

**NORTH CAROLINA'S  
DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
ANNUAL REPORT 2013  
All Aboard for Success and Independence  
Our Mission**

The mission of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services is, in collaboration with our partners, to protect the health and safety of all North Carolinians and provide essential human services. Since 1935, the *mission* of the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has been to enable people who are blind or visually impaired and deaf blind to reach their goals of independence and employment. The agency's *vision* is to be known across North Carolina as the leader in providing employment and independent living services for people who are blind or visually impaired.

**N.C. DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL  
2011-2012**

**Richard Oliver, Chairperson**, Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider

**John Marens, Vice Chairperson**, Director, Client Assistance Program

**Beth Butler**, former recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

**Brenda Savage**, Workforce Development

**Steve Harris**, Business/Industry/Labor

**Julie Kagy**, N.C. Department of Public Instruction

**Dorothy Frye**, Statewide Independent Living Council

**Kim Lambert**, Director, Projects carried out under section 121 of the Rehabilitation Act

**Brenda Monforti**, Parent Training and Information Center

**Tony Ferrita**, Disability Advocacy Group

**Ex Officio**

**Eddie Weaver**, Director, Division of Services for the Blind

**Erica McMahon**, DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

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### **Chairperson's Message**

The North Carolina Commission for the Blind, serving as the State Rehabilitation Council, is honored to present the 2012 Annual Report of the Council and the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). Our theme this year is 'All Aboard for Success and Independence.' In a strong partnership between Council members and DSB staff, we continually strive to work to create more successful outcomes leading to independence for all North Carolinians who are blind or visually impaired. This is a theme that resounds with all involved and we are honored in performing this service.

Please take time to review the various DSB programs and initiatives highlighted in this report. Whether you read about the Medical Eye Care Program, Rehabilitation Center, Business Enterprises Program, Transition Services, Independent Living Programs, DSB Employment Services or others, take note not only of the dedication and expertise of DSB staff, but also the strong partnerships forged with clients, families, eye doctors, schools, employers, Lions Clubs of North Carolina, and many other community stakeholders. The success of these programs is dependent upon all stakeholders having the same vision and desire to create independence that all people dream to achieve.

Many thanks go to the leadership and staff at DSB for their dedication to this better future. As many of us as Commission/Council members are legally blind, we sincerely appreciate the effort and skill that DSB staff bring in working for all North Carolinians, either through direct service or support.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

~ John Quincy Adams ~ 6th American President (1825-1829)

**Richard Oliver**

Chairperson, North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

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### **Annual Comments from Director**

"All Aboard" I hope you will join me aboard this annual report and read about our accomplishments at DSB for all of our programs and read the success stories for our

consumers this year. As I think about traveling on a train, you have a starting point and a destination. You will read about the individuals in these pages who stepped aboard to begin their journey to success and independence with the assistance of our dedicated staff. Many of them learned new techniques of cooking, learned how to read and write braille, how to travel independently and safely using a cane, how to use technology to access computers and use other adaptive equipment and successfully obtain and perform many different jobs. Due to the specialized services offered to our consumers and the trained staff we have that provide these services, our consumers reached their destination of success and independence. One of Helen Keller's famous quotes states, "Alone we do so little; together we can do so much."

**Eddie Weaver**

Director of NC Division of Services for the Blind

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**Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

Each year, the Division of Services for the Blind, in cooperation with the Rehabilitation Council, conducts a *Consumer Satisfaction Survey* of people who completed rehabilitation programs for the fiscal year. We sent 733 surveys and 149 were returned completed.

Here is what our consumers had to say:

**Did DSB staff...**

- treat you with courtesy and respect most or
- all the time - 96 percent;
- telephone calls were returned the same or next day – 94 percent;
- appointments scheduled as soon as consumer thought

it should be, most or all of the time – 88.6 percent.

**Did your DSB Rehabilitation Counselor...**

- provide information about your eye condition and how it may affect your employment, most or all the time – 81.2 percent;
- discuss your job skills, abilities and interests with you, most or all the time – 83 percent;
- if needed, refer you to other programs for assistance , yes – 62.4 percent.

**When developing your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)...**

- counselor and consumer discussed your options together, then you chose your job goal – 88.5 percent
  - decisions about planned services were made jointly or by you alone– 85.1 percent
  - overall rating of experience with the Division as good, most or all the time – 97.3 percent.
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### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

People with blindness or visual impairment who want to go or return to work may be eligible for DSB-Vocational Rehabilitation (DSB-VR) services. These individuals can choose from an array of programs and services that best suit their individual vocational needs with the DSB support and assistance provided by our Vocational and Transitional Rehabilitation Counselors, Business Services Representatives, Community Employment Specialists, Rehabilitation Engineers, Assistive Technology Specialists, Vocational Evaluators and Rehabilitation Center staff, as well as specialists to support and assist those with both blindness and hearing loss.

The DSB provides services through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to help individuals find, keep a job, or return to work. All services provided by this program are geared toward appropriate suitable employment.

VR Counselors assist with providing and coordinating the services necessary to go to work. The VR Counselor is the case manager; however, other DSB staff will provide additional services as needed in order to assist individuals with obtaining their goals.

The VR program can sponsor medical services as a part of the plan of services that are required for eligible individuals to obtain, maintain, or regain employment. These services may include diagnostic eye examinations, eye glasses or other types of corrective lens, eye treatment, eye surgery, low-vision evaluations, assistive technology evaluations and recommendations for equipment, video magnification evaluations (CCTV), and eye care education.

Accessible services are planned according to each individual's employment goals and needs and may include services such as: the receipt of assistive technology and training

on how to properly use the equipment, job placement, independent living training at the residential training program called the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, medical services including glasses, eye exams, surgery and treatment, job modification, job retention counseling, job seeking skills training and classes, on-the-job training, vocational or academic training, orientation and mobility services which are services that teach individuals to use a sighted guide, white cane, and safety techniques to travel independently, school-to-work transition services, supported employment, vocational counseling, visual assessments and other assessments as required, vocational counseling, work adjustment job coaching, as well as other services as required by the individual to be successful on a specific job. Some services provided are based on economic need, while others are provided regardless of income.

### **Business Development and Placement Services**

To improve the employment outcomes of individuals with blindness, visual impairments or deaf blind, DSB supports the dual customer approach to rehabilitation services whereby both consumers and businesses are welcomed as customers of DSB services. In 2012, DSB renewed its relationship with its regional employment team, now known as The NET – Southeast. This partnership of eight southeastern states is strategically aligned with The National Employment Team (The NET), which is lead and supported by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. As a direct result of this alignment, DSB has formed relationships with a growing number of national employers who seek to hire and retain qualified workers from the talent pool of Vocational Rehabilitation. Partnering with business through The NET has created employment opportunities with highly competitive wages and benefits for DSB consumers across the state. Through the agency's point of contact with The NET, DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Business Service Representatives, and Community Employment Specialists are collectively "getting on board" with The NET to build partnerships with businesses to fulfill DSB's mission to enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

### **Our results**

In Fiscal Year 2012,

- 3,192 individuals received VR services.
- 74% who exited the VR program after receiving services achieved successful employment.
- 562 people entered wage earning employment.
- Over 9% entered employment as a result of DSB-VR direct involvement with community businesses and employers through the DSB Business Services Program.
- \$11.94 per hour average earned income.
- \$10.8 million in earned income returned to the economy.
- \$2.1 million approximated income taxes paid.
- \$1.6 million in Social Security taxes paid as a result of this income.

### **Assistive Technology**

There are six Assistive Technology Specialists are located across the state to provide technology assessments and services. Four Assistive Technology Instructors are available to provide small group instruction and assistance to individuals across the state. Modifications may include making a change in lighting, adapting telephones, installing safety measures, adapting computer equipment and Braille displays. Services are provided until the best modification is found, and the individual is capable of performing the tasks needed.

**Technology Resource Center:** Located at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is the Technology Resource Center which has adaptive equipment for large print, speech, and Braille access. This equipment includes scanners, closed circuit TV's, and notetakers which is available for demonstration and evaluation. The Center provides training on the use of adaptive technology.

**Rehabilitation Engineering Services** provide consumers whose jobs are in jeopardy, with the information and assistance on modifications needed for training. This service is made available to program participants with the need of vocational outcomes or employment objectives.

### **Our Results**

- 762 Individuals served by the Assistive Technology program in last fiscal year

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### **Business Enterprises**

The NC Business Enterprises Program generated annual sales of just over \$11.6 million dollars for state fiscal year 2012, and NCBEP operators earned an average annual income of \$41,665. With the addition of new locations in Raleigh and at Fort Bragg, the total number of NCBEP facilities is now 81. New facilities were opened at the new NC National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Raleigh and the Armed Forces Command Center at Fort Bragg.

The new state of the art NCNG Joint Forces Headquarters also houses the NC Emergency Operations Center, the NCDOT Operations Center and the new NC Highway Patrol Communications Center. The building has over 230,000 square feet of space and sits on 18 acres of land. The facility opened in March 2012, and the NC Business Enterprises Program provides food services for over 600 National Guard and Civilian employees working there on a daily basis.

Additionally, as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure Act, the Armed Forces Command Center was relocated from Fort McPherson, GA to Fort Bragg, NC. The new facility, which opened in 2011, contains over 700,000 square feet of space and sits on 57 acres. This facility houses the US Armed Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the US Army Reserve Command (USARC). In addition, over 2,000 Armed Forces and Civilians are employed there. The NC Business Enterprises Program facility located at FORSCOM represents the first jointly operated facility with a nationally branded and recognized partner. The jointly operated facility with Quiznos Subs was completed in June of 2012 and has seen enormous success.

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### **School to Work/Transition Services**

Transition Services is a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities. Those activities may include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities is based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's

preferences and interests, and include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition services facilitates achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student's individualized plan for employment.

A DSB VR counselor can begin working with students as early as age 14 to help them explore the world of work and identify career interests. Skills and educational requirements, along with future job availability, are explored. Activities such as visiting job sites that interest them, working side-by-side with someone in this career, or doing volunteer work are other options.

Students planning on continuing their education after high school receive assistance from a DSB VR counselor in finding a school that will prepare them for their job goal. The counselor can also help them to identify financial resources that might cover part or all of the costs of the training, possibly including financial assistance from DSB. The need for services such as readers or technology is also assessed. The counselor continues to work with the student throughout the post secondary program to ensure success.

Students planning to go to work after high school receive assistance in job exploration, job seeking, job development and placement from the DSB community employment specialist and counselor. If the student requires extra one-to-one assistance, a specialized job seeking and training program, supported employment, is available to help.

DSB Transition Services continues to offer summer programs for students who are blind or visually impaired, in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Raleigh. This program includes the World of Work (WOW) internship program, Summer Adjustment Vision for Youth (SAVVY), Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) a college prep program and a recreation program.

Students who participate in a third party DSB transition program have opportunities in their home communities to participate in summer jobs, WOW internships and other summer programs which include mini-centers for learning independent living skills to recreation programs that included learning to surf, kayaking or canoe trip with overnight campout. Students in transition programs have input in the type of summer program that will be developed in their community, through the programs career clubs.

The WOW program provided paid internships in jobs in which the student expressed an interest. The SAVVY program provided an opportunity to explore career interests, as well as specialized classes in Braille, safe travel, technology, and daily living skills. The college prep program included topics such as how to be a better advocate for themselves, visits to a disability service office both at a four-year college and a community college, introduction to various forms of assistive technology that could be useful to them while in college, information about different learning styles and study skills, and introduction to some daily living skills needed to survive in a dorm setting. The mini-centers in the students' home communities were the result of collaboration between transition staff and the independent living staff, with assistance from orientation and mobility staff and assistive technology personnel. The program included basic cooking, which included developing a shopping list and the purchase of the food and preparation; budgeting; doing laundry; use of public transportation systems; and information about self advocacy.

The goal of the transition program is to work with the student as early as possible to assist them in the development of a career path of their choice, and to be successful in reaching their goal of competitive, integrated employment.

#### **Our results**

- Total Students ages 14-21 active with DSB (402)
- Students active in Transition Programs where there are formal agreement with schools (270)
- Students participating in Mini- Centers and recreation programs in community (29)
- Students in summer work experiences (53)
- Students working part-time jobs (42)
- Students closed successfully working (7)

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## Supported Employment

Supported Employment facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings. It is meant for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment provides assistance such as job coaches, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision.

Supported employment is a way to move people from dependence on a service delivery system to independence via competitive employment. Recent studies indicate that the provision of on-going support services for people with severe disabilities significantly increases their rates for employment retention. Supported employment encourages people to work within their communities and encourages work, social interaction, and integration.

*A job coach* is employed by the placement agency to provide specialized on-site training to assist the employee with a disability in learning and performing the job. *Natural supports* are support from supervisors and co-workers, such as mentoring, friendships, socializing at breaks and/or after work, providing feedback on job performance, or learning a new skill when required. These natural supports are particularly effective enhancing the social integration between the employee with a disability and his/her co-workers and supervisor. In addition, natural supports are more permanent, consistently and readily available, thereby facilitating long-term job retention.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program through DSB provides intensive and on-going services to individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment. Services include assessment, direct job placement, intensive individualized on-site job training and coaching, and extended follow-up on the job site with the individuals and the employer to ensure a good job match. Supported Employment services are purchased from 15 private non-profit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) serving all 100 counties in North Carolina.

**Our results**

- 7 individuals were referred for supported employment services;
  - 20 individuals received services in community based assessments, job development, placement, job coaching and training;
  - 9 individuals received extended services;
  - 4 individuals were placed in competitive, integrated employment;
  - 2 closed successfully working ;
  - 11 are continuing in successful employment.
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**Work Adjustment**

The N.C. Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) community based work adjustment training program are services that are purchased from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) who are accredited by a public authority or professional organization such as (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, Council on Accreditation, or the Council on Quality Leadership). It is an outcome-based program involving a brief situational or community based assessment, work adjustment plan development, job placement services and job coaching services.

This program is designed for eligible individuals who are ready to go to work, but require intensive job placement services and initial on-the-job supports to be successful in employment. All services such as medical, adjustment to blindness, low vision and access technology, safe travel skills training (outside learning safe travel at the job site) and training services must be completed prior to referral for this service.

This program does not provide extended services, such as those provided through a Supported Employment (SE) program. Community-based employment is competitive integrated employment with employers in the community, and is outside any type of community rehabilitation facility.

**Our results:**

- 4 Individuals referred for services;
  - 10 Individuals received services;
  - 1 Individuals placed into competitive employment;
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The North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB) and Evaluation Unit are located on the historic Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. At RCB, consumers receive the opportunity to participate in assessments of their rehabilitation needs, comprehensive vocational evaluations and hands-on training to help them develop personal and pre-vocational goals and skills needed to obtain, regain and maintain employment and independence. Evaluation and skills training areas available at RCB include specialized vocational and psychological testing, work readiness skills, low vision services, assistive technology assessments and training in the use of adaptive equipment, personal and home management skills, safe travel skills, recreation therapy, leisure education, and community awareness and integration among others.

#### **Evaluation Unit Results**

- 94 Total consumers received EU services
- 67 Comprehensive evaluations;
- 11 Small Business Stand evaluations (BEP);
- 2 College evaluations;
- 2 Psychological-only evaluations;
- 7 Vocational-only assessments.

#### **Rehabilitation Center Results**

- 80 VR and ILR eligible individuals received adjustment to blindness training;
- 29 high school students were provided transitional services through the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) Programs: College Prep, Transition and World of Work (WOW).

Technology Support Services at the Center also provided technical assistance, information, demonstrations and tours for visitors to the Technology Center throughout the year.

#### **A New Name**

The Rehabilitation Center is **ABLE!**

Training programs for adults and new employees has a new name, "Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment - ABLE"! It will no longer be called, Adjustment to Blindness. This new name was chosen through the joint effort of RCB staff, RCB Advisory Committee members, and students at the Center. This new name was chosen

because it better reflects the purpose of the training that the adults and new employees receive at the Center. This change will require updates to division forms and manuals, as well as our web site and publications. The acronym for the summer transition program, SAVVY, will remain the same.

### **Acquisitions**

Technology continues to change at all times. At the NC RCB, the growth is picking up speed. The classrooms incorporated Apple products for teaching and training. The iPads were introduced to staff and students for portability, word processing, mapping, and Voiceover features. RCB Staff had the opportunity to train at SAS Institute in Cary, NC to learn the many accessibility features of the iPad that our students can use. The training included hands on instruction, manuals and presentations from experts. Our classes are also working with other technologies such as the hand held video magnifiers, equipment that attaches to the laptops and allows students to view material at a distance and newer models of the note taking devices.

Since the purchase of new exercise equipment (treadmill, upright bike and recumbent bike), there has been an increase in participation in both strength and cardio training with our adult consumers. This has primarily occurred due to increased accessibility and having enough equipment in the Cox Dorm gym to support larger exercise groups. Consumers are working towards therapeutic recreation (TR) goals for weight reduction, increased stamina and core strength which are direct preventions and treatment for medical conditions such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Consumers often experience immediate results and report positive lifestyle changes. Much thanks to the administration and affiliated parties for making this possible.

### **Programs**

The Therapeutic Recreation (TR) program at RCB recently developed a ceramics class in affiliation with the Governor Morehead School's art program. Both programs share a large kiln, ceramic tools and fire consumer projects together to save energy and increase productivity. The RCB consumers who participate in the ceramics classes learn

skills that can be utilized for both leisure and employment purposes upon completion of the ABLE program.

During the past year the consumers participated in interesting and engaging seminar sessions. Sessions focused on topics that helped prepare them to return to work by addressing issues related to employment. Examples of these are "dealing with perceptions of blindness by fellow employees, embarrassing situations in the work place, managing work relationships in the work place, factors to consider when going to work, how to prepare for going to work, how to keep a job, when to disclose your visual impairment to a potential employer" along with many other topics. Consumers seemed to have found these seminar sessions both challenging and beneficial.

There is a new psycho-educational group designed to assist Rehabilitation Center participants in increasing feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem. The topics include addressing the impact vision loss may have had on an individual's feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy, impact negative comments may have on an individual with vision loss, cultural and societal beliefs regarding vision loss, recognizing one's own negative thoughts about him/herself since vision loss, and different ways to begin to change negative thoughts about self. The group meets weekly for 6 weeks and participation is voluntary.

### **SAVVY**

The theme of the 2012 Savvy Summer Program at RCB was "Rise Above". The theme resonated with our Transition, College Prep and World of Work students and staff as it paid tribute to the ability to overcome the difficult choices and challenges in the daily lives of visually impaired youth. For the 29 students enrolled in the SAVVY summer program, the theme became a mantra for empowerment and independence. Workshops and activities focused on building healthy lifestyles, relationships and communities. The students also attended a variety of outings including a day trip to the Aquarium at Pine Knolls in Atlantic Beach, and an outing to see the stage production of the timeless Charles Dickens tale "Oliver", performed at the Progress Energy Center in Raleigh NC. Tickets to the stage show were donated by the NC Theatre.

## **Staff Training**

In May 2012, the Center offered New Employee Orientation training to 25 recently hired DSB employees. The employees resided in the dormitories on campus and were provided the opportunity to experience all aspects of the Rehab Center's day and evening programs. This training is mandatory for all new employees and is designed to provide them sensitivity to and awareness of the experiences of DSB consumers as well as introduce staff to essential skills needed to work with individuals who have vision loss.

## **Independent Living Services Program**

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, the Independent Living Services Program served 10,617 people, and they received one or more of the following services: Adjustment Services for the Blind, Health Support Services, Family Adjustment Services, Employment and Training, Housing and Home Improvement.

In-Home Aide Services for the Blind provided for 339 people and enabled them to continue living in their homes and/or communities. Information and Referral Services were available in all 100 counties.

## **Orientation and Mobility Services**

Orientation and mobility (O&M) is a type of training designed to promote safe, independent movement of persons with blindness or visual impairment. Orientation training is designed to help such individuals determine their location in space and how to plan travel from one point to another. Mobility training involves teaching visually impaired persons to move safely from one place to another, which often requires the use of a mobility device, such as a long cane. Using a combination of orientation and mobility techniques, persons who are blind or visually impaired can learn to move around their homes, communities and the world at large with greater independence. There are a variety of skills that help persons with visual impairments to achieve greater independence. Orientation and Mobility Specialist provide instruction or recommendations to maximize independent movement

5,646 clients received specialized Orientation and Mobility Services and were able to travel about more safely and with greater independence.

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### **Medical Eye Care Program**

The primary focus for the Medical Eye Care Program is the prevention of blindness and restoration of sight. A total of 7,982 people received services which addressed this goal during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. This total includes 1,880 eye examinations which were funded by this program and 2,165 children were screened for amblyopia and other vision defects. These screenings resulted in 69 children referred to eye doctors for follow up. The nine Nursing Eye Care Consultants provided low vision assessments for 2,485 people, CCTV Evaluations for 192 people and Diabetic Education for 320. With regard to restoration of vision, 2,008 pair of eyeglasses were purchased. The Division sponsored 530 treatment/surgeries which prevented blindness, and in many cases restored sight.

The nine Nursing Eye Care Consultants also participated in 25 events such as Health Fairs sponsored by Public and Private agencies/organizations.

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### **Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR)**

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is unique in that it provides a variety of services to individuals who are newly blinded, visually impaired and deaf blind. Because the nature of vision loss affects every aspect of an individual's life, these specialized services are essential to the successful transition and adaptation to life with vision loss. The variety of programs provided by DSB provides individuals with the skills necessary to live more independently and productively with quality of life.

The ILR program provides extensive services and supports to help maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence and productivity of individuals with significant vision loss. Independent living rehabilitation counselors (ILRCs) work as case managers for individuals receiving services. DSB employs 15 ILRCs who work out of seven district offices, serving all 100 counties in North Carolina. ILRC are available to

provide training in the home or through community based learning-centers known as Mini Centers. Classes are designed to keep individuals with vision loss in or near their local community and are held in senior centers, local churches, or other accessible spaces. Transportation to and from these training opportunities are provided and coordinated by DSB. Mini Centers provide an encouraging environment for group instruction and peer support. Curriculums may include training in the following areas: cooking, daily living skills, Braille, assistive technology, access to printed materials, aids and appliances, community services, safe travel, deaf-blind services, health awareness, advocacy, personal management/self care, safety, meal preparation, communication, and low vision rehabilitation. Other services provided by the program include, but are not limited to: diagnostic and assessment services; adjustment to vision loss counseling; information and referral services and; extensive independent living skills training.

The ILR program collaborates with other specialized agency staff which may include social workers for the blind, orientation and mobility specialists, nurse eye care consultants, deaf blind specialists, AT specialists /instructors and vocational rehabilitation counselors to provide a variety of services that help empower individuals to reach their independent living rehabilitation goals. Contact us today to see how we can be of service to you or someone you know with vision loss.

#### **Our Results**

- 1313 consumers served
- 424 consumers rehabilitated

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### **Deaf-Blind Annual Report**

Each year the NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) serves individuals with both vision and hearing loss through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Independent Living Rehabilitation Program. This history of service runs long and deep. Since the inception of the agency in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, DSB has been providing the support, training and services to individuals with hearing and vision loss. The goal of services is to allow individuals to reach their maximum potential with

training and support from the agency. Many times assessments are conducted on individuals who are skeptical of services; dealing with the onset of another sensory loss can be overwhelming. DSB employs five Deaf-Blind Specialists who are experts in the field of hearing and vision loss. Last year, 157 individuals received services from the Deaf-Blind Specialists. Below are the stories of individuals who were served by DSB's Deaf-Blind Specialists.

<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>VR</b>	<b>ILR &amp; ILS</b>	<b>Total Served</b>
ASHEVILLE	13	11	24
WINSTON	31	38	69
RALEIGH	32	41	73
WILMINGTON	7	10	17
GREENVILLE	16	12	28
TOTAL	99	112	211

**I can hear you now, and things are going to be different this year**

Life for Ricky Covington was pretty tough. Mr. Covington is a 47 year old man legally blind due to Glaucoma with significant hearing loss since birth. He has worn hearing aids most of his life, which have served him well until this past year. When I became Ricky's Deaf Blind Specialist, he had two major problems. He desperately needed a job, and he started losing more hearing as well as his hearing aids were not working very well. Ricky never learned sign language, and always relied on spoken language. Realizing that without the ability to communicate due to his hearing, it was going to be extremely tough to get employment with a struggling economy.

Ricky and I decided to tackle his communication problem first. As Ricky's Deaf-Blind Specialist, I helped him get a pocketalker, which is a device that amplifies sound. It has a microphone to pick up sound and headphones to transmit sound. This device worked face to face if Ricky was in a six foot radius of someone. If Ricky wanted to

hear what was going on in his life and the world around him, he would have to take the pocketalker everywhere he went. Even with this device, talking on the phone for Ricky was horrific. He could only pick up on one or two of my screaming words. Sometimes he would just apologize and say "Sorry, I can't understand what you are saying." Stop a minute and think about it. What if you could not use your phone for one day..... let alone for months? What a frustrating situation! Ricky was frustrated and desperate. He went to two different medical doctors as he wanted a second opinion. They both agreed that hearing aids would no longer be beneficial for him, and that he was a prime candidate for a cochlear implant. Worried and confused, Ricky said he was clueless about cochlear implants. When Ricky told me the situation he was in, I remembered a friend of mine that previously had a cochlear implant and was doing beautifully. A meeting was arranged with my friend, Carol Tabor, and Ricky. The meeting provided a way Ricky could talk with someone who had been there and lived the experience of getting a cochlear implant. During the meeting, Ricky asked many insightful questions that explained the entire procedure from start to finish. He did not realize that surgery was involved in getting a cochlear implant, and that his head must heal before going back to the doctor to get the cochlear turned on. He did not know that with a cochlear, sounds would be a little mechanical. He would have to train his brain with practice to understand what something would sound like through the cochlear, and then re-train his brain to understand sounds he had not heard in a long time.

After the meeting, Ricky had a much more realistic view of what is involved in receiving a cochlear implant. He also saw first-hand how a cochlear implant can successfully bring someone back to the hearing world. He stated that this meeting was invaluable to him as he made his decision to get the implant. Ricky received his cochlear implant in the spring of this year. He knew what to expect every step of the way. He was not shocked when the first time he turned on his cochlear and said "it sounded like the teacher on the Charlie Brown cartoons, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah"! He knew from his meeting with Carol Tabor that his brain would take some time to adjust to the new sounds, and that he must practice. One month after the implant, I called Ricky **on the**

**phone** and asked him if he could hear me now? Loud and clear, Ricky said "I can hear you now"! What a glorious moment! Congratulations Ricky and welcome back to the hearing world!

Now that Ricky can hear the world around him again, we worked on his second problem, employment. Ricky said that, "now that I can hear so much better, I am READY\_for work", yes indeed! We updated his resume and completed multiple mock interviews. Ricky and I vigorously job searched and applied on line for employment for many entry level positions. With much job searching on line and in person Ricky had a few interviews that did not work out. During a DSB VR counselor meeting, through a shared job listing, an opportunity became available for a janitorial position with the Raleigh Lions Clinic for the Blind. This competitive job seemed perfect for Ricky. When, I called Ricky and asked him if he was interested in this position he said, "Lord, Yes"! His VR counselor also spoke with the employer and offered an On the Job Training Agreement if he got hired. I helped Ricky complete the application and submit it to the Raleigh Lions Clinic for the Blind. Ricky was called in for an interview the very next week! Being turned down before, Ricky did not want to get his hopes up too much, but he let me know that he really wanted this job. I reminded him that we had been practicing interview questions, and he was ready. Ricky interviewed with staff and was offered the position. Ricky was elated, but still a little worried. The staff told him he must dress professionally. He did not have the wardrobe needed to look professional. Ricky's VR counselor authorized for Ricky to get clothing he desperately needed to be successful in this position. I drove Ricky to JC Penney and shopped for work clothes which resulted in 7 work shirts, 4 pairs of khakis, one pair of jeans, and one pair of New Balance tennis shoes. All are appropriate for janitorial work according to his new supervisor. The smile on Rick's face was HUGE!

To ensure success for Ricky, it was agreed that as Ricky's DB Specialist, I would job coach with him at his work site every Tuesday for two hours for one month. With the supervisor's input, we fine tuned a daily routine, worked on proper grid cleaning techniques, proper chemicals, proper equipment, and safety. Ricky progressed

effectively each week increasing his speed and quality of work. So far, his employer seems pleased with Ricky's performance so far.

Like anyone would, Ricky is enjoying making money for himself again. Ricky shared with me how bad he felt last Christmas that he could not afford to buy his family members Christmas presents. Then, he told me with a BIG Ricky grin.....things are going to be different this year!

This is a success story of a hard-working individual who happens to be Deaf-Blind. Through the resources available, the Deaf-Blind Program, the transition program, and much determination, Tramaine has his own personal success story. His motivation and ability to set personal and vocational goals has proven to be a winning combination. This young man enjoys participating and getting involved in community activities such as Camp Dogwood and the annual North Carolina Deaf- Blind Association (NCBDA) conference, and he has matured and grown so much in the past two years. As a Deaf-Blind Specialist, I not only have the opportunity to provide information to consumers on Deaf, Blind, and Deaf-Blind resources and community events, but also to offer assistance with job seeking skills, jobs development, and job placement.

Two years ago I met a Tramaine and began providing Deaf-Blind services to consumer. He was quite shy and withdrawn at first and he did not think he could work. As time progressed, Tramaine began to agree to try new experiences and he developed more and more confidence in himself. His positive attitude, development of new attainable goals, and a desire to achieve his goals contribute to his success. After assisting Tramaine with job development and visiting numerous local businesses, he chose his ideal work environment. Tramaine's vocational goal was to work as a stocker at Target Retail Store. He took advantage of another Deaf-Blind service and participated in and successfully completed the Job Skills Seeking Class taught during the Transition Mini-Center.

This is a true success story because Tramaine chose to participate in planning his future and achieved goals he set for himself. He not only works at Target, but he went from part-time to full time. Tramaine is doing so well on the job that he was recently recognized as the Employee of the Month for in his department! The Target supervisors and team members have been willing and eager participants of learning sign language and work survival signs, and participating in sensitivity training offered by the Deaf-Blind program.

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### **HOW TO CONTACT DSB**

Office of the Director: (919) 733-9822

Aids and Appliances: (919) 715-0249

Business Enterprises Program: (919) 733-9703

Communications Unit (Produces Materials in Alternate Format for Blind and Visually Impaired): (919) 715-2436

Evaluation Unit: (919) 733-4281 Voice/TTY

Independent Living Services: (919) 733-9744

Medical Eye Care Program: (919) 733-9744

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind: (919) 733-5897

Rehabilitation Services: (919) 733-9700 Voice/TTY

- Community Rehabilitation Program

- Deaf/Blind Services

- Independent Living Rehabilitation

- Supported Employment Services

- Rehabilitation Engineer

Technology Resource Center: (919) 733-5897

CARE-LINE 1-800-622-7030 for access to a Spanish Interpreter

Website: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb/>

### **District Offices**

Asheville

50 South French Broad Avenue

Asheville, NC 28801

(828) 251-6732 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1881

Charlotte

5855 Executive Center Drive, Suite 100

Charlotte, NC 28212

(704) 563-4168 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1895

Fayetteville

225 Green Street

Fayetteville, NC 28301

(910) 486-1582 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1897

Greenville

404 St. Andrews Drive

Greenville, NC 27834

(252) 355-9016 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1877

Raleigh

309 Ashe Avenue

Raleigh, NC 27606

(919) 733-4234 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1871

Wilmington

3240 Burnt Mill Road, Suite 7

Wilmington, NC 28403

(910) 251-5743Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-1884

Winston-Salem

4265 Brownsboro Road, Suite 100

Winston-Salem, NC 27106

(336) 896-2227 Voice/TTY

1 (800) 422-0373