



THE VISIONARY

September-October 2022

White Cane Awareness Day



The Florida Division of Blind Services' (DBS) announces it's annual White Cane awareness celebration will be held on Friday, October 14, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. All are invited to this event aimed at educating and celebrating the independence of blind and visually impaired people in Florida and highlighting transportation laws that were designed specifically to protect blind and visually impaired travelers.

The awareness event will be held in the Department of Education's Turlington Building and will be broadcast virtually to enable all to be a part of the celebration no matter where you're located.

We celebrate the white cane because to many blind and visually impaired citizens, the white cane represents a freedom and ability to fully participate in life. It allows persons to travel safely and move independently across Florida's highways and roadways to work, school, and in communities to live life well.

The event will honor this progress and feature two great speakers who have benefitted from this law. Reach out to your local DBS office to learn about events in your area this October or visit our website events calendar at: dbs.fldoe.org/events for a statewide listing.

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH (NDEAM)

The Division of Blind Services proudly recognizes October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). NDEAM began in 1945, when Congress declared the first week in October to be "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1988 it was expanded to a full month and renamed.

The NDEAM theme for this year is, "Disability: Part of the Equity Equation" and brings awareness to the advancements related to employment for people with disabilities; celebrates the contributions of those individuals within the workforce; and highlights any areas that still require improvement. This observance helps push employment processes and work environments further towards progress and *full* equality.

Every October, the Division works in conjunction with other organizations like our sister division, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), to celebrate NDEAM. Led by APD, the Exceptional Employer Awards recognize several great employers that prioritize employing individuals with disabilities and their places of business.

Be on the lookout the entire month of October as we highlight a new exceptional employer every week on our website, Dbs.Fldoe.org, and for other NDEAM events in your area!



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Happy Work Anniversary!

Congratulations to the following staff celebrating milestone anniversaries with DBS in September and October!

One Year:

Natasha Call
Ranburn Christian
Patrick Lafayette
Daritza Roman-Lopez
Kiyanna Williams

Five Years:

Lachandra Barnes
Sirayto Gantt
Margaret Mills
Jasmine Nance

Ten Years:

Pamela Vinson

Fifteen Years:

Michon Barker

Twenty-five Years:

Maureen Fink

Thirty-five Years:

La'verne Scott



From the Director's Desk

Fiscal Year Successes and Growth

Autumn is always a dynamic season for us at the Division of Blind Services (DBS), and this year is no exception! As we prepare for exciting events to mark White Cane Awareness Day, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and Blindness Awareness Month, we are reminded of the pivotal role DBS plays in creating a barrier-free environment for blind Floridians.

One notable barrier blind Floridians often face is finding and maintaining employment, and that's why I'm pleased to share DBS helped more individuals obtain, maintain and advance in employment than ever before.

Each DBS district has a target number of clients to help reach their successful employment goal. This year many DBS offices exceeded their goals by helping more clients achieve employment success! Here are the statistics for the districts and recognition to team members:

- **District 1 Pensacola-Panama City—112%**
- **District 2 Tallahassee—116%**
- **District 3 Jacksonville-Gainesville—124%**
- **District 5 Daytona-Cocoa—106%**
- **District 6 Orlando—101%**
- **District 7 Tampa-Lakeland—109%**
- **District 9 Fort Myers/Palmetto—127%**
- **District 10 West Palm Beach—172%**
- **District 11 Sunrise-Ft. Lauderdale—107%**
- **District 12 Miami—178%**

- The Employment Placement Specialist with the most placements was **John Mosley** with 43, followed by **Sharon Jadoo** with 38.
- The Johnnie Slaton Award, which is awarded annually to persons with 30 or more closures, went to the following team members with their respective number of closures:
 - ◊ **Christina Panczak-Smith** (56)
 - ◊ **George Rosario** (50)
 - ◊ **Nancy Bateh** (48)
 - ◊ **Kelly Simmons** (47)
 - ◊ **Delcie Pasco** (38)
 - ◊ **Linda Hernandez** (32)
 - ◊ **Roudeline Remy** (32)
 - ◊ **Kathleen Belton** (30)
 - ◊ **Ronald Voltaire** (30)

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) continued an impressive streak this year: for three years in a row, 100% of new BEP operators who were awarded their first facility remained at that facility for the required 12 months. Vendor sales are rebounding after the pandemic, and 121 vending machines were added to the program. Four micro markets were opened as well, with more to come. BEP is also pursuing opportunities to expand its business locations on behalf of blind vendors to include non-Randolph-Sheppard priority locations.

This was an exceptional year not just for DBS but for all blind and visually impaired individuals who received services and assistance in seeking, obtaining, and maintaining competitive integrated employment.

Q&A with the Bureau of Business Enterprise

What does the Bureau do? The Bureau of Business Enterprise recruits, trains, and licenses blind persons with the goal of awarding and placing them in vending and food-service-related facilities in federal, state, and county government buildings and airports. Facilities include interstate rest-area vending, vending routes, vending-only locations, snack bars, cafeterias, micro markets and military dining. Also, future private sector opportunities.



How many people work in the Bureau? Sixteen staff members and one contracted lead training instructor work in the Bureau of Business Enterprise. The staff oversees approximately 118 blind vendors in about 140 facilities.



Whom does the Bureau serve? The Bureau serves legally blind persons who are at least 18 years old and are American citizens living in Florida.

How does the Bureau do what it does? To manage this program, it takes a lot of hands-on attention and business know-how. Leadership staff who oversee the program are based in the Tallahassee State Office. The state-wide Operations

Manager, who works out of the Tampa office, supervises six Regional Business Consultants. Consultants work closely with blind vendors who operate facilities. There are also trainings for personnel and support staff in profit and loss statements and procurement practices. Staff also learn to use iPads and Surface Pros as many will need to use the Square app since many vendors use it to process card payments. Field staff particularly need food service and vending skills and equipment knowledge in those areas. Customer service skills are a must.

What are the future or long-term goals of the Bureau?

The long-term goals are hiring and retaining qualified personnel and adding facilities and blind vendors to help the blind be financially self-supporting. We are also seeking to expand on private sector vending and micromarket opportunities.



Agencies Team Up to Share Comprehensive Services

Exhibitors and attendees gathered May 21 at the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach for the Annual Health and Human Services Summit. Said to be one of the largest of its type in the area, the event hosted 73 exhibitors, 28 speakers and 16 training sessions for the Summit's 300 attendees.

The Friends of Library Access, Inc. sponsored an exhibit table for the Florida Braille and Talking Book Library that was staffed by DBS and VR employees, and an adjacent exhibit table was staffed by the District 5 office (Daytona Beach) representing the Division of Blind Services. This proximity allowed each of the Divisions to easily refer visitors to the appropriate services.



Mary Grant, Rehabilitation Specialist, DBS

DBS representatives Karen Chuyen and Kathy Searle Acevedo also participated as speakers in a panel-style training session to showcase these and other related agencies supporting persons with disabilities. In addition to these presentations, another DBS representative, Kimberly

Bonnette, outlined the services provided at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and Debbie Fox of Easter Seals explained the PLAY Program offered by the Autism Center for Excellence.



Kimberly Bonnette, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Thanks to all attendees and vendors. Partnering with other agencies to showcase a variety of services helps spread the word to a broader audience.



L-R: Sandy Sangster, Rochelle Price, Karen Chuyen, and Kathy Searle Acevedo

Submitted by Kathy Searle Acevedo, Florida Braille and Talking Book Library

Florida Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Did you know the Florida Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is the only intensive daily training program in the state of Florida for blind and visually impaired persons to develop the vocational and daily living skills needed to be productive members in the community and workforce?

The benefits of this 30-acre campus with a residential setting are invaluable as it delivers consistent, dedicated support to clients and provides personally supportive, hands-on services in the best way possible for blind and visually impaired persons to progress and acclimate into society with the necessary skills to function and have successful lives and beneficial employment.

The Center also incorporates instruction in a variety of vocational and independent skills that allows students to gain independence and reenter the workforce with the valuable skills needed to make a difference. The Center offers many trainings and classes that ensure blind and visually impaired students are skilled, competent, and competitive.

Contact a DBS Counselor for additional information on referrals or visit dbs.fldoe.org/Rehab-Center/index.html for more information.

District Spotlight: Pensacola

Transition Student Summer Camp

Summer is here and the time is right for... Transition Student Summer Camp! Our Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) in the Pensacola District, Independence for the Blind NW FL, organized an action-packed week for the students that includes a mixture of work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling and workplace readiness training. The work-based learning experiences ranged from performing maintenance at the City of Pensacola parks to doing chores at the Leaning Post Ranch, which is a very special place in Northwest Florida where individuals with disabilities and at-risk youth can receive equine facilitated therapy ([The Leaning Post Ranch](#)).

training or assistance is needed, and assured them that a workstation with JAWS and ZoomText software along with a CCTV are available to use as needed.



Transition students listen attentively during a workshop

The students learned soft skills through a variety of activities, such as a budgeting and finance workshop courtesy of Central Credit Union. The students also attended a presentation from Career Source Escarosa, where they learned a wide range of job-search information, from how to create a profile in the Employ Florida job search website to dress code etiquette and the importance of a firm handshake. Career Readiness Advisor, Melinda Maiterth, and her colleague, Wakinme Long, did an excellent job keeping the students engaged. Melinda also invited the students to visit her at the CareerSource office whenever additional



L-R: John O'Dillon, Patrick Haynes, James Johnson Jr., Robert Stewart, Brandon Sparks, Christian Love, Aelisa Johnson, Marissa Johnson, Melinda Maiterth, Wakinme Long, Debbie Carty

It wasn't all work and no play, though. The evenings included recreational fun such as a movie night, bowling, and a trip to Bands on the Beach. The highlight of the week was a career exploration visit to the Florida Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) Pensacola campus, a research institute investigating artificial intelligence, augmentics, human-centered computing, robotics and exoskeletons, and health resilience.

The Pensacola District values partnerships with community providers and greatly appreciates the opportunity to work together to make Pre-Employment Transition and Transition Services educational and exciting! The Pensacola district is also proud to announce that seven Transition students graduated from high school this past May, and a total of \$55,635 in scholarships and grants were awarded to Pensacola district college students so far this year!

*Submitted by Debbie Carty, District Administrator
Pensacola District*

Conquering Fears: A Guide Dog Story

MEETING NOTICE:

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

The Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) will conduct its Quarterly Meeting and Public Forum.

Date:

October 27-28, 2022

Location:

Miami, FL

Call in:

1 (850) 583-5063

Conference ID

909 187 09#

Business Meeting:

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Public Forum:

5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Celebrate Guide Dog Month with part one of a four-part motivational story submitted by Alexis Read, Human Services Program Consultant from District Three's Jacksonville office.



Alexis Read

In my life as a person with low vision, I have traveled with several different mobility aids. The mobility aid I used for most of my life was the white cane. When I heard in my late twenties that my low vision would progress to total blindness, I began to consider that the white cane might not be the best mobility tool to meet my needs. There was just one small matter to consider, though: my deep-rooted fear of dogs.

When I was young a large dog jumped on me, and I never forgot that scary feeling. I couldn't be around dogs of any size after that. My family had dogs while I was growing up, but I wasn't able to be in the same room as the dogs. This all-consuming fear of dogs caused me to not even consider training with a guide dog.

During my undergraduate education, I noticed some changes with my vision. I made an appointment with an ophthalmologist to get some answers. After the doctor completed her exam, she said one of the scariest sentences that someone with low vision could hear: "Your condition is

progressive, and you will become totally blind." My first thought after the ophthalmologist's prediction was that I had to train with a guide dog so I could maintain the level of independence I was used to.

After that appointment, I put the idea of partnering with a guide dog out of my mind. Not long afterward, though, I met someone who would have a profound impact on my life.

In late 2005 I moved to another state and became roommates with someone who had a calm and gentle Labrador retriever named Meghan. I started to think more and more about partnering with a guide dog, but I knew I had to conquer my fear of dogs. I told my friend that I wanted to partner with a dog but was too afraid to make it work. She helped me slowly overcome my fear by petting Meghan and eventually helping with simple dog care tasks.

I knew then that I was ready to train with a guide dog.



Alexis Read representing Division of Blind Services at the Jacksonville VisionWalk

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Kori King, Braille and Talking Book Library

Kori King has been volunteering with the DBS Braille and Talking Book Library since April of 2011. She comes to the Daytona location three days a week and inspects incoming digital books in Circulation, using her Braille skills to make sure each cartridge matches the title on its case.



Kori King inspecting incoming digital books

"I have been a Library patron for as long as I can remember", she says. "I volunteer because I want to give other readers the pleasure I get from reading by making sure they get their books."

Kori certainly does her bit towards making that happen. She averages almost 20 hours each week.

"I love the Library's service. For the past year I have been using BARD (the Braille and Audio Reading Download program), and I *really* enjoy it! I'm also an avid Braille reader, but there tends to be more audio books available, so I listen to them as well."

She started using talking books in grade school when she lived in Macon, Georgia, reading for

pleasure and also for school. She continued the service when she moved to Florida with her family. That's a total of over 40 years of reading with Talking Book Libraries!

"I volunteer because I want to give other readers the pleasure I get from reading by making sure they get their books."



We thank Kori for her loyalty and for donating her valuable time to help the Library serve its readers. Volunteers are an important part of what allows the Braille and Talking Book Library to serve so many patrons.

If you're interested in volunteering with the Library, please contact the DBS Braille and Talking Book Library or one of our 9 subregional libraries located throughout the state. Their contact information is to the left of this article.

Submitted by Kathy Searle Acevedo

Contact your Local Library to Volunteer!

Brevard County Talking Book Library

Phone: 321-633-1810

Lee County Talking Book Library

Phone: 800-854-8195

Broward County Talking Book Library

Phone: 954-357-7555

Jacksonville Public Library Talking Books

Phone: 904-255-2665

Pinellas Public Library Cooperative

Phone: 727-441-9958

Miami-Dade Talking Book Library System

Phone: 800-451-9544

Orange County Talking Book Library

Phone: 407-835-7464

West Florida Public Library, Braille and Talking Books

Phone: 850-471-6000

Palm Beach County Talking Book Library

Phone: 888-780-5151

The Florida Braille and Talking Book Library

Phone: 386-239-6000

Vision and Eye Health Awareness

We are Hiring!

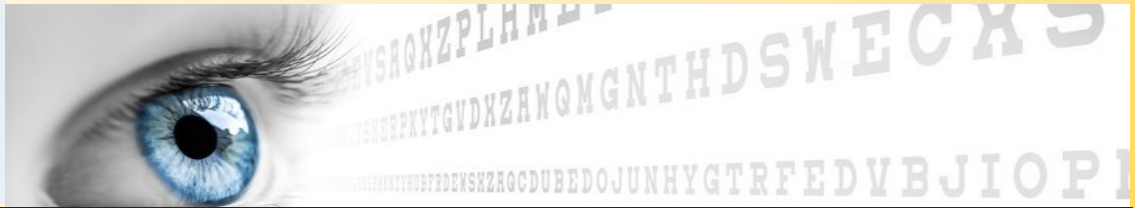
The Division of Blind Services is looking for positive, productive, accountable “people people.” Ideal candidates demonstrate the principles of flexibility, adaptability, approachability, communication, collaboration and coordination. If this is you, we invite you to look at the opportunities we have available at:

[DBS.FLDOE.ORG/
INFORMATION/
JOBS.HTML](http://DBS.FLDOE.ORG/INFORMATION/JOBS.HTML)

If you believe you are the right fit for us, we look forward to connecting with you.

September
CVI Awareness Month
Guide Dog Month
Healthy Aging Month

October
Blind Equality Achievement Month
Home Eye Safety Month
National Disability Employment Awareness Month
Disability History & Awareness Weeks (1st 2 Weeks)
World Blindness Awareness Month
National Braille Week- October 11-17
World Sight Day- October 13
Blind Americans Equality Day- October 15
White Cane Awareness Day- October 15



Do you have news from your District, an employee you'd like to spotlight, blind services information or events to share, or a favorite recipe you'd like to feature in the DBS Visionary? Please share it with us at Communications@dbs.fl DOE.org

Florida Division of Blind Services

THE VISIONARY NEWSLETTER
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Content Submission Deadline: Due by the 20th of each publication month.

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure blind and visually-impaired Floridians have the tools, support and opportunity to achieve success

Florida's "White Cane Law"

Florida's White Cane Law (F.S. 316.1301, F.S. 316.1303) provides coverage for whenever a pedestrian is crossing, or attempting to cross, a public street or highway, guided by a dog guide or carrying in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red, the driver of every vehicle approaching the intersection or place where the

pedestrian is attempting to cross shall bring his or her vehicle to a full stop before arriving at such intersection or place of crossing and, before proceeding, shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid injuring such pedestrian. A person who is convicted of a violation of this subsection is guilty of a moving violation.

