Donor Steve Smola Pays It Forward

ABVI donor Steve Smola’s favorite book and movie is Pay It Forward. That idea of spreading positivity is so important to him that he almost made it the name of his company. Copyright concerns prevailed, and while the company is named Smola Consulting, “paying it forward” is a message and a practice Steve continues to instill in all of his employees. He wants the corporate philosophy to be “do the right thing without expecting anything in return.”

Steve’s desire to share what he has with others goes all the way back to his childhood. When he was 14, Steve used the money he saved from his paper route to take his family on a trip to Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Now that he’s an adult with greater resources that he feels “very lucky to have,” he wants to share that good fortune with others. However, for him, just giving money feels cold.

Steve feels it is important to be part of something. So he also volunteers his time as a member of ABVI’s Development Advisory Committee (DAC). The DAC is made up of members of the community who use their knowledge and networks to help ABVI’s fundraising efforts.

Part of Steve’s reason for supporting ABVI also goes back to his childhood. His grandmother was visually impaired and utilized local support services, so he knew how life changing that could be.

continued on page 2
Ellyn Prietz: The Welcoming Face of ABVI

You only get one chance to make a first impression, but with volunteer Ellyn Prietz at our Vision Rehabilitation Welcome Desk, ABVI makes a good one with those coming for services for the first time. As Ellyn says, “For some people, it can be difficult to take that first step to come here so it’s important to have someone to make them feel more at ease.”

Ellyn, who has retinitis pigmentosa, knows first-hand what it’s like to come through ABVI’s doors for services. In 2003, she came for a class to learn to navigate household tasks after vision loss. Because of the help she received from ABVI, she decided that she wanted to give back and became a volunteer in 2013.

Beyond being a greeter, Ellyn also oversees ABVI’s Monthly Informational News and Demonstrations or M.I.N.D. Series. This series covers a range of topics from health to technology and beyond. Ellyn recruits the speakers, tapping into anything interesting she finds while out in the community, and promotes the series, encouraging those we serve to come learn something new.

Ellyn says that part of the reason she volunteers is because she feels that she has two choices: sit around at home or get out there and be part of things. And she’s proud to be part of ABVI.

“I want people to know that we have so many services to offer. I think they’d be pleasantly surprised by all that we do,” says Ellyn.

Steve Smola

In reality though, being a part of the ABVI family is so much more for Steve. It’s all about the relationships he’s formed with the staff and being part of giving people hope.

“Intruly believe it’s better to give than to receive. I like having an impact where I can put my heart and soul into it,” says Steve.
Our Wish List

Watch Display: $50
Knowing the time is fundamental to living independently. Therefore, a watch is one of the most requested items by people who are blind or visually impaired. We offer an array of talking, large print, and braille watches. We are in need of a watch display and storage cart to display watches so that people can decide the best fit for them.

Gift Cards for Career Closet: $50 each
Located at three of our Goodwill stores, the Goodwill Career Closets are a resource for individuals entering the workforce for the first time, or the first time in a long time, to gear up with the appropriate interview or work clothing. We are in need of gift cards from retailers to purchase items such as work boots, safety glasses, or irregular-sized clothing that are not readily available through our Goodwill donated goods.

Items for Children and Family Program
Our program includes weekly activities for the children and their families, plus more resources for parents through our lending library. Growing up blind or visually impaired can be challenging for a child, and raising that child can be overwhelming for parents. We are here to show our families that everyday life can be fun and that anything is possible!
• Blue Ray/DVDs with audio description: $20 each
• DVD/Blue Ray Player with Wi-Fi: $75
• Materials for Family Resource Center/Lending Library: $100-$500
• Beeping Easter Eggs: $200

Talking Color Identifier: $180
The Colorino is a portable adaptive device that speaks an object’s color aloud. This device would assist our employees who are blind or visually impaired to properly identify the colors of products and supplies.

Items for Work Experience Training: $400
People who participate in our Workforce Development programming receive comprehensive training to prepare them for a job or career. Prior to securing employment, a participant may complete a Work Experience to develop necessary skills needed for a particular job. We need supplies that a participant can use to learn specific tasks to be prepared for a Work Experience.

Glass Display Cases for Goodwill Stores: $400 each
Our Goodwill operation receives a variety of household items from our generous donors. Some of these items such as collectables, dishware, and high-end jewelry need to be displayed in glass cases to assure these items are visible while protecting them from breakage and theft. We are in need of 10 of these display cases.

Equipment for ABVI’s Sewing Operation: $1,500 each (11 sergers and 20 lockstitch sewing machines)
Our sewing department is primarily staffed by people who are blind or visually impaired, and each person works on a sewing machine that has been adapted for their own vision needs. After 15 years, the original machines need replacing. New sewing machines would increase efficiency and decrease down time while machines are being repaired.

Self-Adjusting Pallet Positioners: $2,500 each
At ABVI, the health and safety of our employees is our number one priority, especially within our Manufacturing division. We strive to have equipment available that is ergonomic, and that limits injury. These self-adjusting pallet positioners improve ergonomics and limit bending, resulting in less strain for our Manufacturing employees. We are currently in need of two of the positioners to be used throughout our Manufacturing and Fulfillment areas.

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 Sarah Favro at sfavro@goodwillfingerlakes.org or (585) 327-5526.
ConServe’s Support of ABVI is “Jean-ious”

Walking into any of ConServe’s three locations, you get the feeling this isn’t just any company. There is something different about the over 700 ConServe employees, and it isn’t only that most of them are wearing jeans. As you interact with the CEO, Mark Davitt, the leadership team, and the employees, you get the feeling there is more to ConServe than simply a high standard of excellence in the collections industry. You sense there is a dedication to making a positive impact in the community.

Improving the human condition is such an important piece of the company’s culture that they include this in their mission statement: “ConServe is dedicated to satisfying the needs of our Clients in a manner consistent with improving the human condition, and that will foster the development of long term profitable business relationships with our Clients, our Employees, our Vendors and the community as a whole.” There’s also the company mantra, known by all staff members: “Doing the right thing, at the right time, the right way.”

The ConServe approach to philanthropy is that the mission should be carried out on both the corporate and employee levels. Their Jeans for Charity program gives the staff a way to participate in the culture of giving. Anyone working at ConServe can pay $10 to wear jeans to work every day for a month. These funds are then donated to local organizations chosen by the employees. The giving doesn’t stop there though. The company then matches staff fundraising, doubling the impact! As an employee, it must feel good to know that your gift is so appreciated by your employer that they will give a gift as well.

ConServe knows it takes critical funds to implement vital programs and services for our community, including those provided by ABVI. Together, ConServe and the ConServe employees have donated nearly $18,000 to support our mission. This means those who turn to ABVI are able to learn the skills needed to remain healthy, active, and independent despite their vision loss.

The partnership between ConServe and ConServe employees is a great example of how working together can have a greater impact than working alone. Are you part of a company, civic group, or religious organization that would like to make a difference in our community? You can follow ConServe’s example!

If you would like to join ConServe, and other companies such as HR Works; Boylan Code; and Bond, Schoeneck and King, and hold your own Jeans Days for ABVI, you can contact Sarah Favro, Senior Philanthropy Manager, at either (585) 327-5526 or sfavro@goodwillfingerlakes.org.
Donors Do Great Things!

The Development staff would like to convey their gratitude to all of you who made a contribution to support our mission in 2018. There are many wonderful reasons you may have decided to give and we are glad that you did! Your support demonstrates your commitment to assisting those in our community who are blind or visually impaired, or who have other barriers to independence.

In 2018, 2,035 of you contributed a total of $1.8M. On behalf of the almost 170,000 people who turned to us in 2018, we thank you. Every dollar makes a difference and we are grateful for the generosity from individuals, families, professional groups, foundations, and corporations.

We invite and encourage you to learn more about the many programs and services that play a vital role in our community by visiting our campus. To schedule a time for a tour, contact Marlisa Post at (585) 697-5713 or mpost@goodwillfingerlakes.org.

We look forward to 2019, knowing that with the support of donors like you, we will continue to do great things!

With gratitude,

Your Development Staff:
Marlisa Post • Sarah Favro • Tracy Schleyer • Debra Calandrillo
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 November 1, 2018 through January 15, 2019.

**HONORARIUMS**

In honor of Matthew Alexander  
Timothy and Karen Bancroft

In honor of Ted Berg  
Margaret and Paul Ferber

In honor of ABVI & Lauri Bradstreet  
Russell Volpe

In honor of Liza Crudele  
Donna Crudele

In honor of Gidget Hopf and Mary Boland. Such a wonderful organization - such inspired leadership!  
Anonymous

In honor of Michele Shone  
Causewave

In honor of Tom and Michele Shone  
Drew and Diane Crane  
Carolyn R. Shone

In honor of Doris Smith  
Jeffrey A. Smith

In honor of Katherine White-Hitchcock, OD  
Finger Lakes Ophthalmology, P.C. - The Eye Care Center

In honor of Elizabeth and Jeffrey Jaeklekin  
Leslie Mauro

**MEMORIALS**

In memory of Muriel Ackroyd  
Anne Wolff

In memory of Ann M. Ahlheim  
Ann and Donald MacKay

In memory of Harold Bain  
Matthew Bain

In memory of Grace I. Van Norman Bogaerd  
Elizabeth Finewood  
Carolyn Ryan  
Bernice Young

In memory of L. Ruth Birnt  
David W. Smith

In memory of Carl Combo  
Debra Freyler & RenaJo, Dick & Mary Storti

In memory of Eli Eckman  
Karen M. Schuhle-Williams

In memory of Ruth Etter  
David and Virginia Rice

In memory of Hubert G. Hill  
David and Linda Ayers

In memory of Harvey Holderle  
Nancy H. Pearce

In memory of Dorothy Knoll  
Kurt Knoll

In memory of Dilas and Lois Lago  
Patricia Lago-Avery

In memory of Jarret Lobb  
Clayton and Susan Cloen

In memory of Felix Lapine  
Paul and Judith Flagg  
Bernard J. Iacovangelo  
John J. LaDuca  
Joseph Lentini  
Sepro America

In memory of my beloved sisters  
Jean Cummings, Mary Lou Knapp, Lois Miller Helene Witzmann and my dear friend Mary Lodice  
Nancy Premo

In memory of Helen Mead  
Anne Christman

In memory of Bob Mooney  
Flo Mooney

In memory of Edward Nassar  
JudieLynn Nassar McAvinney

In memory of Freda A. Nassar  
JudieLynn Nassar McAvinney

In memory of Frank and Teresa Pesesky  
Jane Kennedy

In memory of Shirley S. Preston  
Sandra Brewer

In memory of Charlotte R. Russell  
Jean Losinger

In memory of Robert Schmitt  
Paula Schmitt

In memory of Elaine Welty  
Edward and Judith Keil

In memory of Anne H. Yanicky  
Suzanne and Bernard Ernst
2018: A Year of Growth for ABVI

Every year brings growth and changes at the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI). 2018 was no exception. Here are a few of the highlights.

We’ve increased our focus on the children and families we serve. We have a dedicated staff person who will not only hold programs for children who are blind or visually impaired, but also go out into the community to meet with their families. She’ll also be working to facilitate a support network for the families so that they can share information and be there for each other as their children grow.

We welcomed a new volunteer coordinator. This means we’ll now have a centralized and active volunteer program, allowing people in the community to get involved with ABVI, whether as a long-term volunteer or helping with one-time projects.

We launched our Brighter Views program. This program is for people age 55 and over who are visually impaired but not yet legally blind. Classes provide instruction on daily living skills, mobility training, advocacy, and adaptive technology. It offers participants an opportunity to meet others who are experiencing vision loss and share knowledge and support while learning valuable lessons on a variety of topics from our staff.

Our Manufacturing division began work with a new partner – Dymo. Dymo Corporation is an American company that manufactures handheld label printers and other products. ABVI employees are now responsible for packaging the final product to ship to customers. This partnership allowed us to create more jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our Low Vision Center Medical Director, Gwen Sterns, M.D., celebrated 40 years at ABVI. Dr. Sterns was one of the early pioneers of Low Vision care in Rochester and services to the visually impaired have flourished under her stewardship.

We already know that 2019 will be another special year for us. We’ll celebrate 50 years of Low Vision Services and 25 years of being connected to Goodwill International!

ABVI is so grateful to our donors who make everything we do possible.
Designating Your Retirement Assets to ABVI is Simple to Do

Did you know that it can be very easy to provide for ABVI in your estate plans? It isn’t difficult to add a charitable bequest to your will. A simple codicil, drafted by your attorney, will get the job done. However, there are other ways you can support our mission without changing your will.

For example, you can easily designate your retirement assets. It’s simple to make a gift of an IRA, 401(k), or other retirement moneys. Just contact the custodian of your account and ask for the form that you fill out to designate your beneficiaries.

The wonderful thing about making a gift with your retirement assets, is that you play a huge part in providing critically needed services for people who are blind or visually impaired.

If you would like more information on making this type of gift, please contact Tracy Schleyer, CFRE, Vice President of Development at (585) 697-5780 or tschleyer@goodwillfingerlakes.org.