

IMPACT REPORT 2021

Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Building a Stronger Future



BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE



I am delighted to share the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired 2021 Impact Report with you.

Over the past year, we have seized several opportunities to improve our overall operation and client service. Foremost, we strive to protect clients' and staff health during the provision of service. Another objective is to maintain the quality of service while reaching more broadly into the community. In 2021, we expanded our outreach through virtual and inperson presentations and through social media. Utilizing stakeholder input, we reimagined and designed innovative programming. The Society continues to invest in technology to improve client access to goods and services, friends, and shopping, among other day-to-day needs.

A telehealth pilot project will lead to a novel service delivery model for expanded client care where none has existed but is sorely needed. The Agency partnered with other Missouri vision organizations to fund a briefing on the scope of need for vision rehabilitation in our state. The study results are essential to our continuing efforts to deliver needed and timely care.

These are but a few of the most compelling areas where the Society is building a stronger future to meet the needs of our expanding client base. This is only possible because of the unwavering support of the Society board, staff, volunteers, and generous donors. We thank you for your loyalty to our mission!

Laura Park-Leach

Tom Enger

Laura Park-Leach, President & CEO

OUR MISSION

The Society enhances independence, empowers individuals, and enriches the lives of people who are visually impaired or blind.

SPECIALTY SERVICES

- Assistive Technology
- Low Vision Medical Exams
- Occupational Therapy
- Orientation and Mobility

- Social Work
- Support Groups
- Transportation



ENHANCING COMMUNICATION



Patricia Anderson



Orbit Braille Reader

Enhancing communication through technology can literally mean "the world" to those who are blind or visually impaired. Through a United Way "COVID-19 Digital Divide" grant last summer, Society purchased 14 iPads and iPad cases for clients who are visually impaired or blind. The 14 participants ranged in age from 56-92. Their iPad goals included the ability to read books and other documents with an emphasis on the need for large print, internet and email access, voice assistance and controls, magnifiers, family communication, virtual meeting attendance, access to news and other resources, and accessible applications.

Patricia Anderson was one of the recipients and she said, "It's a great blessing to have the iPad and the training. It's frustrating when you can't see to read your email, and you don't want to bother anyone to help you. But now I can do it myself with Seeing AI."

After training, clients had learned skills such as how to use FaceTime and Zoom to reduce feelings of isolation and to read books again by changing the text size and fonts, zoom in or out, or by having the book read to them using an audiobook version or voiceover.

Greg Eikermann, who is totally blind, was excited to be able to use his Orbit Braille Reader with the iPad. He had always struggled with touch screen technology. "Anything that comes out of the iPad will come out in Braille through the Orbit. So I can hear it in voice and read it in Braille."

A big thank you to the United Way for bridging the "Digital Divide" for our clients and improving their independence and quality of life!

"I can read my email myself with Seeing Al!"

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

Dr. Michael Railey has spent the past 40+ years as a family doctor in his hometown of St. Louis.

It was five years ago that Dr. Railey first experienced vision problems. It started with a detached retina in his right eye, and then Macular Degeneration and Glaucoma quickly invaded, rendering him unable to practice medicine. "I was discouraged. Hurt. Threw myself a pretty good pity party. Magnifiers helped for a while, but I finally had to go to my boss and tell him that I have to stop seeing patients."

It was through his ophthalmologist at Washington University that he found out about St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. He was amazed that through all his years of practicing medicine that he had never heard of us.

The most important thing Society did for him was to put him in contact with other people just like him. He attended our support groups and in the first one, he simply listened to what others were saying about their various stages of vision loss. He realized he was not alone and listening to those experiences gave him confidence to face his own vision loss.

"Blindness is unique. I never understood as a doctor how different blindness is. It's different from cancer. It's different from diabetes. But blindness permeates every area and every day of your life, because you are constantly reminded that you cannot see."

Dr. Railey went on to say that "blindness forces you to reinvent yourself. I'm actually better off spiritually now than when I had vision. Without it, I would be despondent and ready to retire to the rocking chair. And I just won't do that!"

"I never understood as a doctor how different blindness is."



Dr. Michael Railey



Using a handheld magnifiier



Cathy Reid



Using a personal electronic magnifier

ENRICHING THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

As an illustrator and graphic artist, **Cathy Reid** depended on her vision to do her work. One day, she felt a pain in the back of her head as if she had been hit with a baseball bat. Treatment for Vasospasms, followed by a stroke left her permanently blind in her left eye and partially blind in the right. In a matter of days, she went from successful artist and illustrator to a person grappling with despair.

"It was a strange new world. I could see a person, but not the whole person. When I tried to read a newspaper, it looked like confetti over the print." She came to Society and learned to use devices that could help her, including using binocular glasses. She began to have hope. When her husband Randy died unexpectant last year, she was once again devastated. "He did everything for me, and I just didn't know what I was going to do."

She immediately contacted Society, and Occupational Therapists sprang into action and showed her how to cook safely, how to mark her appliances and how to navigate her space safely. A portable electronic magnifier became her right hand and allowed her to read numbers and words. "It is a life saver. I use it daily. I take it with me to the grocery store and can see the ingredients and expiration dates. Things I can no longer read, I can with the magnifier."

She has gained confidence. She has even taken up painting again. "It looks like something a first grader might do, but it's just the fact that I'm painting. My granddaughter and I spend a lot of time painting together and we have coloring contests as well."

Cathy now lives with her daughter's family and she says she feels worthy of living there, because "...I can help them. I can clean, I can cook, I even made soup for them the other night. I do my own bookwork. Nobody takes care of me, I take care of myself!"

She said that Society is there to help others, just as they helped her and raved about the "wonderful resources. I can't recommend them enough."

"Nobody takes care of me. I take care of myself!"



VIRTUAL VISIONARY GALA

In 2020 it felt like the world came to a standstill. The Visionary Gala Planning Committee began conversations about whether it would be possible to have a face-to-face event in 2021. It turns out that "Virtual" became the buzzword of the year. We were emboldened by other non-profits successfully holding fundraisers virtually. So, our Committee, meeting regularly over several months, decided to forge ahead with a "virtual" gala and the results were outstanding!

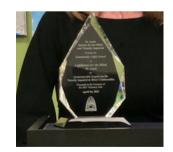
To build excitement for our online event, Society staff member Mary Caldwell created and debuted five video client testimonials via Facebook. They remain available to view on our YouTube channel which can be accessed through our website.

On Saturday, April 24, 2021 instead of gathering in a ballroom with tables, food, and candles, we gathered in our living rooms with spouses, pets, and laptops and presented the 2021 Visionary Gala via Facebook and YouTube. We proudly presented the **Leslie Dana Gold Medals to Dr. Michael Kass and Dr. Mae Gordon** for their decades of impactful research on glaucoma. Also, **Saint Louis Lighthouse for the Blind was honored with the Community Light Award** for their commitment to improving quality of life for those who are blind or visually impaired through direct employment, and support of rehabilitative and medical services. **KMOX's Carol Daniel emceed the event** and singers **Alice Conway and Gerald Brooks performed** via video recording.

We are proud to announce that we met our goal and netted \$65,000 to be used to provide services to people living with vision loss! Where there's a will, there is indeed a way.







Visionary Gala Planning Committee: Chairs Mike and Pat McKinnis, Lori Tesser, Angela Brooks, Gerald Brooks, Ann Shapiro, Kerrie Caldwell-Troutman, Linda Rose, Lisa Enger, Midge Crider, Angela Brooks, and Alice Conway

Leslie Dana Medal Award Committee: Dr. Jim Bobrow, Dr. Paul Tesser, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Feibel, Dr. Mike Donahoe, Dr. Erin Cleary Sullivan, and Dr. Nicholas Engelbrecht

Visiona Gala



From l-r: Dr. Paul Tesser, Dr. Mae Gordon, Dr. Michael Kass, Dr. James Bobrow, Mrs. Laura Park-Leach

> Dr. Mae Gordon and Dr. Michael Kass



The Leslie Dana Gold Medal Awards presented to Dr. Michael Kass and Dr. Mae Gordon





Board Chair Tom Enger presents award to Jill Kluesner



Jill Kluesner



From I-r: Eric Wallace, Floyd Goree, Jill Kluesner, Tom Enger

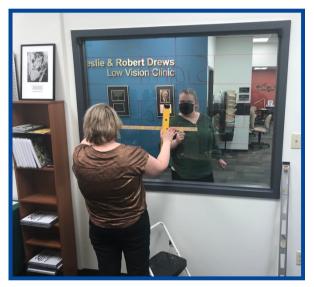
The Community Light Award presented to St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind

SIGHT SOLUTIONS SHOP

It's amazing the difference one room can make. A room that started out as basic office space evolved into a dream for Society in 2021. With a lot of planning and foresight from administration and staff, we opened the Sight Solutions Shop. We also got the shop up and running on our website.

Clients and guests can shop in person or online!





Creating the homemade signage



Finished Signage



SIGHT SOLUTIONS SHOP







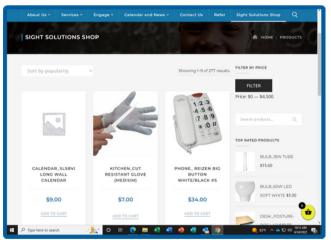
Magnifiers



Large Print Playing Cards and Keyboards



OTs pose behind window



Screenshot of Online store



Signage in Braille

NEW FACES

Society continued to grow in 2021 and added some new faces



Dr. Kate Gettinger

In February, Kate Gettinger, O.D., Low Vision Specialist joined us here at the Drews Low Vision Clinic. Dr. Gettinger obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Truman State University and her Optometry degree from UMSL School of Optometry. She completed training at the Norton Sound Heath Corporation in Nome, Alaska.

She received honors for her specialization in low vision, including the William Feinbloom Low Vision Award. She has spent most of her career in a private practice and boutique optical setting. Dr. Gettinger appreciates the opportunity to perform low vision evaluations and examinations to help those living with vision loss.



Dr. Jessica Broodryk

Society welcomed a new Doctor of Optometry last September, Jessica Broodryk. Dr. Broodryk earned her undergraduate degree in Biology and Chemistry from Missouri State University and her Optometry degree from UMSL College of Optometry. She completed the Ian L. Bailey Low Vision/Ocular Disease Residency at UC Berkeley.

After completing her residency, she returned to St. Louis to provide care in both the low vision and primary care settings. "I am excited for the opportunity to provide compassionate care to people with limited vision through St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They treat each person with respect and compassion, while addressing their needs using a holistic approach.".

NEW FACES



Megan Connelly

In May of 2021, Megan Connelly joined Society as Director of Development. Megan brings a diverse background in nonprofit development. She is experienced in national account marketing and business development for a Fortune 500 company and versed in data management and overall fundraising support, having served several nonprofit organizations in the St. Louis metro area.

Megan attended McKendree University where she obtained degrees in both Marketing and Speech Communication and continued her education at the University of Missouri – St. Louis, earning a Master of Arts in Communication.



John Boyd, III

Meet John Boyd, III. John's role here is twofold: IT and AT. Within IT, Information Technology, he manages the company network, phone system, database, server upkeep and maintenance, and provides technical support to employees. He also projects future costs and expenses for IT improvements. Within AT, Assistive Technology, his duties include teaching different assistive technologies to our clients, as well as developing plans for the future of the department.

John has a BS in Information Science & Technology (BSIST) and recently received instructor certifications in both ZoomText and JAWS.



Society added a bilingual staff member in 2021. Meet Danielle Nahm who offers translation for Spanish speaking clients and translates Society materials from English to Spanish. She is also the Executive Assistant to the President and CEO. She currently has a Bachelor of Arts in Romance Languages.

Danielle will soon be adding to her role. She is back in school and by the end of 2022, she will be working with clients as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She will work with all clients in need of this service but will be an added bonus to those with English as a second language!

NEW FACES



SOCIAL WORKERS

LaMonte' Hamilton, II

In May of 2021, LaMonté graduated with a Bachelor's of Science (BS) in Social Work and came back to the organization that helped him first. LaMonte' is a former client. At the age of 15, he was diagnosed with Juvenile Macular Degeneration.

His first encounter at Society was with a Social Worker. After using our services here, LaMonte' knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life and career. From listening to a Social Worker to becoming a Social Worker, LaMonté has come full circle.



Tammy Pearl

Tammy has always wanted to help people and began her career as an Occupational Therapy Assistant. As an OTA, she often worked on a team with Social Workers to help patients find the resources necessary to live well. It was seeing Social Workers in action that prompted her to change career paths. When she went back to school for her bachelor and master's degrees, she chose the Social Work career path.

She joined Society in July. Low vision is a new area for her, but she relishes the challenge.



Angela Kalinowski

Angela Kalinowski joined Society in November of 2021. She studied Early Childhood Education at St. Louis Community College-Meramec and has spent the past 20 years working as a Medical Receptionist, first with BJC and then EESE Healthcare.

She is the mother of a six year old and what she enjoys most about the job is the people. "I enjoy just being around people, talking to people and helping people."

OPEN HOUSE EVENTS

Society hosted three Open House Events in 2021



Registration in the lobby



Kitchen Safety Demo #1



Assistive Technology Demo



OrCam Wearable Device Demo



Personal Electronic Magnifier Demo



CCTV Demo

OPEN HOUSE EVENTS



Kitchen Safety Demo #2



OrCam supplied the snacks



Orientation & Mobility Q&A



Guest testing out a personal electronic magnifier



Raffle Winners with President



A couple learns about CCTV features



Dr. Lauer gives one-on-one instruction on CCTV

LEADERS WHO PURSUE EXCELLENCE



Tom Enger



Tom with his mother and father

The Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired depends upon the generous support of community members who believe in our mission and our clients. We believe the leaders in our community help change the world.

Tom Enger is one of those leaders who embodies our values and shows it in the way he serves Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Tom was familiar with Society several years ago through his father who began to lose his eyesight due to Macular Degeneration. "The Society had a CCTV which made the print much bigger and allowed my father to enjoy his newspaper for many years. When Lisa and I were married we were older and did not need any wedding gifts. We decided to have our guests donate funds to two charities. One was the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Not long after our wedding and the donations to Society, David Ekin who was then the President of Society contacted us to take a tour. After the tour and speaking with David, I was sold on Society and joined the Board."

Tom has been on the Board for six years. In 2020-2021, he was the Chair of the Board and is currently the Vice Chair. He has held multiple committee positions as well. He feels Society's mission means people can live full, happy lives with few limitations.

When asked what he hopes to see for SLSBVI down the road, he said, "I hope Society can continue to expand into different counties surrounding the St. Louis area. Hopefully we can have satellite offices so people with low vision will have access to everything that Society offers. The Society has made good inroads into the minority communities thanks to our Minority Board and hopefully that momentum continues for many years."

Tom went on to say that "...serving on the Board has made me a better person. It has made me realize how fortunate I am to have good eyesight. I'm also more aware of issues a person with low vision will face."

Leadership 2021

Board of Directors

Officers

Tom Enger - Chair Joseph Brinker - Vice Chair Paul Tesser, MD, PhD - Treasurer Elizabeth Kauffman - Secretary Michael McKinnis - Asst. Treasurer Midge Crider - Asst. Secretary

Members

James C. Bobrow, MD Gerald Brooks Angela Brooks Chris Callan Alice Conway MIchael Donahoe, MD Ron Hampp Larry Hickman Juanita Hinshaw David Morris Ann Shapiro Erin Cleary Sullivan, OD Kerrie Caldwell-Troutman

Advisory Board

Michael Croghan Robert Feibel, MD Chris Pickel Linda Rose Ryan Whittington

Minority Advisory Board

Gerald Brooks - Chair Bola Akande Viswa Belaji Joe Brinker Bonnie Daneker Ken Franklin Linda Rose Maria Tabb Ken Tabb Gary Watkins. MD

Emeritus

Marshall Hier John J. Purcell, Jr., MD

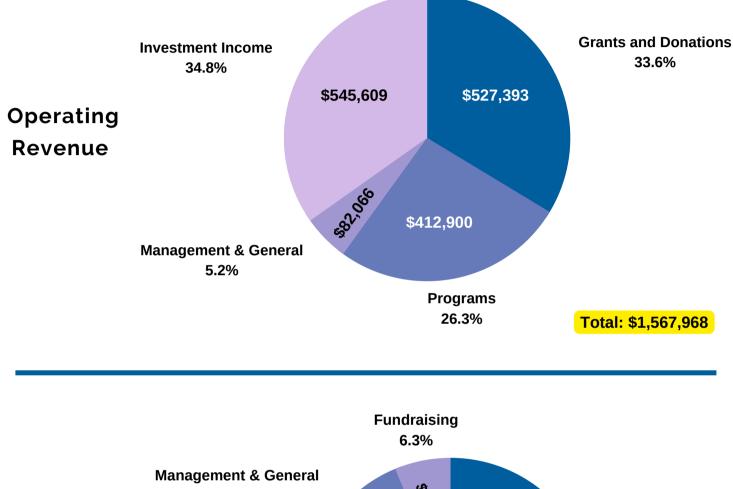
President and CEO Laura Park-Leach

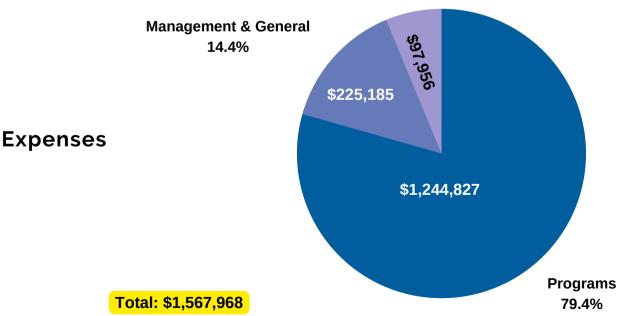
Staff

Jim Arcipowski Liz Beckerle Kate Boland, OD John Boyd, III Jessica Broodryk, OD Mary Caldwell Barbara Clover Megan Connelly Kate Gettinger, OD LaMonte' Hamilton, II Angela Kalinowski Ali Lambert Jennifer Lauer, OTD Lucy McCalpin **Christy McCutcheon** Susan Meissel Danielle Nahm Tammy Pearl **Ted Preuss** Judy Redlich Gina Diel-Russell Veronica Steibel Brenda Wendling

Hana Beckele-Intern, Social Work My Vu-Intern, Occupational Therapy

SOCIETY FINANCIALS





DONOR RECOGNITION

Thank you for building a world where people with vision loss are empowered and can live independently. Every single gift matters to us, and most importantly to our clients. We are honored to recognize those who have made contributions at the \$250 level and above. We do our best to ensure the donor list is accurate. To make a donation or alert us to a correction, please contact: Megan Connelly, Director of Development at 314-968-9000.

Helen Keller Society (\$5.000 and above)

Gertrude & William A Bernoudy Foundation Drs. Nanci & James Bobrow Cornelia L. Vogel Trust Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Brinker **Charless Foundation** Ms. Susan Mary Chuckray Ms. Alice E. Conway Dr. & Mrs. Michael Donahoe Jefferson Foundation Harold & Victoria Egner Charitable Foundation **Episcopal Presbyterian Health Trust** East Missouri Foundation Dr. Todd Margolis Ms. Juanita Hinshaw Marillac Mission Fund Margaret Butler Trust Mr. & Mrs. Michael McKinnis Mr. David F. Morris and Mr. Joey Neal Network for Good **Mariner Foundation Fund** Mr. & Mrs. Mark Shapiro **American Direct Marketing Resources** LLC Mr. & Mrs. David Steinglass Lighthouse for the Blind - St. Louis Dr. & Mrs. Stephen Waltman Mr. & Mrs. John & Elizabeth Wilmsen



Visionary Circle (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

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Visionary Circle (continued)

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Insight Club (\$250- \$999.99)

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In Memory of Anthony & Joan Monachello Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Gribat

In Memory of Nellie Pipitone Ms. Jennie Pipitone In Memory of Ed Provaznik Ms. Jeanette Provaznik

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In Memory of Larry C. Walker Ms. Phyllis D. Phelps

In Memory of Michael Wersching Mr. & Mrs. Richard Wersching

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In Honor of Harold Blanke Ms. Alice Boxdorfer

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In Honor of Ruel Murphy Mr. & Mrs. Ruel Murphy

In Honor of Rhonda Patrick and Her Beloved Mother Ms. Linda Nussbaum

In Honor of Sara Iffrig Pitchford Mr. & Mrs. Don Iffrig

In Honor of Dr. Sandra Rosen Mr. & Mrs. Jerrold Rosen

In Honor of Patsy J. Sanders Ms. Nancy Schomburg

In Honor of Emil and Rosemary Schmidt Mr. Brian Akerson

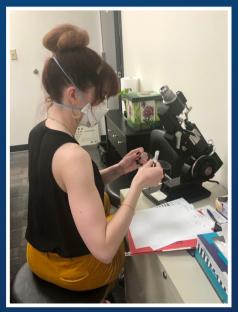
In Honor of Society for the Blind & Visually Impaired Staff Ms. Jo Anne Crider

In Honor of Elaine Weigel Ms. Connie Seelig

In Honor of Rabbi & Mrs. Moshe Zuravin Miss Alice J. Brown



Dr. Boland giving low vision exam to client



Dr. Gettinger checks a client's prescription



Dr. Broodryk giving low vision exam

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR YEARS TO COME

We thank these donors who have left a legacy in 2021 by becoming members of the Marli and Rey Eilers' Guild

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With a planned gift, you can help people served each year by Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired and obtain significant financial benefits for yourself. In making a planned gift, you have the added satisfaction of knowing people who are blind or visually impaired in the future will benefit from your generosity today. To find out more about the Eilers' Guild, contact Megan Connelly, Director of Development at 314.968.9000.

BE A VISIONARY

For over 110 years St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been providing comprehensive services to people living with vision loss. Without these services, individuals with vision loss may not receive the therapy and training they need to stay independent.

You have a chance to change the path forward. To become a visionary today, visit slsbvi.org and select "Engage" or contact Megan Connelly at 314-968-9000. Society is honored to recognize the generosity of our donors in new giving levels for 2022!

Friend: Up to \$299 Insight Club: \$300-\$999 Visionary Circle: \$1,000-\$4,999 Helen Keller Society Beacon: \$5,000-\$14,999 Helen Keller Society Benefactor: \$15,000-\$24,999 Helen Keller Society Breakthrough: \$25,000+

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(314) 968-9000 <u>www.slsbvi.org</u>





If you need the Impact Report in a different format, please contact Mary Caldwell at 314-968-9000. We will do our best to provide you with a format that meets your needs.