



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Services for the Blind and State Rehabilitation Council

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

## A Vision of Success

# A Vision of Success



*Services for the Blind*  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

State of North Carolina • Department of Health and Human Services

Division of Services for the Blind and State Rehabilitation Council

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As part of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the 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.

DSB has a long and rich history of providing specialized and individualized services to people who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. Established in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, the N.C. 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. DSB 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, continue to work, care for themselves, organize their home, or even function in their normal role within the family. Vision loss can have devastating financial

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costs, in addition to the emotional 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 that experience blindness, significant vision loss, or a combination of vision loss and hearing loss can obtain the required assistance that relates to their 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 for many people.

***DSB Transition  
Students are  
involved in  
Pre-Employment  
Training through  
a Summer Youth  
Mini Center in  
Pitt County***



## Table of Contents

N.C. DSB, State Rehabilitation Council 2014-15.....	1
Chairperson’s Message .....	2
Director’s Message .....	4
Consumer Satisfaction Survey .....	6
DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services.....	8
Impact of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) .....	12
DSB Assistive Technology .....	22
DSB Business Enterprise Program .....	25
DSB School to Work/Transition Services .....	26
DSB Supported Employment .....	36
Community Based Work Adjustment .....	37
DSB Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Evaluation Unit.....	39
DSB Independent Living Services Program.....	40
DSB Independent Living Rehabilitation Program .....	64
DSB Deaf/Blind Program .....	70
Various Collaborative Efforts.....	72
How to Contact DSB.....	80

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## N.C. DSB State Rehabilitation Council 2014 - 2015

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
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 Skinner	Advocacy Group for People with Disabilities
David Barnwell	Representative of Business, Labor and Industry
William Tubilleja	Department of Public Instruction Community Rehabilitation Services Provider
<b>Ex-Officio Members:</b>	
Eddie Weaver	Director, DSB
Erica McMahon	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, DSB

## State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson's Message

As the Chairperson of the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council, I am honored to present the 2015 Annual Report for the Council and the North Carolina DSB. The theme for this annual report is "A Vision of Success." In these pages, you will find many examples of success, and I would like to point out two themes that are near and dear to my heart. The first theme is technology.

Technology is integrated throughout our 21st century knowledge economy. Technology skills are required for success in the classroom, on the job and in the public sphere. In many cases, it is no longer possible to attend school, apply for a job or function effectively in the public sphere without digital literacy. Within this annual report, you will find many examples in which the North Carolina DSB has enabled citizens with visual impairments to acquire the assistive technology and, more importantly, skills that are necessary for success. However, technology is a tool, just like long canes and braille are tools. By themselves, the tools of blindness do not build successful careers, just like saws and hammers alone do not build houses. The tools of the trade must be employed by an individual with a vision of the future.

I have traveled widely across the United States. I have talked to hundreds of teachers of the visually impaired and scores of parents of children with visual impairments. I hear too many stories of intelligent young people with visual impairments that graduate from the classroom to the couch. Success in

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this 21st century knowledge economy requires many skills beyond academics including communication, collaboration, as well as the ability to define goals for oneself and achieve them. That brings us to the second theme I want to point out, which is transition. Within this annual report, you will find many examples in which young people with visual impairments are gaining the non-academic skills required for success. One splendid example is the change in attitude during the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital for Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) program, where students learn that they are responsible for their own success as well as the most common choices made by successful students.

Finally, as we close the books on 2015, I want to wish a warm and safe holiday season for all consumers, staff and partners. I look forward to working with you in the New Year.

***Ed Summers, Chairperson  
North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind***

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## DSB Director's Message

Welcome to the North Carolina DSB and State Rehabilitation Center Annual Report for 2015. It is my pleasure to introduce you to this Annual Report and to all of the programs and services you will discover in this report. It has been an exciting year for DSB. On March 5, we celebrated our 80th anniversary, continuing to provide excellent and specialized services to the citizens of this great state who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind. DSB was created by the N.C. Legislature after a passionate speech by Helen Keller in January 1935, with support from the North Carolina Lions and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind.

As you will discover, all of our programs continue to have success in meeting the mission of the Division to enable individuals to meet their goals of independence and employment. Please take the opportunity to read the success stories from each individual, and realize there are many more who have reached their goals, as well. I am proud of our well-trained and dedicated staff who assisted our consumers with multiple services that enabled them to reach their personal goals.

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On a personal note, this will be my final comment, since I will be retired as of this report. It has been my pleasure to serve DSB as the Director over the past five years. It has been a dream fulfilled to serve as the Director, and as we look into the future, there are many more opportunities available to us as a result of new legislation from Congress, specifically the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). Various rehabilitation services will be enhanced, particularly in the area of serving the youth in our transition services. As these opportunities occur, our staff will be provided with the tools to assist them in providing the needed services to enable all consumers to achieve their goals.

I wish all the best to all staff and consumers with your personal and professional success.

***Eddie Weaver, Director  
North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind***

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## 2015 Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Each year, the DSB, in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council, conducts a consumer satisfaction survey of people who completed rehabilitation programs for the fiscal year. DSB sent 226 surveys and 53 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 - 100 percent
- Promptly return telephone calls: most or all of the time - 96.2 percent
- Schedule appointments in a timely manner: most or all of the time - 96.2 percent

### Did your DSB Rehabilitation Counselor ...

- Provide information about your eye condition and how it may affect your employment: most or all the time - 81.1 percent
  - Discuss your job skills, abilities and interests with you: most or all the time - 81.1 percent
  - Refer you to other programs for assistance, if needed: yes - 100 percent
  - (1.8 percent stated such referral was not necessary and were therefore not included)
-

## **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: 86.8 percent (7.5 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: 39.6 percent (39.6 percent indicated that they researched such information on their own, 5.7 percent did not answer this question, and 9.4 percent stated they were not sure)
- Your counselor and you discussed options and you chose the services you required to reach your goal: 69.8 percent (7.5 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 – 94.3 percent
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## DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services

People with blindness or visual impairment who want to work may be eligible for DSB 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 people 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 people 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 people with both blindness and hearing loss – is coordinated through the DSB VR staff. In

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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 people 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;
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- **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, and various specialized programming for youth
  - **Job placement services**, such as job matching, job search skills training, work experiences, job modification, and follow-up services
  - **Medical services** that are required for eligible people 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.
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## **DSB VR Business Development and Placement Services**

To improve employment outcomes of people 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 widely used 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 percent were done through the use of work experiences. Consumers reported gaining confidence and valuable work experience that has helped shape their job goal and for some, resulted in gainful employment. This is a tool that will continue assisting consumers in meeting their goals.

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## Impact of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act



President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law on July 22, 2014. The law was passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority (the Senate voted 93-5 and the House of Representatives

voted 415-6). The law loudly speaks in support of quality employment services for those with disabilities, and was noted to reaffirm the ongoing role of American Job Centers and promotes program coordination and alignment of key employment, education, and training programs at the federal, state, local, and regional levels.

WIOA builds on proven practices, such as sector strategies, career pathways, regional economic approaches and work-based training. It also complements and supports the President's Job-Driven Workforce Vision. WIOA increases individuals with disabilities' access to high-quality workforce services and prepares them for competitive integrated employment. Secondary to WIOA, there will be a unified

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state plan that includes core programs like DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services.

Secondary to WIOA, students with disabilities will receive extensive pre-employment transition services, so they can successfully obtain competitive integrated employment. State vocational rehabilitation agencies will set aside at least 15 percent of funding to provide transition services to youth with disabilities, and local workforce development boards may designate a standing committees to assure compliance.

DSB has stepped forward to meet the challenges of WIOA by making the necessary finances available as instructed, and by using BEAM to emphasize the provision of the required Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth and ensure high quality service for all.



## DSB VR Outcomes for FY 2015

- DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services were provided to 2,394 people with blindness or low vision
- DSB has achieved 497 successful employment closures
- Average wages for successfully employed Consumers: \$11.14
- DSB VR assisted 20 Veterans in achieving successful employment
- Eighty-seven VR consumers were supported through sponsorship and assistive technology to participate in Unpaid Work Experiences to prepare them for their chosen profession
- Ninety-eight percent of VR consumers closed successfully entered wage earning employment

**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. These initiatives are supported by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and have proven to be a valuable tool in preparing for successful employment.

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## A Vision of Success

Born in October 1984, Elexis Gillette began working with the DSB in 1988 through the Independent Living Services Program, then began working with the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Transition Program in 1998. This year, DSB was happy to announce the successful employment achievements of Gillette, thereby formally closing his case. Gillette is a USA Paralympic Track and Field athlete, and a three-time Paralympic silver medalist and world record holder in the long jump. Gillette began his career with the United States Olympic Committee, Team USA in 2004. This year, Gillette was named Male Athlete of the year by the USA Track and Field Association!

Gillette is also a motivational speaker and endorsed by top sportswear, technology and insurance companies, and is also the Brand Ambassador for Alexander Mann Solutions. Gillette is currently training for the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro. Due to the nature of sports competitors, Gillette is paid according to his performance and medals won, as well as sponsors that endorse him.

On top of the competitions that Gillette competes in all over the world, he is also partnering with Classrooms Champions and Google Glass. He serves as a mentor to under-privileged students to teach them inclusion, team building, and how to work collaboratively with students who may have differing

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abilities. Each month, Gillette develops a lesson plan that focuses on steps to success, goal setting and more. He then gives students a task and they video chat with him monthly. Gillette states that the most rewarding part of being a Paralympic athlete is providing advice and support, and shedding light on blindness and visual impairment.

Services that were provided to Gillette during his partnership with the agency include guidance and counseling, sponsorship for tuition and fees to East Carolina University, as well as books and supplies, assistive technology evaluation and other assistive devices needed for college, vocational evaluation and services through the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, and career exploration. These services have enabled him to gain the skills needed to work independently.

Gillette uses his experience and training to inspire, educate, and defy expectations. As a Paralympic Athlete and Motivational Speaker, he is responsible for:

- Attending scheduled practice or training sessions
  - Speaking at public engagements and events in person, and via video conference
  - Participating in athletic events or competitive sports, according to established rules and regulations
-



- Exercising or practicing under the direction of athletic trainers or professional coaches to develop skills, improve physical condition, or prepare for competitions
- Maintaining equipment used in a particular sport
- Maintaining optimum physical fitness levels by training regularly, following nutrition plans or consulting with health professionals

Gillette is earning wages comparable to non-disabled workers in his career field. He continues to break down barriers, educate others and advance in his career. Gillette also said he has gathered all of the credentials and visual supports he will need, and no longer requires services from DSB to continue his career.

More information on Gillette and all of his achievements can be found at [\*\*http://www.lexgillette.com/about-lex.php\*\*](http://www.lexgillette.com/about-lex.php)

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## Training & Internships - A First Step to Success

Tevin Price began working with DSB as a transition student in Forsyth County. He has worked with DSB VR transition counselors, Assistive Technology Consultants and Instructors, Community employment specialists and Rehabilitation Center staff. Price was always an excellent student in high school, as well as in college, and has grown in his independence and self-advocacy skills. Price has now graduated with honors, and is engaged in a work opportunity through DSB's On-the-Job Training Program and is looking forward to continued success!



***Tevin Price: University of North Carolina at Greensboro Graduate & On-The-Job Training Intern***

## Others Catch the Vision

Lincoln Jackson is a 48-year-old male with low vision. He is also diagnosed with diabetes and is partially paralyzed on one side, impacting his mobility. He lives at home with his wife and children. Jackson was employed as an appliance salesman when his case was initially opened in 2008. Since then, he has experienced worsening vision, loss of employment and other concerns that impacted his progress toward a successful employment outcome. In 2014, Jackson began to express an interest in learning JAWS so he could access a computer, maintain control of the family's bills and finances, and find employment working from home.

At the time, because of his vision loss and physical disability, he believed that the only employment he could do was from home, which he felt limited his ability to interact with coworkers, be a productive worker, and safely navigate his surroundings. The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB) was recommended for intensive JAWS training and the ABLE program was explained to him.

In April 2015, Jackson was referred to RCB's Evaluation Unit. He found RCB to be a pleasant and helpful environment and agreed to return for an ABLE assessment at the recommendation of staff.

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After meeting the staff at RCB, meeting other consumers with visual impairments and beginning to learn about the possibilities for individuals with visual impairments, his perception of what he was capable of doing began to change. During his Low Vision Evaluation with Nancy Feldkamp, Low Vision Specialist, he learned he had Eccentric View bilaterally, which allowed him to see things and people he couldn't previously see.

Jackson entered the ABLE program in fall 2015 and has consistently worked hard to improve his Eccentric View bilaterally (he recently reported he was able to see himself in the mirror, something he's been unable to do in more than seven years), and practices the skills he learned in his classes. He often uses the computer lab in the dorms at night to practice his keyboarding skills. He also consistently practices trying to use the low vision techniques he learned at the RCB for navigation to become more independent.

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On a recent break home from RCB, he arranged transportation and attended a medical appointment independently, something he hadn't done since becoming ill and losing his vision. Jackson has gone from insisting he could only work at home because there is no way he could manage at work, to believing he is capable of working outside of home, and even wanting to attend college. His family has noticed his increased independence, and his wife has returned to school herself after years of taking care of him.

Jackson is still a long way from obtaining a successful employment outcome, but he is moving quickly and with more confidence toward that goal than he was a year ago.

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## DSB Assistive Technology Services

There are six Assistive Technology (AT) consultants and one rehabilitation engineer located across the state in the district offices who provide technology assessments and services at a job site, school setting, or home. Four AT instructors are also available to provide small group instruction and assistance to individuals across the state. Modifications to technologies include changing lighting, adapting telephones, installing safety measures, and adapting computer equipment or braille displays. Services are provided until the best modification is found and the individual is capable of performing the tasks needed.



***Visually impaired and blind students are learning to use iPads effectively***

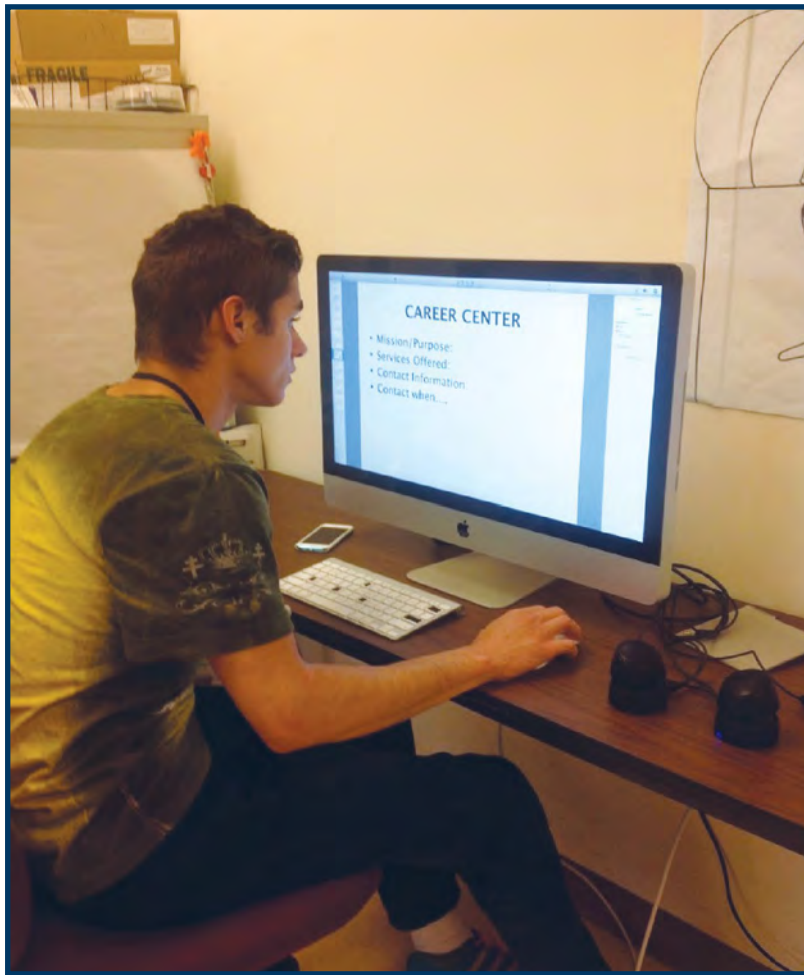
Technology Resource Center: Located at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, the center has adaptive equipment for large print, speech and braille access. The adaptive equipment includes computers, software, scanners, a variety of closed circuit TVs and braille equipment. The center also provides training on the use of adaptive technology.

Rehabilitation Engineering Services assists people who need AT for success in post-secondary training, obtaining jobs where modification is required, or maintaining jobs that require modification or modification updates. Each office has 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 conduct follow-up to ensure the equipment is being used as designed. The AT instructors are available to guide people in learning the maximum operation of the adaptive equipment.

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## DSB VR Assistive Technology Outcomes for FY 2015

- Over 700 hours of direct Assistive Technology services were provided to DSB VR Consumers



***Visually impaired and blind students are learning to use computer effectively***

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## **DSB Business Enterprises Program**

During FY 2015, gross sales from all BEP food service facilities increased to \$10,450,168 from \$10,386,387 in FY 2014. There was a slight decline in the gross profit percentage, 58 percent compared to 58.3 percent for last year. Net proceeds paid to operators totaled \$3,000,996 during this period, compared to \$2,991,153 in 2014. Guaranteed minimum return for the year declined to \$39,524, compared to \$58,163 for 2014.

The Albemarle and ITS building facilities were downsized this year. Minor renovations were completed at the Education Building in Raleigh and the Davidson County Rest Area on I-85. The Winston-Salem Federal Building introduced our first micro-market facility. The food service facility at James Sprunt Community College was closed, along with the Guilford County Courthouse facility. Vending machines were installed at the N.C. Department of State Treasurer, awaiting the opening of a micro-market. Additionally, the Balsam Gap Rest Area at the Beaufort County USA 17 was installed. At the end of the fiscal year, there were 66 operators and 73 facilities.

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## DSB School to Work Transition Services

School to Work Transition Services provides high school students with vision disabilities. A DSB VR counselor designs a personalized set of services for successful movement through secondary school, post-school activities and successful employment outcomes. The services can start as early as age 14, and include vocational counseling, career exploration, postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), independent living or community participation. The services take 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.



***Youth Mini Center students  
learn pre-employment  
transition skills***



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 the Governor Morehead School for the Blind and the Durham County School System. These programs provide trained DSB VR counselors and community employment specialists to work with students, as well as with school systems to enhance opportunities in students' home communities. These students participate in summer jobs, World of Work (WOW) internships and other summer programs, such as learning independent living skills at available Mini Centers, surfing, kayaking or canoeing.

Students needing education after high school to reach their vocational goals are assisted by a DSB VR counselor in planning and obtaining the required training. The counselor can assist in locating a vocational or post-secondary training site featuring classes that prepare them for their job goal, help identify financial resources to cover part or all of the training costs, including financial assistance from DSB, and in obtaining assistive technology required to complete the training. The counselor continues working with the student throughout the post-secondary program to ensure success.

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Students planning to go to work after high school receive assistance in job exploration, job seeking, job development and placement from a DSB Community employment specialist and counselor. If the student requires additional one-on-one assistance, specialized job seeking and training programs, such as community-based work adjustment or supported employment, is available to help in many cases.

DSB Transition Services provide 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 three focus areas: a WOW internship program, training for independent living skills and career exploration for younger youth, and college preparation for older students.

The WOW program provides paid internships in jobs for which the student expressed an interest. The SAVVY program provides an opportunity to explore career interests, as well as specialized classes in braille, safe traveling, technology and daily living skills. The college prep program includes topics, such as how to better advocate for themselves, visiting a disability service office at both a four-year college and community college, an 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 an introduction to daily living skills needed to survive in a dorm setting.

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The Mini Centers in the students' home communities were the result of a collaboration between transition and independent living staff, with assistance from orientation and mobility staff, and assistive technology personnel. The program includes basic cooking, developing a shopping list, purchasing food, preparing food, budgeting, 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 in the development of independence and a career path of their choice, and to be successful in reaching their goal of competitive, integrated employment.

## **DSB VR School to Work Transition Outcomes:**

***Total students, aged 14-21 active with DSB: 434\****

***\*WIOA re-defined transition aged youth in need of Pre-Employment Transition Services as those youth in secondary school aged 14-21 that have a disability.***



## DSB Transition Summer Youth Mini Centers & Pre-Employment Transition Services

DSB's Transition Program has continued to provide exceptional transitional services to youth with visual impairments in North Carolina. The program's continued partnerships with high school visual impairment instructors, and exceptional children staff at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and in various school systems remains very strong. Thanks to these partnerships, the transition staff received a recent increase in referrals, following a temporary lapse due to a vacancies. These partnerships have been reinvigorating and the



***Blind and visually impaired students receive pre-employment transition services at a Summer Youth Mini Center***

support of the administrative staff, guidance counselors, EC case managers, and EC teachers, has proven beneficial in the growth of the Transition Program.

Several students with the Transition Program are graduating from high school this year, and DSB is prepared to support them as they transition to work, school-to-job training or post-secondary training.

Our Assistive Technology consultants provide AT assessments to youth transitioning from high school to post-secondary educational institutions. AT assessments are also performed for consumers who need accommodations at their worksite in order for them to maintain employment. For consumers already enrolled in college, DSB purchased the recommended technology needed to be successful in college, including computers, printers, portable CCTV's, and JAWS or Zoomtext software.

Transition counselors and community employment specialists throughout the state continue to seek job-shadowing opportunities and trial work experiences tailored to each student's vocational interest and career goals. DSB transition counselors and community employment specialists also continue to seek internship opportunities with employers. This past year, the Transition Program provided many unpaid

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work experiences to youth in several settings. These students did various jobs, including answering phones at an agency assisting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, teaching English to students in other countries via Skype, assisting with operation of a rental supply company, and acting as a guide at a natural science center.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Raleigh continues to provide yearly summer learning opportunities for youth in the DSB Transition Program from around the state of North Carolina. This four-week program, Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY), includes three separate summer camp opportunities: a Youth in Transition Program, (WOW and the College Prep Program. Twenty-eight students participated in the programs this summer, with 13 in Youth in Transition, five in College Prep and 10 in WOW.

DSB continues to provide a week-long Youth Mini Center in various parts of the state during the summer, in collaboration with DSB independent living rehabilitation counselors.

During this week-long Mini Center, transition counselors and community employment specialists assist ILR counselors and Mini Center instructors in teaching self-advocacy skills, life skills, cooking, cleaning, labeling, introduction to braille, and other self-help skills. DSB orientation and mobility

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specialists and nursing eye care consultants participate in the week-long Mini Center, providing orientation and mobility skills assessments and low vision assessments to students. They are also given an opportunity for cultural enrichment and community inclusion through participation in various recreational activities, and programs offered in the local community. Many students participating this summer gained independent living skills training, while also learning from peers in a group environment. Four of these Transition Mini Centers were provided across the state.



## A Collaboration that Works

Jay Mebane participated in a summer internship program at the Raleigh Center of the N.C. Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) from July 9 – 30. The internship was sponsored by DSB as part of a full program of Transition Rehabilitation Services. DSB Transition Rehabilitation Services programs afford students the opportunity to explore a career, shadow a job, gain assistive technology skills, work readiness skills and more.



***Jay Mebane***  
***DSB Transition Student***  
***NCATP Client***

Mebane expressed a professional interest in technology, as well as how technology can assist him in performing daily tasks. Because of his interest, Mebane was assigned to survey several video magnifiers and learn how to operate them, perform administrative tasks required for daily maintenance of an agency website, and research funding information for consumers. Mebane also had the opportunity to attend a

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quarterly meeting of the Grant Advisory Council, which advises and guides NCATP in agency policy-making. Mebane's major project was to select a video magnifier from the Demo Center and develop a tutorial on how to operate it. Mebane selected the Zoomax Snow for his tutorial. He learned how to operate it, assisted in developing a script for instructing others on how to operate the device, rehearsed his presentation and produced a video tutorial with the guidance of Lynne Deese, NCATP's media specialist. Mebane also created a written tutorial to accommodate Snow users who prefer written instructions on how to operate the Snow. Mebane's video tutorial can be found at the link below. The ZoomMax Tutorial is also available online.

Frank Harden, who provides support services to the Raleigh AT Center staff and is a former vocational rehabilitation counselor, coordinated Mebane's daily activities during his internship. Because many of Harden's daily responsibilities revolve around equipment located in the Demo Center and NCATP's equipment reuse programs, it was a natural fit for Mebane to gain a working knowledge of the video magnifiers and gain exposure to the administrative tasks required to maintain **[www.ncexchange.org](http://www.ncexchange.org)**.

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## DSB Supported Employment Services

Supported Employment Services is designed for people with the most significant disabilities who struggle to find competitive employment. With the assistance of supported employment services, these people are able to obtain competitive work in integrated work settings, receive specialized on-site job training, then receive 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.

The 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 seven 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.

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The job coaches work with the employer for training of their staff for development of natural supports for these people at the job site. Natural supports are provided by supervisors and co-workers, and include 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 for enhancing social integration between an 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 Community-Based Work Adjustment**

DSB created a community-based work adjustment training program in 2010 with services purchased from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). The outcome-based program, involves a brief situational or community base assessment, work adjustment plan development, job placement services, and job coaching services.

This program is designed for eligible people ready to go to work, but who need 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

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and access technology, safe traveling skills training (outside of 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 VR Supported Employment Outcomes for FY 2015**

- Seven individuals received services in community-based assessments, job development, placement, job coaching and training
  - Ten individuals were placed in competitive, integrated employment and continue in successful employment
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## **N.C. DSB Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Evaluation Unit**

The North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB) and Evaluation Unit (EU) are 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, and increase independent living skills. Evaluations include specialized vocational and psychological testing, as well as low vision services. Work readiness skills training includes job searching, effective interview skills, resume writing, self-advocacy, problem solving and decision making. Consumers may also receive assistive technology assessments and training in the use of adaptive equipment and smart devices, personal and home management skills, safe traveling skills, leisure education, communication skills, community awareness and College Prep for those pursuing a higher education. Proficient skills in the above training areas are vital to work place success.

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## DSB Evaluation Unit Result

- Sixty-eight Total consumers received EU services
- Fifty-two General evaluations
- Forty-four Low vision evaluations
- Fourteen Small business stand evaluations (BEP)
- Nineteen College evaluations
- Three Psychological-only evaluations
- Four Vocational-only evaluations
- Twelve Rehabilitation Center teacher evaluations

The EU is a core service available to assist with vocational planning, and therefore vital to each consumer who is learning to understand his/her visual condition and that they are not alone in their struggles. The EU staff assesses various skills of each individual so each referring counselor can have needed information to further develop the individual's vocational goals. The EU helps people begin to dream again of all the possibilities for their future

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## DSB Rehabilitation Center Results

- Fifty-eight VR and ILR eligible individuals received adjustment to blindness training
- Twenty-eight High school students were provided transitional services through the SAVVY College Prep, Transition and WOW programs

## In the Classroom

The RCB technology teachers have aligned their curriculum with **Digital Apex**, which provides uniform, seamless technology instruction. The teachers also restructured the basic computer skills curriculum to get students using the internet and email sooner. They added technology lab classes for students that needed additional computer training. Their goal was to prepare RCB students for the increasing technology demands of RCB classes, as well as future jobs and vocational training. The RCB teachers also worked with the division technology specialists to develop a technology skills checklist for students transitioning from high school to college, or the workplace.

The **iOS training** course consists of learning how to use voiceover and screen reader, along with specific gestures for navigating an iPhone or iPad. This course covers topics, such as how to use the accessibility features of an iOS product,

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how to use Siri, and how to use the dictation feature found on both iPhones and iPads to send, read, and reply to emails and text messages. The course also focuses on using various apps, such as the LookTel money reader, KNFB reader, Voice Dream Reader/Writer and TapTapSee.

The **careers** curriculum, created in collaboration with NCWorks, provides resources to students in the careers class and enrolls them in the NCWorks database, which is used statewide in the job seeking process. The consumers in the careers course had the opportunity to participate in mock interviews, seminars and workshops at the NCWorks Center. They also had the opportunity to use the NCWorks Careers Center Lab for searching and applying to jobs. The consumers are excited about networking with NCWorks, and are looking forward to independently searching and applying for jobs.

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## Health and Wellness

**Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions** is a self-management session that allows consumers to choose a reachable goal or goals that will better assist them with maintaining their ability to complete simple, everyday tasks most people take for granted in the working community. The sessions share tips, suggestions, and concrete strategies to deal with chronic illness, manage emotions, and live a productive life. It also offers information about exercise, healthy eating, and communication with friends, family and caregivers.

The **1Touch** training technique for individuals with visual impairment and/or blindness has been implemented at the Rehab Center by coaches Wynita Taylor and Cheryl Bitting. The program is a hands-on self-defense technique for dealing with assaults, aggressive behavior and bullying. It shows consumers that there is something they can actually do to protect themselves. The 1Touch technique allows the consumer to either “release” any grip or to engage further, if the attack is more aggressive. The 1Touch technique teaches the consumer how to be “on guard,” by raising both hands in front of the face area, and balancing both feet to break a fall. After being introduced to the 1Touch technique, consumers often comment that they no longer feel as vulnerable and some express a sense of renewed confidence, knowing these techniques can

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help build confidence for moving into new community settings and work environments.

**Horticulture therapy** was introduced as a means to promote individual mental, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being, which in turn prepares one for the work place. Gardening can be a great way to reduce stress, get physical activity, and enjoy home grown nutritious fruits and vegetables. The benefits of horticulture therapy include sensory stimulation, fine motor skills, stress relief, team building, time management, physical activity, creative expression, intellectual and personal growth, social interaction, sense of productivity, self-satisfaction, and overall improvement in quality of life. Horticulture therapy is also a means to re-inforce vocational training skills. There are many job classifications related to horticulture, such as greenhouse operator, landscaper, groundskeeper and florist. Working in the garden and greenhouse offers people viable work-related activities, and opportunities to learn marketable skills. Assigned duties include, but are not limited to, propagation of plants, seeding flowers and vegetables, maintaining proper temperature and humidity within the greenhouse environment, planting flowers and vegetables in the landscape beds, determining watering and nutritional needs of plant, labeling pots, and preparing for a plant sale. During the spring plant sale, people assisted with the organization and promotion of the event, and used their customer service, sales and marketing skills.

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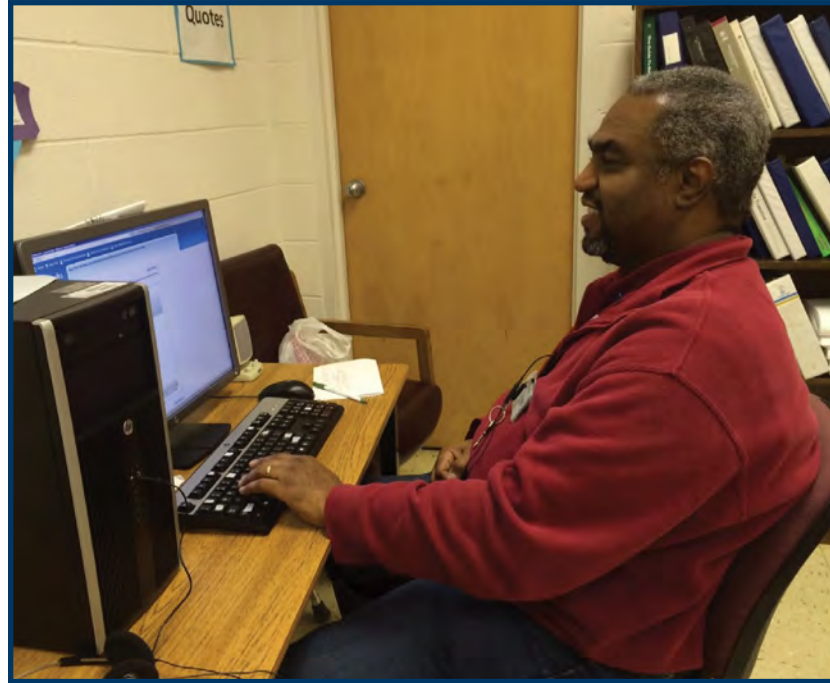


**Aquatics therapy** was also introduced to consumers this year. Aquatics therapy uses warm water to promote healing, relaxation and exercise in a –nearly weightless environment. The warm water helps promote a sense of relaxation, not only for the muscles, but the mind as well. It is beneficial for people with bad joints, and improves core strength and balance. It also helps consumers increase stamina and build tolerance for rigorous, long training days and work days. Other benefits of aquatics therapy are stress relief, fine and gross motor skill development, increased range of motion, and overall promotion of a better quality of life.



## RCB Star

Lincoln Jackson, from Raeford, N.C., began the ABLÉ program Aug. 16, 2015 and is being highlighted as a STAR student at RCB due to his expressed optimism. As he maneuvers along the hallways of RCB, his voice is heard daily with cheerful greetings and banter to all who pass him. He is an individual who has overcome challenging obstacles, yet presents a positive attitude and demeanor. Jackson often takes the opportunity to mentor many of the younger men in the program and encourages them to excellence. With excellent attendance, participation, and consistently demonstrating his motivation in moving forward with ABLÉ program objectives and achieving his personal goals, he is a RCB STAR.



***Lincoln Jackson***

## Partnerships

RCB continues to encourage the development of partnerships with various Rehabilitation Counseling graduate programs. Beginning in May 2015, the rehabilitation staff had the privilege of having a UNC Rehabilitation Counseling graduate student intern, through the N.C. State Government Internship Program, which is part of the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office. The intern worked with the SAVVY WOW Committee from May- July 2015 to participate in the development and implementation of 10 teen work experiences.

In addition, RCB Rehabilitation staff had the opportunity to work with another **UNC Rehabilitation Counseling** graduate student for their practicum work during the fall 2015 semester. She was supervised by two of staff members, and had the opportunity to participate in group therapy and individual counseling with numerous students twice a week.

RCB continues to offer individual and group therapy to students participating in the ABLE program through a contractual psychologist, and RCB's staff psychologist. The purpose of individual therapy is to assist consumers in gaining coping skills in regards to their blindness, therefore, enhancing their opportunity to succeed in their vocational goals. Various group therapies may highlight relaxation techniques, coping skills, assertiveness training, advocacy skills or self-esteem issues. This component of our program is vital to each students' success if they choose to participate.

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## SAVVY “Be Your Own Hero”

The **2015 SAVVY** program was another success. Twenty-eight teens participated in the three programs; YIT, WOW and College Prep. The programs were held from July 5 - 31, 2015.

**WOW:** Ten teens participated in numerous activities during the first three days of SAVVY, which prepared them for their upcoming first day of work. These activities included review of the “Be Your Own Hero” theme, and discussion of heroes and their stories, team-building activities, which assisted each teen in learning about their skills, talents, interests and work values, learning to “sell” yourself to an employer, employer’s expectations,



***Students gain valuable work experience through the WOW summer program***

orientation and mobility to work sites, and visiting Raleigh to learn about the Paratransit system, and the process for daily transport to and from work. The Center collaborated with several UNC Rehabilitation Counseling graduate students, who presented during these activities.

The teens were matched with entry-level jobs to an employer who could offer valuable work experience within their interests, skills or abilities. Each student worked at their assigned site for 15 work days, averaging five to six hours per day, and were paid for their daily work experience. By the end of the program, each teen had a better understanding of the expectations of WOW and shared with fellow SAVVY students how their work experience impacted their lives.

### **WOW - Work positions and locations**

- Hostess - Amedeo's Italian Restaurant
  - Grocery Store Helper - Carlie C's IGA
  - Event Intern/Assistant - EYE Retreat/BELL Program
  - Office Assistant - ADA CIL, Alliance of Disability Advocates, Center for Independent Living
  - Retail Associate - Event Horizon Games
  - Office Assistant  
- City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation
  - Research Project Assistant - Museum of Natural Sciences - Nature Research Center
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- Kitchen Assistant/Dining Room Attendant  
– K&W Cafeteria
- Computer Technician Assistant  
– North Carolina Assistive Technology
- Office Assistant – McLaurin Parking

**College Prep (CP):** Five teens participated in college prep, whose goal is to help students develop the attitudes, study skills, and behaviors that will enable them to succeed in college. Given the differences in the laws governing K-12 education and college, self-advocacy skills are emphasized. Therefore, one of the first lessons the students are presented with addresses a change in attitude. The class motto is, “I am the CEO of my success!” Instead of blaming teachers or making excuses, students are promoted to the position of CEO, and the name of their new company is “My Success, Inc.”

Using the freshman seminar/student success textbook “On Course: Strategies for Success in College and in Life” by Skip Downing, students learn the eight choices that successful students make consistently. These choices are correlated with Stephen Covey’s “7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” Accepting self-responsibility (Downing) and being proactive (Covey) are the key cornerstones of the summer adventure. In addition to class discussions based on textbook assignments, guest speakers were invited to speak on topics that included “What College Professors Expect,” “Working with Disability

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Services,” “Making Wise Choices” and “Developing Healthy Relationships.”

To help students gain confidence in a college environment, numerous visits were made to campuses. Field trips included a tour of UNC-Greensboro (UNC-G), led by a former SAVVY college prep who is now a senior there. Multiple trips were also made to North Carolina State University (NCSU), where students met with a freshman librarian, spoke with the assistive technology coordinator in the Disability Services Office, ate lunch at Fountain Dining Hall, explored the Tally Student Center, and had workshops and work sessions at the Hunt Library.

During the last week of the program, there was collaboration with the EYE Retreat ([www.eyeretreat.org](http://www.eyeretreat.org)), which allowed the SAVVY college prep students to network with other college-bound students, and practice their academic and study skills in a larger group setting. As part of this collaboration, the students used public transportation to attend mock classes at NCSU. They also were required to create a skit and propose a new law to improve disability rights. There’s nothing like a group project to prepare you for the challenges of college!

At the end of the summer, as the students headed off to their respective campuses (Wake Forest University, North Carolina Central University, Forsyth Technical Community College and

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Fayetteville Technical Community College), the students left with a clearer understanding of what is required to be the CEO of their success.

**Youth in Transition (YIT):** Thirteen teens participated in specialized skills building that will create a foundation for independence post high school. Students participated in cooking, orientation and mobility, braille and braille technology, consumer education, techniques of daily living, careers, and technology. Educational seminars, team-building workshops, cultural enrichment activities, such as exposure to guide dogs through Guiding Eyes for the Blind, self-esteem, self-advocacy, bullying, and social skills provided for a well-rounded comprehensive program for visually impaired teens in the transition process.

Becoming proficient in basic life skills is critical to a teen's self-worth, personal growth and sense of responsibility. The teens were encouraged to engage in all activities to obtain the full benefit of the program. The recreational programs were interactive, and designed to develop social skills and implement skills learned in the classroom into community settings.

Activities included sports/fitness, horseback riding, swimming, bowling, wall climbing, table games, drum circle, going to the movies, visiting the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher, Fort Fisher beach, Frankie's Fun Park, Lake Johnson Park, Pullen Park, John Chavis Memorial Park Swimming Pool, the

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North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the Triangle Rock Club and much more. At the end of the program the teens celebrated with a talent show and an end of SAVVY dinner and dance.

## **Campus Life**

Experiencing campus life is a very important part of the entire experience of visiting the RCB for training. During this time, consumers have an opportunity to live independently while also having the supports needed nearby to make sure they are always safe. There is an added sense of security at the RCB. ASG Security scanners have been installed on the DSB buildings on the GMS campus. Scan cards are required to gain entry to the buildings. Designated staff and consumers actively enrolled in the program are assigned and provided scan cards for the Crockett-Peeler building, and Cox and Milsap dormitories. Upon enrollment in the program, consumers are assigned a scan card to access the residential dorms. Access is limited to designated staff and consumers actively housed in the dorms. Attendees are provided the scan cards for the duration of their training. The scan cards are deactivated when the consumer is no longer active.

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## Trainings

**New Employee Sensitivity Training** - During the 2014 Fall NEST from Nov. 17 - 21, 22 new DSB employees and agency guests participated in the week-long training at the Rehab Center. During the 2015 Spring NEST, held June 15 - 19, 2015, there were 21 participants enrolled in the training. The employees were provided the opportunity to experience aspects of the center's training programs and were exposed to skills essential for working with people 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 the Cox and Milsap dormitories on the historical Governor Morehead School campus. The employees also engaged in campus and community activities including fitness, yoga, bowling, and shopping, while under the blindfold.

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## **DSB Independent Living Services Program**

Social Workers for the Blind provides service and support to assist individuals who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind independently manage their activities of daily living, and prevent or reduce institutional care. The Independent Living Services Program provides services to eligible individuals in all 100 counties of the state. During FY 2015, 3,851 individuals received one or more of the following services. Most of the services are provided at no cost to eligible individuals.

## **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.

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## **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. Forty-three individuals benefited from this service during FY 2015. This is a financial needs-based service.

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## Community Partnerships

North Carolina Lions Inc., has a parallel mission to serve the blind and visually impaired. Our partnership is crucial in meeting the needs of those we serve. Social workers coordinate with NC Lions clubs to support all aspects of the annual NC VIP Fishing Tournament. More than a fishing tournament, the participants engage in educational and recreational activities, are introduced to the latest adaptive technologies, and socialize with VIPs from around the state. With over 500 visually impaired participants and their guests, the tournament is the largest service project of its kind in the world.

Camp Dogwood, located on the shores of Lake Norman, is the headquarters of Lions Clubs International and every summer hosts VIPs from across the state for education, fellowship and fun. VIPs have the opportunity to experience water sports, crafts, dance, performing or simply enjoying the rocking chairs on the lakefront porch.

Many Lions Clubs also assist social workers in providing eye exams and/or glasses to North Carolina citizens with limited incomes.

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Communication with local agencies is an integral part of identifying resources and building support systems within the community that are so important for the VIP individual and their families - adult services, home health agencies, housing, mental health, support groups, civic groups, doctors, charities, DSS, disability advocates, National Federation for the Blind, American Council of the Blind, senior centers, adult care facilities, hospitals, community colleges, food banks, local school systems, early education staff - the list could go on and on. Social workers cultivate relationships with these agencies, in order to advocate for the specialized needs of blind citizens.

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## Individual Successes That Make a Great Impact



***Adaptive  
cooking skills  
help increase  
student's  
independence  
and work  
readiness***

As you get up, dress and prepare for another routine day, it probably never crosses your mind that you are depending on your ability to see what you are doing to accomplish the tasks of daily living. So, when the ability to use your vision is diminished or taken away, you might find yourself thinking that many tasks you are accustomed to accomplishing without help from others is now a thing of the past.

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The social workers for the blind are on the front line for DSB, working to find people struggling with vision loss in their respective communities and counties, and are no longer able to function in their homes. Little successes can have a huge impact on a person's quality of life when they are living and struggling with vision loss. So many times, the social workers are told how much of an impact being able to set the dials on their ovens and microwaves have made in their lives, because they can bake a pie or prepare a meal without the assistance of another person. By using basic cooking techniques, and sometimes adaptive aids and appliances, preparing a meal is no longer something of the past. Being able to locate the numbers on the telephone, and dial without the use of vision enables the person to call and schedule his or her own appointments. They can jot down numbers and notes using adaptive writing aids. Being able to apply makeup again is something many of the ladies miss after vision loss. The ability to pay bills and manage money privately is an area of independence that is so often reported to the social workers as being important and missed after vision loss. These are just a few of the things we all take for granted until they are gone.

With the help of social workers, people who might otherwise become isolated due to vision loss are able to interact with others in support group settings across the state. They learn to function more independently by taking on roles of responsibility within the group settings, and establish a

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strong friendship base with others who experience some of the same challenges. Throughout the group process, teaching and learning take place by sharing successes in daily lives, regarding new accomplishments and barriers overcome. The social workers are so often told by their consumers that feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and isolation are alleviated, or may have altogether have become a thing of the past.

### ***N.C. DSB Staff, 2014***



## DSB Medical Eye Care Program

The DSB 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 FY 2015, 933 individuals received Medical Eye Care Program services.

DSB Nurse Eye Care Consultants also provide additional services that are not based on income eligibility. During this fiscal year, low vision screenings were provided to 1,946 eligible individuals and evaluations for video magnification systems were conducted for 339 individuals. Other program achievements are listed below.

### Program Achievements:

- Eight hundred fifty-five eye exams
  - Four hundred fifty-four treatments and/or surgeries sponsored
  - Eleven pairs of eyeglasses purchased
  - Eight hundred forty-seven children screened for amblyopia and other vision defects
  - Three hundred seventy-eight diabetic education sessions provided
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## **DSB Helps to Re-Focus the Vision Jennie Jones Has Come Full Circle**

This is a story about an amazing, hard-working deaf-blind woman. Her name is Jennie Jones (an alias) and she is age 95. As a retired social worker, Jones was not used to receiving help from others. She was used to providing services for other people. She contacted DSB for services due to age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and hearing loss. AMD is an eye disease that effects central or detailed vision. Many with AMD experience trouble reading the mail, a newspaper, or threading a needle and straight lines can seem wavy. Jones has managed her disease very well, understanding her limitations and learning to compensate for her disease. Through the Deaf-Blind Program, the ILR program and great determination, Jones maintains her independence and continues to do things she enjoys.

After meeting Jones at the Mini Center, a deaf-blind specialist conducted a deaf-blind services assessment, revealing that she could maintain her quality of life by obtaining some assistive technology, such as a pocket talker or handheld magnifiers. A pocket talker is a device that amplifies sound, allowing a hard-of-hearing person the ability to hear conversations better. It can be clipped to a person's side or placed in a shirt pocket. Jones received and uses her new assistive devices daily, and she continues to thrive and communicate with her family, friends, and new Mini Center friends. At 95, Jones is still active, independent, and her confidence has been restored due to being open and willing to let others serve her for a change.

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## Independent Living Rehabilitation and Independent Living Older Blind Programs

DSB's Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR) program provides services for individuals of any age, and the Independent Living Older Blind program provides services for individuals 55 or older. DSB's 14 ILR counselors serve as case managers for both programs, which seek to maximize the ability of blind or visually impaired individuals to function independently in the family, home, community, or employment.

Comprehensive independent living skills training are provided in Mini Centers and/or at home. Mini Centers are community based learning programs in which individuals receive instruction in adaptive living skills, cooking, safe travel techniques, peer support and hands-on instruction with a variety of low and high tech devices.



Instruction and adjustment counseling is also provided in the home for individuals unable to attend Mini Centers or before and/or after attending a Mini Center to ensure successful achievement of independent living goals.

ILR and ILOB services are available in all 100 counties. ILR counselor's collaborate with numerous partners to ensure successful outcomes for service recipients through the coordination of services as needed with other DSB case managers, including social workers for the blind and vocational rehabilitation counselors, as well as DSB specialists, including orientation and mobility specialists, nursing eye care consultants, deaf-blind specialists and assistive technology specialists. DSB's ILR and ILOB services are only as strong as our community partnerships, and ILRC's work year-round to build and maintain partnerships with local transportation services, churches, senior centers, Lions Clubs and other civic groups, fire and police departments, local health departments, and many other invaluable community resources.

This year, ILR counselor's received iPads and hands-on instruction in the use of Zoom and VoiceOver. Two counties had specialized Mini Centers on iPad instruction. These Mini Centers have covered technical aspects, gestures, Siri, Voiceover and Zoom so participants could effectively use apps to meet their independent living goals. On the end of class survey, one participant stated, "These classes were most helpful in allowing me to function a whole lot better as a person with visual problems."

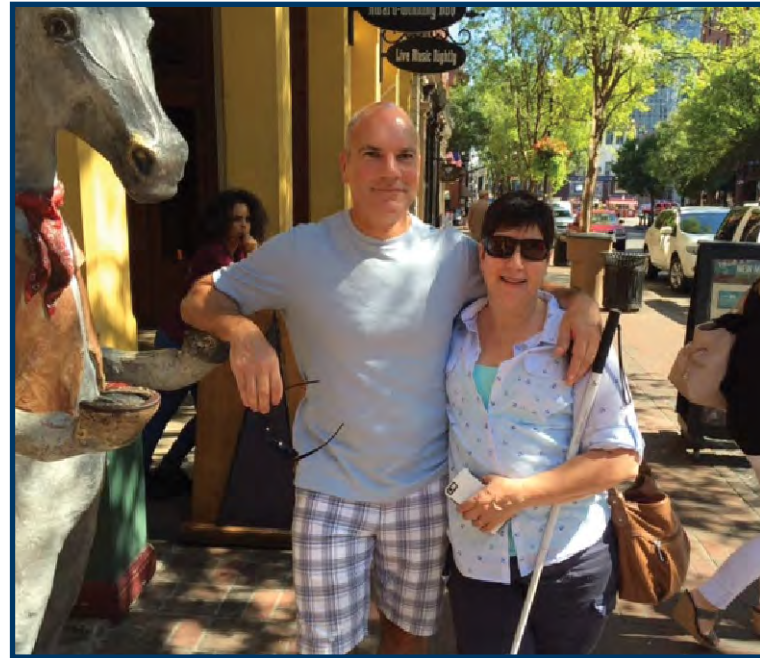
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## ILR and ILOB Results for 2015

- Total eligible consumers served: 1,003 – 367 ILR and 636 ILOB
  - Eligible individuals rehabilitated: 305
  - Mini Centers held: 31 (two for transition-age students)
  - Eligible individuals attended Mini Centers: 357
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## DSB 2015 ILR Case of the Year

Linda LeCuyer is visually impaired, due to Retinitis Pigmentosa, and her vision further declined after a battle with breast cancer, which resulted in a double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. While her physical health stabilized, LeCuyer was depressed, frustrated and scared about her vision loss upon first meeting her independent living rehabilitation counselor. These feelings were in direct opposition to her previous lifestyle of full-time employment, physical activity, and confidence with parenting and entertaining. She was at the stage where she couldn't walk safely, read regular print, use her computer to manage family finances, no longer had a job, and struggled to prepare meals for her husband and two teenaged sons. LeCuyer recognized that her supportive husband, stable income, restored health, and considerate and well-adjusted children were factors working in her favor. She was already working with a social worker for the blind when they referred her to an orientation and mobility specialist. LeCuyer, who previously worked in



***Linda LeCuyer***



sales and marketing for a technology company, was familiar with computers, and committed herself to regaining access to this form of communication. She had an iPhone, but had limited fluency. She had a computer with the screen-reading software NVDA loaded onto it, but she was not comfortable using it.

DSB's Independent Living Rehabilitation program provided services for her from August 2013 to June 2015. During her first meeting with her ILR counselor, LeCuyer made it clear she wanted to learn braille. The ILR counselor introduced her to the Hadley School for the Blind, as well as introduced her to DSB's now-retired Assistant Director, Mary Flanagan, who tutored LeCuyer in braille. The ILR counselor described available Mini Center services to the consumer, and she expressed an interest in attending. During the classes, LeCuyer identified self-esteem, kitchen safety, and organization and labeling as primary goals. While LeCuyer appeared to be capable in performing many of the tasks introduced, she was surprised at her newfound skills and was often emotional. At the end of each class, a support group was held to process the events of the day and the experiences of the previous week. It was not uncommon for LeCuyer to explain how the lessons helped her confidence and how she planned to use the new information. As the classes progressed, she ended up baking brownies and assorted snacks as a weekly routine for the class. LeCuyer maintained perfect attendance throughout the 12 sessions.

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As the class ended, LeCuyer continued to make positive strides. She took several braille classes and bought labeling gun to label her spices. She not only learned to read basic/uncontracted braille, but also the more advanced, contracted braille. For two summers, LeCuyer attended Camp Dogwood for the Blind and even felt confident enough to visit Busch Gardens with her family. On a recent vacation, she rode on a bicycle built for two with her husband. In addition to knowing many apps on her iPhone, she has a Macbook Pro which she uses to manage her finances.

Presently, LeCuyer continues to be involved with Mini Centers. She no longer attends as a participant in need of services, but volunteers to teach and encourage others with some of the most challenging cooking lessons, involving measuring and cutting. LeCuyer has also presented to Mini Center classes during Mental Health Day, sharing how she managed to get through the stages of grief to achieve a sense of self-actualization. Because LeCuyer showed such a significant change in her emotional confidence, learned braille, returned to the Mini Center as a substitute instructor, and resumed a healthy life style, LeCuyer was named 2015 ILR Case of the Year.



## DSB Deaf-Blind Services

Each year, DSB serves individuals with 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 assistance from Helen Keller, DSB has provided support, training, and other services to people with hearing and vision loss. DSB's goal is to provide training and support that helps people reach their maximum potential.

Many times, assessments are conducted with people who are skeptical of services, since dealing with the onset of another sensory loss can be overwhelming. There are five deaf-blind specialists employed by DSB who serve every county in North Carolina.





When someone experiences both vision and hearing loss, serious issues and self-doubt can arise. With the help of a DSB intervention, empowerment can thrive within many, instead of feelings of misfortune.

Here are some real stories of DSB interventions that empowered individuals with hearing and vision loss in areas of employment and independent living.

***Fisher Building, Governor Morehead Campus,  
Raleigh, N.C.***



## Working Together to Help Our Consumers Achieve their Vision for Success

### Sometimes It Takes a DSB Village

Willie Monico was born premature with glaucoma and severe hearing loss. He lost one eye to glaucoma and his vision in the other is 20/200. His hearing loss progressed to a profound hearing loss, and he tried to cope with just one hearing aid. A few years ago, Monico, 52, was laid off from his job and his mother died around the same time, forcing him to move into an apartment. Until now, Monico had never lived on his own. Suddenly he faced the responsibilities of living on his own. Monico wanted to go to work, so he became a DSB consumer. Over the next few



**Willie Monico**

years, Monico needed assistance from various DSB programs in order to work, and be independent at home and in the community. His VR counselor helped set up eye appointments, counseled Monico, set up a trial work experience, and helped with job placement and development. With his permission, the VR counselor also assisted in coordinating appointments, and other services with his pastor and church to help meet these needs.

Monico's orientation and mobility specialist taught him how to ride a city bus, and apply for the Special Transit program. The social worker for the blind got him involved with a blind support group, helped him with some of his independent living issues and assisted him in becoming his own payee. He also worked with an independent living rehabilitation counselor, who worked with him on proper lighting for his home, cleaning skills, budgeting, bill-paying, and preparing and cooking healthy foods for a diabetic diet. A low vision nurse assessed his vision needs and made recommendations for equipment that may help him with his vision when he works.

A deaf-blind specialist also assisted Monico every step of the way with his hearing needs, job development, job coaching, and social and communication skills. Monico's hearing aid was old and didn't provide enough power for him to hear. The deaf-blind specialist took him to several audiologists, and he tried several different kinds of hearing aids until finding the

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one that worked best, but it still wasn't enough as Monico's hearing loss became progressively worse. DSB purchased an FM system that boosted his hearing aid's power, but he still needed communication support, like writing back and forth, fingerspelling, and some sign language education by the deaf-blind specialist to communicate with him. Still, Monico's hearing continued worsening until his audiologist recommended a cochlear implant (CI). He was unsure what to do about this major decision. He learned that a CI would cause a loss of any residual hearing in that ear, things would have a mechanical sound, and surgery was involved. The deaf-blind specialist connected Monico with another person that already had a CI implanted, allowing him to discuss the process with someone with firsthand knowledge, what to expect and answer any questions about the CI. The deaf-blind specialist assisted Monico with obtaining a CI, which he is learning to use and will allow him to hear almost 100 percent in his right ear. This will make communicating with others much easier.

The deaf-blind specialist also transported him to different work locations and helped him apply for jobs. The specialist also reinforced his diabetic training, placed Monico on the Deaf-Blind Mailing List and helped him go to Deaf-Blind Camp. Willie was referred by DSB to the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program and received a new computer with a 27-inch monitor, ZoomText, a large print keyboard and an iPad. Initially, Willie's VR counselor set up a trial work experience at

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Goodwill Industries, which included job coaching assistance from his deaf-blind specialist. After Monico's VR counselor worked with the Winston-Salem Urban League to place him at Goodwill Industries in a part-time position as a porter. Due to the multiple collaborative efforts of DSB staff, Monico is a great success story!

## **Empowering a Veteran's Life through DSB and VA Collaboration**

This past year, Robert Smith, an alias, was referred to a deaf-blind specialist to assess the needs of his dual-sensory loss. Smith has bilateral vision and hearing loss, due to AMD and presbycusis, also known as age-related hearing loss. AMD is an eye disease that affects central and detailed vision. During the assessment, it was discovered that Robert loved gardening and spent most of his time outdoors. Because of an accident in the military, his left hand was paralyzed, making the use of hearing aids, placing them correctly and changing the batteries almost impossible without help. The independent soul that he was, Robert did not want to ask his wife for help and eventually gave up using them altogether.

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Smith's deaf-blind specialist introduced him to the pocket talker. He was astounded! Smith could hear clearly and talk with his wife at a normal volume again, something that hasn't happened in a long time. As his hearing became worse over the years, he and his wife both agreed their relationship became less close, as Smith spent more time alone in the garden. Thanks to the device, they've been talking up a storm, and she was grateful to not strain her voice. The frustration of not hearing what is said, as well as having to scream to be heard, was alleviated with the pocket talker. Smith was impressed that he could use the device without assistance!

Since Smith qualified for Veterans Administration benefits, his deaf-blind specialist provided a letter of recommendation based on the assessment for Smith to take with him to his next VA appointment. Recommendations suggested an amplified cordless telephone he could use as far as the garden for safety and a pocket talker to increase his communication accessibility. His local VA office greeted him and the letter of recommendation with excitement, and provided the equipment at no cost.

Smith uses his talking alarm/digital clock, amplified cordless phone, pocket talker, a CCTV (for reading mail), and a handheld magnifier, all acquired through collaboration between the DSB and VA. Smith also loves listening to talking books. Knowing Smith enjoys working around the house, the deaf-blind

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specialist introduced him to a head-borne lighted magnifier and in collaboration with his ILR counselor, purchased an Optivisor, a device that resembles goggles and provides hands-free magnification for close work. He enjoys working on small household projects that require both hands. He attended the DSB Mini Center, and is adjusting to his vision and hearing loss. During the Mini Center, Smith learned proper nutrition, how to mark his clothing for proper matching, controlling glare, improving vision through lighting, color and contrast, cooking techniques, fire safety, disaster preparedness, and much more. Robert stated how confident he is after receiving services from DSB. Smith is a war hero and a DSB hero, taking on the challenges of vision and hearing loss while using the services and skills he learned through DSB to increase the quality of his life.

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## **Collaboration with Other Agencies to Serve the Deaf-Blind Community and Additional Services Provided to the N.C. Deaf-Blind Community**

DSB's Deaf-Blind Program works closely with our sister agency, the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, regarding the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). This program provides 21st century telecommunication assistive technology to deaf-blind individuals. Our five deaf-blind specialists are fluent in American Sign Language, and uniquely qualified to provide assessments on assistive technology needs based on the goals, communication mode, and the level of AT knowledge of deaf-blind individuals. This ongoing program became permanently funded by the Federal Communications Commission, and DSB will continue working with DSDHH. In the first three years of the program, DSB has served 110 deaf-blind individuals.

The Deaf-Blind Program also collaborates with the Department of Public Instruction's Deaf-Blind Project, and is an active member of the Deaf-Blind Advisory Council, which is facilitated by the DPI deaf-blind project director. The groups work together on issues and concerns related to deaf-blind consumers and their family members age 14 or older that are in school.

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Since its inception, DSB has been an active supporter of the North Carolina Deaf-Blind Associates, (NCDBA). One of the first deaf-blind coordinators co-founded the NCDBA more than 30 years ago. DSB assists deaf-blind individuals across the state with finding sponsorship to the annual Camp Dogwood Deaf-Blind weekend. DSB works closely with local North Carolina Lions clubs, who sponsor many deaf-blind campers based on their resident county. Deaf-blind specialists also assist with transporting campers and working as Support Service Providers while at camp, serving as the eyes and ears of deaf-blind campers. NCDBA has other activities throughout the year that DSB supports, including the NCDBA Conference, the NCDBA Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Day, the NCDBA Holiday Party and quarterly board meetings. DSB's Deaf-Blind Program is honored to actively better the lives of deaf-blind consumers in employment, independent living and full participation in society. ■

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## How to Contact DSB

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Administration	(866) 222-1546
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Office of the Director	(919) 527-6700
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Aids and Appliances	(919) 527-6770
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Business Enterprises Program	(919) 527-6790
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Communications Unit

(for materials in alternate format)	(919) 527-6760
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Evaluation Unit	(919) 527-6800
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Independent Living Services	(919) 527-6780
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Medical Eye Care Program	(919) 527-6780
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Rehabilitation Center for the Blind	(919) 527-6800
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Rehabilitation Services	(919) 527-6711
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- 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 1 (800) 422 1884
Winston Salem 4265 Brownsboro Road, Suite 100 Winston Salem, NC 27106	(336) 896-2227 1 (800) 422 0373 TDD: (336) 896-7047

**Website:** <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb>



*Services for the Blind*  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES