

NEW HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

Spring 2009 Newsletter

UP-COMING EVENTS

April 1–May 1, 2009

Art Beyond Sight® Juried Art Exhibit — Tactile 3-D and 2-D Works

Accessible to those who are
blind and visually impaired.

General Public Invited
Robert Lincoln Levy Gallery
136 State Street,
Portsmouth, NH

Gallery Hours:

Wednesday–Saturday,
10 a.m.–5 p.m.;
Sunday, Noon–4 p.m.;
and by appointment.

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permission.

April 1, 2009

Technology Vendor Workshop

Topic: *Scanning Technologies
from Freedom Scientific*

1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

McGreal Sight Center, Concord

April 18, May 9, June 13, 2009

Technology Users Group

McGreal Sight Center, Concord
10 a.m.–Noon

April 18, June 13, 2009

Gently Used Program

McGreal Sight Center, Concord
1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 2009

Emailing like a Pro!

McGreal Sight Center, Concord
Registration Required. Please
contact Kimberly Stumph at
224-4039 X 312 or email
kstumph@sightcenter.org

Upcoming Events — cont. on 2



New On-Line Registration for This Year's Annual Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon



2008 Walkers On the Move!

The 2009 Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon is planned for Saturday, May 30 — rain or shine. This year, walkers have the chance to register **on line!!!** You can register as an Individual Walker, Team Captain or Team Member on our website at www.sightcenter.org. It's an easy and fun way to raise lots of money that will help your friends and neighbors who are living with blindness! Create your own page and encourage your friends to support you as a sponsor, or to register with you! As in the past, you can register by filling out and sending in the enclosed Registration Form found inside this Newsletter.



This year's Walk-A-Thon is dedicated to the memory of **Janet Akins...**a wonderful volunteer and friend of NHAB. She was a founding member of the Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon and served on the planning committees of all five previous Walk-A-Thons. You may remember seeing her helping at the Volunteer Check-In Table or walking the route with her loyal guide dog, Fonzy. The 6th Annual Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon will be a rousing tribute to Janet's heart and soul.

We are thankful for the support of many local businesses and service clubs who have already pledged their support for the event. **The Concord Lions Club has become our first \$2,500 Platinum Sponsor!** The **Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation** along with the **Peterborough Lions** has risen to the challenge by donating \$1,000 as Gold Sponsors! And...the **Outback Steakhouse** will once again serve as our **Event Sponsor** providing a delicious barbeque lunch after the Walk! We are grateful for their generosity and look forward to seeing them — and you, on May 30! **Be sure to check out our Walk Registration/Brochure found inside this Newsletter. Don't forget to clip your coupon for a free order of Bloomin' Onions at the Outback in Concord.**

New Grants: Making a Difference in the Lives of the Blind and Visually Impaired

For the third consecutive year, the Association received a generous grant from the **Mary Gale Foundation** for the **Senior Service Expansion Project**. The Project provides vision rehabilitation services to elderly women living in the Greater Manchester Area. Generous grant support from the **Pearl Manor Fund** last year allowed us to extend vision rehabilitation services to elderly men in the Manchester area as well.

The **Gibney Family Foundation** showed support for our Technology Upgrade Project-2008 by awarding the Association a grant to develop a planned information management system and improved client services database.

The **Grimshaw-Gudewicz Foundation** continues its thirteen-year history of support for the

services that George Grimshaw found to be so valuable — Low Vision and Adaptive Aids Training, Counseling, Orientation and Mobility Training, and Rehabilitation Teaching. These direct services are provided to nearly every client we serve.

Recent awards from the **Oleonda Jameson Trust, Samuel P. Hunt Foundation** and **Agnes Lindsay Trust** are being used to support the expansion of the Center for Communication and Technology. By using today's latest technology and adaptive devices people who are blind can now communicate electronically and can access the World Wide Web.

For the second consecutive year, the **National Eye Institute** has awarded the New Hampshire Association for the Blind with fund-

ing through **2009 Healthy Vision Community Award**. In the coming year, the Association will concentrate on the availability and effectiveness of Low Vision and Vision Rehabilitation Services statewide by developing strong outreach and relationships with referral sources.

In addition, the Association would like to thank the following donors, whose support through good times and bad, have helped to meet the needs of the blind and visually impaired. Thanks to **Autodesk, BAE Systems, Citizens Bank Foundation, United Way of the Greater Seacoast, Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation, Liberty Mutual, Lincoln Financial, Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation, and the Sim-Ayres Foundation**.

Upcoming Events — cont. from 1

Group A: May 9, 1–4 p.m.
**Group B: June 17 and 24,
10–noon**

Social Networking and Safe Gaming on the Internet

McGreal Sight Center, Concord.
Registration Required. Please
contact Kimberly Stumph at
224-4039 X 312 or email
kstumph@sightcenter.org

May 13, 2009

Technology Vendor Workshop

Topic: TBD

McGreal Sight Center, Concord
1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

May 30, 2009

6th Annual Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon

Rain or Shine.

NEW THIS YEAR —

REGISTER ON-LINE!

See inside for details!

Thursday, June 25, 2009

Donor and Volunteer Appreciation Event

McGreal Sight Center, Concord
4:30 p.m.



Anne Aubertin (far left), Volunteer Administrator followed by Association Volunteer, Stella Scheckter and Shirley Denoncour and Dot Stevenson from the Friends RSVP Program.

Volunteers recently teamed together to fill tote bags with a variety of low vision aids and devices for elderly clients in the Greater Manchester area who are blind or severely visually impaired. Thanks to a generous grant from the Mary Gale Foundation these aids were purchased. These special devices provide the help our seniors need to live safely and independently in their own homes.

What a Show!



would not have been possible without the generous support of our Sponsors. We are so grateful!

- * C.B. Sullivan
- * Centrix Bank
- * The Common Man Restaurants and The Airport Diner
- * Great State Beverages, Inc.
- * Hilton Garden Inn
- * Hippo Press
- * Knights of Columbus Council 5260
- * Lavalley/Brensinger Architects
- * Merchants Automotive Group
- * Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green
- * Spectrum Marketing Companies
- * Werner Auto Group
- * West Side Meat & Deli
- * Wire Belt Company of America
- * WZID 95.7

Special Thanks to West Side Meat & Deli, Citizens Bank, and the Common Man Restaurants!

Once again, the legendary José Feliciano dazzled the audience with his performance at the Palace Theatre on December 14, 2008. More than 100 people enjoyed the reception held prior to the concert at Citizens Bank. The success of the event

Re-Accreditation Received

The New Hampshire Association for the Blind has received re-accreditation from the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving People with Blindness or Visual Impairment (NAC) for five years. The re-accreditation letter states in part:

* Achieving accreditation is an indication of your organization's dedication and commitment to improve the quality of life for people who have vision loss or impairment.

* The tenure of accreditation extends through June 30, 2013.

* NAC appreciates the work that you and your staff have performed diligently in completing the comprehensive Self-Assessment Document.

The Board, staff, clients and stakeholders spent January through March of 2008 carrying out an intensive self-assessment process. The Association was then audited by a volunteer NAC team (CEOs of other rehabilitation agencies from across the country) that visited the Agency for four days and wrote the final report. The Association has been accredited by NAC in five year intervals since 1973.

Coming This Spring: Art Beyond Sight®

Art Beyond Sight® is a juried art exhibit that will be presented by the New Hampshire Art Association in collaboration with the New Hampshire Association for the Blind. The exhibit will be held at the Robert Lincoln Levy Gallery in Portsmouth during the month of April. This innovative exhibit will allow individuals who are blind and visually impaired, as well as the general public, the chance to experience art using multi-sensory means. The works of artists from all over New England will be displayed featuring 3-D tactile or 2-D high contrast work. 2-D pieces will be supplemented with model displays describing each piece. Braille and visual descriptions in large print will accompany all art work.

Kudos go out to volunteers Judy Brenner and Valerie Sobel, Co-Chairs of the event. Both have worked closely with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Currier Museum in Manchester as well as other artists from around the country.

The exhibit will be held throughout the month of April 2009, at the Robert Lincoln Levy Gallery at 136 State Street in Portsmouth. Gallery hours are Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. and by appointment. For more information call the New Hampshire Art Association at 431-4230 or visit their website at www.nhartassociation.org.

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WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

Call **Anne Aubertin** 224-4039 X 317 or email aaubertin@sightcenter.org to learn more about:

- * Community Visitor
- * Program Support Driver
- * Public Education.
- * Community Driver
- * Clerical

Call **Mary Chase** 224-4039 X 324 or email mchase@sightcenter.org to help with:

- * Blind Awareness Walk-A-Thon
- * Benefit Concert
- * Fundraising Support.
- * Spooky Silent Auction
- * Corporate Liaison



Guide Dogs and Puppy Raising: An Opportunity to Change a Life



Vicente travels to Argentina with guide dog, Cabrina.

Kristin from Nashua, uses a white cane but complains, “It doesn’t find everything!” Kristin has completed the prerequisite Orientation and Mobility Training from the New Association for the Blind. In April, she’ll be heading out to Boring, Oregon to meet her new guide dog at the **Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind**. “Every day I remind myself that I am one day closer to getting my new best friend.” Kristin plans to post a *Live Journal* about her experiences during the training period. “Having a guide dog will make my life fuller than it already is.”

Vicente, traveled to his homeland, Argentina, with his guide dog, Cabrina. When Vicente first considered the possibility of having a guide dog, he was concerned that he might not be able to care for it. That was until he learned that one of his friends, also visually impaired, had a guide dog. So, Vicente decided to try. The training is intense but worth it. He trusts his companion Cabrina and says, “When I walk with my dog, I feel free!”

Carol, a guide dog user for 38 years declares, “Except for my family, having a guide dog has been the best thing that has happened to me in my life.”

Of those clients who have guide dogs, all will tell you that they can’t imagine their lives without their loyal companions. For Cindy, a new guide dog user, using her cane made her “think too much and made her feel blind.”

Guide dogs aren’t just born, they’re raised. Raising a guide dog requires time, effort, patience and love. In order for a puppy to be ready to work with clients like Kristin, Vicente, Carol and Cindy, they must go through several months of extensive training.

Puppies can be raised on a farm, in the city and with large families or small. The puppies need to learn house manners and basic obedience. Raisers learn how to prepare their home and train and socialize the puppies. Puppies need to experience new sights, sounds and be trained in areas with distractions, such as people, other dogs and in traffic. Places where puppies are socialized include grocery stores, schools, businesses, restaurants, shops and malls, not to mention trains, planes and automobiles!

Common dog breeds are Labrador and Golden Retrievers with about 10% being German Shepherds. Research shows that approximately 60% of puppy rais-

ers are repeat raisers. Because it takes a level of maturity, discipline and commitment to work with a guide dog, the majority of clients must be 16 years of age. There is no upper age limit for people who have the stamina and health to work with a guide dog. The dogs are highly trained working animals. Several thousand hours of training are needed.

There are 13 schools which train dogs in the US. One well-known school is **The Seeing Eye Center** (Morristown, NJ). They celebrated their 80th Anniversary on January 29, 2009. A second school in Yorktown, NY is **Guiding Eyes for the Blind**. Many NHAB clients have dogs from Guiding Eyes for the Blind. The school has a terrific field “follow up” program to ensure proper grooming, medical treatment, exercise, etc.

If you are a guide dog user in New Hampshire, or would like to learn more about guide dogs or puppy raisers, the Guide Dog Users of NH is a support group that promotes the use of Guide Hearing and Service Dogs for the disabled. Two articles about guide dogs and puppy raisers will be posted on their website (www.dogguideusersnh.org) or just call 603-434-6042. Check it out!

Puppy raising is a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to change a life.



Gretha, an aspiring Guide Dog.

REGISTER FOR THE 6TH ANNUAL BLIND AWARENESS



Did You Know...

From Guiding Eyes for the Blind and Guide Dogs for the Blind:

- * Guide dogs mean safe travel, mobility, greater independence, and better employment prospects for many people who are blind.
- * Guide dogs provide companionship and great emotional support.
- * Guide dogs should not be petted or disturbed while working in harness. When guide dogs are not working, do not pet them without first asking permission.
- * Guide dogs are taught not only basic obedience, such as come, sit down, and stay, but they also learn to stop at curbs and stairs, to avoid obstacles in their paths and to negotiate streets, crossings, elevators, public transportation, and more.
- * If you would like to assist a person who is blind and who has a guide dog, first ask, "May I help you?" If your offer is accepted, then offer your elbow. Do not grab the guide dog, the leash, harness or the person's arm.
- * Do not feed a guide dog.
- * Roughly 10,000 people use guide dogs in the U.S. and Canada.

Doing Our Part — Seacoast Peer Support Group Assists the Red Cross

Do you know what to do in an emergency? How would being prepared differ for someone who is seriously visually impaired? Sue Staples from the Great Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross called Stephanie Hurd, our Volunteer Coordinator on the Seacoast to ask about working together to produce emergency preparedness material that would be accessible for those who are blind and visually impaired. Stephanie invited Ms. Staples to meet with the Association's Seacoast Peer Support Group.

The group discussed the importance of such a project, then planned, prepared and tested a CD on Disaster. Don Nelson, long-time NHAB Recording Studio volunteer, narrated this audio presentation. A free audio presentation on disaster preparedness was made possible by a partnership of the American Red Cross Great Bay Chapter and the New Hampshire Association for the Blind.

Every 8 minutes a disaster strikes somewhere. It could happen while you were at work, school or home. If it happened in your community would you be ready? How would family members find each other? How would you know they were safe? What would you do if basic services like water, gas, electricity and telephone were cut off?

Yes, emergency workers such as fire, rescue and police will be on the scene after a disaster, but they can not reach everyone right away. You can cope with an emergency event by being prepared. The American Red Cross "Be Red Cross Ready" program is an all hazard approach to being ready!

Join Our "Gently Used" Group

Do you have a hand magnifier, stand magnifier or telescope that you are no longer using? Or, are you looking for a deal on a special magnification or Daily Living device? The Association's Gently Used Program may be the place to start. Through this program, people who are blind or visually impaired can exchange assistive devices they no longer use for devices that they need — AT NO COST. Special items that have been donated to NHAB will also be offered at no charge. **The next Gently Used Programs will be held on April 18 and June 13 from 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.** Low vision specialists will be on hand to help. **For more information about the Gently Used Program call Kimberly Stumph at 224-4039 X 312 or email kstumph@sightcenter.org.**



Help Us Save a Tree

Please help us! Do you receive duplicate copies of our Newsletter? Would you like the Newsletter in an alternate format? Are your name and address correct on the mailing label? Would you prefer an electronic version? Take a minute of your time to update our mailing list. Call

Jane Roy, Donor Records and Mail Program Manager, with a correction or addition: Call 224-4039 Ext. 326 or email jroy@sightcenter.org.

Welcome New Board



Joyce Meisel, Board Chair of the New Hampshire Association for the Blind.

At the Association's Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors in November 2008, **Joyce Meisel** was elected as Board Chair. The Association is fortunate to have someone with Ms. Meisel's background and commitment to people with visual impairments. Joyce has served on the Board since 1996. A life-long resident of New Hampshire, Ms. Meisel currently lives in Concord and is the Coordinator of the Eye Center at Catholic Medical Center in Manchester. Most recently Joyce chaired the successful December 2008 Benefit Concert with José Feliciano and headed up the National Accreditation Council Coordinating Committee for the Association's re-accreditation. During her tenure on the Board, Ms. Meisel has served on Budget and Finance, Client Services and Development Committees.

Joyce Meisel announced the election of **Sharon Cholette** of Laconia, to the Association's Board of Directors. Cholette, a former executive of Easter Seals, has served as a board member for a



Sharon Cholette of Laconia

number of N.H. organizations including NH Council on Fundraising, NH Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect, Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester, and Spaulding Youth Center. Sharon currently serves as the Chair for the Association's Special Events Committee and developed the first Annual Spooky Silent Auction, which recently celebrated its third successful year. Cholette has been recognized for her outstanding efforts in fundraising and recruitment.

Ms. Meisel also welcomed **John Woods** to the Board of Directors. Woods, of Hopkinton, has held several senior management positions within the private sector including European Marketing Director for 3M Company in Brussels. Woods served on the European Union Corporate Advisory Council and was a sales and marketing executive for Westvaco Corporation.



John Woods of Hopkinton

Most recently, John has directed the Sector Development Strategic Plan for the State of New Hampshire and currently serves as a Management Consultant for several national and international clients. Woods holds a BA from the University of Florida and an MBA from North Texas University.

John has been a volunteer for the New Hampshire Association for the Blind since 2005 and is serving as the Association's Corporate Relations Specialist. He is a dog guide puppy raiser and a member of the Dog Guide Users of New Hampshire.

Many people develop Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) as part of the body's natural aging process. Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over 65. Thanks to reference material from www.eyeconcord.com and www.geteyesmart.org, the following article offers an overview of Macular Degeneration.

AMD is a deterioration or breakdown of the macula. The macula is a small area in the retina at the back of the eye. It allows you to see fine details clearly and performs such activities as

Macular Degeneration

reading and driving. When the macula does not perform correctly, your central vision can be affected by blurriness, dark areas or distortion. Macular Degeneration affects your ability to see near and far. Although Macular Degeneration reduces vision in the central part of the retina, it usually does not affect the eye's side, or peripheral vision. For example, you could see the outline of a clock but not be able to tell what time it is.

The two most common types of AMD are

“dry” (atrophic) and “wet” (exudative). “Dry” Macular Degeneration is caused by aging and thinning of tissues of the macula. Vision loss is usually gradual. “Wet” Macular Degeneration accounts for about 10% of all AMD cases. It results when abnormal blood vessels form underneath the retina at the back of the eye. These new blood vessels leak fluid or blood and blur central vision. Vision loss may be rapid and severe.

Macular degeneration alone does not result in total blindness. Even in more advanced cases, people continue to have some useful vision. To help you adapt to lower vision levels, the New Hampshire Association for the Blind and its staff of trained professionals offer adaptive aids and devices, and training in their use. A person's remaining sight is very useful and often people can continue favorite activities by using low-vision devices such as magnifying devices, closed circuit television, large print reading materials and calendars and talking or computerized devices.

Volunteer Message

Fred McGonis, has been blind all his life. His vision loss is due to a rare eye disease called Retinopathy of Prematurity, a condition that sometimes afflicts premature infants when the retina does not grow properly.

When Fred was eight years old he was encouraged to attend the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston. While there, he became friends with a Manchester boy who was also blind. This new friendship reassured Fred that he wasn't alone with his blindness. Together the two boys were able to share their hopes, fears and dreams for the future. After attending Perkins, Fred became a student at Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center.

Fred later worked in the print shop at Sanders Associates in Nashua, now known as BAE Systems. Some of his responsibilities included collating, stapling, binding company documents and answering the telephone.

Fred met his wife Betty at Sanders. One day after work, Betty offered to help Fred cross the busy street outside of the office. From their "crossing" conversation, they realized they lived in the same neighborhood so they walked home together. A random act of kindness turned into a daily occurrence which led to an enduring relationship. Fred and Betty have been married for fifteen years!

Fred describes himself as a "computer freak." He uses JAWS (see inset) software to read articles in the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*, as well online books, and e-mails. If you want to know what's going on in the world, ask Fred. With the help of the internet and Skype software he's able to make telephone calls to other Skype users "free of charge." When not on the computer, Fred reads Braille books and listens to local Police and Public Works channels on a scanner. He



Fred McGonis client (left) and Charlie McCaffery.

and Betty also enjoy watching movies, particularly the classics.

Three years ago Fred was matched up with one of our volunteers, Charlie McCaffery. Charlie, a real estate professional for 37 years, has been an Association Volunteer since 2001. Before meeting Fred, Charlie worked with two other clients. When asked what brought Charlie to NHAB he explained that volunteerism is encouraged in his profession. Rather than participate in a single event as a corporate volunteer he wanted to help someone one-to-one, over time, in a more personal way. Volunteering for NHAB seemed like a good fit for him.

Fred and Charlie's first outing was to Greeley Park in Nashua where the two spent time getting acquainted. During their walk, Fred gave Charlie pointers on how to best guide him using the sighted guide techniques Charlie learned during volunteer orientation. Now this dynamic duo has expanded their activities to include grocery shopping, going out for coffee, or to medical appointments. Sometimes they take time for a "field trip" to IHOP (International House of Pancakes.) It's turned into more than just volunteer helping client — they're buddies.

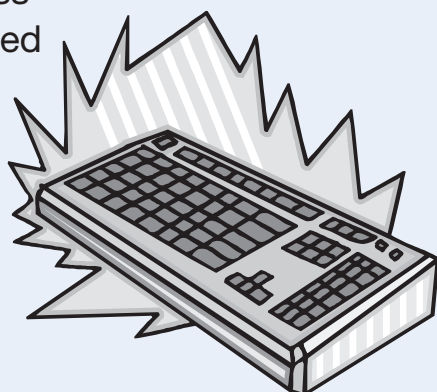
As buddies often do, Fred and Charlie banter back and forth and love to share stories about the funny things they do and say to get a rise out of people. One such story is about the day Fred went to Charlie's real estate office. The two men were sitting at a table talking within earshot of one of Charlie's co-workers. Charlie made the comment, "Well what do you say, Fred, let's go pick up a couple of dates." Fred quipped, "Yeah, a blind date!" The end result was just as they hoped — a look of shock and confusion on the co-worker's face.

Fred and Betty both agree that Charlie is "like family" to them. Fred goes on to say, "All I have to do is call Charlie and he's there to help — I think that's cool." Indeed, it is cool because that's what buddies do.

If you would like to volunteer for the Association, please contact Anne Aubertin, Volunteer Administrator at 603-224-4039 or aubertin@sightcenter.org or visit our website at www.sightcenter.org.

Job Access With Speech = JAWS

JAWS (an acronym for **J**ob **A**ccess **W**ith **S**peech) is a screen reader, a software program for visually impaired users, produced by the Blind and Low Vision Group at Freedom Scientific of St. Petersburg, Florida, USA. Its purpose is to make personal computers using Microsoft Windows accessible to blind and visually impaired users. It accomplishes this by providing the user with access to the information displayed on the screen via text-to-speech or by means of a braille display and allows for comprehensive keyboard interaction with the computer.





Mary Gale Trustees Visit the McGreal Sight Center

A number of Mary Gale Foundation Trustees visited the McGreal Sight Center in February to meet with clients and professional staff to learn first-hand about specialized vision rehabilitation programs that benefit elderly, needy visually impaired women in the Great Manchester Area. From left to right are pictured Bill Sirak, VP Not For Profit Group, Citizens Wealth Management, Jen Merril, Mary Gale Trustee, Dorothy "Dot" Helie, Mary Gale Program participant and Fred Rusczek, Mary Gale Trustee.



This Newsletter is published by the New Hampshire Association for the Blind

Current newsletters and Annual Reports are available in Braille, on disk, and on audiocassette. If you prefer to receive future editions of our publications in one of these alternate formats, please call the Association at 1-800-464-3075.

www.sightcenter.org

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Seacoast Office
603-431-9401

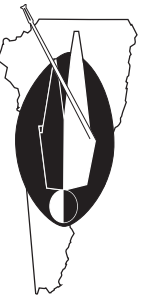


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