



ASSOCIATED SERVICES
FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

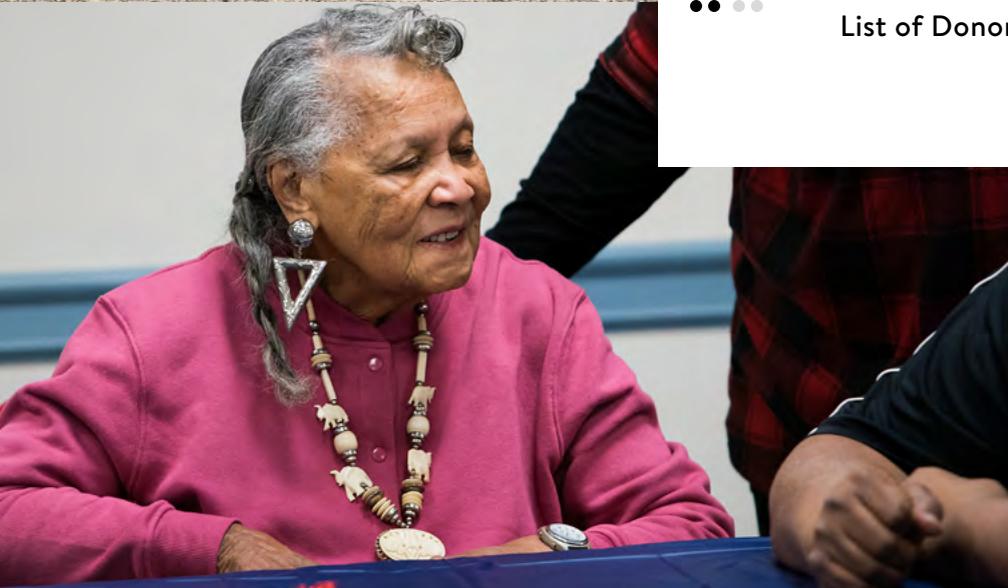
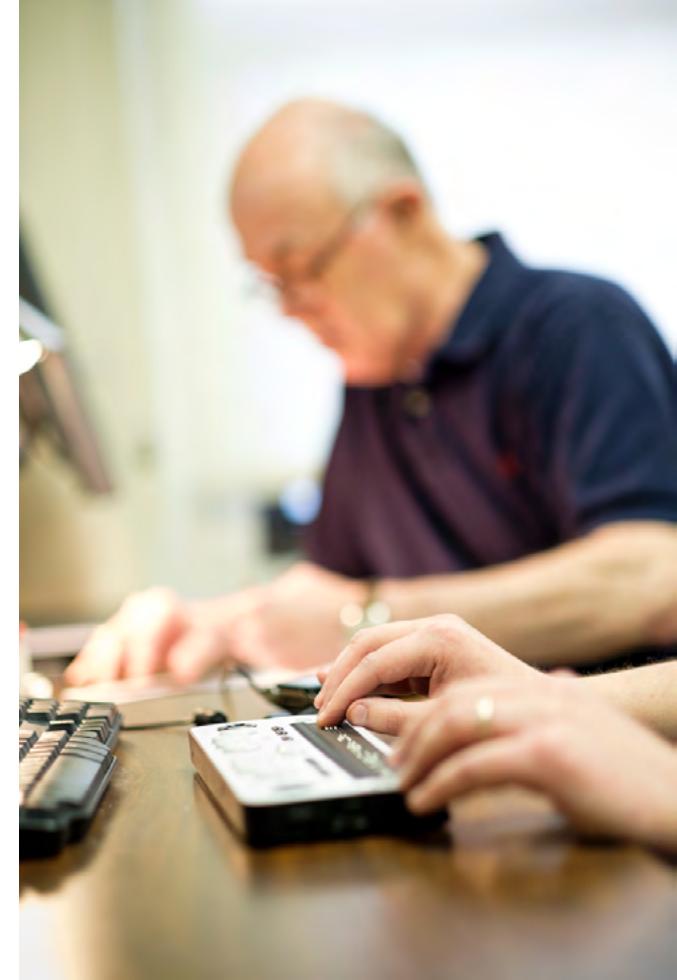
2018-19 FISCAL YEAR

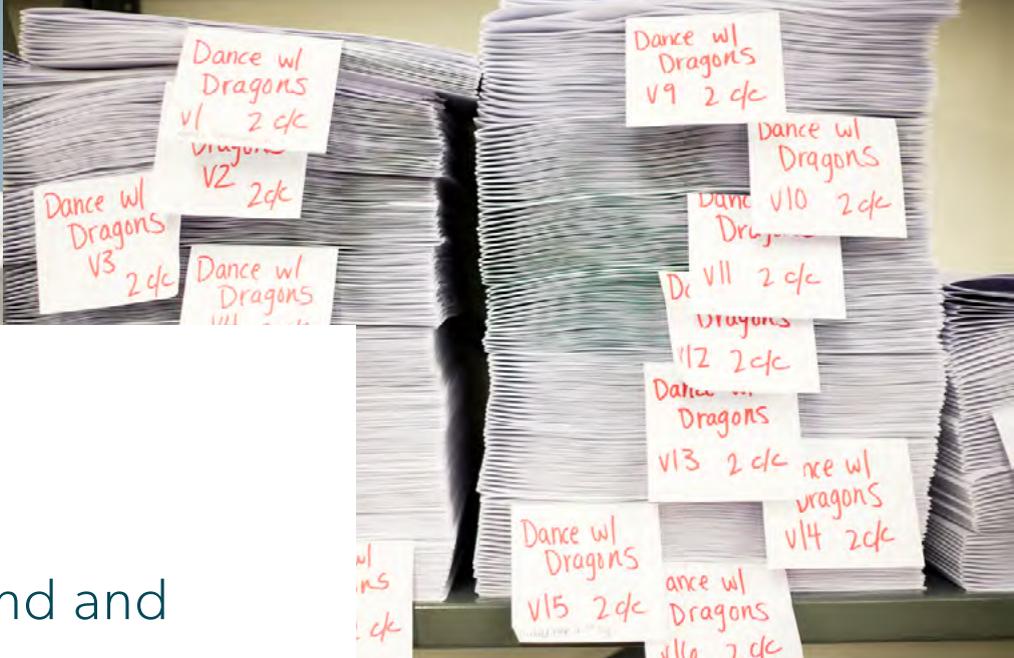
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



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Mission and Vision

Associated Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASB) is a human services organization that acts as a liaison for those in the Philadelphia region facing blindness or a loss of vision. We foster connections among the region's many diverse resources, working with our partners to advance health and well-being, harness technology as a tool, and expand





the reach of the arts and cultural offerings in our vibrant communities. Building on a history of nearly 145 years, ASB promotes independence and self-determination through education, training, and resources, as well as community action and public engagement. We support those we serve in setting and working toward their own individual goals for achieving the quality of life they desire. Our resources, experience, and expertise help facilitate autonomy and community involvement.

"Looking back at all that I've learned and experienced brings a smile to my face."

—Marsha Levy, social worker and ASB participant since 2014



Message from the President & CEO and Board Chair

Inspiring independence. Our year at ASB has been focused on those two simple, yet powerful words. The idea of inspiring independence speaks to the progress and fulfillment that people with low vision or blindness can and do experience when they engage with ASB's programs, services, and with our community. It also applies to our aspirations for ASB's future and our ongoing work to strengthen the foundation of the organization, while expanding our reach and impact for the long term.

Last year, we shared in this letter that it had been a time of transition with the addition of new leadership and the completion of a three-year strategic planning process. In FY19, we began the important work of implementing the recommendations of that plan and are pleased to report in these pages on our strong progress. Notably, we have continued to build the capacity of ASB's professional team, adding deep experience to our education and enrichment programming and seasoned operational and project management expertise, as well, to further support our dedicated staff (see Staff Spotlight: Lynn Heitz).

Together with our full team, we continued to improve and expand our curriculum offerings to facilitate home management skills, develop proficiency in using technology as a tool, and provide meaningful and enjoyable enrichment and social opportunities (see Program Spotlight: Pennsylvania Ballet). In addition, we are expanding our ability to serve as an expert referral source to the region's resources beyond ASB that can be critical to the people we serve – from housing and employment support to healthcare, transportation, and legal services. All of this is intended to more fully support those we serve in developing their skills and confidence to successfully navigate life at home, on the job, and in their communities.



*Karla S. McCaney,
President & CEO, speaking
on assistive technology at an
AIRA event at the Philadelphia
International Airport in 2019.*

"I feel at home at ASB."

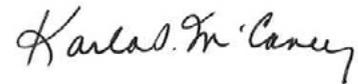
—Clarence Humphrey, ASB participant

Across the Delaware Valley, there are approximately 122,000 individuals who are blind or visually impaired, 43,300 of them living in Philadelphia. It is ASB's goal to become a touchpoint for as many of these individuals as possible, helping them to become the best versions of themselves, whether they have lived with blindness or low vision for a lifetime or are first experiencing the changes and challenges of vision loss.

While milestones and progress are important to share, even more important, we think, is measuring our impact through the stories of those we serve and ASB staff members, partners, funders, volunteers, and friends. You'll read about some of those stories in these pages and on our new website at www.asb.org.

ASB is inspiring independence, and that is work that changes lives.

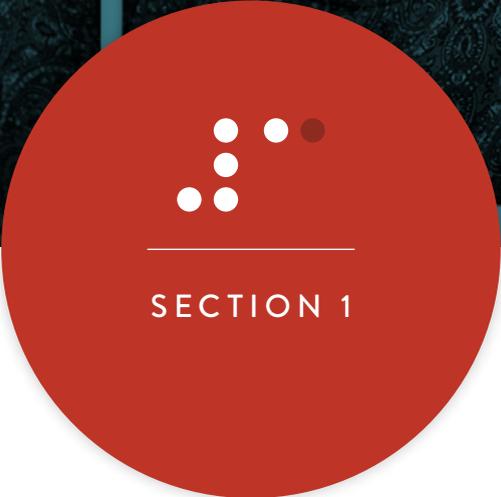
We look forward to reporting back to you on our continued progress, growth, and innovation in the year ahead.



Karla S. McCaney
President & CEO



Thomas J. Teesdale
Board Chair



SECTION 1



Above: ASB staff members and visitors join together during a weekly home management class.

Who We Are

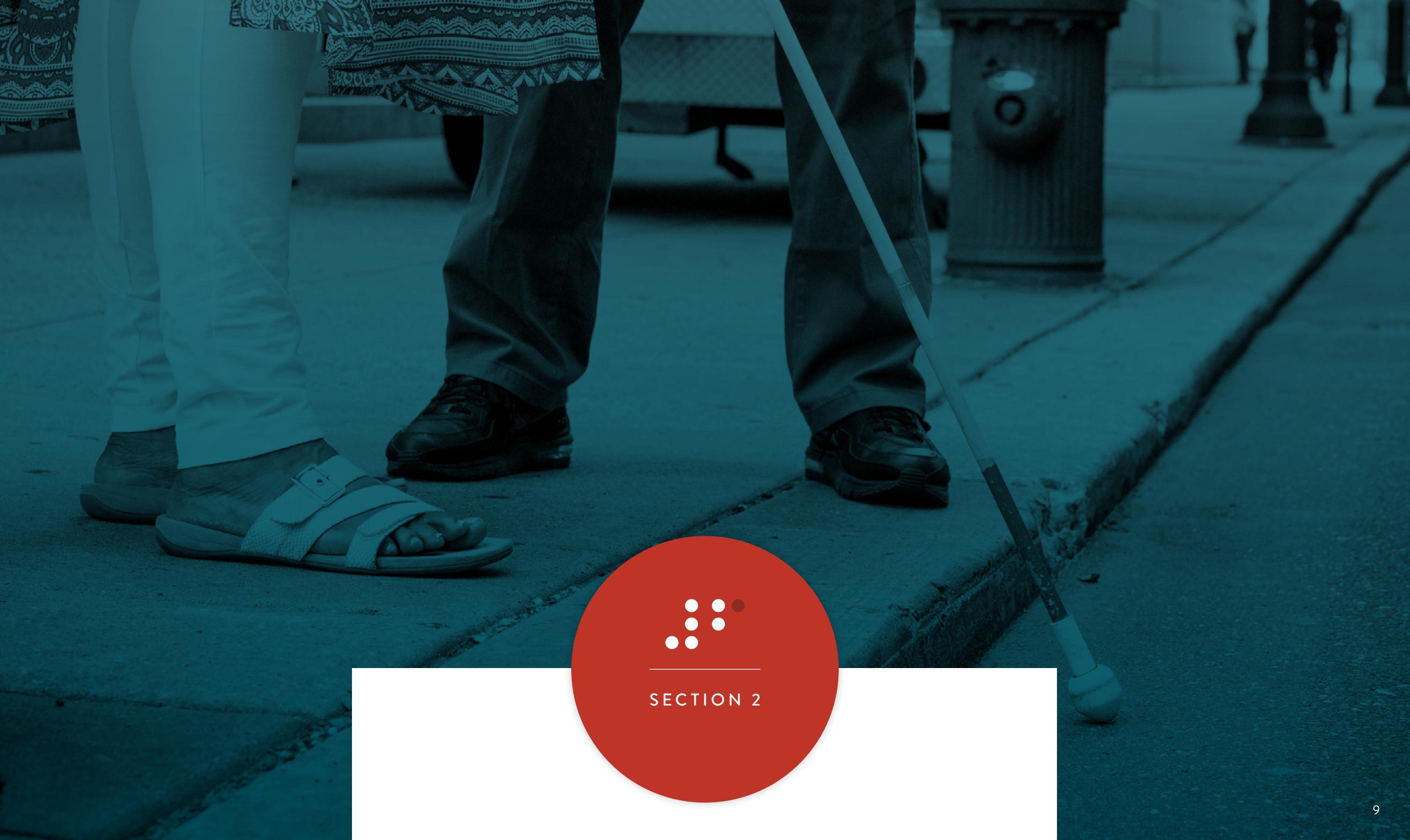
ASB's history is a testament to philanthropy, charitable giving, and volunteerism in Philadelphia and the surrounding communities. Throughout the decades ASB has remained steadfast in its commitment to continually improve, innovate, and build on a comprehensive array of people-centered services.

A Proud History

In 1874, the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men, ASB's forerunner, opened its doors. After World War II, Volunteer Services for the Blind (VSB), an independent agency, formed to transcribe books and magazines into braille and later record college-level textbooks. In the 1970s, VSB expanded its braille program to include government contracts and moved to ASB's current location at 919 Walnut Street in Philadelphia's Washington Square West neighborhood. In the early 1980s, VSB united with two other local agencies—the Information Center for the Blind and the Nevil Institute for Rehabilitation and Services—to form an advocacy organization for people who are blind or low vision. We are committed to living up to this legacy today and serving those who are blind or have low vision as they continue to evolve amidst the demands of modern life.



The original site of the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men was at 3518 Lancaster Avenue.



SECTION 2



Above: Our trainers teach individuals the essential skill of using a white cane so they develop self-confidence in their mobility.

How We Serve

ASB is people-centered at our core. Our staff welcomes everyone as an individual with unique life experiences, goals, and motivations. From the initial intake, we talk through our comprehensive list of classes that offer information and training, as well as our many support groups, recreational programming, and case management services. We strive to ensure that people not only learn the skills they need but also have the ongoing support to continue building their knowledge over time. We continually revisit and adapt our programs to be responsive to their goals and priorities.



Navigating the Physical World:
Facilitating Life Skills



The World at Your Fingertips:
Technology as a Tool



Quality of Life:
Social Programs and Recreation





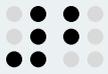
Navigating the Physical World: FACILITATING LIFE SKILLS



Mobility instructor Eric DiFiore (right) works with Gloria Nathan. As part of ASB's Life Skills training, we teach basic orientation mobility such as spatial relationships, object perception, traffic flow, navigating intersections, and safe techniques for crossing the street.

Orientation and Mobility

For many, our Orientation and Mobility Training offers a supportive context for taking steps toward a more independent life. After a full evaluation of an individual's current abilities and needs, our staff focuses on teaching skills to optimize navigation at home, at work, and in the community.



"Like so much of what I've learned at ASB, I learned about Access Link [for help with transportation] from a blind member of the ASB satellite group in Northeast Philadelphia. Last summer I asked an ASB staff member to help me apply to New Jersey's Access Link. How neat to be able to travel from Center City to anywhere in New Jersey! When a friend invited me to her summer home in Ventnor, New Jersey, I was equipped to make the journey.

After downloading the New Jersey-New York map onto my talking GPS device, so I could orient myself, we walked on the boardwalk, and to the pier, restaurants, and stores in the area. My friend is also visually impaired, so she enjoyed hearing the names of streets as we walked around her new surroundings. I also brought my portable talking book and Internet radio Victor reader stream player, which has a recording function. I used it to record the sounds of the waves while standing on the pier over the ocean. It was a blast being there! I look forward to going back. I was fortunate to learn about the various devices from others at ASB who used and demonstrated them for me. Looking back at all that I've learned and experienced at ASB brings a smile to my face."

—Marsha Levy



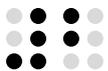
Mobility instructor
Eric DiFiore



"ASB provides some of the best mobility instruction I've ever had. The trainers helped me learn to use my ears to navigate the city, go with the flow of the traffic, and cross the streets with confidence. One of the good things about ASB is that the groups offer you the chance to learn from other visually impaired people how to manage. I've developed my own way of handling myself, and now that I'm one of the veterans around here, I can share some of my ways with others. I'm not Superman, and I do need some help, but I try to be as independent as I can. I'm also motivated not to have to rely on my wife or my son too much. At ASB I've been exposed to blind people who can do and make some amazing things."

—Eric Coleman

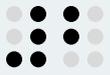
MOBILITY MEANS FREEDOM



Life Skills Education

ASB staff members work alongside those we serve to support them in developing practical skills, in one-on-one tutorials in the field, as well as workshops in the classroom. We provide the support individuals need to gain independence, with a focus on safety. Life Skills Education classes address a wide range of topics, such as personal adjustment to blindness, sensory development, self-esteem building, peer support, introduction to assistive technology, health management, and safety.

As an ASB life skills educator, Bette Homer (center) focuses on teaching skills to build more independent lives. She offers hands-on experience with adaptive equipment, such as screen readers and magnification adaptations. She trains on skills as diverse as managing currency, identifying colors, and preparing food safely to empower people with low vision. Always at Bette's feet is her service dog, Aaron.



People-Centered Goal Setting: Evaluations, Referrals, and Case Management

ASB acts as a gateway to an extended network of organizations that provides services that individuals can use at any level of vision loss, including human services organizations, schools, cultural institutions, and advocacy groups.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Lynn Heitz

Director of Education & Enrichment Programming

Lynn Heitz joined ASB as the new Director of Education & Enrichment Programming in 2019. Lynn began her tenure at ASB with more than 10 years of experience with the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services for both the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In her role, she oversees the coordination, supervision, and training for ASB's Home Management curriculum, Orientation and Mobility classes, as well as the Access Technology Center offerings. Lynn is also the current president of the National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania, recently renewing her presidency through 2022. She holds a bachelor's degree in social administration from Temple University and a master's in social work from the University of Pennsylvania.

“ *If someone is on the fence about accessing ASB programs and services, I personally invite them to come and visit our facility to experience what ASB does, take a tour, meet our fabulous staff, and interact with participants during one of our training programs. Knowing from first-hand experience, blindness is something that has a grieving process to it. You have to allow a person to work through that difficult process before they are ready to gain their independence in their new lifestyle.*

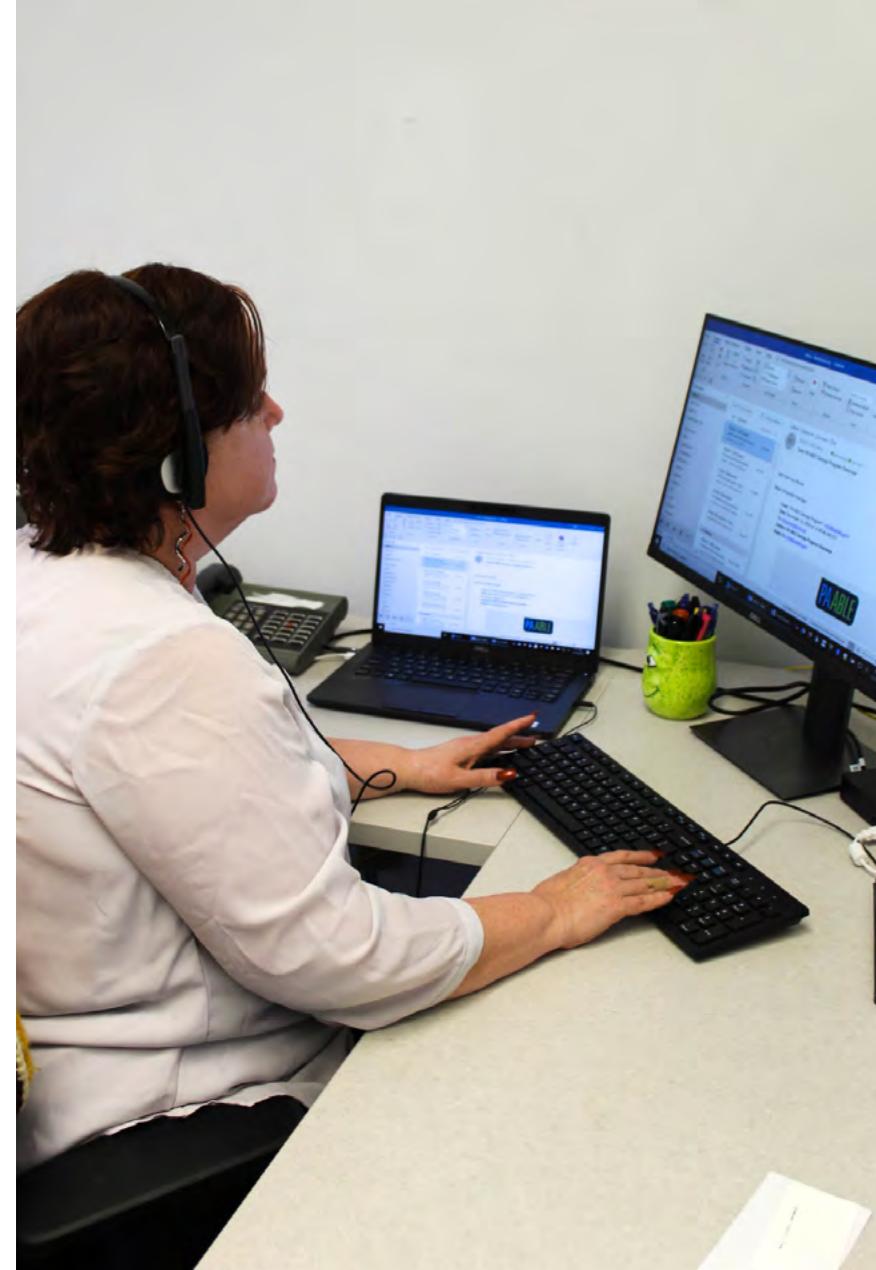
There are a lot of individuals who think because they're blind they can't accomplish tasks, set goals, or become independent, and that is completely untrue. You can do a lot of things in your life – the sky is the limit. If your expectation is down on the floor, that is what you're going to achieve.

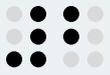


If your expectation is over your head, that's what you're going to strive for. That's what I want the people who come to ASB for training to do. I want them to reach for the stars.

ASB skills-based training meets individuals who are blind and visually impaired in their current life journey, and we take them to new places. We are a program that encourages individuals to live more independently and explore their community confidently. Whether a person decides to participate in our home management, technology, enrichment or social programs, ASB works tirelessly to help people overcome challenges like these, so they have the support and skills needed to manage their days with confidence."

Lynn Heitz uses a JAWS® screen reader in her office for email correspondence. JAWS® is a software program that enables a blind or visually impaired user to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.





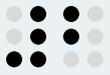
The World at Your Fingertips: TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL



Access Technology instructor Andrew Godwin explains the accessibility options of an iPhone.

Access Technology Center (ATC)

At the Access Technology Center, people with low vision or blindness further their education in assistive and adaptive technology. While some come to ASB seeking introductory classes, we are also equipped to support those who are highly experienced with technology as they adjust to varying degrees of vision loss. Overall the ATC teaches skills to support daily living and help people achieve greater independence. Training takes place with individuals or in small groups.



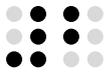
The instruction includes personal computer and software use, Internet navigation, e-mail and social media savvy, and use of other assistive devices such as screen readers and magnification software. Due to increasing interest in portable devices, the ATC also provides smartphone and tablet training as well as an introduction to accessibility software.

Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind

Thanks to this endowed fund, ASB is able to provide grants to those who demonstrate a financial need for adaptive equipment and access technology, such as readers, tablets, talking watches, magnifiers, and more. In fiscal year 2018–2019, this program continued to help those with specific equipment needs thrive. Most recently, the Lighthouse purchased iPhones for dozens of individuals because of the increasing assistance smart phone applications can provide for daily living. While the majority of these applications are free, some such as KNFB Reader have a minimal charge and the Lighthouse assists with purchases when needed.

“ I am proud that the Lighthouse fund has made it possible to provide products for those in need who are served by ASB, to help them succeed in their endeavors and live life to the fullest. Each year the board receives more requests, and we are pleased to be able to honor so many of them.”

—Art Seidner, Chair of the ASB Board committee for the Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind



ASB transcribed a 300-page Game of Thrones book into braille for the Library of Congress. The resulting braille version was 11 volumes.

Communications and Publishing: Braille Program and Alternative Formats

Part of ASB's history is operating a full-scale braille production facility onsite, one of several in the United States. The Braille Division converts and produces a wide variety of print material into alternative formats for people who have vision impairment. Our customers include restaurants, utility companies, educational institutions, and the Library of Congress.

Our braille, large print, and custom audio materials are available for individuals and organizations on a local and national scale. Individuals demonstrating need can receive our materials at low or no cost.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Peggy Garrett Garden Program Coordinator

This staff spotlight is in memory of Peggy Garrett, long-time ASB staff member and dear friend.

Peggy Garrett served as a 20-year ASB staff member living with low vision herself. Her legacy will be remembered at ASB for playing an instrumental part in establishing and maintaining the ASB Hands-On Garden at the Philadelphia Horticultural Center in Fairmount Park. She was a master gardener from Penn State University's horticulture program and created seasonal gardening plans during the colder months and staffed ASB's garden program during the spring, summer, and fall.

The gardening program at ASB provides opportunities for program participants to actively plant and maintain the garden, build social networks and interactions, experience Fairmount Park, and work on building sensory skills through touch and smell. Due to the longstanding relationship with the City of Philadelphia and the happiness it brings to ASB participants, ASB plans to continue the gardening program honoring the legacy Peggy built.

Beloved ASB staff member, Peggy Garrett, was honored at ASB's 59th Annual Louis Braille Awards in May 2019 when she received the Louis Braille Inspiration and Achievement Award.

A class of 1951 alumna of Overbrook School for the Blind, Peggy created an intergenerational program where OSB students join with ASB's "Hands-On Gardeners" group to maintain the school's garden outside of the Nevil Center. She also sat on the OSB's board of directors for many decades.

Peggy's long-term service and dedication was celebrated at ASB's 59th Annual Louis Braille Awards in May 2019 when she received the Louis Braille Inspiration and Achievement Award, which is given to individuals or groups that have overcome challenges, made a positive contribution to the community, and inspire others to succeed in meeting their goals.

“Peggy was a truly outstanding person. She was kind, funny, and loyal – and she loved her garden. Peggy’s passion for gardening was contagious and she encouraged individuals who may have never worked with flowers and plants to get involved. She wanted everyone to smell, touch, and enjoy the plants because she believed it was good for their spirit. Rudyard Kipling said ‘Gardens are not made by sitting in the shade.’ That quote always makes me think of Peggy. She never sat around and waited for life to just happen – she made it happen. We were so lucky to know her, learn from her, and experience the joy she brought us by never sitting in the shade.”

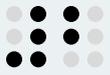
—Beth Deering, ASB Chief Programming Officer

“I have known Peggy since 1985 when I was introduced to her as a volunteer reader. Both Peggy and her husband were blind, so I would go to their home to help her pay bills, read correspondences, and one of my favorite tasks was helping her send her Christmas cards. Peggy was an extremely special person who loved to live independently and adored her labrador retrievers who were her seeing eye dogs. She was absolutely amazing and would handle all aspects of her life – everything from cooking, laundry, and picking out her clothes. One of my most favorite memories is the day she and I made braille tags to hang with her clothes that indicated what color the garment was. Peggy always wanted to make sure that when she left the house she looked beautiful and was put together properly. She was a warm, caring, and inviting person who loved ASB’s garden and was very committed to the success of the gardening program. Everyone she came in contact with she treated with the utmost respect and left an incredible impression in their hearts. I look forward to ASB continuing her legacy in the years to come. We certainly will miss her dearly.”

—Will Jordan, ASB Board Member and Friend of Peggy Garrett



ASB’s hands-on gardening at Fairmount Park’s Horticultural Center allows individuals to connect with nature in our sponsored community garden. The group expresses their creativity while also learning adaptive techniques and developing hands-on skills.

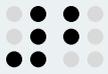


Quality of Life: SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND RECREATION

Enriching peoples' lives is as essential as teaching concrete skills. ASB is committed to a holistic approach, one that reflects how we focus on the whole person, including cultivating the wide range of abilities of those who engage our services. The supportive community at ASB stems from the close interactions among those we serve, their peers, instructors, and staff.

Alumni find they have built lifelong connections among their peers at ASB.





Building the ASB Community: Peer Support

One of ASB’s most important roles is facilitating networks of peer support, both formal and informal. Individuals find that our peer groups provide a safe space to talk about the realities and challenges of blindness or low or changing vision and to learn from the experiences and insights of others.

As part of a Peer Mentoring Program, people who are new to ASB have the opportunity to access social support through partnership with veterans of our program. In the Low Vision Support Group, individuals facing similar conditions engage with each other and have the opportunity to share stories, concerns, and triumphs.



“When I came to ASB I learned about a lot of the different conditions leading to vision loss. My vision loss was gradual but I was not aware of it. I retired from the federal government, after working for the Office of Housing and Urban Development, and began working for an airline, and I was using computers there when I started to become aware that I was losing my sight.

I feel at home at ASB because over time I had a chance to get to know the others, and they could get to know me. I’m a listener—that’s how I like to learn. I’m more comfortable staying quiet until I have something to say. One of the good things about the Low Vision group is I have a chance to hear others share their experiences, what they are doing to help themselves. At 80, I think I’m the oldest member of the group. I’ve come to learn that no two people took the same path to where we are.”

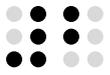
—Clarence Humphrey, retired HUD employee and ASB participant since 2012

LEARNING BY LISTENING



“I came to ASB in 2014, looking for opportunities to get out of my house and socialize. One learning experience [at ASB] leads to another. I’ve attended ArtReach events at local theaters, and [I remember] hearing audio description for the first time. I’ve participated in popular dance instruction with rec[reational] therapy students. I’ve joined monthly book and international cuisine club groups. I love my ASB ‘family!’”

—Marsha Levy

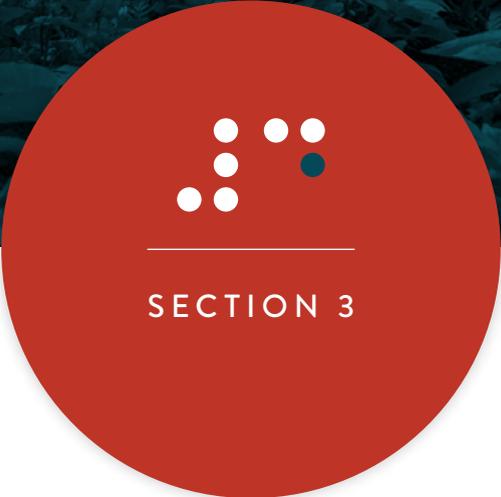
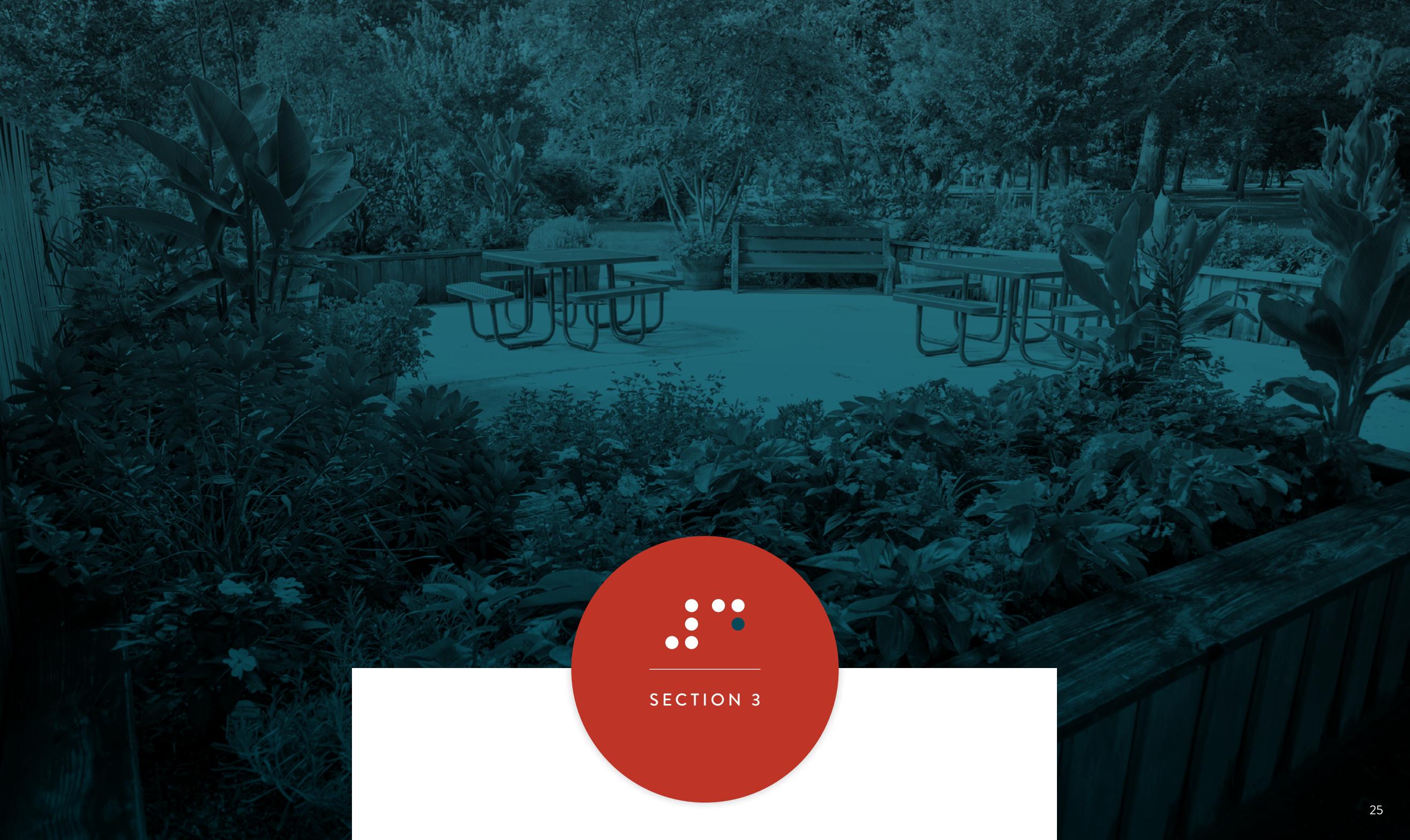


Gardening at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Center

ASB's gardening program, located in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, provides countless opportunities for people with low vision or blindness to develop hands-on skills as they become creative and connect to nature. We teach adaptive techniques for this nourishing and gratifying activity.

Recreation Programs and Cultural Opportunities

ASB offers a supportive community for people to socialize, make new friends, and enjoy themselves among peers who have similar interests. Strong partnerships with ArtReach as well as the Pennsylvania Ballet, Walnut Street Theatre, and other local cultural organizations provide accessible experiences for those who are blind or have low vision.



SECTION 3



Above: ASB members have the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities at the ASB Hands-On Garden located at the Philadelphia Horticultural Center in Fairmount Park

Partnering with the Community: Outreach, Education, and Advocacy

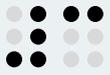
ASB strives to serve as a resource to the community by partnering with local organizations interested in improving or learning from interactions with individuals with visual impairment.



Staff member Bette Homer (far left) presented an in-service training to first-year nursing students at Thomas Jefferson University School of Nursing.

Educating the Sighted: ASB as a Resource

ASB staff members make presentations throughout the year, having spent many years building relationships with local healthcare and human services organizations as well as nearby colleges and universities. In 2018-2019 our staff made presentations to JCC KleinLife, Paul's Run Senior Center, Jefferson University Nursing students, and Jefferson University Pharmacy students, as well as hosted interns and students from Temple University, Cairn University, and LaSalle University. ASB has begun



making connections or having events with Fairmount Park Horticulture Center, Neighborhood Gardens Trust, Pennsylvania Ballet, Coalition Against Hunger, The Philadelphia Fire Department, and Mural Arts.

Every fall, Dr. Angela Nace of the Jefferson College of Pharmacy brings to ASB a group of her students from the Department of Pharmacy Practice to work with Bette Homer's Diabetes Information group. For two hours each week over the semester, the students share relevant medical and health information with this group. In exchange the students gain firsthand clinical experience and valuable insight from the members of the group.

Bringing Resources Onsite: Partnerships and Speakers Program

Each month, ASB hosts staff from local community and government organizations who speak on services and activities that are of interest to people who are blind or low vision. Some of the participants this year included the City of Philadelphia's Office of Adult Education, the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, and the Social Security Administration.



In 2018, ASB and the Pennsylvania Ballet hosted a special five-week class in conjunction with the company's presentation of "Romeo and Juliet."

The Legal Clinic for the Disabled also made several visits to ASB this year, including a general presentation about the services the organization offers, as well as a credit workshop where attorneys helped people to pull their credit reports and dispute any false information.

ASB is grateful for the partnership of these and other organizations that provide information and education for those we serve.



SECTION 4

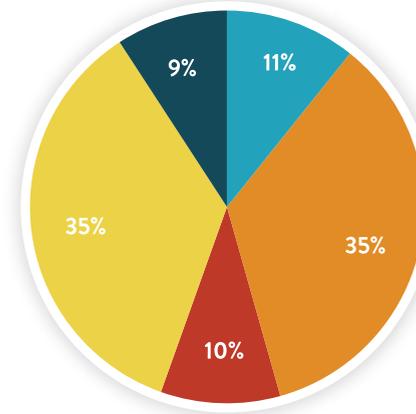


Above: A team works together to transcribe a document into braille.

Financial Overview

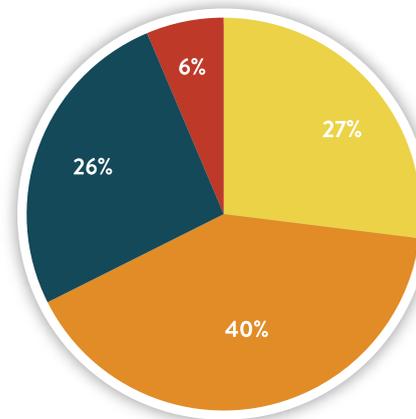
Support and Revenues

Grants and Donations	\$ 379,000
Product and Service Sales	\$ 1,250,995
Government Grants	\$ 349,110
Investment Income	\$ 1,263,475
Other Income	\$ 324,827
Total	\$ 3,567,407



Expenses

Program Services	\$ 964,779
Braille Operations	\$ 1,430,506
Administrative/General Operations	\$ 927,598
Fundraising	\$ 216,600
Total	\$ 3,539,483
Change in Net Assets	\$ 27,924





PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



Pennsylvania Ballet Partnership

At ASB, we partner with some of the region's most notable organizations – from the arts, to wellness, to social services agencies – to offer enriching, new experiences to those we serve.

The Pennsylvania Ballet conducts workshops at ASB to teach the physical technique and artistry of ballet and movement. Participants are encouraged to express their stories through this physical art form, challenging the idea that communication needs to be verbal or visual. Participants also gain an understanding of the physical health benefits that consistent movement provides for the body and mind. (Our partnership was featured on WHYY, [watch here.](#))

In 2018, ASB and the Pennsylvania Ballet hosted a special five-week ballet class in conjunction with the company's presentation of "Romeo and Juliet." The class taught ballet basic skills and balancing techniques but also helped increase independence, self-esteem, and artistry. At the end of the five weeks, the group attended a live performance of "Romeo and Juliet" using audio description. We're thankful that CBS Philadelphia was able to capture our program – [watch here.](#)





Another successful collaboration with the Pennsylvania Ballet and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital is ASB's The Mind, Body, Wellness Project. Through the program, participants engage in physical activity, nutrition education, and mindfulness meditation and have access to community-based wellness resources. Taught by a Pennsylvania Ballet instructor, this interactive movement program gives participants the opportunity to experience ballet and other dance mediums, such as African and Hip Hop, by learning about sequences of music and how to internally visualize movement. This program was made possible from funding by Independence Blue Cross and matching funds by our Board of Directors.

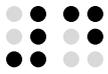
“*Joining this ballet class is such a gift. Ballet helps me with balance and so much more. Being able to feel graceful and confident without vision is difficult. Also, without vision it's very hard to find opportunities for joining other people in a class. This class and learning ballet has helped me with my independence and self-esteem.*”

—Marsha Levy

“*The benefits of dance are being connected with your body, strengthening and stretching one's body and also just the mind-body connection. Anyone can dance, and vision plays a small part of it. It's about connecting to the music.*”

—Sarah Cooper, Director of Community Engagement, Pennsylvania Ballet





ASB would like to thank the many generous donors who have helped to make possible our programs and services over the past year.

Individual and Foundation Donors

\$75,000+

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\$25,000-\$49,999

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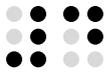
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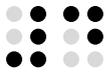
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