VISIONS

ASB unveils new logo and newsletter

Welcome to Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired’s new Visions newsletter, which is a merger of the former Visions newsletter and ASB’s volunteer newsletter, the Volunteer Voice.

Since ASB’s programs and services expanded, a more comprehensive newsletter was necessary to reach more people. Content will include information for volunteers and supporters of ASB and will contain important information on agency events.

A major part of the new design of Visions is ASB’s new logo, which was recently adopted. As literature is continually updated, the red square with ASB in white will be seen more and more often, eventually phasing out the green logo ASB has been affiliated with for the past several years.

As more people become aware of ASB, this new logo will be recognized more widely and the ASB brand will be known throughout the Delaware Valley and beyond.

We welcome your feedback on these changes. Please feel free to email karchibald@asb.org or call 215-627-0600, ext. 3242 with comments.

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FAST FACTS:

✔ Ten million people are identified as blind or visually impaired in the United States.

✔ Approximately 109,000 visually impaired people in the United States use white canes to get around.

✔ Just over 7,000 Americans use dog guides.

Source: American Foundation for the Blind

On page 3...

Former New Orleans resident Walter Wright relocates to Philadelphia and feels right at home at ASB following Hurricane Katrina. Read about his ordeal and the journey that led him to ASB.

ASB Visions is available in braille, cassette or on the web at www.asb.org.

ASB Opens Online Braille Bookstore!

www.asb.org/bookstore.htm

For the first time, Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (ASB) has opened up its archives and created a database to give worldwide access to a vast collection of Braille Books.

The ASB Braille Bookstore currently has 9 categories and over 100 books ready for immediate sale. With updates every week, we plan on having over 300 books in our catalogue.

If you have any questions, please feel free to write to us at bookstore@asb.org or call 215-627-0600, ext. 3242

ASB Visions

Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired

919 Walnut Street

Philadelphia, PA 19107

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

Recorded Periodicals • Custom & Production Braille • Radio Information Center for the Blind • Computer Technology Center • Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind • Latino Outreach • Specialized Services & Rehabilitation • Volunteers • Hands-on Gardening

www.asb.org

January 2006

ASB VISIONS newsletter of associated services for the blind and visually impaired
Drexel students serve up holiday meal

Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired partnered with Drexel University's Learn by DUing Class this fall to serve a Thanksgiving feast for clients, complete with all of the trimmings.

The LeBow College of Business at Drexel University developed the Learn By DUing program in 1990 as a way to mutually benefit Drexel senior business students and the Philadelphia community. Realizing the impact the students were making on the local community, the College established partnerships with various non-profit organizations to enhance this impact.

ASB has been taking advantage of this program for the past two years. This semester, four students were assigned to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for 50 clients of ASB who are blind or visually impaired.

Throughout the semester, students solicited for food and a venue, and held fundraisers to have the means to purchase other necessary items.

On November 14, at the Newman Center on Drexel's campus, 50 ASB clients enjoyed the hard work of the students. In addition to good food, clients also enjoyed several games of BINGO, which they played on new BINGO cards that the students were able to purchase with funds raised throughout the semester.

And that's a story that's repeated over and over again here at ASB. I encourage you to not only spread the word about ASB and all it has to offer people who are blind or visually impaired, but that the message of loss of vision does not mean losing your way of life.

From the desk of Patricia C. Johnson...

Welcome to the first edition of our new Visions newsletter. I am very excited about this new comprehensive newsletter because now we will reach more people with our message that vision loss does not mean loss of independence.

Loss of vision can be overwhelming. Many adults who are blind or visually impaired—especially those who have recently lost their sight—come to ASB believing their lives are over. These wonderful human beings fear that all the things they once did that gave their lives meaning and joy, are now completely beyond their reach.

Our goal at ASB is to do whatever is necessary to give them back the lives, the independence, the meaningful existence, and the joy they thought was lost.

I was recently giving a tour to a visitor, and during this tour, one of our newest clients told us that when she started coming to ASB three weeks earlier, she couldn’t even talk about her vision loss without starting to cry. Now, because of the things she has learned here, and even more importantly, because of the support she feels among others who are facing similar situations, she is actually beginning to feel hopeful about her future. Her face said it all—ASB has given her back a life she thought was lost.

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars for these exciting events happening at ASB in the months ahead!

January 23-27, 2006
Braille Literacy Week - Call ASB’s Braille Department at 215-627-0600, ext. 3214 today to schedule a tour of one of only 5 braille printing houses in the United States. Great activity for school groups.

March 24, 2006
Guide Dog Appreciation Day - Join us in thanking our canine friends who give the gift of independence to people who are blind or visually impaired every day. A ceremony at 919 Walnut Street will recognize these wonderful workers.

April 27, 2006
Volunteer Recognition Luncheon - ASB will hold a special luncheon at the DoubleTree Hotel for its dedicated volunteers as a way to say “thank you.” Invitations will be mailed in late February. So let us thank you for all of your hard work and please join us for this special luncheon.

June 13, 2006
Second Annual Vision Cup Golf Tournament - It is never too early to start thinking about golf! This year’s tournament will once again be held at the ACE Club in Lafayette Hill, PA. Call 215-627-0600, ext. 3242 for more information. Space is limited so be sure to reserve your spot early!

ASB in the community...

On Saturday, December 3, 2005, Bette Homer, ASB’s Life Skills Educator, made a presentation on assistive technology and individuals with a visual impairment at the 2005 World Conference and Exposition on Disabilities at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Participants included mainly professionals working with disabled individuals, parents and consumers.

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An inspirational evening as ASB celebrates the Louis Braille Awards

On Wednesday, November 9, 2005 Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired held its 46th Annual Louis Braille Awards Ceremony at the Hyatt Regency at Penn’s Landing and recognized the accomplishments of Judy Summers-Gates, Canon U.S.A., and the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO).

Judy Summers-Gates, a chemist with the Food & Drug Administration who has been visually impaired since birth, proudly accepted her Individual Award and thanked ASB for all it provides to the community. Summers-Gates has been a consumer of ASB’s products for many years, making this award even more special to her.

Canon U.S.A. accepted the Corporate Award for its initiative in providing access to its products to customers with visual disabilities through braille overlays and other innovations.

Dr. Jeffrey Smith from Pearl Vision presented Dr. Sarah Appel, from the William Feinbloom Vision Rehabilitation Center at PCO’s Eye Institute, with the Special Recognition Award for PCO’s commitment to education, research and rehabilitation for people who are blind or visually impaired.

"With such extraordinary honorees, this event gets better and better every year," said Patricia C. Johnson, CEO & President of ASB. "We are already looking forward to next year."

Giving made easy...a guide to choosing the right gift for ASB

There are many ways in which you can get involved and support the ASB’s mission. Everyone can make an impact, and every dollar you donate to ASB can make a difference. Here are a few ways you can give:

Annual Giving: Make a gift through our direct mail campaigns. It’s easy and we accept cash, check, credit card, or visit us on the web at www.asb.org to make your gift on-line.

Memorial Gifts: Give a gift in memory of a loved one, or honor someone special.

Bequests: Set up through a Will is the most common way to give all or part of your estate to ASB.

Trusts: A great way to provide a tax benefit and can be used to provide a reliable income to the donor, family member, or loved one with special needs.

Insurance: ASB can be designated as a recipient of your life insurance policy. This option is attractive to those who may not be able to afford a sizeable cash gift, but have a policy that is no longer valuable to them.

Matching Gifts: Many companies match employee charitable contributions dollar for dollar.

Let’s make 2006 a great year for ASB! Contact the Development Office at (215) 627-0600 ext. 3278 for more information or to discuss our giving options.

ASB lends helping hand to Hurricane Katrina evacuee

Four months ago Philadelphia was just another city on the map to Walter Wright, but circumstances beyond his control have made this city his new home and he is adjusting well to his new surroundings thanks to the support he has received from Associated Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired and other city organizations.

Wright was living in the 9th Ward in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina struck on August 30th. He tried weathering the storm in his apartment with his brother, but water levels rose very quickly and the two men were forced to their roof where they were rescued by a helicopter.

"ASB has reached out to me and given me a chance to sharpen my skills." Wright said. He received rehabilitation training from the Louisiana Center for the Blind, and had just received a computer with adaptive software from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services two months before the hurricane.

Wright depends on his computer to communicate with friends and to help him through contacts at the Red Cross. The computer is equipped with software that speaks and enlarges text on the screen. "This computer will help me stay connected with my family who is still living in the south," said Wright.

ASB's Rehabilitation program has also been helpful to Wright. Although he is very independent, he wanted to receive mobility training in Philadelphia to get oriented with the city. He has gotten help finding places of interest to him and has gotten active in the community.

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Before Hurricane Katrina, Wright had plans to go to school in Florida. However, he’s had to put those plans on hold for now until he figures out his next step. For now he is trying to adjust to Philadelphia and is getting along very well thanks to the support he has received from his new friends at ASB.

Walter Wright’s new computer with adaptive software will help him stay connected with his family and friends.

ASB stepped into action and through the agency’s Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind, which provides funding to people who are blind or visually impaired to fulfill specific personal needs, such as adaptive aids, computers and white canes, awarded Wright a computer.

Selma Toth, who left a bequest to ASB for more than $300,000, Selma passed away last year and was a longtime friend and volunteer at ASB.

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Volunteer Fast Facts:
- ASB volunteers recorded more than 30,000 hours of service to the agency last year.
- ASB welcomed 45 new volunteers to the agency last year.
- There are 200 active volunteers at ASB.

Volunteer Job Corner
Billing & database manager
To provide department manager assistance in managing the monthly billing process. Assess accuracy of current database, assist with monthly input, billing, and delinquencies, and solicitation of new customers. Must have excellent computer skills including knowledge of Access and Excel.

Binding & Thermoform
Thermoform and bind braille books. Divide braille books into volumes, create title pages and labels, check accuracy of information, bind books, and keep records. Must be able to follow procedures accurately.

Magazine Narrator
Record scientific magazines for Recorded Periodicals Division. Must have knowledge of general science or computer science. We can arrange for volunteers to record in their home.

Volunteers show off their talents at appreciation day
Being a volunteer at ASB gives people the opportunity to use their talents to help people, but on December 8th, volunteers had the chance to use their talents to entertain, at the Volunteer Appreciation Talent Show.

Each year the Volunteer Department holds an Appreciation Reception with a different theme. This year, it was a talent show. This is a way to bring volunteers from different departments together for entertainment and fun.

The showcased talents included singing, comedy and the reading of original poetry by volunteers Richard Bogue, Ronda Butler, Barry Jacobs, Tom McCormick, Vanessa Postell, and Claire Wilson. Dame Edna (Connie Moore) also made a special appearance.

“Our volunteers are such a talented group of people who are so dedicated to ASB’s mission,” said Linda Gaffney, Coordinator of Volunteers. “We always want them to know how much they are appreciated.”

Volunteers stay educated and connected to the community
Volunteer Braille Transcribers Hold Semi-Annual Workshop
The Fall Transcribers Workshop was held for Braille Volunteers on Wednesday, December 7. Workshops for the Custom Braille Department are held semi-annually to update braille skills and to provide information on current technology for volunteer transcribers.

Volunteers Doing "One Book, One Philadelphia"
For the fourth year, ASB’s Volunteer Braille Transcribers are participating in “Philadelphia Reads,” which promotes One Book, One Philadelphia. Children and adults all over the Delaware Valley are encouraged to read and discuss this book. This year three books are being publicized, and our volunteers are transcribing two of them. The books are "Franklin: The Essential Founding Father," by James Srodes, transcribed by Mary Ann Metzger, and Ken Miller; and "Ben and Me" by Robert Lawson, transcribed by Maxine Cook.

Classes for Braille Transcription
A class for braille transcribers has formed and will begin on January 4, 2006. Students will learn how to transcribe print into braille. The class will be held every Wednesday at ASB and will continue through the spring. Margaret Trauger, a volunteer transcriber, will be the instructor.

Professional Broadcaster Lends Voice to RICB
Eric Herr, who has a long, distinguished career as a radio news reporter in Philadelphia and can be heard delivering traffic and news on local radio stations, is a volunteer in ASB’s Radio Information Center for the Blind (RICB). He produces a half hour program interviewing community leaders and people of interest on “RICB Perspectives with Eric Herr.” For those who do not have an RICB receiver, these interviews can be accessed on ASB’s website, www.asb.org.

Sharing a craft through volunteer work

Agnes Williams wears her new poncho that she made with the help of Donna Cooper in ASB’s knitting class.

Knitting and volunteering both come very naturally to Donna Cooper, so starting a knitting class for ASB clients was a perfect fit for this retiree.

Recently retired from a career as an educator, Cooper was looking for something to do to fill her free time when she came across ASB on the Volunteer Match website.

After contacting ASB and discussing her interest and skills, it was decided that she would start a knitting class, teaching knitting and crocheting to ASB clients who are blind or visually impaired.

The class started last month and continues to grow. Donna and her other faithful volunteers have about 15 students that meet twice a week. Many participants have had some knitting or crocheting experience prior to losing their vision.

Cooper has found different ways to help teach knitting and crocheting to people who are blind or visually impaired. She uses thicker yarn which is more tactile and easier to use for someone with no vision. She also uses contrasting colors for people who are visually impaired.

The key to success according to Cooper is not giving up and making a commitment to the class. An example of this is ASB client Agnes Williams who recently finished knitting a poncho.

Along with WEBS, America’s Yarn Store, Cooper and her husband donated materials to get the class started, but she said more donations are needed, especially donations of yarn that is thick and soft, since they are easier to use for people who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition to teaching a wonderful skill to clients, another positive outcome from this class is seven new volunteers who have joined Cooper in teaching this class.

If you are interested in sharing your skills with ASB clients, contact ASB’s volunteer coordinator, Linda Gaffney, at 215-627-0600, ext. 3275 or email lgaffney@asb.org.

In "Philadelphia Reads," which promotes One Book, One Philadelphia.

Volunteers doing "One Book, One Philadelphia" for the fourth year, ASB's volunteer Braille Transcribers are participating in "Philadelphia Reads," which promotes One Book, One Philadelphia.

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