**Board Meeting Reports**

**September 21, 2021**

# Director's Report – Emily Wharton

As mentioned in the last report, the rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) performed our first review since 2009. The bulk of the review took place during the second half of July. We had many Microsoft Teams discussions of programmatic and fiscal documentation, processes, and measures. The RSA review team spoke with our Commission Board, reviewed documentation and asked questions of the VR counselors. The entire review was conducted remotely. We have had follow-up requests for documentation and conversations in August and September. We anticipate receiving our report toward the end of September. We will then have 15 days to compose a response.

August 6th was Al Bickell's last day as Center Program Administrator. The position was posted and interviews were conducted. On September 3rd, Karly Prinds accepted the position. Karly has worked for IDB for almost six years as a Home Management Instructor. She served as chair of our IDB Communications Team in PY21. She previously worked for the Colorado Center for the Blind and Blind Industries and Services of Maryland. Prior to this, she worked in various positions within the business and financial services industries. We are excited to welcome her to our leadership team and look forward to the improvements she and her team will make in this crucial program.

Because of the Center Director transition, the Center naming process had to be put on hold. We plan to resume this in October and will put out information soon.

The highlight of my summer was the opportunity to do six business classes with the LEAP youth. Their enthusiasm and curiosity energized me and I'm looking forward to spending time with the YATP students this fall.

We held our first in person quarterly All Staff Meeting on August 20th. It was really great to be able to talk face to face with all of our staff from across the state. The energy in the room was very positive and uplifting. The following was New Staff Seminar week. We had eight staff participating. We crammed so much about our history, mission, values and contemporary challenges into one week. The group had lively discussion and gave thoughtful presentations about a wide variety of topics. I was very impressed and very grateful that we have been able to bring on board such smart, passionate, and talented individuals.

## Facilities

* The ADA ramp and stairs have a tentative October 7 start date. This project is being managed by the Department of Administrative Services and as with similar projects has experienced significant delays and communication issues. We apologize for the inconvenience and planning this has caused all stakeholders. If the construction begins as planned, the main entrance -will be moved to the mail room on the west side of the building. Clients, patrons, and guests will come to this entrance and the front desk will be located in the mail room throughout the construction. Staff and students will still be able to use the east entrance as normal.
* The main elevator doors where replaced and other control repairs were made. There were significant delays in this project as well and we greatly appreciate everyone’s patience and flexibility during that longer than expected outage. A big thanks to Randy for all of his hard work making things work during this time and pushing the contractor to get the project completed.

# **CFO – Cheri Myers**

## Federal Grant Update

* The Grant Report as of 08/31/2021 is enclosed.
* We moved to the FFY21 VR grant at the change of the state fiscal year to ensure that the state match is spent by 9/30/2021.
* The FFY22 grant award notices have not yet been received.

## Budget Report:

I have enclosed a budget report on State FY22 through 08/31/2021 and end for FY21 budget report that includes all expenditures through the end of the hold over period. The report included report compares year to date to the annual budget based on state fiscal year. The Department of Administrative Services price increase after the budget was finalized in causing that line to be over budget this year. This is common in that DAS bases their rates on the “fifth quarter”, the amounts after the closing period for that state fiscal year.

IDB ended the fiscal year with a small reversion of $2,092.08. These reverted funds can be used to cover any FY21 invoices that have not been received to date.

Also, please find enclosed the proposed budgets for FY2023. In addition to the financial budget for FY23 there is also a capital ask request for FY23.

## Gifts and Bequests

As of January, 2021 for FY2021 beginning $4,126,902

 Total revenue for FY2021 to date is $77,776

 Total expenditures for the fiscal year are $296,842

As of 04/30/2021 the current balance is $3,907,836

## WorkDay Conversion

The state conversion to WorkDay is progressing. The human resources system, payroll system and travel reimbursement system is set to convert 9/17/2021. Grants management, Procurement and Financial Accounting are currently being configured by my staff and I.

## Other

* The FY20 audit has been completed. The final report on the audit has not been received.
* The final NRLI seminar that I was to attend has been delayed until January due to COVID concerns.
* Kelli Brennan the new Accounting Clerk 2 has finished her Center training and has already proven to be an asset to the department. Patrick Bremhorst, who was working as a temporary Accounting Clerk 2, has returned to college and he will be missed.

# Education and Training Team – Helen Stevens

## Personnel

* Jessica Katzung began work as a Youth Services Worker effective June 7. Jess has prior experience working for IDB’s youth programming as a LEAP staff member.
* Ashley Kirvin resigned her position as a Youth Services Worker effective August 19. We have completed interviews for the position, and should have a person in place by the time of the Commission meeting.
* Hannah Nichols transition from the position of field Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher to Careers instructor for the Young Adult Transition Program effective August 20.
* We are in the midst of conducting interviews for our two open field Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher positions.
* We needed to repost our open Rehabilitation Technology Specialist position again as we have not found the right candidate.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services

* 14 youth participated in the 2021 LEAP program. While this is fewer students than participated two years ago, this is more than participated last year. Students participated in weekly STEM activities led by the library team, daily braille, technology and cane travel classes, and developed their personal care and home management skills through living in college apartments. Examples of activities in which students participated throughout the summer included canoeing, camping, a cooking challenge, volunteering at Meals from the Heartland, and eating out each week at a local restaurant.
* Our Youth Weekend Retreats are back, with the first one being held at IDB September 24-26. Students will work on problem-solving and spatial awareness skills by building and testing catapults, develop their O&M skills at Urban Air, cook a meal, and more.
* Additional retreats will be held in October, December, January, February and April. We expect attendance will be lower than just before COVID for now, and take time to build up.

## Young Adult Transition Program

* 4 Students are enrolled for the 2021-2022 school year.
* We are already talking with families of students considering enrolling for the 2022-2023 school year with the goal of expanding our enrollment, and preparing to meet students’ needs as quickly and effectively as possible.

## Client Training

* Approximately 100 clients are currently receiving services from a Rehabilitation Technology Specialist.
* Approximately 150 clients are currently receiving services from a Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher.
* Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers and Rehabilitation Technology Specialists continue to meet with clients in-person or remotely based on which method best fits the training needs of the client.
* As of this moment, 14 clients are scheduled to participate in the October Self Week session.
* Applications are being accepted for the March and May sessions.
* Approximate total number of direct services recorded as provided to clients by VR Teachers, Rehabilitation Technology Specialists, YATP or LEAP staff members so far during program year 2021, which began July 1, 2021: 500. These services include: Disability Related Skills Training, Job Readiness Training, Rehabilitation Technology, Pre-ETS Job Exploration and Counseling, Pre-ETS Work Based Learning Experiences, Pre-ETS Counseling on PSE Enrollment Opportunities, Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training, and Pre-ETS Instruction in Self-Advocacy.
* Program year 2020: 3,000
* Program year 2019: 3,100
* Program year 2018: 1,600

# Independent Living Program - Kimberley Barber

## Hired New Independent Living (IL) Teacher and Secretary 1 position

A job offer for our newest IL teacher was made and accepted by Alyssa Munstermann. She has worked for our IL program for three years in the capacity of IL Secretary 1. She has extensive knowledge of our agency, mission, vision, culture, programs, philosophy, and has developed excellent communication and team building skills. She will start our certification training in our Orientation Center on Friday, September 17th. We are very happy to have her onboard as our newest IL teacher.

As for the IL Secretary 1 position, the hiring documents for that position were sent over to Iowa Department of Administrative and were approved for posting on NeoGov. We expect to being the interviewing process sometime soon after the position has been vacated.

## Update: University of Iowa Partnership Meetings

Susan Howard and I continue to be available to work with Darrick Willis, Patricia Bahr, and Caitlin Owens in search of grants for our Independent Living program to address AT programming needs. Over the summer, the University needed some time to conduct additional research so we did not meet.

Of recent, Patricia Bahr emailed an interesting national level grant indicating they were looking for innovative local models to provide volunteer non-medical assistance to older Americans, Adults with disabilities, and Family Caregivers. The grant ceiling for that grant was $150,000; however, the grant just closed mid-summer. Patricia and I will be following-up yet this month to talk more. We will be able to apply for this grant next year if it fits within the scope of our project.

## Mississippi State University Older Individuals Who Are Blind-Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC)

We have submitted our application to OIB-TAC for Intensive Training and Technical Assistance (T & TA) for our Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program. This training and technical assistances is available to designated state agencies at no charge. Services are provided through a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University.

All technical assistance is individualized, and goals are set by the designated state agency in collaboration with the Independent Living Services Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (IL OIB-TAC) staff.

Available T & TA services focus on four topic areas:

1. Community outreach methods and strategies to identify potential recipients of services.
2. Promising practices based on “promising evidence” as defined in (34 CFR 77.1), including the development and dissemination of relevant materials to facilitate the delivery of high-quality services.
3. Program performance, including data reporting and analysis.
4. Financial and management practices, including practices to ensure compliance with grant administration requirements.

What else does the service entail?

* Approximately 5 days to attend scheduled meetings and trainings during two in-person site visits or virtual events.
* Four to six, one-hour conference calls before technical assistance site visit (approximately 1 per week) to gather relevant information about the agency, needs, and goals.
* Three one-hour conference calls to be held between technical assistance site visit and training events to discuss progress and provide follow-along technical assistance based on goals set.
* Follow-along monthly conference calls held until intensive technical assistance is completed or approximately 12 months following completion of intensive T & TA.
* Completion of an agency intensive self-assessment, which will require input from multiple team members in administration, fiscal management, personnel, and service delivery.
* Completion of an OIB-TAC facilitated SWOT analysis.
* Access to local stake-holders, including referring organizations and potential referral sources, consumers, and direct service staff for focus groups.
* Completion of quarterly goal reports for one year.

We will keep Commissioners updated if or when we are selected to receive OIB-TAC T &TA in the coming months.

## Independent Living Program Brochure

Kelsi Hansen, Susan Howard, Sandy Ryan, and I have started meeting to begin work on IL program brochure upgrades. We talked much about the current brochure, the things we like about the current brochure and the things that we would like to see changed. We defined our audiences, who would be receiving the brochure by mail or email, briefly discussing some of the content that could or should be used within the brochure and that we might consider having two different brochures for two difference audiences; therefore, the content might be slightly different for each. We also discussed photos for the brochures and the need for media releases.

To get started, Kelsi Hansen and Sandy Ryan will lead Team 1 to develop a draft brochure to target applicants-clients, families, and friends. Susan Howard and Kim Barber will lead Team 2 to develop a brochure that will target professions or others (i.e. non-applicants/clients, family, and friends). We will continue to work together until we have drafts readied to our satisfaction with a goal to finish our draft by October 7, 2021. At some point, our next steps will be to submit the brochure(s) to be previewed for comments by the Department’s Communication Team.

## Presentations

IL Community presentations and in-services are now picking back-up as IL Teachers are now seeing an upswing in requests. During the period when COVID19 hit last year, several in-person community presentations were cancelled by those who scheduled with us. We had offered virtual presentations instead; however, agencies were not fully prepared at that time to engage and were scrambling with other priorities to ensure client needs were going to be met under the new COVID19 circumstances. There is now an uptick now in requests for presentations so we are seizing these opportunities as we want to help to provide information, education, and have conversations with the general public so barriers, whether perceived or real, can be removed for those served.

On August 17, 2021; as required under our SPIL, along with IVRS, and the SILC ED, I attended the A2I Board meeting and had an opportunity to share information about the Department’s Independent Living program and core services. Subsequent to the August 17th meeting, on August 25th, with IVRS, I met with CICIL’s Board to sharing the same information as mentioned prior. Both Boards were given opportunity to engage in a Q&A following my presentation. I appreciated the invitation, as well as the opportunity to provide information with everyone. Center Directors along with their respective Boards were invited to schedule a visit with our Department to take a tour in the near future.

## Independent Living Senior Integration

Once again, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting an upcoming IL Senior Integration here at our beautiful downtown Des Moines, Iowa, agency. This training event is scheduled from Sunday, September 12 through Friday, September 17. There will be seven individuals who will be 55 years or older attending traveling from various regions across our state. During their week at our Department, they will engage in a variety of training opportunities throughout that entire week.

Participants taking this week-long training will engage in classes such as Braille, computer and technology, home and personal management, travel with the long white cane, industrial arts, and a discussion group called the Business of Blindness. There will also be scheduled evening activities including those with local consumer groups. These activities will give participants an opportunity to network with and learn from their peers as well build new founded friendships.

Finally, participants will have an opportunity to develop self-confidence, learn about the misconceptions held about blindness and develop a positive attitude about themselves and blindness. We are ready and excited for our participants so let the training begin!

# **Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Report and Statistics – Sarah Willeford**

## Library Updates

The Library continues to partner with the Governor’s STEM Council and received 5 STEM Scale-Up Grants for this year which include; STEM Story Time packs, Project Lead the Way Gateway Medical Detectives, SoapyCilantro, VEX IQ Robotics Competition Challenge and Ioponics. The scale-up activities will be made accessible, available for check out and will be used in our youth programming we do throughout the year. The Ioponics Scale-Up is currently located in our Youth Library and consists of 2 aquaponics systems. Our plants and fish are in the beginning stages of growth and we will be adding information and tactiles to the systems.

The Library continues its partnership with State Library of Iowa to provide monthly online trainings to public librarians. Topics have included; information about our library, BARD, screen readers, braille, audio books and Universal Design. Over 200 librarians have attended the webinars so far. We are also working with the State Library to provide an online course based off of the Library’s Braille Bits program that will provide librarians with an introductory course to braille.

The Instructional Materials Center worked this summer to update its Handbook for Ordering Instructional Materials used to assist educators when ordering materials for their students. A new student material order form was also created to help streamline orders and ensure staff has the information they need to produce student materials. The IMC staff also launched a new program called “Quick Braille”. The Quick Braille program offers quick turnaround braille for orders that are needed in 2 weeks or less. It also provides a loaner program for students who would benefit from having access to a braille embosser and braille eReader for their materials. The IMC staff had an opportunity to share information about services and programs at a booth at the Iowa School Administrators Conference in August.

The Library will host a Preconference on October 6, 2021 for the Iowa Library Association Conference. Participants will spend the day at IDB learning about library and Department services, accessibility and assistive technology.

## Library Staff Updates

The Library would like to thank our Summer VISTA and our Iowa STEM Teacher Externs for their hard work this summer. Our programs would not have been as successful without them.

The Library is currently in the process of hiring an Access Service Librarian to fill the position of Deena Cross who retired in July.

## Summer Library Programs

The Library will be hosting several summer youth programs this Year.

* Tales and Travels Summer Reading Program for youth of all ages. The program consisted of 27 youth programs held over 9 weeks. The 18 participants were mailed 9 activity kits to be used at the weekly programs on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
* Summer STEM Teen Program was held over 8 weeks and provided STEM experiences for 14 teens 14 years and older this summer.  Teens used hands-on STEM Activities based off of STEM Scale-Up Kits provided to the Library by the Iowa STEM Council. This program will also offer guest speakers focusing on STEM careers including; a professional skateboarder and a pilot.
* Our Library partnered with over 60 public libraries to provide a program for children pre-k to 5th grade this summer. The program focused on accessibility and early literacy skills through interactive play. Each public library received an activity packet including; the print/braille book Pete the Cat Rocking in my School Shoes, braille materials, online resources, help with creating a 30-minute online-recorded program to share with their library patrons.

## Online and Social Media

Library Blogs

* Turning the Pages Library Blog. Find information on library services, programs and resources. <http://iowalibrary.blog>
* Instructional Materials Center Blog. For educators and transcribers. Information on accessible educational materials, braille transcription, universal design and more. <http://idbimclibrary.blog>

Podcasts

* Library News. A monthly podcast by library staff about upcoming library events, programs, latest books and more.
* Library Chat. A monthly podcast by library staff where we review books and podcasts on all types of subjects.
* Braille Bits. A podcast reviewing each Braille Bits lesson and a discussion with a special guest about braille.

Social Media

Follow Twitter, Like us on Facebook and check out the great resources on the IDB YouTube channel

## Library Statistics

For May 2021, June 2021, July 2021 and August 2021

Library Patrons Added: 166

Library Material Circulation

Total Circulation:

Braille: 1,620

Large Print: 479

Digital Books: 123,751

Magazine Issues: 3,539

Digital Players: 223

Library Collection

Total Books Added to the Library Collection: 2,664

Braille: 233

Print/Braille: 67

Large Print: 286

Digital Books: 2,069

Kits: 9

Instructional Materials Center Orders Received

Total Orders Received: 472

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) Usage

Total Books Downloaded from BARD: 15,451

Audio: 12,954

Braille: 2,497

Average Number of Patrons Using BARD: 575

Newsline Service Usage

Current Subscribers: 1,720

New Subscribers: 22

Telephone Calls: 10,485

Web Sessions: 23,056

“In Your Pocket” Deliveries: 41,449

E-mail Deliveries: 11,304

Iowa Newspaper Accesses: 94,358

National Newspaper Accesses: 6,183

International Newspaper Accesses: 851

Blog Usage

Library – Turning the Pages Blog

Visitors: 1,452

Views: 3,776

Instructional Materials Center Blog

Visitors: 525

Views: 1,690

Library Podcasts

Library News Monthly Podcast: 4 produced

Listens Online: 514

Sent Out on Cartridges: 2,605

Library Chat Podcast: 4 produced

Listens Online: 388

Braille Bits Podcast:

Listens Online: 726

# Orientation Center Report – Karly Prinds

## Orientation Center Students

The Orientation Center has been in transition for the last month, however we are moving forward nonetheless. We have had 2 graduations since June.

Currently, we have 5 students (including a new student who moves in today.) As of now, we will have two students starting in October, and one student tentatively starting in November.

In July we went axe throwing; this was a new activity for everyone and it turned out well. One student refused to participate at first, however towards the end she decided to throw the axe and got a bulls-eye. It was so exciting to see the joy that she had in the end.

# BEP – Kathy Roat

The BEP Administrator has promoted BEP among the VR Counselors and at the Director’s Forum. The Training Subcommittee has a pilot screening tool being used in September with an interested individual, and has more rubrics drafted as we move toward robust training. Between now and December outsourced and in-house resources will be identified to prepare.

The Oran Pape building transition from vending to a micro market is complete, IDB will pick up City Hall as a micro market from a third-party, and another micro market is readying installation in October at the Neal Smith Federal Building. More credit card readers have been added and several vendors attended an additional training by manufacturers on their use and of the new beverage machines.

During this quarter, the review of financial records from vendors to prepare for attestations in order to execute the Randolph-Sheppard Financial Restoration and Relief Appropriation funds identified some monthly reports requiring correction and also a decision to ask RSA for another provision as part of the definition of losses. This provision has been approved by RSA, and all but two vendors have confirmed the calculated losses through attestations. Four vendors now show net gains in 2020 over 2019 and the balance of vendors should receive their distribution of funds by September 30, 2021. Refresher training in completing monthly reports will be offered to vendors so this becomes a more useful tool and takes less staff time in addressing corrections that could be better spent elsewhere.

Some buildings have increased staffing, others remain mostly remote and vehicle traffic is at about 75% of pre-COVID-19 figures. Thus continued invitations are open to vendors to become computer-proficient to learn to operate micro markets and consider new business generating options. BEP Counselor Matt Nemmers and another vendor attended the National Automated Marketing Association (NAMA) conference and brought back information about an expanded variety of products, more accessible options that may make a micro market at IDB possible, and other new technological innovations to consider.

Shortages in metal, wood and ingredients have prices rising and ordering lead times of up to four months, so the new product options should be helpful and IDB has ordered several machines still in stock to be ready for needs between September and December. It has already been helpful to have equipment in warehouse supply when a need to make a rapid shift to please a facility came about. This is the type of service the private sector offers and with which customers expect BEP to operate as well.

Since June, IDB has been awaiting RSAs approval of the two small remaining questions on the 2020 version of the Operating Agreement. The same individuals reviewing Operating Agreements are in charge of FRRP funding, so as these are almost all approved, we hope to see movement.

Iowa Administrative Code 111, Chapters 7 revisions recommendations have been submitted to the IDB Director, and Chapter 8 will be on the agenda for the next quarter.

# Vocational Rehabilitation – Keri Osterhaus

## VR Position Vacancies and Changes

* Dorothy Gerischer accepted the Secretary 1 position, supporting both the Vocational Rehabilitation and Business Enterprises Program. Dorothy has completed her initial training in our Orientation Center and is learning her new position.
* Pamela McCowen has resigned her position in eastern Iowa and we have begun the process to replace the position. In the meantime, our VR team will work to ensure clients continue to receive services.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Activities

* Client Outcomes: During the last quarter counselors successfully closed 13 VR cases in employment. Positions included accounting specialist, cashier, computer support specialists, two customer service representatives, two food service workers, DeafBlind specialist, editor, lawyer, office assistant, operations manager and a teacher. The average hourly wage for these individuals was $21.02 per hour with an average of 32.85 hours per week. Several individuals are currently in employment and counselors are working with them to ensure success in their positions. Counselors have also been working with high school students on work-based learning experiences throughout the summer to develop workplace readiness skills and to assist them in making future career choices.
* Business Services: We continue to provide services to employers across the state. During the summer, employer services were provided to employers such as the University of Iowa, Hy-Vee, Unity Point, United Way, Mediacom, Hilton Hotels, Popeye’s, Finley’s, and Wells Fargo. Services were in the areas of consultation, education, recruitment, accommodations and retention services.
* Training: VR counselors will be participating in training with Chaz Compton on Eligibility Determinations in September. Chaz is the project director at the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAV-QM) at Interwork Institute at San Diego State University.
* Partner Engagement: IDB staff continue to work within our workforce regions on the development of local plans as required by WIOA. In addition to this work, counselors are using this time to engage with their local partners, to learn more about the services and new programs available in their local areas and to develop ways to better serve their clients. In addition to the work with our workforce partners, IDB counselors will be engaging in the development of local school plans across the state. IVRS, IDOE (Dept of Education) and IDB partnered with field staff to develop a Local School Plan Implementation Guide and will be pushing out training on this topic this fall. The goal in developing local school plans is to enhance communication among partners and to ensure students in our local schools have access to the services, training and resources they need to be successful.