended services, such as those provided through a Supported Employment (SE) program. Community-based employment is competitive integrated employment with employers in the community and is outside any type of community rehabilitation facility.

DSB REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND & EVALUATION UNIT

The North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB) and Evaluation Unit are located on the campus of the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. Consumers at RCB receive the opportunity to participate in assessments of their rehabilitation needs, general vocational evaluations and hands-on training to help them develop personal and pre-vocational goals and skills needed to obtain, regain and maintain employment as well as increase independent living skills. Evaluation and skills training areas available at RCB include specialized vocational and psychological testing, work readiness skills, low vision services, assistive technology assessments and training in the use of adaptive equipment, personal and home management skills, safe travel

skills, recreation therapy, leisure education, and community awareness and integration among others.

DSB Evaluation Unit Result

- 75 Total consumers received EU services
 - 50 General evaluations
 - 14 Small business stand evaluations (BEP)
 - 7 College evaluations
 - 2 Psychological-only evaluations
 - 2 Vocational-only evaluations
 - 0 Other
-

DSB Rehabilitation Center Results

- 101 VR and ILR eligible individuals received adjustment to blindness training;
- 31 High school students were provided transitional services through the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) College Prep, Transition and World of Work (WOW) programs.

TRAININGS

New Employee Sensitivity Training

In November 2013, nine new DSB employees participated in a one week training at the DSB Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. This group was small in number due to the recent hiring freeze. The new employees were provided the opportunity to experience aspects of the Center's training programs and were exposed to the skills essential for working with persons with a visual impairment. The skills training included areas such as home management, resources for individuals who are blind, orientation and mobility, Braille, adaptive computer usage, and recreation therapy. Sessions on the psychological effects of visual impairment, diabetes, low vision concerns and adaptations, issues related to deaf-blindness, and business enterprise were also provided during this training. Employees resided in a dormitory on the historical Governor Morehead School campus and engaged in campus and community activities of choice.

Window-Eyes

DSB sponsored a two-day Window-Eyes training for seven RCB teachers and staff in

January 2014. The training was instructed by John Lee of Outside Touch Inc. The initial training provided foundational knowledge and an introduction to Window-Eyes with an overview of the system requirements, control panels, desktop navigation, Windows Explorer and Internet Explorer. A review of Braille displays was also included. A two day Windows-Eyes advance training was scheduled for the Assistive Technology staff in November 2014. The training was instructed by Marc Solomon of AI Squared, formerly G.W. Micro.

Annual RCB Staff In-Service

During the week of June 9-11, 2014, on three afternoons, RCB teachers Janet Perez, Assistive Technology, Cheryl Bitting, Assistive Technology, Miriam Dixon, Braille Education and Daria Reilly Consumer Education, presented Technology In-service training for 23 RCB staff members. The training sessions included an introduction to Braille technology, screen reader basics, screen reader internet basics, iPad accessibility basics, Apple apps, and overview of reading devices. Staff were also provided time for exploration and independent practice.

The following week of June 16-19, 2014 34 RCB staff members attended the Annual In-service and Medical Update training located on the historical Governor Morehead School campus. The Medical Update on Eye Conditions presentation was provided by Dr. Chamblee, Medical Consultant for DSB. A session on Eye Prosthetics was presented by Anna Boyd Jefferson, Ocularist and owner of Carolina Eye Prosthetics. Faye Trip, Occupational Therapist from Duke Eye Center did a presentation on Bioptics. DSB and RCB staff also presented sessions on several topics including Mental Health Issues, Factors Influencing Readability, Orientation & Mobility Update, Role of the Interpreter, Case Work Documentation and World Work Trends.

Acquisitions

The RCB has expanded the Braille education curriculum by adding a Braille Technology class to the class schedule. New equipment has been purchased to include Braille note takers, refreshable Braille displays for the classrooms and computer and Braille labs.

Consumers enrolled in Internet and Braille Technology classes are advancing their braille and technology skills by using refreshable Braille displays and Braille note takers to communicate effectively and stay competitive in the 21st century. Students are learning to read and/or create various documents (resumes, cover letters, college assignments, recipes), access websites, send email, and enjoy reading books from accessible online libraries, such as Bookshare and BARD (Braille and Audio Reading download) and to pair this Braille technology with iOS devices.

SAVVY

Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth

The SAVVY theme for the summer of 2014 was "Be the Change" short for the full theme of "Be the change that you want to be!" This theme empowered the teens and promoted the program ideals for the Transition, College Prep and World of Work programs. In all, 29 students participated in work opportunities in the community, classes in Independent Living Skills, writing, Braille and technology skills, assisting them in their career path to achieving their own dreams and future goals. The teens also participated in a variety of workshops and recreational activities such as skits and role playing, swimming, horseback riding, a day trip to Kure Beach, and a visit to the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher. Guest speakers for the workshops represented Disability Rights of North Carolina and Interact of Wake County.

An effort that expanded opportunities for our college prep students was the creation of a SAVVY Assistant Technology Assistant (ATA). This work exploration experience gave a college student who is blind the opportunity to develop leadership abilities by serving as an Assistive Technology Assistant. The ATA also practiced independent living skills by staying in an apartment on campus. This is a position that we hope to continue next summer.

College Prep

Twenty-two RCB consumers took the College Prep class during 2013-2014. Eleven of these students are currently enrolled in various institutions (UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Pembroke, Central Piedmont Community College, Wake Technical Community College, Forsyth Technical Community College, Pitt Community College, and Rockingham Community College).

In addition to developing the skills, habits, and mindsets needed to be successful in college, the college prep class also took field trips to North Carolina Central University and North Carolina State University. On October 16, 2013, College Prep students and chaperones participated in the STEM Career Showcase for Students with Disabilities held at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. The event was co-sponsored by the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and SAS, a business analytics software and services company. The event provided the students with an opportunity to connect with role models. A video of this event can be viewed

at: http://www.livestream.com/naturalsciences/video?clipId=pla_3dd2bb51-6a95-4dd1-8a5f-b490a2eda75f.

The STEM Career Showcase for Students with Disabilities expanded our students' perception of what is possible. Our students shared that they were challenged to take their drive and determination to a higher level.

INTERNSHIPS

RCB applied to the North Carolina State Government Internship Program, Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (YAIIO) for a second year and was afforded the opportunity to host a state government intern for 2014. The Intern Project Job Title was WOW (World of Work) Youth Employment Intern, and the intern worked with 10 high school students who were visually impaired and gaining their first work experience, through the SAVVY WOW program. The intern was responsible for mentoring and monitoring the students work experience to assure there were strategies in place for learning appropriate work skills for future success. The development of a PowerPoint Presentation was the final project by the intern and it afforded the opportunity for each

student to share their work experience with the staff, peers and their parents. RCB's partnership with YAIIO made such a significant impact in service provision, that RCB is submitting another application for the 2015 program.

RCB continued its collaboration with North Carolina Central University's Vision Impairment Training Program by providing observations and internship experience to Orientation and Mobility students. Throughout the year, NCCU O&M students schedule observations with RCB Orientation and Mobility specialist to gain insight into real world application of theory they are studying. Under the supervision of RCB O&M instructors, an intern completed a 350 hour internship consisting of direct service to RCB consumers for university program completion and satisfying Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education (ACVREP) requirements. The intern had previously worked for DSB and brought knowledge of the Division mission along with classroom theory to practice travel training with visually impaired consumers of North Carolina.

RCB also worked in partnership with East Carolina University, where a graduate intern was provided the opportunity to complete a dual internship in Vocational Evaluation and Rehabilitation Counseling from January – May 2014. This internship resulted in offering new insights into assessing consumers in the field of Vocational Evaluation and in assisting a consumer in the development of a "roadmap" to meet her vocational objective through career counseling and various goal mapping exercises.

Collaborations

On September 18-21, 2014 the Wake Federation of the Blind hosted the National Federation of the Blind of N.C. Convention at the Holiday Inn Crabtree in Raleigh, NC. The theme for this year's convention was "Blindness is Not a Capital Offense". Three teachers from the NC Rehabilitation Center for the Blind assisted with the Convention, Miriam Dixon, President of the Wake Federation of the Blind, Leta VanStory and Renee Foster. Three clients presently attending the NC Rehabilitation Center for the Blind attended the Convention. There was a concert by the Carolina Lightning Bluegrass Band led by Alice Zincone of Governor Morehead School for the

Blind. Annual Reports were given by Eddie Weaver, Director of DSB; Barbria Bacon, Director of GMS; Tessa McCarthy NCCU; Carl Keehn, Regional Librarian NCLBPH. NC Rep. Marilyn Avila and US Congressman Rep. David Price addressed the members in attendance. For workshops NC Senator Josh Stein and NC Rep. Duane Hall discussed issues related to blindness and visual impairment; and there were speakers who addressed policy and advocacy; Dr. Peichun Yang of NCSU discussed current research on the full-page Braille display technology, and Miriam Dixon gave updates on the transition to the Unified English Braille Code. A Silent Auction was held the entire weekend. There was a dance in the evening. The DJ was Fred McEachern from Governor Morehead School. There were technology demonstrations by NFB members Johnna Simmons and Jeremiah Rogers as well as Ed Summers with SAS in Research Triangle Park. There was a vendor hall which included Rick Sladich, Trainer for the Business Enterprises Program, and Donna Wiggins from Aids and Appliances. It was a very successful convention.

Residential Life

Door Access Scanners have been added to the Residential dormitories providing a measure of added security to residential life on campus. The dormitory doors now remain locked at all times. The students residing in the dormitories require an access card to gain entrance to the external doors. Access cards are issued upon arrival to the program and are returned upon completion of the program. Cards are also deactivated if students are no longer active in their current program.

DSB INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROGRAM

DSB's 57 Social Workers for the Blind provide services and supports that assist individuals who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind to independently manage their activities of daily living. The following services are available through the Independent Living Services Program to eligible individuals in all 100 counties of the state. Most of the services are provided at no cost to eligible individuals. During SFY 2014, **3,614** individuals received one or more of the following services:

Adjustment Services

Counseling and casework assistance to individuals and their families to help individuals choose, obtain and use needed resources, services and mechanisms of support; basic instruction in activities of daily living, provision of adaptive devices to support independence and facilitate experiences to help individuals adjust to and accept visual limitations.

Individual and Family Adjustment Services

Recommend accommodations and modifications to the environment, housing resource assistance, and information and referral

Health Support Services

Secure needed health services available under Medicaid, Medicare or other agency health programs from public or private agencies; counseling and planning with individuals, families and health providers to assist with continuity of care, help secure admission to health-related facilities

In-Home Assistance (Aides)

In-home assistance such as cleaning, cooking and laundering, may be available to legally blind individuals who require such assistance in order to continue living safely and effectively in their homes. This is a financial needs-based service. Fifty-six individuals received In-Home Aide Services during State Fiscal Year 2014.

Success Story – Working as a Team and Treating the Whole Person

In 2008, the Social Worker for the Blind in Cleveland County received a phone call from Connie C. She had just been to see her eye doctor, and he gave her the news that she was legally blind due to Age-Related Macular Degeneration. She was only 54. As she spoke to the SWB, she began to cry. She started listing all the things that she couldn't do anymore and even expressed that life for her was over. The Social Worker made an appointment to go to her home and complete an assessment and discuss a plan with her. Soon, she started to see a glimmer of hope.

After meeting with Connie and hearing from her what daily tasks had become difficult for her, the Social Worker purchased some low vision equipment for her to use such as a magnifier and adaptive kitchen items. She wanted to learn to use a long cane, so a referral was made to the O&M Specialist. She started walking all over town and was so excited to have some freedom and independence. She walked so much that she noticed many of the walkways were cluttered with weeds or overhanging branches that presented a danger to her and to others. The intersections in town were not marked with the variegated domes which also made it difficult for her to travel. She decided to write a letter to Kings Mountain City Council and express her concerns and asked them to consider cleaning up the walkways and fixing the major intersections so that they would be more accessible. She and her O&M Specialist took pictures of the areas and submitted those with her letter. Within 6 months, the City of Kings Mountain started working on her suggestions. They put in new sidewalks with the domes at the intersections and cleared overgrown bushes along major thoroughfares.

Connie also received help from the Assistive Technology Instructor who assisted her with training her on her computer, taught her how to use Zoomtext, and introduced her to BARD so she could download books. Connie continued to learn and gain more confidence and independence.

The Social Worker spoke to her about going to Camp Dogwood and she loved the idea. She's been a yearly camper ever since! She said, "It was like breaking out of protective custody!" She felt this way because her husband Tommy was very protective of her and didn't want her to get hurt. The first year she attended, she was awarded Rookie of the Year! She says it was the first time she was treated as if she didn't have a disability. She has also gone to the VIP Fishing Tournament for the last 5 years. This year she took 2nd Place on Jennette's Pier representing Cleveland County. Connie says that what she likes best about going to these two events is meeting new people and reconnecting with friends. Connie's husband has grown used to the idea of her being "on the go" all the time and encourages her to keep it up.

She participated in an Independent Living Rehabilitation Program Mini Center a few years ago and now she is a Mini-Center teaching assistant and travels to various Mini Centers in the western counties of North Carolina. As a result, she has become proficient in riding the bus from Gastonia into Charlotte. Connie loves her job and strives to help others who are experiencing vision loss.

Connie is a different person than she was in 2008. She is a confident and independent woman who is not afraid to try anything. She reaches out to people and tells her story in hopes that they will be inspired to reach beyond their comfort zone. Connie says she is more confident and has a better attitude about life. She advocates for herself and encourages others to do the same. "I know what I want and I go after it!" Connie said. Connie remembers that she was grieving back in 2008 when she heard the news about her vision loss. Then she says she got mad, and "when I get mad about something, I do something about it."

DSB MEDICAL EYE CARE PROGRAM

The Medical Eye Care Program provides sponsorship for medical services that prevent blindness or additional loss of vision and procedures and treatments that help restore sight. Services are based on income eligibility and are generally available to those who have no other comparable benefit. During SFY 2014, 2,774 individuals received Medical Eye Care Program services.

Program Achievements:

- **754 eye exams, treatments and/or surgeries sponsored**
- **103 pairs of eyeglasses purchased**
- **951 children screened for amblyopia and other vision defects**
- **126 diabetic education sessions provided**

DSB INDEPENDENT LIVING REHABILITATION (ILR)

The Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR) and Older Blind Programs provide extensive services and supports to help maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence and productivity of individuals with significant vision loss. Independent living

rehabilitation counselors (ILRCs) work as case managers for individuals receiving services. DSB employs 15 ILRCs, all of which hold a Master's Degree in Counseling and understand the psychosocial aspects of progressive vision loss. ILRCs provide direct concrete, tangible services directly to individuals with vision loss in the home or through community based learning-centers known as Mini-Centers. The Mini Center classes keep individuals with vision loss from being institutionalized because they are no longer able to provide for their own needs, in their own homes. Classes are held in senior centers, local churches, or other accessible spaces. Transportation to and from these training opportunities are provided and coordinated by DSB. Mini Centers provide an encouraging, supportive environment for group instruction and peer interaction. Curriculums may include training in the following areas: cooking, daily living skills, Braille, assistive technology, access to printed materials, aids and appliances, community services, safe travel, deaf-blind services, health awareness, advocacy, personal management/self-care, safety, meal preparation, communication, and low vision rehabilitation. Other services provided by the program include: diagnostic and assessment services, adjustment to vision loss counseling, and information and referral services. Extensive independent living skills training may be planned for those who require assistance with money management, home management, computer access, email use, and using a variety of apps to assist accessing printed materials, identifying colors, money identification and so much more. The ILR program collaborates with other specialized agency staff which may include Social Workers for the Blind, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Nurse Eye Care Consultants, Deaf Blind Specialists, AT Specialists / Instructors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to provide a variety of services that help empower individuals to reach their independent living rehabilitation goals. Contact DSB today to see how services can assist you or someone you know with vision loss. Don't let DSB remain a secret! Share the good news with someone who has diabetes.

Our Results

- Consumers served in the Independent Living program (under 55) : 420
- Consumers served in the Older Blind program (over 55) : 723
- Consumers rehabilitated in both programs: 370

DSB 2014 ILR Case of the Year

Ms. Robinson was a referral to the Independent Living Rehabilitation Program from the local Social Worker for the Blind, as a good candidate for mini-center center training. Mini-Centers are classes, held in the local community, designed to teach independent living and adjustment to blindness skills to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired. Because mini centers are formed within local communities around the state, participants can remain in their homes and community without fear of being institutionalized.

Ms. Robinson lost her vision due to diabetic retinopathy, a complication of In addition to vision problems caused by diabetes, she also experienced secondary to her diabetes, hypertension and kidney damage, which causes her to be on dialysis three days a week. Prior to receiving services from DSB, she was at a loss and did not know where to go for assistance. Everything in her life had changed. Things that used to be so simple were now difficult chores. She was unable to read printed material due to the fact diabetes caused her to become legally blind. Shortly after meeting her Independent Living Counselor with Services for the Blind, the residual functional vision that she had was lost, and she could see only light and darkness. Prior to losing her vision, Ms. Robinson was in nursing school and working as a certified nursing aid.

When the independent living rehabilitation counselor met Ms. Robinson, she was staying in an apartment where she had her own room and bathroom but shared the kitchen and living room with roommates that she had not previously known. She desperately wanted to obtain independent living skills so she could move out on her own. She agreed to attend a Mecklenburg county mini-center.

At the time of referral, Ms. Robinson participated in an assessment that helped determine her immediate needs. She also received guidance and counseling to grieve the loss of her vision and independence, orientation and mobility services (to learn to travel independently and safely), and a low vision assessment. During her program, she

received a magnifier (that assisted her with reading until she lost all of her vision). She initially wanted to be able to read her Bible, newspaper ads and CD labels. After she lost the rest of her vision, the Independent Living Counselor educated Ms. Robinson about talking books. She was interested in getting them, so the counselor helped her apply for services from the Library for the Blind where she received digital books and a digital recorder free of charge. This service makes printed materials accessible in audio formats so she is able to listen to her Bible, and other books of interest. She also received information about the radio reading service which broadcasts the readings of various newspapers from across the state and country. Ms. Robinson received aids and appliances that she saw in the Mini-Center that she thought would help her with her independence. Some of the aids she received were a liquid level indicator to let her know when her cup is full, writing guides, which allow her to make lists or to write checks, and many other low-tech items.

After seeing the technology presentation by the Assistive Technology Specialist, she became interested in learning to use the computer with adaptive technology to be able to e-mail her friends. When computers have been a part of your life, losing vision should not separate anyone from reaching out with technology. After being referred for assistive technology instruction to learn how to use the special computer programs and software, she was able to navigate the computer. She then decided to get a new laptop. She was referred to the Assistive Technology specialist so she would have the correct specifications before buying to make sure it would accommodate the special programs needed to make her computer accessible.

After cooking lessons and instruction in the mini-center, Ms. Robinson requested additional cooking lessons in the home. The Independent Living Counselor provided in-home instruction on how to prepare meals using her stove, microwave, electric skillet, crock pot and a George Foreman grill. Prior to learning these skills, she depended on her brother to bring her food.

During one Mini-Center class, there was a presentation about the visually impaired support group sponsored by the DSB Social Worker for the Blind and the Independent

Living Counselor. Ms. Robinson started attending the support group meetings and, as a result felt empowered by others who also had experienced vision loss and were living independently. She quickly became involved and also prepared a meal for the group. She has been very verbal in the group and has given her peers important and relevant information and resources that could help them. As her confidence grew from the services she received from DSB, she became a leader! During one of the support groups, a speaker came in to talk about volunteerism and told about different agencies that were looking for volunteers. Ms. Robinson rose to the challenge and started volunteering at the front desk of one of the organizations, transferring calls and giving callers information about the organization. She then became the president of the visually impaired support group.

Many have seen Ms. Robinson transform into a very confident, capable, encouraging and responsible person. She also started attending another support group for the blind in Mecklenburg County to motivate and assist others who have lost their vision and has become a social butterfly.

As a result of her experience and services with DSB, Ms. Robinson moved into her own apartment and needed to be oriented to her new environment. She needed training on how to travel more independently and get to her mailbox and laundry room. The Independent Living Counselor referred Ms. Robinson to one of DSB's specialized staff, the Orientation and Mobility Specialist, who provided the training necessary to accomplish those goals. Because of her vision loss, she was not able to determine colors of clothing, so the Independent Living Counselor taught her how to use safety pins to develop a labeling and recognition system. Another one of the aids and appliances she received, as a result of a mini center classroom demonstration, was the pen friend labeling device which has compatible laundry labels that are attached to her garments.

She is now able to record the colors and care instructions using the laundry labels. Once information is recorded on labels, using the pen friend, the information is retrieved by placing the pen tip on the label and it repeats what was recorded, like "red

sweater” or “green socks.” The Independent Living Counselor tactilely labeled the washer and dryer at her complex with raised dots and she is now able to do her own laundry by using those dots to operate the washer and dryer by touch.

Ms. Robinson’s goal was to become as independent as possible so this, of course, included the ability to make phone orders and pay her bills by phone, but, she could not remember her credit card number. A label was placed in a notebook with the credit card information recorded using the pen friend she received. When asked for her credit card number, all she has to do is put the tip of the pen on the label and retrieve the recorded information. She was not able to operate her air conditioner and heating unit in her new apartment. The Independent Living Counselor labeled the thermostat using the pen friend so she could determine which button was for heat and which button was for air and how many pushes were needed for the desired temperature. After learning to use the pen friend, Ms. Robinson was able to label her CDs and movies so she could retrieve that information independently. To assist with remembering appointments, the Independent Living Counselor helped her set up a notebook and put labels on pages representing the 12 months of the year. Several other labels were put under the month so she could record multiple appointments in that month and retrieve them. Every week she would see if she had an appointment scheduled by placing the pen friend tip on the label. She was taught how to use the pen friend and a notebook to take with her to the Doctors office to record the appointment dates.

Ms. Robinson became so empowered that she decided to fulfil her lifelong dream of going to college. The Independent Living Counselor connected her with the VR Program within DSB. The VR program is for individuals who desire to return to work in spite of vision loss. A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor assisted Ms. Robinson with navigating through the program which began with an evaluation to determine if the North Carolina Services for the Blind could sponsor her in college. The VR Counselor suggested Ms. Robinson take advantage of the ABLE (Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment) program at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind located on the Governor Morehead campus in Raleigh to better prepare her for the demands of college. The Independent Living Counselor wanted her to initiate the contact with the

vocational rehabilitation counselor as a part of increasing her independence. She was encouraged to continue to work on learning as much about JAWS (popular screen reader developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content or navigating with a mouse; JAWS provides speech and Braille output for the most popular computer applications on your PC) as possible while working with the assistive technology instructor as she would need to be able to access the computer in order to write papers and do research for school. She had her evaluation and the ABLE program was recommended. Ms. Robinson has just recently completed the ABLE program and will be entering Central Piedmont Community College in January, 2015.

DSB DEAF-BLIND SERVICES

Each year the N.C. Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) serves individuals with both vision and hearing loss through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Independent Living Rehabilitation Program. This history of service runs long and deep. Since the inception of the agency in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, DSB has provided support, training, and other services to persons with hearing and vision loss. The goal of services is to allow persons to reach their maximum potential with training and support from the agency. Many times assessments are conducted on persons who are skeptical of services; dealing with the onset of another sensory loss can be overwhelming. DSB employs five Deaf-Blind Specialists who are experts in the field of hearing and vision loss serving every county in North Carolina. This year 355 persons received services. The VR program served 94 persons, the ILR program served 226, and the ILS program served 35 persons that have both a hearing and vision loss. When a person experiences both vision and hearing loss, serious issues and self-doubt arise. Through DSB intervention, empowerment thrives within many instead of feelings of misfortune.

Here are some real stories of DSB intervention to empower the lives of individuals with hearing and vision loss in areas of employment and living independently. Patrick was born with Usher's Syndrome II related to Retinitis Pigmentosa, a progressive genetic disease affecting both hearing and vision. He suffered hearing loss all of his life and in

the last 10 years lost most of his peripheral vision. Patrick lost his job as a cabinet maker because it was unsafe to be around saws. Patrick is considered Deaf-Blind and eligible for the Deaf-Blind Program. He was referred to the Deaf-Blind Specialist in his area, and she completed an assessment of his situation. With the assistance of his Deaf-Blind Specialist, Patrick obtained hearing aids, community inclusion, job searching, assisting with applying for jobs, and finding employment. The Deaf-Blind Specialist also assessed Patrick for the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program resulting in him obtaining a computer, iPhone, and Large Print Keyboard. Patrick's major goal and fervent wish was "I just want to work."

This spring the Deaf-Blind Specialist informed Patrick of positions available at Industries for the Blind in Winston-Salem. The Deaf-Blind Specialist scheduled an appointment with Human Resources, transported Patrick to his appointment and assisted in filling out his application. Patrick performed two different assessments on two different occasions. While the Deaf-Blind Specialist was waiting for Patrick to return from one of the assessments, she heard that a position was available in the optical department. This job is considered competitive employment open to sighted and hearing people as well. Knowing that Patrick had the skill to do this position, the Deaf-Blind Specialist asked the Human Resources Manager if Patrick could apply for that position and do an assessment. The manager granted the request. Patrick took the bull by the horns and did an outstanding job on the assessment. He was offered the job! Patrick's fervent wish was closer to coming true but not yet reached. Two obstacles reared their ugly heads...moving to Winston-Salem and transportation. Careful thought and consideration must go into a visually and hearing impaired person's decision in choosing where to live. Is public transportation available and accessible? Is there a supermarket close by or a drug store or doctor's office? The Deaf-Blind Specialist assisted Patrick in finding an appropriate apartment. She contacted the DSB Social Worker for the Blind to assist him in accessing Special Transit. Through the skills learned previously at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB), accessing public transportation was not a problem for Patrick. The Deaf-Blind Specialist kept thinking of the words any man would aspire to fulfill, "I just want to work." With the assistance of

DSB and the Deaf-Blind Specialist, Patrick's major life goal and fervent wish came true. He is a working man!

The Success Continues!

Rachael is a very busy mom of four who has moderate to severe hearing loss and rapidly deteriorating peripheral vision loss associated with Usher Syndrome II. This Syndrome is a hereditary disease associated with Retinitis Pigmentosa and hearing loss. Throughout life, Rachael has faced many challenges related to her vision and hearing loss including vestibular function and balance issues, and feeling isolated in crowded spaces, since she cannot hear well in populated environments. She also experiences a lack of privacy when she uses the phone or technology, as she shares her husband's email and has to use the cell phone on speaker to hear well enough to converse. Despite these challenges, she remains true to her passions in life: To be a wonderful mom and to write children's books one day.

The Independent Living Counselor sent a referral for the Deaf-Blind Specialist to complete an assessment. When the Deaf-Blind Specialist first met Rachael to conduct a DB Assessment, she was decorating for Christmas. During the assessment, Rachael stated how much it bothers her that she cannot hear her children or the phone at times and that it is frightening when people are standing nearby and she doesn't even know they are there, unnoticed in the darkness of her peripheral loss and silence. When Rachael's back is turned she cannot hear her children's sweet "I love you" or "I'm hungry." During the deaf-blind assessment by the Deaf-Blind Specialist, Rachael was counseled on types of hearing loss, self-advocacy, and how to handle common communication challenges. She was also trained on the use of amplified technology called a Pocket Talker. This device is an assistive listening device that amplifies sound to allow a hard of hearing person to hear conversation and the environment. When Rachael first turned this device on, a bright smile lit up her face. She could hear her daughter typing in the other room, the dog outside, and her son's laughter as he bounced around the Christmas tree. The Deaf-Blind Specialist also educated Rachael

about fall prevention and taught her several techniques and tips to avoid falling. When she was told about the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), her jaw dropped. "Are you saying that I could have my own computer to write my children's books on? I can access the internet without asking for my children to help me?" "Yes, that is exactly what I am saying" the Deaf-Blind Specialist confirmed. While completing the NDBEDP assessment, the technology discussion included iPads, iPhones, features available, accessibility options, software, apps, using the TV as another option for a large screen with the use of HDMI cables, hand held devices, desktops, laptops and then some. Every day DSB assists individuals who are blind, visually impaired and Deaf-Blind with navigating their way back to the world through the use of technology. Recommendations for Rachael were made by the Deaf-Blind Specialist, and Rachael waited patiently for the equipment to arrive. Finally, the Deaf-Blind Specialist received the equipment in her office and made the three hour trip to Rachael's home to deliver her equipment. Rachael was excited to receive an iPad, desktop with a large screen and software that will enable her to use the equipment with ease. Rachael is getting used to her new equipment. She is learning to send emails for the first time in her life, and is beginning to scribble the beginnings of her first children's book. Through the Deaf-Blind Specialist's assistance, Rachael is now empowered to live life more independently and pursue her passion to become an author of children's books.

HOW TO CONTACT DSB

Administration: (866) 222-1546

Office of the Director: (919) 527-6700

Aids and Appliances: (919) 527-6770

Business Enterprises Program: (919) 527-6790

Communications Unit (for materials in alternate format): (919) 527-6760

Evaluation Unit: (919) 527-6800

Independent Living Services: (919) 527-6780

Medical Eye Care Program: (919) 527-6780

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind: (919) 527-6800

Rehabilitation Services: (919) 527-6711

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Deaf/Blind Services

Independent Living Rehabilitation Program

Supported Employment Services

VR Business Services

School to Work Transition Services

Rehabilitation Engineer

Staff Development

Technology Resource Center: (919) 527-6698

DHHS Customer Call Center 1-800-622-7030 for access to a Spanish Interpreter

District Office Locations

Asheville

50 South French Broad Avenue

Asheville, NC 28801

(828) 251-6732

1 (800) 422-1881

Charlotte

5855 Executive Center Drive, Suite 100

Charlotte, NC 28212

(704) 563-4168

1 (800) 422-1895

Fayetteville

225 Green Street

Fayetteville, NC 28301

(910) 486-1582

1 (800) 422-1897

Greenville

404 St. Andrews Drive

Greenville, NC 27834

(252) 355-9016

1 (800) 422-1877

Raleigh

309 Ashe Avenue

Raleigh, NC 27606

(919) 527-6740

1 (800) 422-1871

Wilmington

3240 Burnt Mill Road, Suite 7

Wilmington, NC 28403

(910) 251-5743

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