What a year it has been!

Gidget Hopf looks back at ABVI’s Centennial Year

ABVI’s 100th anniversary has given us the opportunity to celebrate our rich history, and the foundation it provided for the success we’re experiencing today. As we conclude this milestone year poised on the threshold of our next century of service, we can all take pride in knowing that we’ve built an innovative engine for continued growth fueled by our entrepreneurial spirit.

Throughout 2011, we commemorated 100 years of service, innovation and empowerment for people with vision loss by engaging in a number of celebratory activities.

Beginning in January, our employees kicked off the yearlong celebration at our Anniversary Launch Party.

In May, we broke ground on our new Vision Rehabilitation Center, significantly expanding the space required to meet the growing needs of the people we serve. Anticipation is building for when the doors open to the next era for ABVI’s world-class vision rehabilitation services.

In October, over 350 guests attended our celebratory Centennial Gala. It was a special night that raised $145,000 in support of our mission.

On November 18, over 60 donors to our capital campaign took part in the new building’s cornerstone placement ceremony. This cornerstone, engraved with the year 2011 serves as a reminder of the 100 years leading up to its placement and the possibilities yet to come.

For the last 25 years, I’ve had the privilege to work alongside hundreds of board members, community volunteers, donors and employees who shared the vision to transform ABVI into the leader that it is in the field of vision rehabilitation services and to establish ABVI as a model of innovation and entrepreneurship in the nonprofit world. Thank you.
When over 350 guests joined ABVI at an elegant black-tie Gala in October, it was an event 100 years in the making.

ABVI President and CEO Gidget Hopf began the formal program by asking the guests to take part in an experiential exercise meant to empower in them an understanding of whom ABVI serves by promoting a positive image of people who are blind. She asked guests to don eye shades at their tables and then to sense the sounds around them, feeling the presence of the other guests and listening as she shared the story of ABVI’s evolution.

New York State Senator Joseph Robach provided another highlight of the evening when he presented a proclamation honoring ABVI’s 100 years of service to the community. Additionally, Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks, a longtime supporter of ABVI, was in attendance, taking a moment to address the gathered guests and declaring her admiration for ABVI’s mission and positive legacy.

The evening’s most emotional moments came from a mother talking about her son. Kari Smoker, whose young adopted son Christopher is visually impaired and receives services from ABVI, told the story of discovering the severity of his eye condition and the subsequent journey of acceptance and determination. She explained how Christopher’s vision loss was not going to stand as a barrier to his long-term happiness; and how reaching out to ABVI provided her family with emotional support. ABVI also provided Christopher’s first pair of glasses. When he put them on, Kari said he looked up at her and exclaimed, “I can see you mommy!”

The story Kari told is unique, but she is not alone – there are thousands of people in the community who have come to count on ABVI throughout its 100 years of service. The Gala, its generous supporters, including Presenting Sponsor SentrySafe, Wegmans and Bausch + Lomb and the record-breaking $145,000 raised to support ABVI’s mission stood as a tribute to all of those people and to the continued impact ABVI will have throughout its next 100 years of service.
Swimming for fun thanks to Ronald McDonald

By Sarah Favro, Children's Program Coordinator

Learning to swim is a skill that a child can take with them throughout their lifetime. It is an activity that children can participate in as a sport or just have fun with family and friends. All that is needed is a body of water and a bathing suit!

With funding from the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Rochester, ABVI was able to develop a program that gives children who are blind or visually impaired the chance to learn the fundamentals of swimming, as well as advance their skills at their own pace. Each child’s skill level was evaluated at their first lesson by a certified swim instructor. Each week the child and their instructor works on improving current skills and learning new ones.

ABVI’s service area spans east and south of Monroe County. It is challenging to provide programming that isn’t always based in the greater Rochester area. To overcome this challenge, ABVI offered this program at three different geographic locations within Monroe, Livingston and Ontario counties. This has allowed us to provide the children a program close to their own community. All together, 17 children are participating in Webster, Rush-Henrietta and Canandaigua.

Each child received a one-on-one lesson with his or her instructor. The instructors were trained on how to best work with a child who is visually impaired. Sessions began in September and continued through the end of the year. The second half of the program starts up in the new year.

A key aspect of empowering people with vision loss is accessibility. Facing the loss of accessible functionality of its Community Resource Database, 211/LIFELINE sought help to ensure that people who are blind or visually impaired can still provide this vital resource.

That help came through the generosity of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, who provided a $35,000 donation that will allow 211/LIFELINE to purchase and implement a new accessible software product that will house the database. The new software will also allow 211/LIFELINE telecounselors to track information about the number and types of contacts they handle from people in need in the community.

This is the second contribution JPMorgan Chase Foundation Upstate Division President Sandy Wolcott makes vital resources more accessible for all.

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Since coming to ABVI a decade ago, Tracy Schleyer’s focus has been on making a difference in the lives of the people ABVI serves. Tracy, who is ABVI’s Vice President of Development, says grounding her career in the fundamental notion of helping others is truly rewarding.

“It is especially touching to me when older adults with vision loss tell me that ABVI gave them their lives back by empowering them to continue to live productive and fulfilling lives,” says Tracy.

Recognized for a desire to give back

In her role managing ABVI’s $10 million capital campaign, Tracy knows that success will be reflected in a building that expands ABVI’s ability to serve the growing numbers of those with significant vision loss in our community.

More importantly, she knows that ABVI’s impact reaches far beyond the expanded building’s bricks and mortar. “Kids with vision loss just want to be there in the kitchen with their parents baking cookies, or applying for a job at the local grocery store—just like their sighted friends,” says Tracy. “ABVI’s here to help those kids achieve their goals. That’s what we do.”

For carrying out her work in such an exemplary manner, Tracy was recognized in November by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Genesee Valley Chapter, with the Outstanding Professional Fundraiser Award. The award was presented at the local chapter’s National Philanthropy Day luncheon that honored individuals and organizations for the work they have done to give back to those in need.

“Tracy is an extraordinary role model and we are very proud of all she has done to strengthen ABVI’s mission,” says Gidget Hopf, president and CEO.

Lois’ Story

“I remember I wanted to color a picture, but I could no longer see.”

This is the memory Lois has about going blind at the age of eight. The world around her lost its colors and shapes, which was especially difficult for someone as creative and artistic as she was.

Born premature, Lois had sight in one eye until age seven. She remembers growing up in Albany and spending hours crafting and playing with her twin, Norma.

When she lost her vision, she lost the familiar and vibrant world around her. She spent years searching for a place where she could use her talents and find fulfillment. The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI) was just that place.

ABVI provided Lois with on the job training and employment in the sewing department. Each day for the last 10 years, she has channeled her creativity into the manufacturing of athletic apparel for our brave service men and women. Her job has not only honed her creative skills, but it has given her a purpose.

We are grateful for the philanthropic support from our community who made the original investment in our sewing program. Contributions from the Davenport-Hatch Foundation, the Joan and Harold Feinbloom Supporting Foundation, and other funders made it possible
Our Wish List

The kindness and generosity of our donors help us to offer the best and most up-to-date services possible. The following is a list of much needed items that are not covered by ABVI’s budget. To donate funds to purchase any of these items, or to donate the items themselves, please contact Tracy Schleyer, CFRE, at tschleyer@abvi-goodwill.com or (585) 697-5780.

**Kindle: $189**
For the Insights Shop to demonstrate use to those who are blind or visually impaired.

**Kindle gift cards**
To purchase downloadable books for the Kindle.

**iTunes gift cards**
To purchase apps that provide accessibility for people who are blind or visually impaired, so they can perform tasks such as identifying money or colors.

**Wegman’s, Tops or Salvatore’s gift cards**
To support adult recreation programs.

**Ocutech bioptic telescopes: $1,000**
7X Eschenbach Powerlux stand magnifier: $200
This equipment is vital for performing low vision screenings.

**Peli Prism glasses for hemianopia: $400**
To expand the visual field of someone with hemianopia, who has vision loss in either the right or left sides of both eyes.

**Second hand slit lamp for Project Eye Care: $1,500. Second hand phoropter for Project Eye Care: $2,800. Or, a new phoropter for Project Eye Care: $4,000**
- This equipment is needed to support Project Eye Care, our community outreach program that provides free eye exams by volunteer eye doctors based on lack of insurance or income eligibility.

**BrailleNote Apex: $6,000**
- This is a note taking device with a built-in Braille display. It allows the user to access the internet, email, calendar, word processing, and calculator functions in a compact, portable device. The Adaptive Technology Center would love to have one to be able to demonstrate this device to the people we serve.

**Three iPads**
- For ABVI’s Marketing Department to support the mission-focused work of the agency in the ever changing world of online and real time communications.

Please consider making a gift today with the enclosed envelope so we may continue to help others like Lois see and do great things.
A memorial or honorary gift is a wonderful way to celebrate special occasions, honor a loved one, or pay tribute to the memory of family members or friends. Many generous people have found a way to express their caring spirit while helping to ensure the success of ABVI. As a thank you for your gift, ABVI will list your name and the names of those who you are honoring in our newsletter. We'll also send a note acknowledging your gift according to your wishes. For more information about making a memorial or honorary gift donation, please contact Kristen O’Connell at (585) 697-5711 or koconnell@abvi-goodwill.com.

Thank you to the following friends who have made contributions from June 1, 2011 and October 31, 2011.

In memory of Janeth Baker
Helen K. Francis

In memory of Roger G. Bennett
Timothy and Lori Giarrusso

In memory of Alvin Birnbaum
Harvey M. Nusbaum

In memory of Robert L. Blair
Michael Blair

In memory of Doris Blind
Loraine Blind
June Cotter
Deborah Frati-Hepper
Eileen M. Hart
James and Barbara Hurley
MaryLou Jacobson
Rita and John Kennelly
Ray and Elaine Klafehn
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In memory of Mary L. Bower
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In honor of Lauri Bradstreet
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In memory of Harry L. Brewer
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In memory of Howard Burgess
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Jerry and Nancy Welcher

In memory of Lois J. Green
Laurie Tramonto

In honor of Ernest G. Guillet, M.D.
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In memory of Chris M. Hanna
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In memory of Vera Lou Hapip
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In honor of Elizabeth Harvey, O.D.
Roy Farnsworth
Charles F. Young

In memory of Hubert G. Hill
Reverend Geoffrey L. Brice

In memory of Dorothe Hoag
Judith Beckerink
Marie Blum
Patricia and Richard Bondi
Marcia and Peter La Force
Tom and Mary Quinlan

In memory of Harvey Holderle
Dr. & Mrs. Paul C. Levy
Marcia and Ronald Maeda
Sara Marangola

In memory of Helene Hollatz
Maxine and John Nicholson

In honor of A. Gidget Hopf
Arthur E. Lowenthal

In memory of Beatrice Kremer
Tom Pastorella
Maimie Reitano

In memory of John LoGrasso
Frank Pollatta

In memory of Mary Lotz
Our Village Optician
What kind of gift never expires, never goes stale, never gets returned, is always in fashion AND you can feel great about giving it?

**A tribute gift to ABVI.**

This holiday season, make a gift in honor or in memory of a loved one. Your gift will make a difference in the lives of people in our community who are blind or visually impaired.

Just log onto www.SeeGreatThings.com and follow the prompts to make a gift. To contribute with a credit card over the phone, please call (585) 697-5713.

We will send an acknowledgement to the person or family you are honoring.

Thank you!
InSights

Looking for another way to give to ABVI?

Donate your car, truck, motorcycle, boat, or other vehicle to ABVI’s Vehicle Donation Program. It’s quick and it’s easy!

You will receive tax benefits and help support our vital mission.

To learn more about ABVI’s Vehicle Donation Program, please call Kristen O’Connell, Development Manager, at (585) 697-5711 or email her at koconnell@abvi-goodwill.com