The WhiteCane
The magazine of the Iowa Department for the Blind

Lifelong Learning

From school age to the Golden Years, Iowans with vision loss continue their quest for education

INSIDE:

Molding medical minds

Seniors get the basics in weeklong training

Samsung Haven, a no-frills option for cell phones

State of Iowa to hire more blind employees

Preparing our students for success

Braille student becomes the teacher

Volume I, Issue 4 • Fall 2010

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|from the editor

It's easy to get caught up in the back-to-school excitement.

At the Department, our library staff is working diligently to get textbooks and other materials to students who can't read standard print in time for classes.

It is also a time to take in the educational opportunities around us happening at every moment. Whether it's mastering a new set of letters in Braille, tackling that new software program or figuring out how to deal with a new person, we are constantly reminded of our ability to be lifelong learners.

This issue of *The White Cane* is dedicated to that purpose, and we highlight a few of our programs and associates involved in the processes of learning. Our columnist, Linda Slayton, has a delightful piece on noticing our growth potential. It serves as a reminder to embrace opportunities.

— Shoshana Hebshi

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|from the director

It's been an amazing summer. A cascade of staff changes resulted from the early retirement program that concluded at the end of June. We hosted a dynamic and successful series of transition programs for youth, and carried on with the activities and services that result in jobs and independence for blind or visually impaired Iowans.

We have received a group of grants to carry out an oral history and document-collection project. See the related item on participating on page 5. Our building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places for Statewide Significance this summer, and with grant support, we're hoping to amend that to national significance.

For the past two years we've been concentrating on public education and outreach. The result to date is positive, with a 17 percent increase in referrals over two years ago.

We would like to develop closer relationships with eye care professionals as part of this effort. To that end, in July, we sponsored two focus groups with optometrists and ophthalmologists to discover better ways of coordinating our services with theirs.

I found it very informative as the participants were candid in their discussions about their perceptions of the Department's philosophy and services.

I believe IDB's goals and the goals of all participants in the focus groups are essentially the same. We all want to maximize the independence of all blind and visually impaired Iowans. We want each person to have the ability and the confidence to live up to their full potential as a human being regardless of their vision loss.

Successfully compensating for reduced vision in our vision-centric world requires each person to develop a complex set of tools and techniques, along with a high level of self-confidence and a solid network of support. We each have our areas of expertise and our roles to play, and only by combining the best from everyone can we truly help Iowans who are visually impaired reach their maximum potential at work, at home and in the community.

I'm looking forward to the beginning of a healthy and productive dialog that will benefit all the people we serve.

Sincerely,

Karen Keninger

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Opportunities for Independence

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Molding Medical Minds

IDB offers opportunity for osteopathic medical students to learn more about blindness

Medicine and rehabilitation are not always seen to go hand in hand. Beginning this fall, however, the Iowa Department for the Blind and Des Moines University (DMU) are launching a new program to make medical students more familiar with the rehabilitative services offered through the Department.

DMU osteopathic medical students will begin rotating through the Department for two-week stints that will expose the future physicians to a new population and a new perspective on blindness. They will also become familiar with the many services available to Iowans with significant vision loss.

"Physicians tend to not know what they do not know," said Dr. Dana Shaffer, associate dean of clinical affairs at DMU.

"This is an opportunity to have these students learn something other than the standard medical curriculum."

During their time at the Department, students will spend at least a week going through the Orientation Center, taking all the classes regular students take each day. They will be wearing sleep shades so they can experience first hand that a person can function successfully without vision.

"The only way to really gain an understanding and appreciation of what we do at the Department is to go through the program as all of our students do," said Orientation Center Director Sandy Tigges, who will oversee the DMU students. "The methods we use to teach our students non-visual techniques are proven effective over the past 50 years. Students learn new ways of living with vision loss and gain confidence in those skills and in themselves."

The DMU students are required to spend their third and fourth years rotating through medical clinics and hospitals gaining experience in a variety of settings. At IDB, they will be getting a different perspective on disabilities, Tigges added.

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Normally, a medical student would see patients, supervised by an attending physician. Rotating through IDB will provide the students with a view into the lives of patients outside the medical setting.

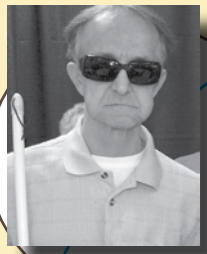
"All of our students have seen a doctor—especially eye doctors," Tigges said. "And sometimes they are not seen as people who are independent and can think for themselves. We hope to instill a positive attitude toward blindness in the DMU students who pass through. We hope they come out understanding that through specialized rehabilitative training, a person with significant vision loss can lead the kind of life any sighted person would lead."

DES MOINES UNIVERSITY

The students will travel with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and Independent Living teachers as they meet with clients in their workplaces and homes. A day will also be spent learning about Library services for the blind and physically handicapped.

Once a student's two weeks are up, said Tigges, he or she will have a well-rounded understanding of services available at the Department, which they will then be able to pass along to their future patients.

"This is an exciting opportunity," she added, "and we hope it helps create a broader base of knowledge for a new generation of doctors heading into the working world." ◆



Have a story to tell?

The Iowa Department for the Blind is embarking on an oral history project to document experiences and memories of blind Iowans.

We want to hear about your work life, home life, community activities and more. Any length and topic is acceptable.

You can submit stories by e-mail to: **Shan.Sasser@blind.state.ia.us**
or by postal mail in print or Braille to: **Oral History Project, Iowa Department for the Blind, 524 Fourth Street, Des Moines, IA 50309**
or record to a voice mail box at: **877-742-4938**
Please provide name, address & phone number with your story.

This project is supported in part by the State Historical Society of Iowa, Historical Resource Development Program and the Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Stories submitted will become property of the Iowa Department for the Blind and made part of a "History of Blindness" collection.

More information is available online at:
www.IDBonline.org/oral-history

Talking Tech
w/ Curtis Chong

THE SAMSUNG HAVEN

Those of us interested in fully accessible cell phones for the blind or visually impaired have been frustrated by the lack of full nonvisual access in commercially available low-end cell phones.

Enter the Samsung Haven. This phone, released by Verizon in late July, is neither a smart phone nor a personal digital assistant. You can't take a picture with it, you can't send e-mail with it, and you can't browse the Web with it. Simply put, the Samsung Haven is just a phone.

What makes the Haven interesting is that this phone can be used with little or no vision. Once speech output has been turned on (a simple procedure for someone who knows how to do it), all of the menus will talk to you. You can hear what you enter on the phone's keypad, and you can hear who is calling you. You can also send and read text messages without help from a sighted person.

There are two important points to keep in mind regarding this new and exciting phone: First, the literature makes no mention of its ability to talk. Second, no one in the Verizon stores seems to know how to activate the phone's speech.

If you are interested in this phone and want to score a few points with the Verizon sales staff, here is how to activate speech output:

1. After turning on the phone, press the Menu key.
2. Press number 6 on the keypad to enter the Settings Menu.
3. Press number 1 to enter the Sounds Menu.
4. Press number 5 to enter the Voice Commands Menu.
5. Press number 6 to enter the Full Readout Menu.
6. Press the Up-Arrow key to select On and press the OK button. After about a two-second pause, you should hear speech.
7. Press the Clear key four times to move out of these menus and back to the home screen.

As a final note, you should know it is best if you purchase the Haven with an extended-life battery. Experience has shown that speech output drains the phone's normal battery rather quickly. ◆

Curtis Chong is oversees IDB's field operations and technology departments. He contributes to IDB's assistive technology blog at http://blind-technology.wordpress.com. You can reach him at curtis.chong@blind.state.ia.us

Laura Ingalls Wilder comes to life in Des Moines with Utoff

Laura Ingalls Wilder, beloved author of the *Little House on the Prairie* series, is well known to readers of all ages.

The 2010 Iowa Author Reads program, sponsored by the Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind, the Iowa Humanities Board and the Animal Rescue League of Iowa, will give you the opportunity to hear Laura and her stories (almost) in the flesh!

Wilder expert Sarah Uthoff of Cedar Rapids will appear in costume as Laura, presenting "Stories from Pa's Big Green Animal Book." The interactive program is suitable for all ages.

Come early or stay late (1 to 5 p.m.) to meet some of the ARL's adoptable pets. The program is free and open to the public. Donations, which will be split between the Friends and the ARL, will be gladly accepted. ◆

IOWA AUTHOR READS

2 to 4 p.m.
Sunday, Oct.17,
Animal Rescue
League of Iowa
Auditorium
5452 NE 22nd St. Des Moines

Seniors find ways around vision limitations

By Shoshana Hebshi
Editor

Dave Bartels was a little apprehensive when he was approached with the idea of spending a week at the Iowa Department for the Blind learning alternative ways of doing things without using his vision. Once he got through that week, though, he was a changed man.

The 62-year-old Onawa resident said his week at Senior Orientation gave him the confidence he needed so that if he loses more of his vision to macular degeneration he knows he will continue to live a full life the way he wants.

"There's things you can work around, there's another way," he said. "The whole experience helped me see things in a different perspective, and that made me feel really good. I know that if my eyes get worse than what they are, I think I can cope with it to a point that you can live with it like everybody else does."

Bartels was one of six seniors who participated in the weeklong program in June at the Department's headquarters in downtown Des Moines. Each year, the Independent Living program (IL) puts on two sessions, once in the spring and once in the summer. And each year, there are several more senior Iowans out there who feel the same as Bartels.

IL teacher Lance Blas (left) helps Dave Bartels make a cutting board in the IDB woodshop as part of senior orientation in June.

"If the person is motivated to learn new techniques, if they have hit the wall and realized their vision loss is limiting them and are motivated to find a way around those limitations, then they will do well in senior orientation," said Becky Criswell, program administrator for the Independent Living program.

IL teachers nominate clients, and then the IL staff meets as a group to determine the best candidates for a senior orientation class. Criswell said a participant must be in relatively good health to participate because the training is intensive, and students are required to be active for eight to 10 hours a day. "Sometimes that rules people out who don't have the stamina," she said.

During senior orientation, participants take a variety of classes to learn specific skills. In Braille, they learn the basics of the alphabet code and discover that Braille can be an easy and practical way to stay organized in their homes by labeling items, keeping track of phone numbers, addresses and recipes, taking notes and creating shopping

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lists.

In the cane travel class, participants learn to use a long white cane to navigate stairs, cross streets and walk around the block. Embarrassment about using a cane begins to disappear and is replaced by a greater sense of confidence and security.

The home management class teaches techniques for daily living.

Students have a choice of taking a craft class or an industrial arts class. Participants in the crafts class will embark on small projects, like creating a yarn doll or a wreath. In industrial arts, students will make measurements by hand and cut wood with electric saws and create a small item, such as a cutting board or knife block.

In home economics, students learn to prepare meals. They chop, cook and serve food—and, of course eat it when they're done.

Perhaps the most important class of the week is the business of blindness, where students and a few facilitators discuss issues related to blindness. This class creates a non-threatening environment for students to discuss any fears or accomplishments they want to share with the group.

Throughout their week, students go through the classes wearing sleep shades to eliminate any residual vision they have. The function of the sleep shades is to remove the distraction of using vision so the students can adequately learn the non-visual techniques.

"When vision becomes so poor that it inhibits a person's ability to perform simple tasks like pouring a cup of coffee or walking down the stairs, it's time to learn another way of doing things," said Criswell. "And the best way to do that is through sleep-shaded training. Through this method, they discover they have options. When they leave senior orientation and the sleep shades come off, they will use whatever vision they have for certain things, and where vision isn't working for them, they will use the non-visual techniques they have learned that are safe and effective."

It might be scary at first, Bartels said, but any apprehension will be eased once the student begins to learn the new skills and come to terms with vision loss.

"It will be a whole new thing to you, but you have to experience it to see the difference it will make in your life," he said.

The glue that holds senior orientation together is the Independent Living staff. Each student receives individualized attention and assistance throughout the week. "We understand that everyone coming in to the week will have a different skill level and will be on a different timeline in accepting their blindness," said Criswell. "Our teachers are great at bringing the best out in our students and helping to enable success."

"It's not a job to them," said Bartels. "That kind of thing comes from the heart. It's caring. To help you achieve something you've never done before."

One of those things for Bartels was working in the wood shop during industrial arts class and making a cutting board using none of his remaining vision.

Now, several months after spending his week in senior orientation, Bartels is continuing to work on learning Braille. He is up to the letter "K," and is using his cane to safely get around. He said he might even ask his IL teacher, Dawn Kruse, if he can come back for another week.

"It's not going to be easy," he said. "The acceptance that there is another way to do something and you can go on with your life, doing the things you do every day. Senior orientation just made me see the fact that there's another way to do things if it does get that bad. It's better than giving up."

For more information on senior orientation or other independent living services, call (800) 362-2587 or e-mail barb.weigel@blind.state.ia.us ◆

State initiative to bring in more jobs for disabled

By Shoshana Hebshi
Editor

In the 1980s, when Ray Walton worked for Rep. Tom Harkin, now a U.S. senator for Iowa, he accompanied the congressman to a talk at the School for the Deaf. Harkin, whose brother was deaf, signed the first half of his speech. His sign language was a little rusty, but Harkin's gesture made an impression on the young staffer and Indianola native. At that moment, Walton understood how unfairly and overlooked the disabled population in America was.

Nearly 30 years later, Walton is director for the state's Department of Administrative Services and finds himself in a position to help.

"I just want people to be treated fairly," he said. "I just want them to have a fair chance."

In July, Americans across the country celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As part of that celebration, President Obama signed an executive order to hire 100,000 disabled workers into the federal government. While that initiative may be a boon for workers, Iowa is already ahead of the game.

Gov. Chet Culver issued Executive Order 4 shortly after he took office in 2007, directing state government to promote a diverse workforce that includes hiring people with disabilities. Walton has taken that direction to heart.

Department of Administrative Services Director Ray Walton has a personal interest in bringing more disabled Iowans to work in state government.

After the state's early retirement program went into effect in June, the state lost about 2,000 workers and plans to fill about 1,000 of those positions. Walton, whose department oversees a portion of the hiring process for most of the state's 34 agencies in the executive branch, is determined to fill about 10 percent of those jobs with non-traditional employees. Some of those, he hopes, will be blind.

Walton and his staff are working with the Iowa Department for the Blind to find qualified candidates to fill some of those positions.

"There's a dignity in work, and it matters to everybody," he said. "If you're prevented from getting a job, it's just so terribly unfair."

Walton's youngest son, Jay, is legally blind. Jay completed the intensive training program at IDB's orientation center and is now more confident and works for VISTA AmeriCorps. Seeing Jay's experience with IDB, plus working with IDB Director Karen Keninger and Employment Specialist Brenda Criswell, and knowing that the IDB will provide job training, coaching and other support, Walton says he is confident in placing blind workers into state jobs.

And the state, he said, will get quality employees. Walton listed statistics showing that disabled employees are dedicated, loyal and hard-working employees, and

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he said, "At my core, I believe those things are true."

He knows of one blind employee at DAS who works in mail services and has been a successful employee. "Our experience has been really good," said Walton.

"Ray is a champion of ours," said IDB's Keninger. "State jobs are good, solid jobs. I really appreciate his initiative."

IDB's Criswell said the state can be a prime example of an employer taking the initiative to be inclusive and hire people with disabilities. "We have many qualified applicants that, if given the opportunity, could be excellent, long-term workers for the state," she said.

"We are doing what we always said we'd wanted to do, and we are putting it into practice because of Ray Walton's commitment and belief that people with disabilities can compete for those types of jobs."

State departments have already begun the process of filling vacated positions, and Walton says that blind workers and others with disabilities will get a "fair shake" in the application process. "We will make adaptations to accommodate people here," he said. "We will be reasonable. We won't hire blind people to be a surgeon or a pilot, but there are lots of jobs blind people can do."◆

IRIS radio honors IDB's Trogdon for her service

Linda Trogdon, field operations secretary for IDB, was given an award in August from the Iowa Radio Reading Information Service (IRIS) for her work keeping inventory of the many radios stored at the Department.

The radios go out to Iowans who receive IRIS broadcasts throughout the state. When an IDB counselor or teacher signs up a client for IRIS service, Trogdon is the one to mail out a radio to that client and keeps track of the many radios stored at the IDB. ◆

Meet new VR supervisor Megen Johnson

By Betty Hansen
Contributing Writer
VR Deaf-Blind Specialist

Megen Johnson assumed the duties of Vocational Rehabilitation supervisor on May 28.

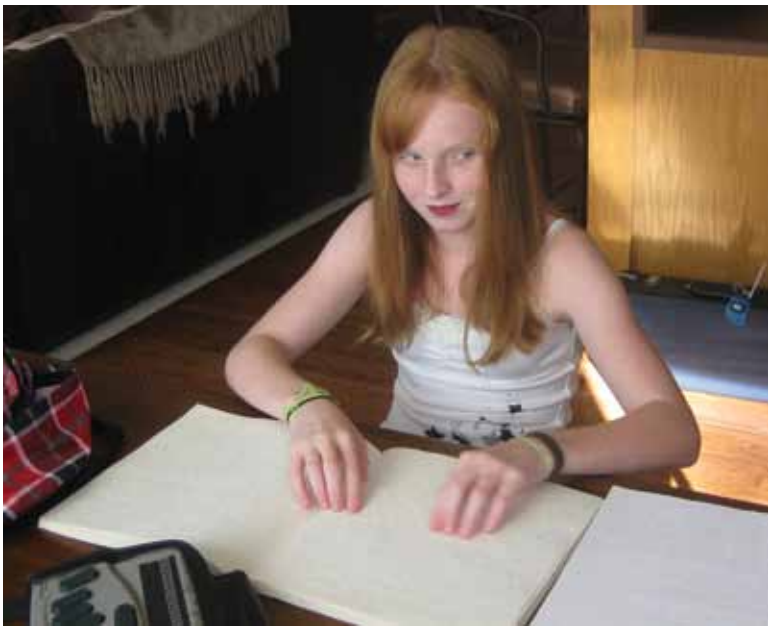
Johnson first started at the Department in February 1999 as a Rehabilitation Counselor. In May 2002, she took the position of Transition Specialist and held that position for six years. She left the Department for a little more than a year to serve as the Transition Family Service Specialist at the Iowa Braille and Sight-Saving School in Vinton. In August 2009, she returned to the IDB to serve as the agency's Transition Work Experience Specialist, and nine months later she was chosen as VR supervisor.

Johnson will be overseeing the management of VR cases, mediating relations between VR clients and the IDB and keeping staff abreast of the state and federal laws and regulations that govern our program.

Johnson recognizes that our counselors and specialists have "a wealth of knowledge and experiences" and that they "take great pride in serving Iowans who are blind." She believes in the positive philosophy of the Department and acknowledges the weight of responsibility she has in ensuring that blind Iowans have access to the resources they need to maintain their current jobs or to obtain the opportunity to join the workforce. ◆

Non-traditional students thankful to IMC

By Beth Hirst
Contributing Writer



Sixth-grader Lauren Thomson does her homework in Braille, her preferred method of alternative media, which she gets from her IMC librarian at the Department./ Photo by Carrie Thomson.

As Lauren Thomson entered the school building using her long white cane on the first day of school, she thought about how great this year would be. Sixth grade—he last year at Earlham Elementary School! She knew her way around, was familiar with the teachers and other kids, and was especially looking forward to learning more about her favorite subjects, math and science.

Thomson had some great news to share with her teacher and classmates. Over the summer, she went to Los Angeles to compete in the National Braille Challenge, and she placed third in her division among kids from all over the country.

Thomson recalled her experience: "The most exciting part of the Braille Challenge is the awards ceremony. That is when we find out our scores, and it's very nerve-wracking! The whole weekend is a lot of fun though. I really like meeting new friends. The welcoming ceremony on Friday is fun, and marching in and being introduced to the audience Saturday morning is really cool."

Thomson has excelled in school because of the support she has received from her parents, her teachers and school staff, and her Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI). However, all of their encouragement and expertise might have gone for naught if Lauren had no textbooks in a format she could use. This is where the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has come to her aid.

The Instructional Materials Center (IMC) at the Library serves print-disabled students from pre-Kindergarten to college and beyond. Each school year, IMC librarians receive requests for textbooks and other educational materials in alternative format, such as Braille, audio or large print. The librarians search across the country to locate titles in the students' chosen formats.

If a given title is not available anywhere, the librarian initiates the process of producing the book in house or through a contractor.

"The IMC at the Department for the Blind has really helped me in school," Thomson said. "They have provided materials and books for me that my school didn't have or my teachers couldn't produce."

Carol Eckey has been Thomson's IMC librarian since the 12-year-old started Kindergarten. "Lauren is involved in so many activities, both in and outside of school," Eckey said. "The whole Thomson family is enthusiastic about everything she does, from sports to science camp to playing trumpet in the band. Lauren has also participated in the Library's Summer Reading Club. This year she completed the entire *Harry Potter* series,

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Dorothy Bryant: A witness to history

By Lance Blas
Special to the White Cane

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dorothy Bryant was among the first Libary employees and recalled fond memories of her time there./Photo by Courtney Townsend.

The first time that I met Dorothy Bryant, I knew I was in the presence of a trail blazer. When Dorothy told me she does tai chi each morning, I knew right away that talking to her was going to be one of those special experiences you remember throughout the rest of your life. I should mention that she was 106 years old at the time.

Dorothy, who passed away July 24, was a witness to history in Iowa and at the Iowa Department for the Blind. As one of the Iowa Library for the Blind's first employees, she worked alongside Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, whose radical vision shaped the Library and the new incarnation of the Department.

In the Library, Dorothy worked as an assistant librarian. She remembers the early days at the Department, before Jernigan transformed it into the leading agency for the blind in the country.

"Before Mr. Jernigan came to Des Moines in 1958, Iowa had no library for the blind, so the talking books had to come from Illinois and they were not very satisfactory.

"The very first thing after buying the building that Mr. Jernigan wanted to do was to set up a library in Iowa."

As the result of countless hours of hard work, that ambitious dream became a reality in 1960. The Library of Congress designated the Commission for the Blind as one of its official libraries for Braille books and talking book records. Dorothy recalls: "In July of that year the first talking book record was mailed out. The talking books at the time were 78 rpm records, and the players were portable record players. The Braille books arrived to the library by the semi-truck loads. Magazines were first offered to patrons in August of that same year and 1,000 items of reading material were sent out and received each week."

Dorothy was hired to take on the challenge of running the library, while the permanent librarian, Florence Grannis, took care of educational commitments in Seattle. Dorothy oversaw the operation of the library for three months.

She recalls meeting with Grannis on the first day of work. "At that time, Mrs. Grannis told me that we are here to work and there is not to be a social atmosphere here. That sounded all right to me. In Mr. Jernigan's library, things were all

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business, and we addressed one another as 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' Those first days we worked night and day to get everything just right."

There were four staff members in the library. "I was in charge of the talking book records, Carolyn Shuemann typed correspondence letters to patrons, and two gentlemen were in charge of Braille books."

Grannis returned from Seattle in September, and at that time, she and Dorothy went out for dinner to discuss how things in the library were going. "We talked about each other's families and formed a great friendship that lasted throughout the years, right up until the day that Florence passed away."

Dorothy was very proud of the strong friendships she formed at the Iowa Department for the Blind.

She also became a patron of the Library after her vision worsened. She signed up for services and started receiving talking books in 1992.

"The blind people that I worked with and served at the commission were wonderful examples to me. When my vision started to deteriorate, I knew that it was possible to do everything that I always had. I was able to stay in my home and do most everything for myself all the way until I was 103."

Dorothy said the talking books were good company and a way to keep in touch with what is going on in the world. The National Library Service honored Dorothy in 2004 with a Four Square Certificate for patrons who are 100 years old.

According to Dorothy: "Education was the most important thing to Mr. Jernigan. He wanted the Library for the Blind to be equal to or better than the community library and provide the same opportunities for the blind patrons. He was pleased with the results."

We all benefit from the work of trail blazers like Dorothy Bryant. Her spirit is one that should be celebrated and honored as we recognize the 50th anniversary of our library. ◆

Lance Blas is an independent living teacher at the IDB. He visited with Dorothy Bryant in late May, just before her death. An audio interview with her is available at www.idbonline.org

From the librarian

Back-to-school time is here, bringing new teachers, new classmates and new textbooks to students throughout the state. And for an increasing number of students, those textbooks are in alternative formats: Braille, audio, large print or e-text. Through our Instructional Materials Center, requests for accessible textbooks for the 500 Iowa students who use the service has increased by 41 percent in the past five years. This is good news: more Iowa students are receiving the books they need than ever before.

Actually, readers of all ages are finding increased access to books in alternative formats. In August, Iowans downloaded 2,191 digital talking books from the National Library Service's BARD website, a number that we expect will continue to grow. And patrons are discovering that books from other sources can be played on the NLS player as well.

Of course, the great service provided by the Library is more than just digital talking books, and this fall we plan to celebrate *all* aspects of our service at an open house on Nov. 5 from 1 to 5 p.m. The Library reached a milestone this year, and we'd like the world to know that we're Fabulous at 50! I hope you can join us!

Happy reading,

Tracey Morsek

Booklist

Reading opens the door to learning no matter what your age, and these recent recordings by volunteer narrators offer patrons an opportunity to explore topics ranging from the Lincoln White House to Hawkeye football. All the following titles are available in digital format. If you would like to borrow a digital talking book player, contact the Library.

DB015007
***Mary* by Janis C. Newman**

Mary Todd Lincoln is one of history's most misunderstood and enigmatic women. The first president's wife to be called First Lady, she was a political strategist, a supporter of emancipation, and a mother who survived the loss of three children and the assassination of her beloved husband. Yet she also ran her family into debt, held seances in the White House, and was committed to an insane asylum.

This fictional autobiography is presented as notes composed by Mary Todd Lincoln when she was at the insane asylum. The Library has prepared a reading group discussion guide for use with this book. 2007. Narrated by Sue Smith.

DB015017
***Light From Lucas* by Robert Vander Plaats**

Provides insights into parenting, marriage, spiritual growth, the nature of suffering, the character of God, and the value of every life. These insights are shared in the context of the author's many stories about Lucas, the third of his four sons, who was born severely disabled with lissencephaly. 2007. Narrated by Robert White.

DB015033
***Growing Up Country: Memories of an Iowa Farm Girl* by Carol Bodensteiner**

Memoirs of a happy childhood on an Iowa farm in the 1950s. 2008. Narrated by Carol Bodensteiner.

DB015040
***Playing with the Enemy: a Baseball Prodigy, a World at War, and the Long Journey Home* by Gary W. Moore**

Gene Moore was a country boy who could hit a baseball a country mile. He was so good that the Brooklyn Dodgers came calling. When Gene's baseball career was interrupted by World War II, he joined the U.S. Navy, and in 1944, he found himself on a top-secret mission: to guard the German sailors captured from a U-505 submarine carrying an Enigma decoding machine. Stuck with guard duty, Gene taught the enemy how to play baseball. It was a decision that irrevocably changed his life . . . and maybe baseball itself. Inspired by true events. 2006. Narrated by David Saurman.

DB015084
***The 50 Greatest Plays in Iowa Hawkeye Football History* by Michael Maxwell**

Ranks and brings to life the most memorable moments from Hawks gridiron lore. Fifty chapters describe the action, profile the participants, and reveal the rich story behind each play. 2008. Narrated by Harlan Watson.

DB015201
***The Forgotten Friend and Other Stories* by Grace Livingston Hill**

Gordon Pierce has bought Christmas gifts for everyone on his list. Then a sudden hailstorm drives Gordon into the shelter of a small church, and he is reminded of someone for whom he forgot to shop, someone who gave him the greatest gift of all. Includes six other stories. "The Forgotten Friend" was originally published in 1916. Narrated by Jessica Healy. ◆

Former student returns to teach Braille

By Alicia Seedorff
Special to The White Cane

Alicia Seedorff looks over a Braille menu at Java Joe's in downtown Des Moines during her time as a student in the Orientation Center in 2009.

My name is Alicia Seedorff. I am a college student at Grand View University in Des Moines. My transition to college has been a bit different than most because I am blind.

I lost my vision at age 26 from a motor vehicle accident. Like many people, I knew little of the world of blindness. I truly thought my life was done; that I could never again be a productive person with a full life. It was not until I attended the Orientation Center at the Iowa Department for the Blind that my views changed. I learned so many valuable tools that I use in my daily life. When I finished the Center I decided to return to college and work toward a bachelor's degree in human services.

I take the same classes as any other student and follow the same curriculum. My professors expect the same quality of work from me as a sighted individual. However, there are some accommodations that are necessary to ensure I can do my best. I usually talk with the teachers before starting a class to let them know what I may need. For example, if they write something on the board they need to read it out loud as well.

There are plenty of options to make school materials accessible. I receive my textbooks on CD through Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic so I can listen to the assignments. I also buy a print version of the text and hire a reader or scan the book for JAWS (a computer screen-reader program) to read to me. I take the same tests and quizzes, but usually have them dictated for me.

I am pleased to say that I received all A's last spring. I've realized that I am capable of doing what "sighted people" do.

When I was in the Center, Braille was one of my favorite classes and a skill I seemed to pick up quite easily. I learned how valuable a tool it is for communication. I also found out that I enjoyed helping others learn Braille. So, during my summer break from college I decided to volunteer in the Center's Braille class. The students were great to work with, and throughout my time there I made some new friends.

> "For me, learning and teaching Braille opens up the door for communication and independence.

For me, learning and teaching Braille opens up the door for communication and independence. I love reading books now, something I never did as a sighted person. I am who I am now because of the Center. The teachers believed in me when I didn't. One day I hope to help others find belief in themselves; I hope to teach Braille. ◆

Get to know Cynthia Qloud, orientation center teacher

By Rebecca Swainey
Contributing Writer
Braille Teacher

Cynthia Qloud teaches computers and cane travel in the orientation center. We sat down with her to find out more about why she loves what she does and some of her fondest memories in the center.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself.
A: I am originally from a little town in New York called Horseheads. Until I was 13 I went to public school, but I could not read because I couldn't see the print. So then I went to the New York State School for the Blind in Batavia to learn Braille and other blindness techniques.

Q: How did you come to work for the Iowa Department for the Blind?
A: I was looking for a job after I graduated from the University of Iowa; they were looking for a home-teacher in field operations. Shortly after I was hired for that position I was asked to work in the Orientation Center where I became the home ec teacher. I've worked here now over 31 years. In that time, in addition to home ec, I've taught Braille, cane travel and computers.

Q: Tell us about a memorable experience you've had in the Orientation Center.
A: I think of the first orientation center alumni banquet done by the Center students and staff. This was just my second year in Orientation. We decided to make pumpkin pies for dessert. We needed enough pumpkin for 40 pies. So, we all picked lots of pumpkins and started to make pumpkin pie filling from scratch. We cooked the pumpkins and then ran them through a food processor. What a mess! There was pumpkin everywhere. Truthfully, though, it was a lot of fun. It was also a wonderfully valuable experience, working together on one big project. I've looked forward to banquet time each year since.

Q: What do you like most about your job?
A: "I like my job because I believe in what I'm doing. I believe blind people should have an opportunity to demonstrate to themselves that they can be successful." ◆

Linda Stone (left) and Bridget Stovall completed training in the center this summer. Stone is spending time volunteering, and Stovall is seeking employment in the Des Moines area. You can read about Stone's experiences in the center on our Cane Tracks blog: idbcomm.wordpress.com

Success in college comes first from self acceptance

By Tai Blas
Contributing Writer
Transition Specialist

MORE AT IDBONLINE.ORG:

- Listen to and watch an audio slideshow of John Budding's first day of school at Knox.
- Read the full Q & A session with Budding.

Editor's Note: John Budding is a blind student entering his sophomore year at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. He is doing well and has made the Dean's list. He participated in IDB's Transition program and attended the Orientation Center in 2009.

Q: How is school going?
A: I have had a very typical experience transitioning from high school to college. I haven't had many challenges throughout this process. The first year was rough due to increased workload and learning to manage time while enjoying the many social activities at college, but that is something that everyone has to get used to, blind or sighted. This year, I am rooming with one of my former suitemates from last year, so I was able to form lasting friendships. Members of the choir comprise my main social group. I was concerned about the social setting and fitting in as a blind person, because I have just recently begun carrying a cane and identifying as blind. Initially, there was some awkwardness because students were not sure how to react to the cane, but that uneasiness did not last.

I did not disclose my blindness in high school, so no one made an issue of it. I was concerned that students might make an issue of it at college, but everyone is very accepting and friendly. It is mostly my fear of awkwardness that is a bother. There is always a bit of awkwardness but it has not been bad. I don't feel terrible about it. It is people I don't know that I have the most problems with. When I am meeting new people or in a new setting, it is hard to explain myself because I don't necessarily look blind.

Q: What type of assistance do you receive (not financial, but academic) to get your textbooks on time, your class work, etc.?
A: My college scans books that are not in audio format. Every professor I have met with and talked to is very accommodating for exams and in class notes and texts. They always provide materials in an email or scanned format. Most of my classes have been very informal seminar type classes. My psychology professor emails me PowerPoint presentations of the class. He also made a scan sheet in Excel so that I could use that to take my tests rather than using a Scantron sheet. For my German class, the Center for Teaching and Learning enlarged each section of my German textbook so that I was able to read it. The school has been very timely in providing accommodations.◆

A day in the life of a B.E.P. vending manager

By Roger Erpelding
Contributing Writer
B.E.P. Program Administrator

We all know vending machines can't stock themselves. Through the Business Enterprises Program (BEP), blind and visually impaired vending managers maintain operations in public buildings throughout Iowa.

One of the most successful of these managers is Kevin Slayton, who operates several vending sites in Des Moines. Kevin has been working for himself in this business for 19 years. This summer I followed him around on a typical work day.

It all began on a Monday morning at 6:45. Kevin and his employees, Dan and Al, arrived at one of their route locations, the Iowa Department for the Blind, and the day's work commenced immediately.

Kevin's first duty was probably his most important task from the employees' view—passing out payroll checks. Kevin and his crew checked on the temperature of a refrigerator that had been recently repaired, cleaned the tables in the adjacent dining area and checked in a pastry order from Hostess.

Next stop was the Polk County Court House. Meanwhile, Al was dispatched to several nearby locations to clean and fill vending machines as well as to troubleshoot and solve problems. At the Court House, Kevin and Dan took a quick product inventory in the machines, cleaned tables and microwaves, changed a light bulb in the snack machine, filled the pop machine and cleaned the coffee machine.

We then headed back to the Department for the Blind, several blocks away, to pick up additional product. Then we took off for the Federal Building. With practice and routine, it did not take long for the crew to do what was necessary and move along.

Kevin operates three locations in the River Point area on SW 7th, 8th and 9th streets. It was at these locations where a little extra time and effort was required. Accustomed to seeing Kevin and his employees at work, several customers approached them for cash and product refunds. Being the organized man that he is, Kevin incorporates this necessary duty into the schedule. Fortunately, the repairs were minor, refunds were quickly given, customers were satisfied, and it was back on schedule in a flash!

"Organization and customer service is what this business is all about," stated Slayton, as we were off and running back to the Department to give the tables a second cleaning, and to load up product for our next few stops at River Place, two small Polk County buildings and a quick stop at the Court House again to replace inventory that had been sold over the weekend.

> "Organization and service is what this business is all about.
>
> —Kevin Slayton
> *B.E.P. Manager*

But first it was time for an early lunch, and an opportunity to sample some of the new products that Kevin has been receiving from his suppliers. It was also a time to review our morning's tasks, and what would lie ahead.

After lunch, we went to the west-bound rest area vending location at Waukee, which presented some different

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BEP Manager Kevin Slayton works on a broken vending machine during his daily operations at facilities./Photo by Courtney Townsend.

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vending aspects. Since this location is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Kevin had visited the roadside locations on Sunday, and knew what inventory to take with him. Besides cleaning and filling, Kevin checked the machine counters on the beverage machines to ascertain the number of sales which occurred during the previous week. It was also a time to collect money. We saw a similar pattern in the east-bound site later on that day.

On occasion, BEP managers call one of our staff for assistance in vending machine repair. At Kevin's newest location, the Internal Revenue Service Call Center, the coffee machine had been leaking. He had tried to trace the problem on his own and with telephone coaching from Tim Wigans, a BEP counselor. Since these endeavors were not successful, Wigans agreed to stop by and take a look. So, the schedule was broken, and we were off to I.R.S.

Tim re-set, tested, adjusted, tore apart, put together, and watched the coffee machine continue to leak, although the volume had lessened. It is a prime goal of our program to give managers the tools they need to truly become independent business people. Naturally, this applies to vending machine maintenance and repair.

"All I did with Kevin in this case was to verify his assessment of the problem. I also gave him several things to try and possible replacement parts to install to resolve it," Wigans said. "It is always a pleasure to work with someone who takes as much pride in his business as Kevin does, and who will extend the effort to understand his equipment."

Now it was time for Kevin to call it a day—on the route anyway. He was returning to his home office to prepare orders, do bookkeeping and count receipts.

When asked how he determines what products go into the machines he replied, "It is based upon what sells. I carry much of the same product at each location, but sometimes I'll carry a different product if there is a demand—Coca-Cola Zero at River Place, for example."

Service, reliability, organization, scheduling, happy customers, functioning machines and a good product mix are all important ingredients in forging a successful business. And the best part is that Kevin's track record shows that this works! ◆

A higher learning is passion for Cody Dolinsek

By Shoshana Hebshi
Editor

It's 9:30 a.m., and the class has already been deep into the books for more than two hours. Well, it's really just one book—The Good Book. In this case, it's the Book of Jonah, and it's in Hebrew. But that's not a problem for Cody Dolinsek, who is taking this Hebrew language course at Faith Baptist Theological Seminary in Ankeny as part of his studies toward a Master's of Divinity degree.

Cody Dolinsek's fingers move across the pages of his Braille Book of Jonah, written in Hebrew, during class at Faith Baptist seminary.

Dolinsek, 34, is also studying Greek, which he taught himself. Fluency in these two languages will help him understand the original contexts of the New and Old Testaments, which were written in those languages, as he prepares for a career in the ministry. And, as a blind man, he has been learning it all in Braille.

"I love the challenges of thinking hard, raising critical questions and constantly being in the process of learning," he said, adding that Faith Baptist requires its students to learn the two languages so they can be better preachers and Biblical scholars.

On this particular day, the class was pouring over Chapter Three, Verse 1 in Jonah, analyzing specific Hebrew words and their English translation. Dolinsek thumbs through his Braille version and follows along. His teacher, Dr. John Hartog, calls on him, and Dolinsek reads a line successfully. Hartog gives him a double thumbs up. The class giggles.

Hartog was instrumental in Dolinsek enrolling at the seminary. As an undergraduate at Des Moines Area Community College, Dolinsek found he enjoyed deep conversations about faith and truth (he later earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Drake University). Hartog, then the dean of Faith Baptist, encouraged Dolinsek to pursue the ministry and enroll. Now, Dolinsek plans to graduate this coming May.

"He's a very sharp student," said Hartog. "He's perceptive and well read. He's got good, strong critical thinking skills."

Hartog said these skills will be of great benefit to Dolinsek as he enters the working world. As a blind man, Hartog continued, Dolinsek will have no problem with being confident in his ability to lead a congregation, but it will be the congregation members that must look within themselves to accept a blind man as their leader.

"He doesn't let any of those challenges thwart him," Hartog said. "He never has."

Dolinsek, who has been blind since birth, makes his

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By Linda Slayton

I've never read the book *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. I do know if I wrote something with that title it would focus on kids and the wondrous potential they bring to this world.

We all have great expectations for children when they are born, and they develop great expectations for themselves. It's exciting to see the first day of school arrive. New clothes, new supplies and new expectations follow those laughing faces right out the door.

School is a big factor in a child's life. I used to work as a teacher's aide. My job was to assist visually impaired students in an elementary school. They arrived on the first day of classes just as exuberant as other children. They were eager to learn and show what they could accomplish. It was the best day of the year.

I noticed, however, that some parents and teachers didn't have high expectations for blind students. It wasn't that they didn't have any expectations; it was that they weren't comparable to those set for their sighted peers. My students saw the difference, and I saw the effect. There were some students who were self-motivated and excelled despite the odds for or against them. Sadly, there were also those who, over time, bought into the can't-do-it mode and just stopped trying. Watching a child give up on their abilities and self-worth was the hardest part of my job, especially when it was expedited by those professing to care about them. Thankfully, I also met parents and teachers who continually helped blind students succeed.

> "One of our jobs is to teach all children to reach for their potential. Another is to seek our own.

That experience taught me a lot about people in general. At what point do we stop being excited about learning and trying new things?

I know people who never stop. They are always taking a class or delving into a project. I wish I was more like them. I think it goes back in part to expectations. Once we get settled into our lives people don't challenge us very often. More to the point, we don't challenge ourselves. The expectations we had for our future decline and, eventually, doubt replaces dreams. The mundane replaces the magnificent. Somewhere we forget the joys of learning and the excitement of accomplishment.

So as we send kids back to school, let's not forget what expectations can do for them. Let's not forget what possibilities exist in all children. Take an active role in helping kids succeed, even if it is simply to smile at a child and say, "Nice job." Then take these concepts further. It's too easy to give ourselves a pass because we are disabled. The world does that for us. Society doesn't always hold high expectations for blind adults either. We need to set those for ourselves. One of our jobs is to teach all children to reach for their potential. Another is to seek our own. None of us has reached it yet. Amazingly, there are still great opportunities waiting for each of us.

This fall, let's all start a new "school year." Happy learning! I hope our accomplishments exceed our greatest expectations.◆

Linda Slayton is a freelance writer living in Des Moines. She can be reached by e-mail at lcslayton@yahoo.com

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which she read in Braille, her preferred format."

Thomson had 11 Braille textbooks waiting for her when school began in August. These included many volumes in science, math, history, literature and other subjects. She will receive additional materials throughout the year, such as worksheets, tests and novels for leisure reading.

Gail Stricker, another IMC Librarian, said about one-third of all requests arrive before the start of the school year. Another third come at the start of classes, and the remainder filter in as the year progresses. More than 2,000 requests were filled for the 2009/10 year, and well over 1,200 had already been provided at the beginning of 2010/11.

Due to the continued growth in IMC orders, a third librarian was hired this summer to share the workload. Marcella Edmonds, a veteran of 22 years in the Library's circulation unit, brings enthusiasm and dedication to the IMC mission of providing students with materials they can use to advance their educations. Edmonds will serve the middle section of the alphabet, students whose last names begin with G-L. Stricker handles A-F, and Eckey will continue to serve Thomson and the rest of the students from M-Z.

For more information about receiving instructional materials, call 800-362-2587.◆

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way around the small Ankeny campus with confidence and ease, using his long, white cane as a guide. Part of his nature stems from the year he spent 15 years ago at the Iowa Department for the Blind's Orientation Center, learning the skills of blindness and building his confidence.

Sometimes, he says, he allows other students at Faith Baptist to help him do things in order to make them feel better. But mostly, the other students treat him normally. He says he would not mind the long hours of study required for his coursework if it weren't for his part-time job at Nationwide Insurance in downtown Des Moines, where he puts in 20 hours a week as a customer service representative.

When he's finished with his Master's, Dolinsek will seek out a Ph.D. in either philosophy or theology. Both are equally appealing to him, and either will serve as a solid foundation for a career in teaching and preaching. "People may not like to admit it, but philosophy and theology are constantly working off each other," he said.

And this all comes from a man who hated school as a youth.

"I thought it was a waste of time," he said. "I would have rather listened to music or read Stephen King novels. It didn't hold a lot of interest for me."

Then, at age 14, he converted to Christianity, which set the wheels in motion for deep understanding of the religion and sacred texts.

"I discovered that lots of people had written about what it means to be Christian, and they had written about Greek philosophy," he said. "It piqued my interest. I wanted to be as learned and holy as these people I was learning about. Initially, I never would have considered myself headed for academics, I wanted to be a singer. I still love music, and if anyone were irresponsible enough to take an overweight 34-year-old out on the road, I'd go for it."

Until that time comes, however, Dolinsek will be content studying his languages and working toward his more tangible future of scholarly pursuits and divine understanding. "I like a good challenge," he said. "In the middle of them, I think: Man, Cody you are an idiot for getting yourself involved in it. But you muddy through that and do the best you can." ◆

Notes

Director
Karen Keninger
karen.keninger@blind.state.ia.us

Deputy Director
Bruce Snethen
bruce.snethen@blind.state.ia.us

Commission for the Blind
Next meeting: Dec. 9, noon
Sandi Ryan, commission chair
Steve Hagemoser, member
Mike Hoenig, member

Mission:
The Iowa Department for the Blind is the means for persons who are blind to obtain for themselves universal accessibility and full participation in society in whatever roles they may choose, including roles that improve Iowa's economic growth.

- We would love to come speak about blindness at your club or organization's next meeting.
- We also provide training workshops on blindness at your school or office.
- If you've never seen our building and want to learn more about our services and what we provide in our building, we'd love to give you a tour.

Email us at information@blind.state.ia.us or call us at (800) 362-2587 for more information.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 15
White Cane Safety Day
Locations throughout Iowa
Each year, the Department recognizes White Cane Safety Day as a time to celebrate efforts toward equality and independence for blind people. The day is celebrated throughout the country, and many proclamations are signed by government leaders, including the governor of Iowa.

Nov. 5
Library 50th Anniversary Open House
IDB Assembly Room, 524 4th St.
If you are already familiar with our Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped or have never heard of it and want to learn more, join us Nov. 5 from 1 to 5 p.m. in Des Moines. There will be interactive booths, refreshments and an awards presentation. You will also have a chance to meet staff and volunteers, and find out about supporting organizations.

Dec. 6
More than Words 2
Des Moines Art Center
Iowa Poet Laureate Mary Swander's undergraduate poetry students are back for a second semester of exploring blindness. The students will read original poetry during a reception at the Des Moines Art Center from 5 to 8 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

More upcoming events and details at www.idbonline.org/news

Iowa Dept. for the Blind
524 Fourth St.
Des Moines, IA 50309

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Iowa Dept. for the Blind Assembly Room
524 4th St., Des Moines, IA

See What We're All About & Bring a Friend!

Interactive booths explaining and demonstrating the digital talking book players, audio recording, our online catalog, the online digital download service (BARD), Braille production, and more. Learn about volunteer opportunities and ways to become active in the Library! We will have refreshments and give out an award to a special Library borrower. See you there!