A 30-year Journey of Empowerment

Angelo (left) and Phil Ercolamento have worked at ABVI for 30 years.

Thirty years ago, Angelo Ercolamento lost his job at a factory in Rochester. He then found his career with ABVI. And he brought his brother Phil along with him roughly one month later.

“Finding this job was one of the best moments in my life,” says Phil, who came to ABVI after his seasonal job ended. “It was very difficult to find a job. Once we got here we had the opportunity to move up. This place has let me grow.”

Angelo and Phil both said that they did not know where they would be without ABVI, because it was difficult to find a job with the stigma around vision loss that existed 30 years ago.

Both Angelo and Phil have retinitis pigmentosa and have been legally blind since birth. The eye disease did not stop them, however. They followed their motivation to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families and their community.

“Getting a job here is one of my highlights. It allowed me to meet so many people over the past 30 years. The experience and the knowledge you gain are highlights, too,” says Angelo.
McGowan Fund Makes an Impact

Since its inception in 1998, the Contact Center has become one of the premiere programs of its type in the Northeast. We have extensive experience including inbound and outbound calling, email, chat and customer satisfaction surveys.

The Contact Center has demonstrated overall and ongoing excellence in operations, technology, training, contract procurement, corporate and community partnerships and, most importantly, in offering challenging and rewarding career opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired.

In 1998, the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund provided us with a grant of $50,000 as start-up funding for our Contact Center operation. Since that time, the Center has flourished and is now a state-of-the-art operation. We started with one contract and two employees and have grown to a multitude of contracts with 83 employees.

We have many hotlines supporting the federal and NY State government, nonprofits and commercial contracts. With our competency in this line of business we were able to acquire the 2-1-1/LIFE LINE program in 2005, which has been a part of our community since 1973. This mission-based program provides a safe, confidential place to connect with a caring and highly trained telecounselor through a variety of access channels (telephone, TTY, live chat, email, and soon, text) for people in the community to get linked with services in a time of need. It is a free, confidential, multilingual service.

2-1-1/LIFE LINE provides 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access to trained counselors ready to provide information and referrals to human service agencies and programs and responds to questions about mental health issues, crisis counseling, emergency food, shelter, clothing, or other health and human service needs. In 2016, our telecounselors served over 149,000 people in a 13-county territory.

The William G. McGowan Charitable Fund has an interest in supporting projects that address homelessness and access to food, health and work. They recently granted us $20,000 to support our 2-1-1/LIFE LINE work with homeless individuals. We are grateful for the original investment in 1998 they gave us to start our Contact Center and for this recent contribution that will help those in need of shelter and housing. They can be proud of the impact their investment made so many years ago and for the thousands of individuals their recent contribution will help.
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 Tracy Schleyer, CFRE, at tschleyer@goodwillfingerlakes.org or (585) 697-5780.

Watch Display: $82
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 in order to display our plethora of watches in a neat and organized fashion so that people can decide on the best fit for their time telling needs.

DVDs for Children: $100
What better way to spend a rainy afternoon than watching a movie. On occasion, snow or rain keeps the children who attend our day-camps inside. We would like to update our library of movies for the children’s program.

Furnishings for Tranquility Room: $500
Each day, our 2-1-1/LIFE LINE Telecounselors are saving lives. Whether they are finding beds at a homeless shelter for a young mother and her children, referring a senior to their nearest food pantry, or stabilizing a teen who is considering suicide, our Telecounselors are here to help, 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. As you can imagine, these conversations, which can range from a few minutes to an hour, can be emotionally and physically taxing for our Telecounselors. We want to create a space for the Telecounselors to destress and re-energize for the next person in need. This room will include a tranquility fountain, soft lighting, small tables, and comfortable seating.

iPad Pro with Case: $800
With an iPad Pro, children who are blind can use the Voiceover feature built into the device to hear what is on the screen and children with low vision can use Zoom to enlarge what is on the screen. An iPad Pro with a 10 inch screen would enhance our ability to teach concepts, play games and other activities with preschoolers who are blind or visually impaired. The accompanying case can be adjusted so that the child can angle the iPad to the best position for their vision needs.

Tablet and Printer for Early Vision Screening: $1,400
The Early Vision Screening program provides vision screenings for children from six months old through Kindergarten who attend Rochester’s ABC Head Start programs, other agencies that serve at-risk families and children, and child care centers. In addition to the screenings, we follow-up with the parents of the children who did not pass their screening to facilitate an eye exam. We are in need of a tablet and portable color printer to accompany the vision screener. Currently, we are only able to conduct screenings in one location, but with a second set of equipment, our program staff and qualified volunteer could be conducting screenings at multiple locations concurrently, and would also allow us to have back-up equipment if the other devices are in need of repair.

Compact Wireless Color Scanner: $250
Because our service territory spans the Finger Lakes region, we provide low vision exams in remote locations to eliminate the need to travel to Rochester. We are in need of a scanner that would enable our Low Vision Specialist who conducts these exams to scan documents directly into our electronic medical record from the remote locations.
Puppy Vests Something to Bark About at ABVI

Guide dogs help people who are blind navigate their environment. However, how does someone identify a dog guide? The answer is the vest. And thanks to a partnership between ABVI and Guiding Eyes for the Blind, the vests the dogs wear during training make it easy to identify them as dog guides.

ABVI and Guiding Eyes partnered after a puppy raiser met Joe Kells, ABVI’s Director of Sales and Business Development at a hockey game. Joe thought ABVI could produce new vests for the puppies in training. So when the puppy raisers and their charges came to ABVI to see the people who made the vests for them, the result was something to bark about.

“The vests have gotten a great response. They look so professional and the Guiding Eyes logo is very visible. The strap in the front is new and gives more visibility. You can see a service dog in training is coming,” says Pamela Boy, Regional Coordinator for Monroe Region of Guiding Eyes for the Blind.

Although the vests are getting a lot of attention, the partnership means so much more. “Guiding Eyes and ABVI help people who are blind or visually impaired. It is very heartwarming,” says Boy.

Lois, who works in the sewing department at ABVI, is seen here with one of the puppies Guiding Eyes is training on their visit to ABVI.

Fundraising on the Run: 2017 PhotoFinish 5K

ABVI will once again be participating in the Eastman Museum PhotoFinish 5K on October 14, 2017.

Through this event, local non-profits can fundraise for their cause by putting together teams and asking their supporters for donations. Whether you want to enjoy a leisurely walk through the Neighborhood of the Arts or want to beat your fastest 5K time, this is a great event that everyone can enjoy while fundraising for your favorite organization. In the past four years, ABVI has raised over $22,000 through the PhotoFinish 5K.

Last year, ABVI’s Board of Directors and Development Advisory Committee members formed a team to run and walk in support of ABVI. Even though the weather was less than ideal, Board member Bill Barnecut-Kearns (below, left, with fellow board members Kristin Auchter and Gary Knaack.) remembers the event fondly. “It was a wonderful morning. Even on a cold, drizzly morning, you can feel the warmth of the participants support great organizations and one another. For me, I am going to get up and workout anyway. Why not do it for a great organization?”

Want to join the fun? Contact Marlisa Post at (585) 697-5713. Want to be a corporate sponsor or put together a team for your company in support of ABVI? Contact Sarah Favro at (585) 327-5526.
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 January 21, 2017 through July 10, 2017.

**Honorarums**

*In honor of Janie Baker*
Deborah Barton

*In honor of Ann Castle*
Diane Castle

*In honor of A. Gidget Hopf*
Mary Lou England, Goodwill – Manasota
Wendy and Philip Clay
Steven and Diane Feldon
Jean and Jack Fiannaca
Dorothy Green
Warren and Joyce Heilbronner
William Loughlin
Patricia and Raymond Naber, Jr.
Thomas O’Connor, Al Sigl Community of Agencies
Gwen and Richard Sterns
Barbara and Judy Underhill
Joyce Zimowski

*In honor of Dennis and Catherine Mullen’s 40th Wedding Anniversary*
Mike Catalana

*In honor of Tracy Schleyer*
William and Jason Barnecut-Kearns
Howard and Karen Kessler

**Memorials**

*In memory of Dilas Avery*
Patricia Lago-Avery

*In memory of Ruth Bloom*
Alan Blumenstock and Jean Banfield
Louise Epstein
Anthony Nero
Jean and Jerome Warren

*In memory of Thomas I. Boak*
Judith and Norman Karsten

*In memory of Richard A. Calabrese*
Michael Tallon

*In memory of Marjorie Canham*
Beatrice Jones

*In memory of Catherine Carnes*
Sally Shiffer

*In memory of Ray Crudele*
Joan Onderdonk

*In memory of Marion Crumlish*
Mr. and Mrs. Chris Chilas
Richard and Elsie Schaefer

*In memory of Joyce Decker Fitzgerald*
Ann and Jeffrey Flynn
Thomas Fornesi
Porzia and Curtis Quinn
Peter and Lynn Sarratori
Jeanne Waddington

*In memory of Eli Eckman*
Julie and Karl Marsiglio

*In memory of Edward Garno*
Evelyn Collett
Lloyd and Donna Collett

*In memory of William S. Herzog*
Nikki Llewellyn

*In memory of Thomas Kenyon*
Friends at Sam’s Club – Elmridge Plaza

*In memory of Jean Lee*
Mitchell Pierson, Jr.

*In memory of Geraldine Lynch*
Helen T. Bleier
Cynthia and Donald Bleier
Josephine J. Kroll
Phillip Leutz
Joseph M. LoBozzo II
Mary Magee
John Maier
Terry and Betty Modlin

*In memory of Douglas Murrell*
Christopher and Debra Russell

*In memory of James Parsons*
Richard and Elsie Schaefer

*In memory of Lois Rosipayla*
Kathlene and John Hubbard

*In memory of Albert Sica*
Peggy MacAdam

Continued on next page.
In memory of Laura Stone
Christine and Daniel Quinlan
William and Shirley Reber

In memory of Josephine Stowell
Friends at Monroe Community College Advisement and Transfer Services

In memory of Frederick W. Tee
Boon
George Hogestyn
Maureen Magee
James and Sharon Recore
Robert and Deborah Webber

In memory of Vera S. Wheten
Wilma Wheten

We would like to recognize the following companies who are members of ABVI’s Corporate Leadership Society for their 10 or more years of consecutive giving to ABVI.
Thank you for your commitment!

Alesco Advisors LLC
Bausch + Lomb, Inc.
Browncroft Day Care
ComTon, Inc.
CooperVision, Inc.
Cypress Financial Consultants, LLC
Diamond Packaging
Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co., LLP
OcuSight Eye Care Center
Retina Associates of Western NY, PC
The Dolomite Group
Thomson Reuters
Visionary Eye Associates
YourCare Health Plan - a Monroe Plan Company

We would like to recognize the following companies who are members of ABVI’s Partners in Success Society for their five to nine years of consecutive giving to ABVI.
Thank you for your commitment!

3M General Offices
AP Professionals of Rochester, LLC
Berengaria Development, LLC
Bonadio & Company, LLP
Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC
Boylan Code LLP
Canfield & Tack Inc.
DeCarolis Truck Rental, Inc.
Ecolab, Inc.
Excellus BlueCross BlueShield
Flaum Eye Institute
Flaum Management Company, Inc.
HR Works, Inc.
Macy’s
Manning & Napier Advisors, Inc.
Mattingly Low Vision, Inc.
MetLife
NOCO Natural Gas & Electric
Pixos Print
Rochester Eye Associates
Simmons Rennolds Associates, LLC
Spectracom Corporation
Sumner Leigh Systems, Inc.
Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.
Xerox Corporation
InSights

www.SeeGreatThings.org

Thanks to our donors’ forward thinking, we can move ahead.

We can:

- provide orientation and mobility training for people to learn skills to move and travel safely
- teach individuals to adapt everyday activities and assist with problem solving challenges that may arise due to visual impairment
- provide assistance with career exploration and job placement, as well as teach work readiness skills

The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired’s Vice President of Development, Tracy Schleyer, can help you create a philanthropic strategy that fits your unique interests and financial situation. You may discover that you can have a greater impact than you ever imagined.

Ready to find out more? Contact Tracy at 585-697-5780 or tschleyer@goodwillfingerlakes.org