



Vision Loss Resources



2014 Annual Report



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Message from the CEO and Board Chair

One hundred years is a long time. When you consider the spectrum of history, you will note the profound leaps in how we diagnose and treat eye injuries and diseases. From early detection of glaucoma to outpatient cataract surgery, along with the proliferation of Lasik eye surgery centers, the second half of the last century brought advancements that help people care for their eyes and forestall vision loss.

Change is a part of life, making it all the more important to reflect on the fact that for every person who joins a peer group at the Vision Loss Resources community center or who begins their first day in the rehab center, the kind of change that brought them here – vision loss – can seem overwhelming. Our leadership strategy at Vision Loss Resources reflects three core philosophies: be willing and able to adapt and change, foster a culture of hospitality, and that caring about someone does not mean caretaking.

Change can be hard, but Vision Loss Resources can serve as a respite, and we know from experience that a little hospitality goes a long way. Giving Vision Loss Resources participants the space, literally and figuratively, to hear a friendly and welcoming voice, or to socialize and learn new skills, provides the reassurance that they do not need to face vision loss alone.

Throughout the 2014 annual report you will read stories from individuals whose lives have been impacted in ways big and small by Vision Loss Resources' services and staff. And you will read about how these same individuals have encouraged each other to see possibilities and not their limitations and to not be defined by vision loss.

For Vision Loss Resources, the past one hundred years are representative of our determination and humility, the collective experience of our staff and volunteers, generosity of our funders and donors, and the relationships we have built in the community. Without this network of support - these partnerships - none of our work would be possible. We are honored to be stewards of the programming and resources that support blind and visually-impaired individuals and their families.

The timeline of our successes, both incremental and monumental, are a testimony to the community's commitment to building support for low vision care.

Thank you for sharing this last year with us,



Kate Grathwol
President and CEO



Barry Shear
Board Chair



COMMUNITY SERVICES

1,224 Total clients served

Contacts with clients **5,800**

640 Clients we saw last year for assessments and returned for **67** follow-up visits.

Volunteers who provided **7,300** hours of donated services. **230**

RHEABILITATION TEACHING

134 Clients taught; provided **256** teaching sessions.

Support group sessions we held **260**
Approximately **1105** people attended and we started **2** new groups.

Total Community Center attendance was **2477** people.

REHABILITATION CENTER

Students who took classes at the Rehabilitation Center **66**

Students who successfully completed the full Adjustment to Blindness Training Program **17**

DEAFBLIND SERVICES MN, LLC

70 Deafblind adults received over **11,000** hours of direct services to help them maintain their independence

65 Deafblind children received over **10,000** hours of direct services

2014 Board Members

Board Chair

Barry Shear

Vice Board Chair

Lisa David • eCapital Advisors

Secretary

Mary Mcdougall • Merrill Lynch

Treasurer

Jackie Peichel • Minnesota Department of Human Services

Member At Large

Patricia Durst • U.S. Bancorp

Members

Joan Arbach • Saint Paul, MN

Ron Beauchane • Plymouth, MN

Dr. Herbert L. Cantrill, M.D. • Vitreoretinal Surgery, P.A.

Jim Dale • Minnetonka, MN

Joan Gilbertson • WCCO-TV

Dr. Robert Hersman, O.D. • Hopkins Eye Clinic and Excelsior Eye Care

Lori Kamin • Midwest Immunology Clinic & Infusion Center

Anne Kelly • Junonia

Jean Machart • Ameriprise Financial

John Priestley • Plymouth, MN

Chris Stall • Moss & Barnett

Deb Swenson • Walsh & Gaertner, P.A.

Lisa Mauri Thomas • Minneapolis, MN



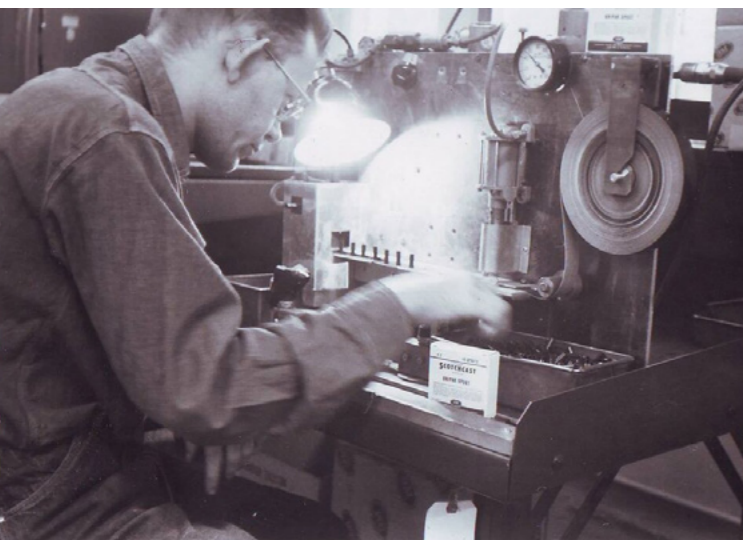
A Century of Community Involvement and Support

Few nonprofit organizations have the pleasure of observing a centennial anniversary. So it is with great humility and pride that we reflect on this significant milestone with a nod to the people and organizations that laid the foundation for what Vision Loss Resources is today.

We could recount the history of Vision Loss Resources by describing how things have changed: programming has changed to satisfy needs as they emerged; lifestyles have changed, creating new demands and expectations; and, of course, technology has changed. And while these changes have certainly influenced how we operate and what we offer in terms of programming, the key to our success has been—and will always be—our community.



Our community of program participants and caregivers, volunteers and staff, business partners and supporters are, collectively, the reason why, one hundred years after its founding, Vision Loss Resources continues to be a valuable, innovative, and well-respected organization. Our history is defined by the people who have, in some way, championed our mission to be a community of services, skills, and support for people with vision loss, stretching all the way back to our founding in 1914.



In the early 20th century, a group of volunteers came together to work alongside people in Minneapolis who were blind and visually impaired. This was a time of change and progress. New opportunities were made available for people with vision loss in an effort to promote greater independence and integration into larger society.

Then

1910s The Minneapolis Society for the Blind (MSB) is founded in 1914. In Saint Paul, Mutual Aid Blind Association grows with support from the Council of Jewish Women.

1920s Programs grow with support from the Community Chest (precursor to United Way) and the Amherst Wilder Foundation.



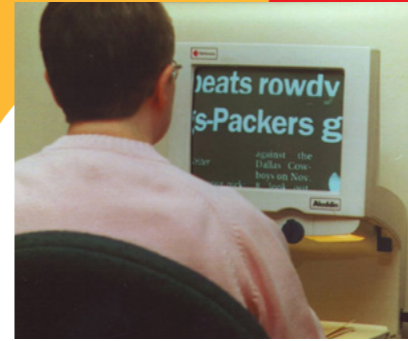
1980s The peer counseling program unites people who have vision loss or blindness. The low-vision program evaluates vision loss and trains people to use magnification devices. Manufacturing diversifies in both Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

1970s Diabetes-related vision loss is the focus of a special service program in Minneapolis.



1950s Saint Paul Society for the Blind (SPSB) is founded in 1955.

1940s MSB moves to Vision Loss Resources' current location on the corner of Lyndale and Franklin Avenues.



1960s We pioneer community outreach with support from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Wellness.

2014 Vision Loss Resources embarks on a new program of philanthropy, community outreach, and preparation to meet the increasing demand for services.

1990s Vision Loss Resources is created by the 1993 merger of the Saint Paul Society for the Blind and the Minneapolis Society for the Blind.



2000s DeafBlind Services Minnesota, LLC joins Vision Loss Resources in 2005. Contract Production Services is the new name for the packaging and manufacturing division of Vision Loss Resources. The Community Center is founded.

Now

One hundred years after its founding, Vision Loss Resources continues to grow and evolve with new and exciting programs and initiatives underway to meet an increasing demand for services. The number of people with age-related vision loss is expected to increase substantially in coming years; we are responding to this need with the same energy, passion and resourcefulness that has become synonymous with our services and programs. And as we look to the future, we recognize that our ongoing success is a testament to the community that has made us who we are.



Centennial Year Celebration Events

Vision Loss Resources 100 year kickoff lunch featured Olympian who is blind

Vision Loss Resources hosted world-class runner Marla Runyan to share her story as a kickoff to our centennial year. Legally blind since age 9, Runyan defied expectations when she competed in two Olympic Games, won gold in the Pan-Am Games, has held national and world records all while competing against elite sighted runners.

Runyan inspired guests with her words on the celebration of our anniversary, *“Chances are, if it’s not you who is going to have vision loss, someone in your family, or a close friend will. We’re all interconnected and we become stronger as a community if we help and support one another. Support means more than just saying, ‘I know you can do it.’ Real support means saying, ‘I’ll help you do it, and I’ll show you how.’ One hundred years ago, the founders of Vision Loss Resources knew that. Today, they make it possible for people losing their eyesight to do more than adapt – they show them how to succeed.”*

Family Fun Day

Family Fun Day proved to be an amazing opportunity to bring families together to find out more about our services and to raise awareness about vision loss and its growing prevalence in older adults. We gathered elders and their adult children and grandchildren on a beautiful summer day in June at Minnehaha Park. Participants danced, enjoyed several live performances of comedy and magic, and were treated to a gourmet picnic lunch.



Copies of *The Way We See It* can be purchased on the Vision Loss Resources website

Games and demonstrations that day allowed VLR to underscore our mission and showcase our services. A beep ball (baseball developed by and for blind and visually impaired players) exhibition and activities that allowed participants to wear vision loss simulator glasses helped guests understand the challenges loved ones with vision loss face every day.

The Way We See It

Maybe the most important and enduring piece of our centennial was the publication of a 240-page book chronicling the struggles and triumphs of Vision Loss Resources participants living with vision loss or blindness. When we asked participants how they would most like to commemorate our anniversary, they shared their desire to share their stories. To tell the stories of living rich and full lives with vision loss.

An English professor, a ballroom dancer, a golfer... through their loss of sight, we see clearly the enduring power of the human spirit.

The book educates all of us about the realities and challenges of losing sight. As readers, we experience their journeys and the roller coaster of emotion through stories of honesty, humor, optimism, anger and hope. Through memoir, narrative and poetry our authors describe how vision loss has transformed their lives.

The book can be purchased from our website in either paperback or eBook and digital formats. You can listen to excerpts from the book: <http://visionlossresources.org/product/the-way-we-see-it-a-fresh-look-at-vision-loss>.

Listen to audio from *The Way We See It* 

