Goodwill of the Finger Lakes Names Jennifer Lake CEO

The Board of Directors of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes has appointed Jennifer Lake as chief executive officer, effective April 22. She replaces Dr. A. Gidget Hopf, who is retiring after 34 years.

Lake joined Goodwill of the Finger Lakes in 2007 and was appointed president in September 2019, when Hopf announced her retirement. Prior, she was part of the senior leadership team, responsible for the organization’s People Resources and Donated Goods retail divisions. As vice president, she was the Strategic Planning liaison to the Board of Directors and consults on all organizational development, learning and change management initiatives.

Lake received the prestigious Forty Under 40 award from Rochester Business Journal in 2016 and completed a sought-after Executive Development Program through Goodwill Industries International. She has served on the Bivona Child Advocacy Board of Directors since 2017, has been a member of United Way of Greater Rochester’s Women’s Leadership Council since 2015, and has been a mentor in the National Human Resources Association Rochester Mentoring Program since 2011.

Originally set to retire in June 2020, Hopf watched Lake take immediate action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through that leadership,

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes has made a real impact on the communities it serves. All concerned agreed that it made sense for Lake to take on the role as CEO immediately.

“Under Jennifer’s capable leadership, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes has become a key community collaborator in response to the pandemic,” said William Barneecut-Kearns, board chair of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes. “She is eager to help and quick to respond to the needs of the community. It is through her leadership that we have risen to the occasion as an organization - as a family — and truly made an impact. As CEO, continued on page 2
When David and Donna Cole’s youngest son entered kindergarten, it was clear that even his new glasses weren’t helping his vision. He was still struggling with learning activities. His ophthalmologist referred him to Dr. Gwen Sterns, a low vision specialist and Director of ABVI’s Low Vision Clinic. After an evaluation, their son received tools to help him in the classroom and beyond. The Coles also were given information so that they could effectively advocate for him.

Grateful for the help for their son, the Coles became ABVI donors. They are cautious about who they give to and make sure that an organization will be good stewards of their donation. According to David, “ABVI routinely demonstrates the effective use of funds as well as using strategic planning and creativity to reach as many people as possible.”

A busy family schedule limits the time they can volunteer, but they act as unofficial spokespersons, telling friends, family, teachers, and co-workers about ABVI’s services. This year, they are volunteering in a more official capacity, serving as ambassadors for our 20/20 We Have a Vision campaign.

When asked what they would want others to know about ABVI, the Coles said, “We know there are lots of organizations competing for your charitable giving. We would encourage you to learn or think about the impact ABVI has upon the community. While meeting specific needs of people with low vision or blindness, the organization’s impact goes much farther than simply meeting an episodic need: the numerous services, the visual aids, the jobs, the skills taught, all improve the quality of individual’s lives as well as provide the foundations for independent living. We believe there is no better reason to support ABVI than the fact they help individuals achieve their highest potential and purpose in life.”

Jennifer will be a compassionate and visionary leader of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes and the mission programs of the Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired (ABVI), 211 / LIFE LINE and workforce development programs. She will help us elevate our brand and further our impact across the communities we serve.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have helped to address the needs of community members. Our Vision Rehabilitation staff reached out to those who are blind or visually impaired that we currently served, and we deployed our Workforce Development staff to contact school-age and college-age students with vision loss to ensure they have access to virtual learning. As a partner with the United Way of Greater Rochester, Monroe County and Congressman Joe Morelle’s office, We made available our warehouse to store and distribute items that allow community-based organizations to continue serving their populations. We have also served as a collection site for United Way’s Mask Maker initiative, collecting more than 1,300 masks by mid-April. All of this has been under Lake’s leadership.

Our 211/LIFE LINE hotline has experienced a 200% increase in daily contacts with community members in need, and 80% of those are related to food. The organization has increased support of 211 so they can better connect individuals to resources they need such as enrolling participants in Foodlink’s emergency food distribution.

“This is an exciting time for our organization, and I have full confidence in Jennifer, between her genuine passion to serve, the respect she has earned throughout her career and her vision for Goodwill of the Finger Lakes,” Barnecut-Kearns said.
For Destiny Diaz, ABVI has been a constant presence in her life. She participated in our Summer Sizzle and Winter Chill programs as a child and then as an adult she became part of our staff and was named Employee of the Year.

As a child, our programs gave her the opportunity to interact with children who were like her. She went roller skating and rode bicycles, her favorite activity as a child. But outside of ABVI, Destiny had a different experience on a daily basis. Her everyday life was a struggle. Destiny was legally blind and her medical condition made her eyes look different. This led to her being the subject of bullying from her fellow classmates.

In addition to the bullying, Destiny also had a hard time with her studies. Her teachers did not understand how she learned and did not have the necessary equipment to help her. This almost led to her failing one year of school. Yet, Destiny persevered. She achieved her goal of graduating high school in 2015. “It felt really, really good. It felt like I could accomplish a lot more,” said Destiny.

Nine months after graduating high school, Destiny found herself again at ABVI. This time she came to work in the sewing division, making pants for the Air Force and shorts for the Army. She said she had never sewn before taking this job. Destiny has grown in the position, garnering recognition from her supervisors for her punctuality, flexibility in moving from job to job within the department, her ability to exceed production goals, and the quality of her work.

Since coming to the sewing division five years ago, Destiny enjoys the people she is working with and has fun at her job. She hopes to be a supervisor in the sewing operation one day. Due to her determination and drive, Destiny was named ABVI’s Employee of the Year 2020.
While the health and wellbeing of our staff is our first priority, we also feel a great responsibility to the community we all call home. And so during the global pandemic, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes employees were part of the region’s efforts to maximize survival rates and to make sure people who needed critical services could be connected to the agencies that could deliver them.

**Here’s how we helped:**

• Our Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI) mission team is calling the people we serve to make sure they have the tools they need to safely navigate their homes and that school-age and college-age students have proper access equipment and training for virtual learning environments.

• Goodwill has provided warehouse space, a truck fleet and experienced drivers and material handlers for the distribution of in demand products for our community. For example, we delivered 1,400 bottles of hand sanitizer for the United Way to at-risk community organizations. Also, our stores and donation centers are now the collection sites for the distribution of face-masks for the community across our region.

• Our Food Services department is making sure that kids and seniors have access to nutritious food as we partner with FoodLink, Monroe County Senior Services, LifeSpan, and Action for a Better Community.

• Our 2-1-1/LIFE LINE program, which is our region’s 24/7 health and human services and crisis hotline, has been fielding three times as many calls as normal. Calls from people who need help knowing where their next meal will come from, need to know where to look for unemployment resources, or just need to talk to someone about the heightened anxiety and loneliness they are feeling right now.

• Goodwill has also partnered with the United Way to collect surgical masks. As of April 16th, we distributed over 59,600 masks that were either donated or manufactured by our Sewing Department.

Of course, over a year ago, when we laid out our agency budget for 2020, we could not have foreseen the outbreak of COVID-19. But we still chose to respond to the needs of our community, placing a higher value on human lives than on budgetary constraints. And so, instead of asking you to help with a piece of equipment, our wish is that you give to our Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund to assist our employees who, in a time of crisis, helped frightened people find food, delivered essential supplies, and gave much-needed comfort and support. Your gift would show how much it means to you that when the call for help came, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes answered without hesitation.
Kimberly Lawrence Celebrates 20 Years With ABVI

For twenty years, Kimberly Lawrence has been an essential part of ABVI’s efforts to be out in the community connecting underserved populations with crucial eye screenings and eye care.

Since 2000, Kimberly has overseen ABVI’s Vision Wellness programs. One of these programs is Project Eye Care (PEC). Currently 20 local eye doctors volunteer to give eye exams to uninsured and underinsured people throughout the community. Eye glasses are donated by LensCrafters, Empire VisionWorks, and Changing Life Through Lenses, a program of the Essilor Foundation. Most of the exams are free or are provided for a nominal fee of $10, if the individual can afford it. To date PEC has served over 5,300 individuals who would have gone without the eye care services they needed.

The program also saves lives for some who were unaware they had life-threatening diseases like diabetes and have helped to prevent vision loss and blindness by detecting eye disease early. Kimberly remembers a woman who was a part-time housekeeper at a local hotel. Lacking medical insurance, she didn’t get an eye exam for her failing vision. Her poor vision affected her job performance and she was fired. Also, she was also hit by a bus that she didn’t see coming. She heard about PEC and came for a free exam. She had severe cataracts and diabetic retinopathy. We were able to provide her assistance with applying for Medicaid and we referred her for eye surgery immediately. Her former employer heard her story and hired her back full-time, making her eligible for health insurance!

Kimberly oversees another Vision Wellness program called Vision Care for Kids, which provides low income or uninsured children grades K-12 with free eye exams and glasses. Over 500 students have received free eye exams and the glasses they need since the inception of the program.

Since 2010, our Early Vision Screening program has screened over 17,000 kids under five years of age, with over 2,800 requiring referrals to eye doctors. One in four children under the age of five in the U.S. has an undetected vision problem that can result in permanent vision loss. As a result, children enter kindergarten without the ability to see properly and they struggle through school. Once children receive the treatment or glasses they need, many parents and teachers have happily reported an improvement in the classroom and at home, noticing better behavior, cooperation, and interest in learning.

On behalf of the thousands whose lives have been touched by Kimberly, we thank her for her continued service. Kimberly says, “I have seen the faces of people light up when they get their free glasses, cry when they realize someone is willing to help them regardless of their ability to pay, and the gratefulness for a service they otherwise would have gone without. Knowing that we helped just one child see better so that they WANT to learn in school or one adult whose life has been enhanced from clearer vision makes it all worthwhile.”
InSights

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 October 16, 2019 through March 15, 2020.

HONORARIUMS

In honor of Matthew Alexander
Timothy and Karen Bancroft

In honor of William BarneCut-Kearns’ service to ABVI as Board Chairman
Warren and Joyce Heilbronner

In honor of Joyel Bennett and Leon France
Jeanne Mallia

In honor of Mary Boland and A. Gidget Hopf for their exemplary leadership
Anonymous

In honor of Carol Borsa’s Birthday
Tracy Schleyer

In honor of Ian Harper
Steven Bandrowczak

In honor of Brian Harrington
Peter Moore

In honor of Amelia Holmqquist
Jane W. Kitchen

In honor of A. Gidget Hopf, Ed.D.
Daniel Meyers
Charles and Mary Nitsche

In honor of Jennifer E. Lake
Anne and Edward Kress

In honor of Kimberly Lawrence
Tina T. Reeves, O.D.

In honor of Henry and Sheila McLeod
Sabrina M. McLeod

MEMORIALS

In honor of Doris Smith
Jeffrey A. Smith

In memory of Muriel Ackroyd
Anne Wolff

In memory of Ann Ahlheim
Wendy Ahlheim
Ann and Donald MacKay

In memory of Eunice Shepard Barnes
James and Diane Darnell
Patricia J. Gorthy
Dorothy Rockwell

In memory of Thomas I. S. Boak, Jr.
Judith and Norman Karsten

In memory of James T. Briggs
Joseph and Nancy Briggs
Peter and Lauren Briggs

In memory of Catherine Carnes
Sally Shiffer

In memory of Barbara Challenger
Dawn L. Call
Tammy A. LaBatt

In memory of Frances Cirafisi
Edward Hasenauer

In memory of Josephine Curran
Mary Ann and Myron Green
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 36
Ken and Bonnie Kausner

In memory of Eli Eckman
Ashley and Brian Eckman
Julie and Karl Marsiglio
Karen M. Schuhle-Williams

In memory of Rose M. Gallo
Joseph R. Gallo

In memory of Dorothy H. Green
Leonard and Germaine Chaput
Patricia B. Swayze

In memory of Kathleen Griffith
Anonymous

In memory of Julianna Hart
Roger Hart

In memory of Hubert Hill
David and Linda Ayers

In memory of Lisa H. Hoffman
Nikki B. Llewellyn

In memory of Harvey Holderle
Nancy H. Pearce

In memory of Barbara Horwitz
Anonymous

In memory of Howard Hunt
Linda Becker
Ken and Marty Breiner
Dry Timber Lake Inc.
Carroll and Joycelyn Hawk
Marc Hunt
Walter and Ann Hunt
Deborah and Thomas Illis
ON Semiconductor
Robert and Patricia Ottley
Jennifer and Joseph Ray
Kathleen and Robert Ruiz
David S. Tooker
Valorie A. Trost
Steven and Sharon Vanslyke

In memory of Geoffrey Kramer
Deborah and James Allen
Martha Kahan
Here’s How to Give “Stuff” Instead of Cash to ABVI

We are always grateful for cash donations to fund the work that supports our mission and we encourage you to support us in this way. We understand, too, that cash is not the only way to sustain ABVI. You may want to consider supporting our programs and services in an entirely different way.

There are many benefits to giving ABVI your special “stuff” instead of cash.

Think outside the box about your special stuff, which could consist of valuable artwork, real estate, antiques, and/or collectibles. Most of us have those things lying around our house and we don’t even notice them or don’t know what to do with them. That antique chair from Aunt Betty that just doesn’t go with your décor. The piece of property in your family that no one wants. The collectible Star Wars figures you saved for your grandson, but he’s into sports, not science fiction. And the best part is that giving stuff doesn’t have to cost you a lot of out-of-pocket cash today.

How to Gift Your Stuff

You can give us your stuff now, or another simple way to give us an asset is a bequest where you specify which stuff you’d like to bequeath to ABVI. When you donate your art, antiques, and collections, we sell them on our online auction site or in our Goodwill stores and use the revenue generated to fund valuable vision rehabilitation and employment training services.

Donating art, antiques, and other collectible objects can provide you with the following possible benefits:

An income tax deduction
Avoidance of the tax on capital gains on appreciated assets
An estate and gift tax deduction

To learn more about non-cash giving, contact Tracy Schleyer, CFRE, Vice President of Development at (585) 697-5780 or tschleyer@goodwillfingerlakes.org.
In this time of crisis, if you don’t know where to turn, call 2-1-1 / LIFE LINE

Get Help Now
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(TTY: 585-275-2700)

Text your zip code to 898-211 or visit website to chat online

InSights
www.GoodwillFingerLakes.org/ABVI

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