



The Visionary

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK 1

“SEE DIFFERENT” FORUM HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA 2

FROM INCAPACITATED TO INDEPENDENT COLLEGE STUDENT: JOSE’S PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF 3

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND 4

DECEMBER IS SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS MONTH 7

GIFT IDEAS FOR THE SEASON OF GIVING 8

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM’S COMMITTEE OF VENDORS MET FOR FINAL TIME IN 2019 10

NATIONAL COALITION OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS 2019 CONFERENCE 10

TECHNOLOGY TODAY 11

Leading the Way: 100% of Content on Apple TV+ Has Audio Description 11

IN THE HEADLINES 12

QUICK TIPS ON DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY 13

Creating Accessible Emails 13

UPCOMING EVENTS 14

NATIONAL BRAILLE PRESS HOSTS 3RD ANNUAL BRAILLE POETRY CONTEST 14

Message from the Director’s Desk

As each year draws to a close, I always appreciate the opportunity to reflect on what DBS has accomplished during the year and where we are headed in the upcoming year. As a whole, DBS, our clients, and our network of providers have celebrated many accomplishments, including:

- A new record in the number of blind and visually impaired clients gaining, retaining or advancing in employment;
- Historical sales for blind operators in our Business Enterprise Program;



- Advances in our work with the Blind Services Foundation to create a new and accessible Vocational Evaluation Tool for Blind and Low Vision Clients;
- Implementation of key organizational changes to assist with better services, recruitment and retention efforts; and
- Brand new milestones in Braille and Audio Recording Downloads (BARD), ensuring even more independence for our visually impaired library users.

You can check out the October edition *The Visionary* to review our [end-of-year statistical review of the 2018-2019 fiscal year](#).

In the coming year, I'm looking forward to the opportunity to unveil increased access to accessibility tools for clients, state agencies and businesses; provide updates to our strategic plan, which includes strategies to offer Information Technology Training Certification for consumers; more details about the Accessible Vocational Evaluation Assessment for the Blind; and a host of other great things to come.

For those looking to get a personal head start on the next year, I would encourage you to grab a copy of *Today Matters* by John Maxwell. The book includes a number of strategies to maximize each day, to lead towards a better tomorrow. In the meantime, as we prepare for all that this season has to offer – fun, food, and family time – we wish you the very best holidays and the happiest of New Years.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Doyle III

“See Different” Forum Held at University of Florida

In November, the See Different team traveled to Gainesville for an interactive forum hosted by Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED), a Pre-Health Honors Society, at the request of the Health Outreach for Progress and Equality (HOPE) Director of AED. The pre-health field includes students who plan to pursue a career in medicine (allopathic and osteopathic), dentistry, optometry, podiatry, veterinary medicine, and other health care professions requiring post-baccalaureate study leading to an advanced degree.



A student tests out goggles which simulate various visual impairments

The forum was tailored to address issues of interest to pre-health students, specifically those related to health care for those who are blind and visually impaired. Each of the three panel



A panel member and her husband answer questions and demonstrate using an iPhone

members had varying degrees of sight and one member had hearing loss in addition to blindness. Panel members took turns presenting on topics based on their knowledge and personal experiences. Topics ranged from visual health disparities, unique health issues within the blind community, common fears and misunderstandings, and effectively and respectfully interacting with people who are blind/visually impaired as well as barriers and challenges in obtaining healthcare, such as inaccessible medical forms and unattended kiosks at health care facilities. To show that they are human just like their sighted counterparts, panelists also shared some personal information, such as their pet peeves and hobbies (skydiving and playing bass guitar in a band anyone?!?).

Panel members discussed dog guide etiquette and demonstrated proper sighted guide techniques. Participants were given the opportunity to guide each other with one person blindfolded. At the end of the formal presentation, participants eagerly approached with well-thought-out questions and enthusiastically tried out some of the equipment and technology that the See Different team brought.

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“See Different” is the brainchild of a few visually impaired DBS staff members who were inspired to create the initiative after volunteering at a “Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work” event. The staff members were at the event to answer children’s questions about blindness while showcasing the technology, toys, games and guide dogs used by people who are blind/visually impaired. The community outreach and awareness campaign showcases the abilities of those who are blind and visually impaired in a positive manner by offering fun, interactive forums showcasing how those who are blind and visually impaired live, work and play. Using humor, demonstrations, and real-life experiences, the See Different team hosts forums for everyone from children to the elderly and everywhere from workplaces to church groups to college classes. Visit the [See Different webpage](#) to learn more or email the team at SeeDifferent@dbs.fldoe.org to request a forum for your group.

From Incapacitated to Independent College Student: Jose’s Perseverance Pays Off

Jose Marcos Romero was born and raised in Mexico and immigrated to the United States in 1982. He worked in the construction industry until 2010 when the economy took a downward turn and he lost his job. In 2011, Jose relocated to Indiana where he found employment as a factory laborer. During the next three years, Jose noticed some changes in his vision but didn’t receive medical care. On May 20, 2014, Jose experienced a sudden loss of vision. He received a diagnosis of optic nerve edema. He was not able to return to his job and his family decided he was unable to live independently. They insisted he relocate to Jacksonville to reside with his daughter.

Jose quickly became dependent on family members and did virtually nothing without assistance. Jose's daughter realized the need for specialized services for her father. She encouraged her father to apply to DBS as a first step in regaining his mobility and in September 2014 he did so. His DBS Counselor referred Jose for vision rehabilitation training at the [Vision Education and Rehabilitation Center](#) (VERC) located at the downtown [Florida State College at Jacksonville](#) (FSCJ) campus.

When Jose began training, his vocational potential appeared limited. He was fully dependent on a sighted guide, spoke little English, and appeared disheveled and dejected. Slowly, he began to regain his confidence and self-esteem as he learned to travel safely and efficiently. He also attained the skills necessary to perform activities of daily living without relying on family members. Jose was then introduced to keyboarding and [assistive technology](#) using [Job Access with Speech \(JAWS\)](#).

With the assistance and support of his DBS Counselor and VERC instructors, Jose enrolled in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at FSCJ in 2015. He quickly progressed through the curriculum and successfully completed the program in 2016. In 2017, Jose's DBS Counselor referred him to DBS' [Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) in Daytona. While there, he learned the basics of Braille and furthered his training in other areas. Jose credits the Rehabilitation Center for further building his confidence with mobility and JAWS and routinely recommends enrollment at the Center to other individuals with vision loss.



Armed with his newly acquired skills, Jose decided to focus on a new goal of earning his high school diploma. He re-enrolled at FSCJ and received his General Educational Development (GED) certificate on February 14, 2019. During this training period, Jose also returned to VERC for advanced JAWS training.

When Jose now walks in the door, he is barely recognizable from the man of 2014. He travels with confidence, speaks with assurance, and presents as a well-groomed and self-possessed student. Jose has recently enrolled in college-level coursework at FSCJ. His revised vocational goal is to complete his college education and become a Spanish-English translator. He hopes to give back to the community that has helped him come so far.

Community Partner Spotlight: Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

The Division of Blind Services works with a number of community partners to assist in providing services to our clients. DBS is thankful for the work that our partners do. Periodically we will recognize the work of a CRP that is providing extraordinary or innovative services.



For the December 2019 issue, DBS would like to recognize the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Virginia Jacko, CEO of the Lighthouse and a woman who is blind herself, is at the center of everything the Lighthouse is doing. She has not simply followed traditional Lighthouse programming but rather has transformed it in her 14 years at the organization. From a preschool that serves both

sighted and visually impaired children equally to a program that provides eye care at no cost to underserved children throughout Florida to sensory experiences with professional sports teams and car museums for visually impaired children and teens, Ms. Jacko has been a terrific advocate and visionary leader for the blind and visually impaired community. Here are some of the other programs that the Lighthouse is currently offering:

Mentoring Matters

In partnership with DBS, The Miami Lighthouse created a mentorship program for clients who are actively seeking work or a new experience. Dubbed “Mentoring Matters,” the program is designed to support clients as they prepare for an interview, a new position, or to help them gain confidence in a professional environment. It seeks to equip clients with the tools they need to effectively interact with their coworkers in social situations, network within their field, and other skills outside of specific job training. The Lighthouse’s Job Services Coordinator matches clients together based on compatibility with one another. Things that are considered when determining a pair are a good fit includes the clients’ professional interests, personality, career similarities, and future goals. Mentoring Matters has not only had a positive impact on the protégés but for the mentors as well. Stephen Podley, who works for the Miami International Airport, [recently shared his experience in the program in an interview with Miami’s CBS affiliate.](#)

Not Just Your Standard Training

While the Miami Lighthouse provides the traditional Blind Babies, Children’s, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Independent Living programming, it goes beyond teaching the standard orientation and mobility skills or employment skills. The Lighthouse has taught a variety of classes, including English, computer literacy, art, various life skills and just recently, a program called “Beauty for the Blind.” Contrary to some beliefs, individuals with visual impairments may love fashion, makeup, and doing their hair. “Beauty for the Blind” was an interactive presentation for the Lighthouse’s Senior Group and Health Activities (SGA) program with popular fashion stylists and designers as well as a celebrity makeup artist and hairstylist. The “Beauty for the Blind” program didn’t just offer expert hair, makeup, and personalized style tips, but also addressed the special challenges faced by those who are visually impaired.

Many of these programs are funded, in part, via the Division of Blind Services. If you are in the Miami area and interested in any of these programs or just want to learn more, reach out to your DBS counselor or [contact the Miami Lighthouse.](#)

Jacksonville Children Benefit from Equine Therapy

Some children who are blind or visually impaired may lack a visual connection to the world when compared to their sighted peers. This lack of connection can leave a gap in developmental and social skills. DBS' [Children's program](#) seeks to help bridge those gaps. As part of that programming, the DBS Jacksonville Office planned an event in hopes that participants would experience some of the benefits of equine therapy.

Interacting with and riding horses has enabled children with a variety of disabilities to develop physical, emotional, and cognitive strength and increased their confidence and social skills. Equine riding therapy fitness gains include improved range of motion, balance, posture, and hand-eye coordination as well as increased core strength from taking control of the horse and moving in unison with it.

Jennifer Yudow of Horse Sense and Sensitivity works with children with a variety of disabilities including visual impairment, cerebral palsy, or selective mutism. On this occasion, four families attended the event. Each child was given the opportunity to touch the horse and learn about its size before being helped onto its back. They were then able to have a short ride around the corral under the supervision of Yudow and several volunteers.



Each child that participated reported they really enjoyed the experience! One child's parents saw such a positive impact from this one visit that they plan to continue the equine therapy. The biggest breakthrough came from Gabe Kramer, a child who is deaf-blind. He has been

actively working on his communication skills with his counselor and family. Before the outreach event, he was mostly communicating through sign language; but after spending time on the horse, his family noticed more verbal communication from Gabe!

DBS is thrilled that this outing proved so beneficial and hopes to offer this type of therapy again in the future. If you know a blind or visually impaired child who may benefit from equine therapy, please contact your local district office.

Program Spotlight

If you are like most parents and guardians, you want to give your special little one the absolute best. You are always searching for ways to give them a head start academically, socially and emotionally. If your child is blind or visually impaired, our [Blind Babies](#) and [Children's](#) programs could be your child's next greatest opportunity. These programs provide early intervention education and developmental training for blind or visually impaired children and their families. In order to qualify, the child must be diagnosed with a bilateral visual impairment that has/will substantially affect their development and require the use of adaptive technology and alternative learning techniques. Participants in these programs see a substantial increase in their independence as they learn to maneuver with confidence at home and at school.

If you believe your child qualifies for either of these programs, you can learn more about them on the [Division of Blind Services website](#) or by contacting your [local district office](#).

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month



Safe Toys and Gifts Month reminds us all that while we love seeing the smiling faces of children as they open the gifts we've given them, we must be careful that they aren't hurt by the very toys we gave them in hopes of bringing them joy. One way to do this is to pay close attention to the safety regulations and age requirements for *each* toy we give. **The age recommendation on toys is for the *average* ability stage of that age group.** If a child meets the age requirement but their abilities or maturity level don't match the age group, the toy may not be the best fit for them. After checking the safety labels, it's always a good idea to supervise the child playing with the toy before allowing them to play with it alone (if supervision isn't required). Reading the directions, safety warnings, and user manuals can also go a long way to prevent minor and major injuries.

Some [other tips from the American Public Health Association](#), include:

- 1 Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off. The toy should have no sharp edges or points and should be sturdy enough to withstand impact without breaking, being crushed, or being pulled apart easily. Do NOT give toys with ropes, cords or heating elements.
- 2 Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (give a helmet with the skateboard).
- 3 Look for labels that assure the toys have passed a safety inspection – “ATSM” means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.
- 4 When purchasing toys for children with special needs, try to choose toys that may appeal to different senses such as sound, movement, and texture; consider interactive toys to allow the child to play with others; and think about the size of the toy and the position a child would need to be in to play with it.

TIP: Take a toy out of its original packaging and then wrap the unpackaged gift with wrapping paper. This gives a child who is visually impaired or blind only one layer to unwrap before they get to the gift and they can start enjoying it immediately!



Gift Ideas for the Season of Giving

Have someone special in your life who is visually impaired but don't know what to give them? Don't worry, we have some suggestions!

In addition to the items below, those who are blind or visually impaired might appreciate a gift that allows them to use other senses (e.g. a plush blanket for the sense of touch or aromatherapy for the sense of smell).

For gift ideas other than the ones below or if you're looking to give a gift certificate, check out [Maxi Aids](#) and [LS & S. This Amazon list](#) has some great ideas specific to children who are visually impaired.

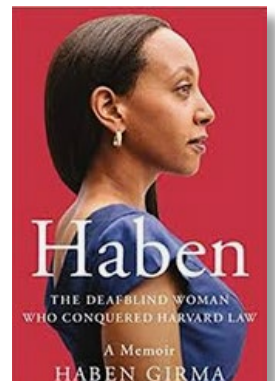
A Smart Speaker

These devices have revolutionized the lives of the sighted and visually impaired alike! Smart speakers can be paired with a number of other smart devices (i.e., a smart thermostat) to make homes more accessible. These devices can also serve as a voice command alarm clock! Options include the [Amazon Echo](#) and [Echo Dot](#), [Google Home](#), and the [Apple HomePod](#). If you're interested in one of these for a child in your life, there's the [Amazon Echo Dot Kids Edition with parental controls](#).

Audio or Braille Books

The National Braille Press has a [Children's Braille Book Club](#) which features a new print/Braille book each month. Subscriptions for 6 or 12-months are available for your favorite little reader.

If you're looking for a book that will inspire someone with vision loss, you may want to give them [Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law](#) about an Eritrean refugee who is the first Deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School. (This book is also [available in DBS' Braille and Talking Book Library](#) in both talking book and Braille formats.)



Games

Microsoft is working to create [gaming that is accessible for all](#) so if you have someone in your life who loves to play video games (or even might be interested in it), check out this [list of games with Xbox controller support with blind support](#). There are also options for [colorblind-friendly](#) or [high-contrast games](#)).

If video games aren't your cup of tea or to limit the amount of time your child spends in front of a screen, there are plenty of other options including [Braille and Low Vision Monopoly](#), [Braille playing cards](#), [Uno Braille Edition](#), [a tactile checkers set](#), [a tactile Rubik's Cube](#), et cetera.

A Subscription to Aira

The Aira service is accessed through the Aira app (available on iOS and Android). It allows blind and visually impaired users to access visual assistance using one's phone camera or through smart glasses. Agents providing assistance can do anything from read a menu or program, navigate through an unfamiliar public space, or help with shopping.

While some locations like Walgreen's, Smithsonian museums, and certain airports offer free access to the service, most of their service must be purchased by individual users. All agents are certified and trained. A drawback to Aira is the cost of the [subscription plans](#) if a user isn't in a free access area.



Braille Jewelry

Whether it's a ring, bracelet, or a necklace, you can't go wrong with Braille jewelry. There are a number of different stores that sell Braille accessories, but for a customized touch, [Etsy](#) is a great place to find some Braille jewelry. You're sure to find something that says, "You're special to me" – in Braille of course!

Sporting Goods

Various sporting goods can be equipped with bells or beeps to allow those who are blind or visually impaired to play sports. Options include [Frisbees](#), [soccer balls](#), [footballs](#), or [tennis balls](#). If someone you know is just trying to keep in shape, maybe this [talking pedometer with alarm clock](#) is the way to go.



A Trip to a Theme Park

Many theme parks are working to become more accessible for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Featured offerings include audio-described content, tactical or large print maps and booklets, accessible kiosks, and printed materials in Braille. Research your favorite theme park to see what they offer in terms of accessibility.



Please be advised that the Division of Blind Services has no affiliation with any of the listed companies, websites, or makers of any of these products. Any views expressed by the companies or in these products do not necessarily reflect the views of DBS.

Business Enterprise Program's Committee of Vendors Met for Final Time in 2019

The Committee of Vendors met for their quarterly meeting on Friday, November 15 and Saturday, November 16 at the Embassy Suites in Orlando. The Committee is comprised of ten district representatives, a chairman, and vice-chairman elected by the Blind Vendors of Florida.

After a presentation by Nicky Gacos of the National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM), the Committee voted to host the Business Leadership and Superior Training (BLAST) Conference in Florida in Fall 2021! The Conference is highly recognized throughout the vending industry and DBS is looking forward to hosting this national training in 2021.

The Committee discussed a number of other issues relevant to blind vendors in Florida, including the (in)accessibility of kiosks used in micro markets; the availability of accessible equipment for vendors; recruiting qualified candidates; streamlining training for licensed vendors from other states; and a Business Enterprise mentoring initiative. For more information about the Business Enterprise program and a full breakdown of the quarterly meeting, you can visit the [Business Enterprise program page on the DBS website](#).

National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils 2019 Conference



The [National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils](#) (NCSRC) met in Jacksonville, Florida for their semi-annual fall conference in late October. Over 100 state rehabilitation council members from across the country attended the conference, seven of whom are members of the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

(FRCB). Members had the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with one another on how to best facilitate participation in council meetings and better serve their respective populations. The conference allowed members, both new and established, to better understand their roles in the council and engage in conversation about best practices for the council as a whole. Participants heard from CSAVR President Alan McClain, Florida DVR Director Allison Flannigan, and others. A Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) representative presented information about the data points at the federal level and showed how the rehabilitation agencies are supporting and helping clients – which encouraged members about the importance of the work they do. Florida Rehabilitation Council Chairman, Mikey Wiseman, spoke on a panel where he discussed the nuances of the council.

When asked he thought of the conference, Chair Wiseman said, “The conference was an extraordinary opportunity that we were able to have right here in Florida.” While Mr. Wiseman noted the many opportunities to connect with and learn from other states, he remarked on the pride that he has in seeing how well the Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind functions when compared to some of his national counterparts. He specifically noted the strength in the working relationship between DBS and the Council.



TECHNOLOGY TODAY

Leading the Way: 100% of Content on Apple TV+ Has Audio Description

Movies and television are a big part of popular culture today, but blind and low-vision consumers can feel left out when trying to watch video content that is highly visual. To help blind and visually impaired individuals enjoy video content, Media Access Group began offering a video descriptive service in the 1980s. This service was included as a secondary audio track which provided a concise narrative of the characters' appearances and visual action; it was timed to fall in between the characters' dialogue. The service was a hit and quickly came to be valued by sighted viewers who heard descriptions of visual content that they hadn't noticed themselves.



Other companies and organizations in the U.S. and abroad began offering similar services for both television and movies. While the quality of some of the options was not quite as good as that of Media Access Group, blind viewers began to have more options in procuring video content that had audio description. This later paved the way for movie theaters, cable providers, and even streaming services (when they became popular) to offer descriptive narration; however, until recently, audio description was not obtainable for all of the content on any single platform.

Enter Apple TV+. Apple announced plans to launch its own streaming service in September. The all-original content service officially launched on November 1st and every show on the Apple TV+ platform has audio description included. The Apple TV+ service costs \$4.99 per month with Apple allowing a whole family (up to six members) to share a single subscription. The service can be played on all Apple devices with the Apple TV app as well as Roku, Amazon Fire TV, and [some smart TVs](#) with the Apple TV app or online at tv.apple.com. While [content is currently limited](#), Apple plans to release more original content each month.

If you're interested in seeing what's available with audio description, the American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project has compiled a great breakdown of [available streaming options with descriptive video](#). If you have cable, check with your cable provider to see how you may be able to access descriptive video on your cable television channels.

Want to share with us any other assistive technology that works well for you? Tell us about your experience by emailing communications@dbf.fldoe.org.

In The Headlines



Here are some articles that caught our attention last month and we thought we'd share them in case you missed them!

Need a Lyft to a job interview?

[Lyft Offering Rides to Job Seekers With Disabilities](#) drew our attention. The ride-sharing service rolled out its Jobs Access Program which offers free or discounted rides to or from job training programs and interviews as well as back and forth from work for the first three weeks of a new job! The service was initially launched in 35 cities, including [Tallahassee, Jacksonville, and the Tampa Bay area](#). You can check out [Lyft's blog post](#) for further details about the program.

New Apple TV+ Show Portrays a World without Vision

One of Apple's new television series on its Apple TV+ service might be of particular interest to those who are blind or visually impaired. "See" starring Jason Momoa and Alfreo Woodard is "set 600 years in the future after a virus has decimated humankind and rendered the remaining population blind. When all humanity has lost the sense of sight, humans must adapt and find new ways to survive."



To help make the new show more realistic, Apple hired blindness consultant and former DBS employee Joe Strechay. Vulture's article [How See's Blindness Consultant Helped Demystify a Sightless World](#) provides fascinating insight and a behind-the-scenes look at the production of the series. The show also employed a number of actors who are blind or low-vision which some argue has made for a more realistic representation of blindness than is normally seen on television.

Mini Sculptures Make Exploring More Enjoyable



If you like checking out historic landmarks, did you know that some places like the [Aachen Cathedral](#) in Germany have miniature replicas so that people with visual disabilities are able to take in the beauty of it all? Viewers are able to *feel* the entire landscape of the historical monument and oftentimes Braille descriptions are included. A great read on the topic is [Mini Sculptures in Front of Monuments Help Visually Impaired People Explore Architecture](#). The next time you are visiting a historical landmark, ask your tour guide if there is a miniature replica to help you see it more clearly!

Quick Tips on...

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

We live in a visual world and that includes the digital one. So, how do we make that world easier for those who are blind or visually impaired to navigate? Each month we'll give you some tips on making the online world better for those who can't always see it so clearly.

Creating Accessible Emails

Emails are important, especially for those that are in the workforce. Ensuring that your emails are accessible enables those who are visually impaired can read them and increases their workplace productivity. Plus, some of these tips are just a good rule of thumb for sighted and visually impaired alike!

Be sure to use appropriate and descriptive subject lines and logical file name attachments.

Make sure the recipient of your email knows what the email is about (or what the attachment is) before they open it. It is also helpful to describe what a hyperlink is rather than just giving the website address. Text should always be clear, concise, and accurate.

Use fonts that are readable. The best fonts are sans serif, evenly spaced, and characters with uniform width. The minimum font size should typically be 12. Do not use cursive, decorative or stylized fonts (even in your email signature) as they can be very difficult for those with low-vision to read. Good fonts to use include Arial, Tahoma, Verdana, Segoe UI, Lucida Sans, and Calibri.

Good font: Can you please follow-up on this message?

Bad font: *Surc. no problm. I have it scheduled for 3:00 am on Monday.*

Use contrasting colors and do not use color alone to convey meaning. While your favorite color may be yellow, using yellow text on a white background (or vice versa) is difficult to read. Also, avoid using red/green color combinations as they can be difficult for those who are colorblind to differentiate. Screen readers and individuals who are color blind will not be able to understand the meaning if you only use color to indicate something is different.

Use alt text for images. When using images, use appropriate alt text or describe the images in the text of the email. Do not display text as images; screen readers can't typically read text displayed as an image. For more information, read [last month's Quick Tips on Digital Accessibility column](#).

If you're using Outlook for your email or as an email client, Microsoft has written an article on [how to make your Outlook email accessible to people with disabilities](#) on Windows, macOS, iOS, and Android platforms as well as in their Outlook web app.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) Meeting

The FRCB will conduct its quarterly meeting in Tallahassee on February 6 and 7, 2020, at the Holiday Inn, 2003 Apalachee Parkway. The meeting will begin at 8:30 am on February 6 and 9:00 am on February 7. The FRCB will also conduct a public forum from 5 to 6 pm on February 6. For more information, email Selena Sickler at Selena.Sickler@dbs.fldoe.org.

2020 Vision Awareness Day Open House

On February 22, 2020, join the VA North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) and the Villages Visually Impaired Persons (VIP) Group for their 26th Annual Visual Awareness Day event. The open house will have agencies and companies that work with and provide equipment for the legally blind and visually impaired. For more information, contact Bruce Davis at (353) 271-6001.

National Braille Press Hosts 3rd Annual Braille Poetry Contest

Writers of *all* ages are encouraged to enter their original braille poetry for a chance to win a grand prize. **The theme for this year's contest is "freedom."** Freedom to be you, freedom in the world, fighting for freedom, let your creativity run free (pun intended)!

The poem must be an original work 125 words or less, using English Braille American Edition or Unified English Braille.

Submissions will be accepted until February 7, 2020.

Winners will be announced on World Poetry Day: March 21, 2020. Winners will be selected from each of the following age groups: K-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, 6th-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, and adults.




For more information or to submit your poem online, go to the [National Braille Press' 3rd Annual Braille Poetry Contest webpage](#).

Tell us what you think! Email us at communications@dbs.fldoe.org and visit our [website](#) for more information on DBS and its programs.

**“Vision is the Art of
Seeing What is
Invisible to Others”**
- Johnathan Swift



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