Supporting ABVI’s Mission for 60 Years

By Tracy Schleyer, VP of Development

There’s a lot of mutual admiration between Don Metzger and ABVI. Don has a great appreciation of the contributions ABVI has made to our community. And ABVI has a great appreciation for all Don’s contributions to ABVI, both of his time and treasure. Don became an ABVI volunteer 60 years ago in 1956 and his awe of ABVI still remains strong.

Don and his late wife, Terese, had three children. His daughter, Mary Beth, was born in 1954 and shortly thereafter declared blind. Mary Beth’s doctor persuaded Don to contact the Association for the Blind of Rochester. At the time, it was on Monroe Avenue. Don decided to invest himself into the organization and started volunteering.

Don recently shared memories of the organization with me, and told me about Mary Beth who he is so proud of. In the 1960s most parents of children who are blind sent their children to the Batavia School for the Blind. Don and Terese chose a different path. They sent Mary Beth to public school in Irondequoit. For high school she went to Mercy and then to Middlebury College.

ABVI had an impact on Mary Beth throughout her childhood, teen, and early adult years. At a young age, she learned Braille from long-time ABVI associate Margaret Webster. She learned to ski at Bristol Mountain. ABVI’s past Director of Vision Rehabilitation Dorothy Green set up that program. ABVI’s ability to adapt workplaces helped Mary Beth secure her first job as a switch board operator with

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Staff Member/Donor Equates ABVI to Hope

by Marlisa Post, Annual Giving Manager

As Vice President of People Resources, Jennifer Lake has seen first-hand the powerful effect ABVI has on people’s lives. For example, Jen knows it can be life-changing for someone to learn to use adaptive technology on a smart phone. Or how transformative a job can be for someone who is blind or visually impaired.

“I’ve spoken with so many people who have received vision rehabilitation services here and they have told me that before they came to ABVI, their hope was gone. But connecting with ABVI and receiving the services they needed turned their life around,” says Jen.

ABVI has even touched Jen’s family: “My grandmother lives in a rural area without access to the kind of services ABVI offers. I brought her to our Low Vision Center and they were able to help her make the most of her remaining vision.”

60 Years of Support, continued

Eastman Kodak. Today, Mary Beth is living life as a retiree from a position as a personnel administrator for New York State.

Mary Beth’s experiences are like those of others who came to ABVI for help. For years, many who were blind wanted work in a manufacturing setting. Don remembers when the ABVI Board of Directors decided to pursue the manufacturing idea. Board members with ties to Eastman Kodak came up with the partnership idea. ABVI hired people who were blind to work on a contract with Kodak to recycle components of unused film.

Don also recalls when ABVI started the Low Vision Clinic in the 1960s. He was the chair of ABVI’s Board of Directors. The clinic was the first step in delivering ABVI’s vision rehabilitation services and programs. When ABVI hired Gidget Hopf as Executive Director in 1986, Don was outgoing Chairman of the Board. Gidget now serves as the organization’s President and CEO.

Don still has many wonderful things to say about ABVI. “The Association is doing so much more for blind people than ever. I’m proud of the organization. What Gidget and others have done is unbelievable. It started as nothing and is now one huge success.”

Don’s belief in ABVI’s mission has spanned six decades of donating his time and his money. “I know that the money I donate is always being put to proper use and being spent where it should be.”

We’re grateful for all that Don has done for people who are blind or visually impaired. Thanks to him and others, today we have great programs and services that support people in our community who are blind or visually impaired.

Our mission: To prepare and empower people who are blind or visually impaired to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and communities.

Jennifer Lake, VP of People Resources

“Oh, I wish I had done this five years ago! I wouldn’t have had to give up so many things in my life,” Jen’s grandmother said.

That’s why Jen is not just an ABVI staff member. She’s also a donor.

“ABVI means hope. It’s as simple as that,” says Jen.
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 and Goodwill of the Finger Lakes’ budget. To donate funds to purchase any of these items, or to donate the items themselves, please contact Marlisa Post, at mpost@abvi-goodwill.com or (585) 697-5713.

**SPOT Vision Screener: $8,145**

Our Early Vision Screening program provides vision screenings for children from six months old through kindergarten who attend Rochester’s ABC Head Start programs, child care centers, and other agencies serving at-risk children. The SPOT Vision Screener is used to conduct the screenings. It is easy to operate, noninvasive, yields more accurate results than any other screening method, and provides immediate results indicating if the child has passed the screening or not. If the child does not pass, the screening results and information on how to access an eye exam are provided for the parent. Through this program, we are helping the youngest in our community see their world more clearly and provide a foundation for future success! We are in need of upgrading our current model to the latest version of the screening equipment.

**iPad for Adjustment to Vision Loss Groups: $750**

Through our Adjustment to Vision Loss (AVL) group series, participants are able to receive emotional support from others in similar situations, and coping techniques from our social workers as they adjust to their visual impairment. Because participating in the AVL groups can be impossible for those who live in Counties outside of Monroe due to lack of transportation, we want to provide access to the groups by implementing the use of an iPad. Someone living in Wayne County for instance, can achieve the same outcomes as those gathered at our main campus in Rochester via video and audio linkages provided by the iPad and Skype. Our ability to reach these individuals through this technology will enhance our service delivery and provide hope where hope was lost.

**Technology Upgrades for the Adaptive Technology Center: $575**

Mainstream technology that can be used by people who are blind or visually impaired to complete tasks independently is always evolving. With the current technology, people can use voice activation to search for information on the internet, play music, and even turn up the heat! Our adaptive technology team is committed to being on the forefront of this technology and providing demonstrations and resources so that people in our community can make purchase decisions and learn how to use it. In order to do this, we need to update the equipment in our Adaptive Technology Center:

- 1 Amazon Echo
- 5 Smart Plugs
- 2 Wi-fi Smart LED Light bulbs
- 1 Canary All-in-One Home Security Device

**Scotch Advanced Thermal Laminator with Laminator Pouches: $125**

As you can imagine, reading labels on food packages, reading dials on your stove or washing machine, or being able to see just about anything in your home can be challenging if you are a person with vision loss. In many situations, a simple large print label or large print layout of an appliance is the best way to remedy this and allow someone to independently identify items in their home. Currently, our Vision Rehabilitation Therapists make layouts on paper or cover index cards with a clear adhesive such as tape to create large print labels. A laminator would allow labels that are more durable and longer lasting to be made for those who need them.

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Development Advisory Committee Members Take Their Efforts to the Next Level for ABVI

From left to right: Bill Barnecut-Kearns, Kim Hess, Tim Thomas, Brian Harrington, Steve Smola, Tracy Schleyer

Not pictured: Steve Ashe, Amelia Blake-Dowdle, Bob Bleier, Scott Clements, Sarah Favro, Kaitlin Hildebrandt, Ann Maynard, Nicole Philipp, Marlisa Post

Planning and carrying out an over-the-top baseball-themed gala. Check.

Reaching out to contacts and asking for financial support. Check.

These are just two of the many things the Development Advisory Committee (DAC) does. “They’re the backbone of ABVI’s fundraising program,” says Marlisa Post, ABVI’s Annual Giving Manager.

The DAC started in 2005. It boosts ABVI’s Development staff’s fundraising plans and goals. It’s members promote ABVI in the community. And each year it assists in planning and putting on the Visionary Gala. Volunteers with a variety of backgrounds form the committee. They use their experiences and contacts to raise funds for ABVI.

This great team of volunteers has raised funds for a variety of ABVI’s programs and services. Everything from a camp program for children, to adaptive technology so an adult who is blind can use a computer at their place of work. We are grateful for all that they do.

“When I joined the DAC, my immediate thought was ‘Oh no. Am I going to be asking more people for money?’ I leave every meeting energized. The volunteers and agency employees are passionate and committed. It inspires me,” says Bill Barnecut-Kearns, DAC Chair and ABVI board member.

Many of the DAC members echo these comments. Once on the DAC, they find talents and resources they didn’t know they had. Together, they are able to bring new ideas and perspectives to the table.

“It’s commendable how DAC members think outside the box. They do the asking others are uncomfortable or unwilling to do,” says Bill. “I want to thank this group for pushing my commitment to another level. They have showed me what we are all capable of when we are passionate about a mission.”
ABVI's McGuire Named NYSPSP Employee of the Year

New York State Preferred Source Program for People who are Blind (NYSPSP) has named ABVI employee Leonard McGuire as its Employee of the Year. NYSPSP’s Employee of the Year Program is intended to recognize and reward outstanding and exemplary work by a person who is blind or visually impaired employed at one of their New York State affiliated agencies. ABVI is one such agency.

Leonard starting working in ABVI’s production area in 1976. In 1982 he left ABVI to work at Chase Manhattan Bank. During his 17 years in the public sector, Leonard worked his way up to the position of operations specialist. In 1999, Leonard returned to ABVI to work in the Contact Center. He is now Contact Center Supervisor.

Our Contact Center is an every day, around-the-clock operation that handles calls, emails, and web chats for a variety of federal and state agencies, as well as private businesses. We currently employ more than 75 individuals in the Contact Center. “What really stands out is how Leonard treats his team and the customers he serves. He ensures that every member of his team is heard, supported and feels valued,” says Gidget Hopf, ABVI President and CEO.

As Contact Center Supervisor, Leonard seeks out solutions to difficult problems. He investigates ways to streamline processes for internal and external customers. Leonard also communicates in an open manner and continues to be a positive presence in the workplace.

“Leonard is a trusted member of the Contact Center,” says Hopf.

Outside of his work with ABVI, Leonard is also active in his community. He has been involved in neighborhood conservation projects like planting trees and refuse clean up. He also supports local food pantries.
Memorial and Honorary Gifts

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 ABVI’s Development Department at (585) 697-5711. Thank you to the following friends who have made tribute contributions from July 1, 2016 through September 30, 2016.

HONORARIUMS

In honor of Dr. Paul Caito
Linda Weisbeck

In honor of Barbara Devney
Marian and Lawrence Bach

In honor of Gidget Hopf’s 30 years as President/CEO of ABVI
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Warren and Lisa Ballard
Michelle Belknap
John Robert Bleier
Daniel Boucher
Joseph and Nancy Briggs
Michelle and Tom Cain
Rudy and Anne D’Amico
Donald and Cathy Dea
Phillip Ercolamento
Eye Care Distributors
Steven and Diane Feldon
Roxann Fleury Mayros
Eugene Fram
Philip and Beverly Gelsomino II
Dorothy Green
Brenda and Leonard Gumbs
Steve and Julie Gutch
Dr. Jacqueline M. Hamp
Heritage Christian Services
Human Solutions
idbick & Co.
Susan and Donald Kitchen
George and Eva Klemann

In honor of Jeanne Krautwurst
Adam and Josephine Leyens
Donald and Pat LoGuidice
Thomas Lynch
Brian McLaughlin
David and Catherine Meloy
Donald Metzger
Daniel Meyers
Stuart Mitchell
Patricia and Raymond Naber, Jr.
Leah Powell, C.P.A.
John and Susan Purves
Ramerman Leadership Group
Rochester Rotary Club
John and Karen Schiess
Tracy Schleyer
Shirley and Iris Skinner
Smola Consulting
Gwen and Richard Sterns
The Opportunities Group, Inc.
Barbara and Jerry Underhill
Samuel and Pamela Walrath
Robert and Linda Wayland-Smith
Katherine White-Hitchcock and Richard Hitchcock
Patricia Woods and Thomas McGrath
YWCA
Joyce Zimowski

In honor of Lynn Pembroke’s 26 years of service as an ABVI Library Volunteer
Dorothy Green

In honor of Marlisa Post and David Tyler
Gidget and John Hopf

In honor of Cathy Schaffron’s 35 years of service at ABVI
Tracy Schleyer

MEMORIALS

In memory of Ray Crudele
Donna Crudele

In memory of Marie C. Curran
Eugene and Barbara Bucknam
Andrea Cole
Lynn Shipe

In memory of Olive Hoffman
Dorothy Green

In memory of Nikki Llewellyn’s 25 years of service at ABVI
Tracy Schleyer

In memory of Lyn Pembroke’s 26 years of service as an ABVI Library Volunteer
Dorothy Green

In memory of Marlisa Post and David Tyler
Gidget and John Hopf

In memory of Cathy Schaffron’s 35 years of service at ABVI
Tracy Schleyer

In memory of Ray Redfield
Pieter and Ellen Aarsen
Dr. and Mrs. Robert Clement
Marilyne Emmons
Richard Hirschland
Robert and Jean Newman
Arthur and Edna Prouty
Ingebord Redfield
Gretchen A. Voss
A bequest, a gift specified in your will, will give you peace of mind knowing that your support of ABVI’s services that enable people to cope with vision loss, travel safely, take care of their homes, meet career objectives and enjoy leisure activities, will continue for many years after your lifetime.

Providing a gift in your will is a way to leave a legacy of helping others, and it can also have certain tax benefits for your estate and heirs.

For information, contact
Tracy Schleyer, CFRE
tschleyer@abvi-goodwill.com
585-697-5780

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Our Wish List, continued

**Braille Paper for our Multi-Media Center: $800**

Our Multi-Media Center is located at our main campus in Rochester, but people who are blind or visually impaired from around the world can access this very special service. Our dedicated group of Braille transcribers volunteer their time to create materials in Braille such as utility bills, restaurant menus, and entire books. Even though individuals can access a wealth of information through current technology, Braille remains the only form of literacy for those who are unable to see regular or large print. It is truly the window to the world!

**Two Channel Digital Storage Oscilloscope: $1,200**

Oscilloscopes are a vital piece of equipment when designing and making high frequency analogue circuits as well as being very useful for evaluating circuitry. ABVI’s Vision Rehabilitation Center and Manufacturing teams are collaborating with local and international organizations to develop and bring to the global market affordable assistive technologies for people who are blind or visually impaired. This piece of equipment will be of great value in evaluating performance and function of product concepts and prototypes that are under consideration for production.

**Employee Handbook Translation: $2,500**

ABVI and Goodwill of the Finger Lakes are diverse organizations. In addition to employees who are blind or visually impaired or have other barriers, many of our employees are more comfortable reading documents in Spanish rather than in English. Our Employee Handbook is a comprehensive guide of standards and expectations for our employees to read and have available at all times. To fulfill our value of accessibility, we want to have our Employee Handbook translated into Spanish, enabling more employees access to this important document.
Something to think about...

Many people don’t understand the advantages of giving appreciated stock versus cash. Did you know that you can take an immediate tax deduction for the full market value of a gift of stock and also avoid the capital-gains tax you would owe by cashing in on appreciated securities? Then, using the cash you might have otherwise have donated, you can repurchase the same stock at a higher cost basis for capital-gains purposes.

Think about it. Would you like more information on making a gift of stock to ABVI-Goodwill? Contact Tracy Schleyer, CFRE, Vice President of Development, at 585.697.5780 or tschleyer@abvi-goodwill.com