**Board Meeting Reports**

**September 20, 2022**

# Director's Report – Emily Wharton

In order to re-distribute workload and improve IDB's outreach efforts, two structural changes were made in August 2022. We have posted for and will hopefully soon fill the position of Chief Information Officer. This position will take on outreach and communications duties currently being covered by myself and members of the leadership team. Secondly, Access technology staff were moved from the Education and Training division to their own group supervised directly by me.

We are hoping to sign a contract for a new VR and IL case management system in the coming weeks. We are revitalizing our demo equipment and loaner pools. We are excited to be hosting a Technology Fair on October 15th that will be open to the public and feature vendors of access technology and IDB staff to help answer questions.

The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) Disability Access Committee (DAC) has been hosting listening sessions with members of local DACs from the local workforce areas to find ways to better support them in their work.  The IDB Library provided training to 35 workforce partner staff in accessibility and universal design in an online, self-paced training over the course of the summer.

Several IDB managers were asked to present to the ICUB state convention on August 26 and 27 and I presented to the NFBI convention on September 10th. I was honored to be invited to speak to the Mount Pleasant Evening Rotary on August 15th.

CFO – Cheri Myers

## Federal Grant Update:

Enclosed is the Grant Report as of 07/30/2022.

## Budget Report:

State FY22 budget report through 7/30/2022 and State FY23 through 7/30/2022 are enclosed in the packet. The report included report compares year to date to the annual budget based on state fiscal year. There is a brief explanation in column F on any item that appeared to be over budget to date. The Gifts and Bequests report is at the bottom of the FY23 Budget report.

We will start work on the SFY24 budget shortly.

## WorkDay Conversion:

The conversion to WorkDay has been moved back to May 2023. End to end testing has started and all of the accounting staff will assist in testing each area of WorkDay at least one procedure in each.

## State Fiscal Year End:

I am quite happy with my accounting staff as IDB’s accounts payable are in the best shape since I started. They have worked hard each month to clean up any old and outstanding invoices. We did end up reverting $21,952.02. This was due to the Department of Education paying invoices for May and June in August and the timing of needing to pay our outstanding bills. I fully expect to be able to recoup all the funds reverted based on some FY22 authorizations that we were unable to obtain the invoices for.

## Other:

* Patrick Bremhorst has joined the team as the new part time Accounting Clerk 2. Patrick previously worked with us on a temporary basis. His hours will increase to help handle the additional duties accounting has with the changed contract with the Department of Ed and WorkDay. We are quite happy to have him join the accounting team.
* Jenny Gries has been promoted to an Accounting Tech 3 position. Jenny has been a wonderful asset to the department and her computer skills and accounting knowledge is exceptional.
* Kelli Brennan has been promoted to the Accounting Tech 2 position. Kelli has been instrumental in keeping our accounts payable up to date and her organizational skills are extremely useful.

# Education and Training Team – Helen Mejia

## Personnel

* Jeffery Jasper began work as a Youth Services Worker August 19. He is a graduate of the Orientation Center and worked as one of this summer’s temporary LEAP staff members.
* We are still in the process of hiring two Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers, and an Independent Living Skills Coordinator for YATP.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services

* 17 students attended the 2022 LEAP program: this is more students than any previous year except 2019.
  + The program ran June 12 - August 13, 2022.
  + Students lived in apartments and attended classes at Grand View University.
  + Every Thursday, students participated in a STEM activity with the library and then went out to eat at a local restaurant.
  + Students had classes in blindness philosophy, braille, cane travel, career exploration, life skills, and technology.
  + Some of our community activities included rock climbing, camping, swimming at a local pool, visiting the downtown farmers’ market, and exploring the mall.
  + Four students attended the National Federation of the Blind convention in New Orleans.
  + August 13, we held our final day celebration where students prepared a meal for their families and celebrated their accomplishments.
* Our first weekend retreat is September 23-25. Currently twelve students are registered.
* Retreats will be held in September, October, December, January, February, and April.
* This year we are hoping to match the attendance we had prior to the pandemic. Historic data:
  + 2017-2018, 5 retreats, 13 unique participants, average 8 participants per retreat.
  + 2018-2019, 6 retreats, 25 unique participants, average 13 participants per retreat.
  + 2019-2020, 5 retreats: 30 unique participants, average 16 participants per retreat.
  + 2020-2021, No retreats
  + 2021-2022: 6 retreats: 19 unique participants, average 11 participants per retreat.

## Young Adult Transition Program

* The 2022-2023 school year began August 28 with six students, 3 male and 3 female. All three new students just finished twelfth grade in the spring.
* During the beginning of the year, we are particularly focusing on developing routines and Independent Living Skills IEP goals.

## Client Training

* Approximately 150 clients are currently receiving services from a Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher.
* 8 clients participated in the July self-week session.
* 10 clients are currently scheduled to attend the October session.
* Applications are still 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: 3,800. 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
* Approximate number of services provided without counting Rehabilitation Technology Specialists during program year 2021, 3,100. Note, this will be the number to compare for the coming year as Rehabilitation Technology Specialists will no longer be included.
  + Even without Rehabilitation Technology Specialists, more services were provided in program year 2021 than in any previous year.

# Independent Living Program - Kimberley Walford

## Independent Living (IL) Forum

This federal fiscal year, our agency’s Executive Director, IL teachers, and I met with our Independent Living Advisory Committee (ILAC) on a quarterly basis where agency and program updates were provided. This group of volunteers worked closely with our program to help advise us on various program matters and they also took information back to their respective community to share. They partnered with us to promote issues related to our agency and program. For the last several years, we have found that the composition of this committee was changing and finding new members to replace retiring members was challenging at best. In consultation with and under ILAC’s valued advisement, we decided to launch an IL public forum with the hopes of reaching a broader spectrum of the public and to receive greater feedback using the video conference channel as well as to turn the video into a recorded podcast version where the public could listen then call us afterwards to provide feedback. Our first live ZOOM broadcast was Wednesday, August 24, 2022, at 1 p.m. Our next IL Forum will be November 17 at 1 p.m. will be the next IL forum. The public and our constituents can subscribe through Govdelivery.com to be notified as to when we will be holding our meetings and how to connect via ZOOM.

## Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

SILC’s new Executive Director, Amy Robasse announced all Governor appointments. Kim Walford was reappointed as ex-officio to this Council. On October 5 and 6, SILC will be conducting general board training, then October 7 there will be committee meetings and policy discussions and updates. Members are required to attend and as ex-officio, the SILC Executive Director has requested I attend part and if possible, all sessions of these trainings and the meeting.

Every three years the Iowa SILC reaches out for input from people around the state who have disabilities. This feedback is used to develop the Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The SPIL lists the areas Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) that will focus their efforts and services on for the three next cycles. SILC has published a survey on their website that could take 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and it is anonymous. We are helping to share this with blind Iowans and others of interest asking they consider completing the survey. The link can be found here: <https://iowasilc.org/spil/public-input/>.

## Independent Living Brochures

There are two final copies of these brochures, and both are accessible. We will make both available online through our IDB website. We can also use these brochures as marketing tools when scheduling speaking engagements or other outreach activities.

## IL Integration

IL Integration, for those age of 55 or older, is confirmed and planned for Sunday, October 23 through Friday, October 28, 2022. ILR Teachers have completed their nomination cycle for candidates that wish to participate in session’s training cycle. Three candidates have confirmed their interest in participating through their respective IL teachers. One potential candidate is still consulting with their IL teacher to see if that date will work within their schedule. There will also be one confirmed mentor who will be participating. The mentor was a previous participant of the IL integration and successfully completed the entire week of training.

In addition, to partnering with the Iowa Blind Empowerment & Independent Center and their respective teachers to provide participants needed rehabilitation skills training, the IL program will be partnering with the Iowa Council of the United Blind (ICUB) Des Moines Chapter, and the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa (NFBI) Des Moines Chapter to coordinate social networking opportunities for participants. Our ILR Teacher assisting with the rehabilitation skills train portion and support this upcoming program session is Kelsi Hansen, Alyssa Munstermann and Monica Venesky. We look forward to collaborating with the clients and our partners.

## Iowa Council of the United Blind (ICUB)

This year, ICUB’s President, Carrie Chapman, sent and invitation to IL program directors requesting attendance to their convention to provide program updates. Accepting the invitation and based on the theme of their convention, I attended and provided convention members and guests with some IL history and current updates the evening of Friday, August 26, 2022. A follow-up email was sent to Ms. Chapman, sharing a couple of IL success stories given we did not have time to cover those stories during convention then requested her consideration to share these stories with ICUB members. A response was received from Ms. Chapman that the information was shared, and she also sent a kind note thanking us for participating and sharing program updates.

## Continued Education Training

In step with our IDB policy regarding IDB continued education, all instructors will be required to complete continuing education training every five years. They will attend the Iowa Blind Empowerment & Independent Center classes for up to one month until they are able to demonstrate the tasks as outlined within our agency’s policy while wearing learning shades. The instructor may test out of any class listed if they are able to complete the requirements without any additional training. Mark Edge will start his five-year continued education training the week of October 17, 2022.

White Cane Awareness DayEvery year on October 15 is White Cane Awareness Day. For blind people, the white cane is an essential tool that gives blind citizens the ability to achieve a full and independent life. It allows blind citizens to move freely and safely from place to place whether it's at work, at school, or around our neighborhoods. Anyone can encourage their local government to issue a White Cane Awareness Day Proclamation. As an interested citizen this is a great way to involve with local community and educate the public about the blind. White Cane Awareness Day Proclamations can be found on various websites. If you are unable to locate them, please feel free to reach out to our Resource Specialist, Marcella Edmonds at [marcella.edmonds@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:marcella.edmonds@blind.state.ia.us) or call 515-901-8621 and she will happily assist.

## Delta Gamma Volunteer

In March, you received my report indicating that Drake University’s Delta Gamma sorority planned to help our Independent Living program by conducting a fundraising project. The goal was to raise $3,000.00 and if achieved, they planned to donate half of the proceeds to the Independent Living program. In a recent follow-up email message, the sorority’s president has now indicated that since the Iowa Department for the Blind nor its foundation is not a 501(C)3, their organization is unable to allocate charitable funds to our agency. The sorority had supplied all the information to Drake’s executive offices who in turn denied the sorority’s request to donate funds citing we are not a non-profit organization. She sent her regrets that they are unable to assist our agency financially; however, if their sorority can help in other ways, other than monetarily, as they are interested.

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

## Library Updates

The library held the Iowa Regional Braille Challenge on Saturday, February 26th at the Iowa Department for the Blind. Eight students and their families attended. The library offered two summer online courses One for paraeducators, associates and educators focusing on Accessible Educational Materials or AEM and Braille. And a second course for Workforce staff called Accessibility 101 for Iowa’s Workforce System. Each online course was an eight-week self-paced course where participants were provided resources and practical assignments to give them knowledge and skills related to AEM and accessibility. The library staff facilitated each course providing information, feedback, and resources. There were 36 participants for the Accessibility 101 for Iowa’s Workforce System course and 24 participants for the Accessible Educational Materials or AEM and Braille course.

The library’s Summer Reading Programs had record numbers this year. The Ready, Set, Adventure! Summer Reading Program for all ages was held three times per week via Zoom with participating families receiving activity kits before each week to go along with the programs. Twenty-seven virtual programs were held in June and July with 24 registered and 166 virtual program visits. Each Thursday, library staff met with the LEAP students for STEM experiences. Programs focused on physical science, engineering, coding, and guest speakers. Denise Bean, Youth Services Librarian, also took programming out to communities and public libraries with the *When Storytime Comes to You* program which focused on braille through stories and hands-on activities. She visited 7 libraries and had 136 attend the programs.

The library is completing the implementation of new Instructional Material Center (IMC) production tracking software called Athena. It is a cloud-based platform designed to simplify the process of placing and handling orders, managing inventory, and tracking the production of books to meet student needs. The IMC Team is currently doing final testing and data migration. The new system is scheduled to be available to school districts in early October. The IMC Team is also currently working with school districts through the changes implemented by the Iowa Department of Education requiring the school districts be billed directly for accessible educational materials. A memorandum of understanding between the school districts and IDB has been developed and information on cost assistance is being shared.

The IMC Team has implemented weekly office hours to assist in answering school district and educator questions about accessible educational materials (AEM), as well as monthly webinars focusing on AEM.

In July the Library had a booth at STEAM on the Ridge, a STEAM Festival for children grades K-8 in the Oakridge neighborhood. Library staff provided hands-on Braille activities for the kids. Library staff also attended the Downtown Des Moines Farmer’s Market in August as part of their Saturday Spotlight for non-profits. Staff shared information about IDB, the library, programs, services, and braille. Staff also had a booth at the annual School Administrators of Iowa conference held in Des Moines sharing information about IDB, the library, the Instructional Materials Center, and the changes to procurement of accessible educational materials.

## Upcoming Programs

The Library will be hosting program this fall:

* Afterschool Program, *Crafting Your Story*, each Tuesday afternoon at 4:15pm on Zoom. Each month there will be a new theme and families who register will receive a program supply kit in via mail.
* Makerspace Mondays will begin in September on the second Monday of the month at 6:00pm in-person at IDB or participants can receive the activity kit and video to do the projects at home.
* IDB Virtual Book Festival on Saturday, September 24th from 10:00am – 12:30pm. Join us on zoom as we celebrate all things books and reading. Author Reid Forgrave will join us to discuss his book *Love, Zac* which will be followed by sessions on different book and reading topics.

## 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 us on Twitter, like us on Facebook and check out the great resources on the IDB YouTube channel

**Library Statistics**

For June 2022, July 2022, and August 2022

Library Patrons Added: 102

Library Material Circulation

Total Circulation: 87,570

Braille: 964

Large Print: 246

Digital Books: 83,960

Magazine Issues: 2,237

Digital Players: 163

Library Collection

Total Books Added to the Library Collection: 2,765

Braille: 741

Print/Braille: 69

Large Print: 87

Digital Books: 1,866

Instructional Materials Center Orders Received

Total Orders Received: 218

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) Usage

Total Books Downloaded from BARD: 10,147

Audio: 8,593

Braille: 1,554

Average Number of Patrons Using BARD: 590

Newsline Service Usage

Current Subscribers: 1,750

New Subscribers: 7

Telephone Calls: 7,496

Web Sessions: 18,784

“In Your Pocket” Deliveries: 28,374

E-mail Deliveries: 10,003

Iowa Newspaper Accesses: 79,691

National Newspaper Accesses: 4,997

International Newspaper Accesses: 396

Blog Usage

Library – Turning the Pages Blog

Visitors: 851

Views: 2,117

Instructional Materials Center Blog

Visitors: 449

Views: 1,558

Library Podcasts

Library News Monthly Podcast: 3 produced

Listens Online: 227

Sent Out on Cartridges: 1,711

Library Chat Podcast: 3 produced

Listens Online: 203

Braille Bits Podcast:

Listens Online: 396

Programming Statistics

Adult Programs Held: 4

Adult Program Attendance: 19

Youth Programs Held: 34

Youth Program Attendance: 437

Outreach Programs Held: 17

Outreach Program Attendance: 536

Total Programs Held: 55

Total Program Attendance: 992

# Orientation Center Report – Karly Prinds

## Orientation Center Students

The Center currently has 7 students. We had a student graduation on August 19th, and she is now employed fulltime in the Des Moines school district in the Nutrition Department. Three former students that have graduated in the last year are employed fulltime as well.

We have had some fun activities in the last couple of months. On July 20th we all traveled to the Art Center to take a tour, and then had lunch at a nearby restaurant.

On July 26th, Center and Self Week students had dinner together. There was a lot of great conversation and camaraderie. Two of the Self Week students from July are starting Center training this month, and we are happy to have them!

On August 5th we all traveled to Dubuque to have lunch and go zip lining. Of course, we could not miss the fair, so on August 11th students and their Travel instructor went to the fair and made a day of it!

We have three upcoming graduations, one in September and two in October. Maddie Mardesen has completed her Center training and is now learning and carrying out her job as Generalist.

# Vocational Rehabilitation – Keri Osterhaus

## Position Vacancies and Changes

* Anna Reilly is the VR counselor for East Central Iowa, serving vocational rehabilitation clients in Benton, Linn, and Jones counties.
* Ambrose Fowler-Harney completed training in the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center. Ambrose is the VR counselor for North Central Iowa. He is now serving clients in Story, Boone, Hamilton, Webster, Calhoun, Wright, Humboldt, Pocahontas, and Polk counties.
* Carrie Wadding completed training in the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center. Carrie has recently begun field training in her role as BEP counselor. She will be traveling Iowa over the next three months to learn from licensed vendors and begin in her position.
* Matt Nemmers accepted the BEP Executive Officer position and took over in this role on July 8, 2022. In addition to passion for the BEP program, Matt brings knowledge and experiences in teaching, managing businesses, entrepreneurship, counseling and more into this role. We are excited to have him in this position and are working to fill his former role as BEP counselor.
* We reposted the Employment Supports Specialist position due to lack of qualified applicants.

# VR Program Updates

At the end of the last program year, IDB successfully closed 39 VR cases in competitive and integrated employment. These individuals worked an average of 30.9 hours per week and earned an average of $16.45/hour. Since June 1, 2022, individuals closed in the following positions: team assembler, store manager, software engineer, social worker, vending facility operator, laborer, housekeeper, helper-production worker, food preparation worker, customer service representatives, dishwasher, certified nursing assistant and childcare worker. There are currently 19 individuals working in positions that meets their employment goals.

In July, IDB partnered with Dale Carnegie to provide the Generation. Next program to blind students eligible for pre-employment transition services. Ten students participated in this program using a virtual classroom where they learned skills related to self-advocacy and workplace readiness. Student comments included themes around gaining a different perspective, developing communication skills, growing in their relationships, gaining skills to help reduce stress, learning ways to support others and being more confident to meet and learn about other people. We are working with Dale Carnegie to identify future opportunities for collaboration.

We have implemented the use of virtualjobshadow.com to provide students additional resources in exploring career choices. We are in the beginning stages of using this program and working to learn more about all of the tools available. We are excited about the opportunity students will have to explore careers, employment, schools, and scholarship opportunities as well as develop soft skills all in one program and look forward to seeing the outcomes of this program.

This summer, IDB counselors partnered with the University of Northern Iowa and Grandview University for a College Day event and tour. Students had opportunities to learn the campuses, were given overviews of the schools, majors and minors, dorm life, meal plans opportunities for clubs and support services. Current and recent college students also participated and shared about their experiences in college.

With the beginning of a new school year, means it is time to gear up for IEP meetings and partnering with schools and providers to develop local school plans as we continue to develop and strengthen partnerships to benefit students who are blind. We are working with IVRS to update our current MOU to ensure that blind students are being referred at an early age and we are developing guidance for educators regarding IDB services.

VR counselors and other key IDB staff are partnering with our workforce partners across the state to conduct the One-Stop Certification self-assessments and evaluations. This is a required activity, and we are looking forward to the process and outcomes benefiting blind Iowans in reaching successful employment.

As we prepare for National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, we are partnering in the workforce regions to provide a variety of public events. These events are ranging from informational presentations, sharing of success stories, and hosting reverse job fairs.

Over the past program year, we had several open positions on our VR counseling team. Many counselors managed extra caseloads and territories to ensure clients continued to receive services and progress toward their education and employment goals. We are excited to now have Anna and Ambrose in the field and that we are now fully staffed with 10 counselors. We look forward to this new program year and client successes.

## BEP Update

In State Fiscal Year 2022, the average BEP manager net income was reported at $49,314.28.  This is a significant improvement of more than 76% over last year’s average net income of $27,974.00.

Over the summer our BEP team has been working with BEP managers to improve current business practices, increase acceptance of cashless payments across the program, and identify ways to improve customer experiences. BEP and our BEP managers have experienced supply chain issues and are working together to identify solutions.  We continue to explore and develop new vending locations, upgrade current sites to micro markets, and monitor success in established locations. Our BEP team has replaced several old machines and is developing a strategy to continue that process which will, in turn, assist our BEP managers to reduce repair costs while improving the perception of the Program and vendors by offering modern, reliable, and appropriate equipment.

We have one upgraded rest area in Western Iowa as well as a new location in Des Moines opening this fall.  We are also reviewing opportunities to add new locations, including a federal agency campus in Central Iowa and another federal building in Iowa City.

BEP and the Elected Committee of Blind Vendors are partnering on the development of a comprehensive quality training curriculum for new vendors, the identification of training needs for current vendors with the inclusion of peer education, the review and updating of policies, the schedule for our upcoming statewide meeting, the planning of a regional conference for BEP professionals to be held in the spring, as well as the development of recruiting strategies for bringing new trainees into the program.