



# Innovation and Opportunity Rule!



*2017 Annual Report*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES &  
THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT



*Consumer  
Services*



*Employer  
Services*



*Assistive  
Technology*



*Medical  
Assistance*



*Independent  
Living*



*As part of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the N.C. Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) strongly supports the department's mission, which is, in collaboration with its partners, to protect the health and safety of all North Carolinians, especially those with visual impairments, blindness or deaf-blindness, and provide essential human services.*

# Our 2016 Annual Report

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# Services for the Blind

## *State Rehabilitation Council 2016-17*

**David Barnwell, Chairperson**

Representative of Business, Labor and Industry

**David M. Horton, Vice Chairperson**

Community Rehabilitation Services Provider

**Helene C. Wells**

Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

**Anastasia S. Powell**

Advocacy Group for Persons with Disabilities

**Agreta Limerick**

N.C. Division of Workforce Development

**Karen J. Kelly**

Parent of a Child with a Disability

**Sandra Hicks**

Statewide Independent Living Council

**Celeste Hunt**

Director of Projects Carried out under  
Section 121 of Rehabilitation Act

**Debra T. Pickens**

Parent Training and Information Center

**John Marens**

Director of the N.C. Client Assistance Program  
(NCCAP)

**Vacant**

Representative from the Department of  
Public Instruction

## Ex-Officio Members

**Cynthia Speight, Director**

Division of Services for the Blind

**Jordan D. Thomas,**

*Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor*

Division of Services for the Blind

# State Rehabilitation Council *Chairperson's Message*

*As Chairperson for the Division of Services for the Blind, it is an honor to present the 2016-2017 Annual Report. The theme of this annual report is "Innovation and Opportunity Rule." In these changing times, as our society sees technological advances almost daily, it is vital that we do all we can to ensure that these advances in technology are readily available for people who are blind or visually impaired. The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind has enabled North Carolinians with visual impairments to acquire the skills and assistive technology necessary to be successful.*

*This annual report will show how the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is using innovation through many different training opportunities for children and adults that clearly prepare clients to be ready for the many challenges and opportunities that are available.*

*A heart felt "thank you" to the staff and all who have made this year a success and paved the way for Innovation and Opportunity in these challenging times.*

**David Horton**, *Chairperson*

North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

# Division of Services for the Blind *Director's Message*

*The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) along with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) are pleased to submit our 2017 Annual Report. DSB greatly appreciates the commitment of the SRC in partnering with and advising us in the development and provision of innovative rehabilitation programs and services designed to best meet the needs of North Carolinians who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind.*

*As you review this report, you will learn about the various ways that DSB has embraced the opportunities afforded by the WIOA. It has been an exciting year in which we have experienced enhanced collaboration with workforce partners, developed new resources for the provision of pre-employment transition and supported employment services and increased the number and types of consumer work experiences provided in addition to many other accomplishments. Innovation and opportunity have truly ruled and I am thankful for the tireless efforts and dedication of DSB staff in helping those we serve achieve their goals of employment and independence.*

**Cynthia Speight**, Director

N.C. Division of Services for the Blind

# 2017 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. DSB sent 556 surveys and 59 were returned completed.

Here is what our consumers had to say:

## Did DSB Staff...

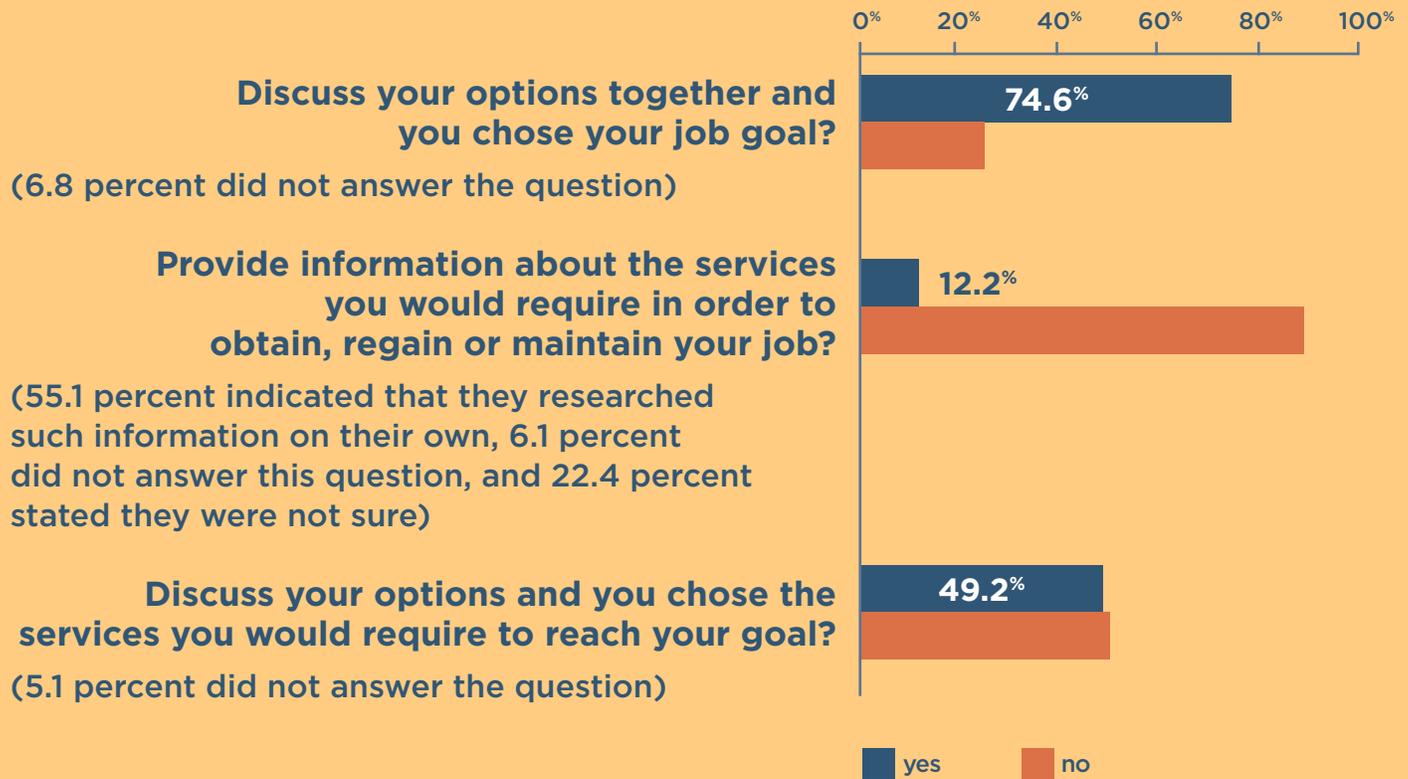


## Did DSB Rehabilitation Counselor...



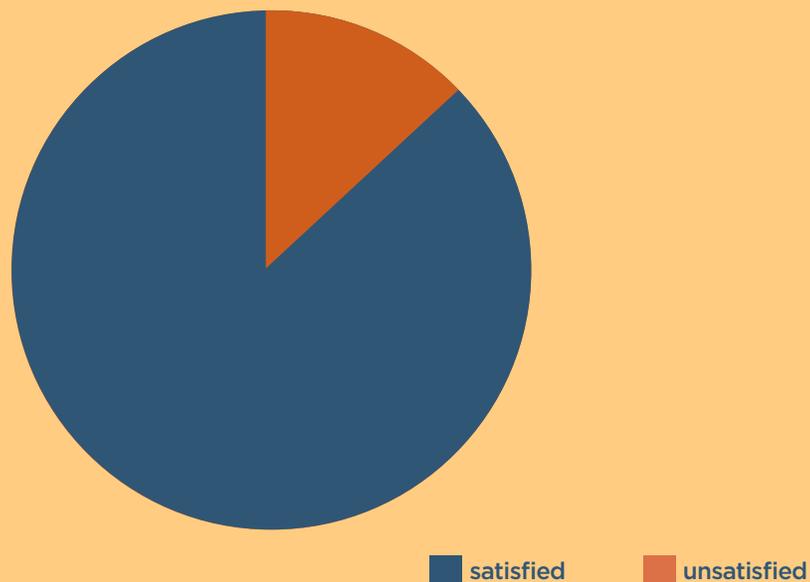
(20.3 percent stated such referral was not necessary and were therefore not included)

## When developing your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), Did your Counselor...



## Satisfaction with Overall Experience:

89 percent of survey respondents reported being satisfied with their overall experience with DSB.



## DSB *Vocational Rehabilitation Services*



*Student using a slate and stylus to take notes*

People with blindness or visual impairment who want to work may be eligible for Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation (DSB VR) services. DSB provides vocational rehabilitation to help individuals obtain, maintain, or regain employment. All services provided by this program are geared toward gainful employment that will result in self-support and independence. Eligible people develop an individualized plan of services to help them reach their vocational goal which may include guidance and counseling, medical, training, and job search and development services that best suit their individual vocational needs.

DSB's *Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors* and specialized *Transition Rehabilitation Counselors* serve as counselors and case managers for people requesting vocational rehabilitation services. They are responsible for providing and coordinating the services necessary to go to work. Teamwork with specialists in specific areas - DSB *Business Services Representatives, Community Employment Specialists, a Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, Assistive Technology Instructors, a Vocational Evaluator and various Rehabilitation Center staff, as well as Deaf-Blind Specialists* who work with people with both blindness and hearing loss - is coor-

minated through the DSB VR staff. In addition, all support staff in the area and district offices, as well as the team of administrators in the state office, strive to find ways to assist people achieve successful employment outcomes. Services are coordinated with DSB *Social Workers for the Blind, Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Nurse Eye Care Consultants* as needed.

Accessible services are planned according to each person's employment goals and needs. Some services provided are based on economic need, while others are provided regardless of income. These services may include:

• **Pre-Employment Transition Services for all Students with Disabilities, which includes:**

- (1) Job exploration counseling
- (2) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- (3) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- (4) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living

*Accessible services are planned according to each person's employment goals and needs.*

(5) Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

- **Guidance and Counseling services**, such as vocational/career counseling, job retention counseling, adjustment to vision loss counseling, and supportive counseling
- **Training services**, such as vocational and/or job specific or academic training, orientation and mobility services to teach individuals safe travel skills (use of a sighted guide and white cane, and safety techniques to travel independently), on-the-job training, supported employment, or work adjustment job coaching
- **Independent living training** at the residential training DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind or through local staff
- **Assistive technology** required for the vocational goal, such as low-vision evaluations and equipment purchase, assistive technology evaluations and purchase of equipment, video magnification (CCTV) evaluations, or training in use of the equipment either locally or at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind
- **School to work services**, such as counseling with students beginning at age 14 as they plan their future and providing the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) program at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, Youth Mini-Centers, various specialized programming for youth

- **Job placement services**, such as job matching, job search skills training, work experiences, job modification, and follow-up services

- **Medical services** that are required for eligible persons to obtain, maintain, or regain employment, such as diagnostic eye examinations, eye glasses or other types of corrective lens, eye treatment, eye care education and eye surgery

## DSB VR Business Development and Placement Services

To improve the employment outcomes of persons with blindness, visual impairments, or deaf-blindness, DSB supports the dual customer approach – consumers AND businesses are welcomed as customers of DSB services. Business services, such as work observations, on-the-job training, and job modifications address the recruiting and hiring needs of employers with attention to supporting businesses' bottom lines.

This year, a major initiative has been to increase the offering of Work Experiences and Supported Employment opportunities to those that require it or could benefit from it. This effort gives those who need it or could benefit from it the opportunity to obtain valuable and educational real work experiences with the needed supports to help them obtain their desired competitive employment goal.



*Student at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind perfecting work-related skills*

## Impact of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA)

President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law on July 22, 2014. The law was passed by Congress with wide bipartisan majority (The Senate voted 93-5 and the House of Representatives voted 415-6). The law speaks loudly in support of quality employment services for those with disabilities and was noted to reaffirm the ongoing role of American Job Centers and promotes program coordination and alignment of key employment, education, and training programs at the Federal, State, local, and regional levels.

The Opportunity Act builds on proven practices such as sector strategies, career pathways, regional economic approaches, work-based training.

WIOA increases individuals with disabilities' access to high quality workforce services and prepares them for competitive integrated employment. Secondary to WIOA, there will be a unified state plan must include all the core programs, including DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services. WIOA also introduced the concept of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities ages 14-21 years of age.

It also mandated a 15% set aside for the delivery of those very specific services.

DSB continues to intensify its efforts to meet the innovation and opportunity challenges of WIOA and beyond! DSB has concentrated on strengthening its Pre-Employment Transition Services through the activity of PETS Associates to go out and find our students with blindness visual impairment and deaf-blindness that are not presently served by a dedicated Transition Counselor, use of the American Printing House Transition Tote System as an accessible curriculum for initiating some PETS services, intensively training our VR staff regarding the delivery and accessibility of PETS services. DSB has also begun working

with Technical Assistance Centers to assist us in better addressing issues in our state of poverty among our target group, pre-employment transition services as a whole, WIOA implementation and policy development as well as strengthening our relationship with the One Stop Centers.

DSB has made great strides in better meeting the needs of our clients through compliance with WIOA and our efforts continue. Innovation and Opportunity definitely rule in 2017!

*DSB continues to intensify its efforts to meet the innovation and opportunity challenges of WIOA and beyond!*



*SAAVY students building confidence and challenging themselves on the rock wall*

## DSB VR Outcomes for SFY 2016-2017

- ***DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services were provided to 3218 individuals with blindness or low vision***
- ***DSB VR has achieved 311 successful employment closures***
- ***Average wages for successfully employed consumers: \$12.71 per hour***
- ***One-hundred-eighteen VR consumers were supported through sponsorship and assistive technology to participate in Unpaid Work Experiences to prepare them for their chosen profession. Forty-five of those individuals were Students under the age of 22***
- ***DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Program provided services to 37 people with military service experience***

## DSB *Assistive Technology Services*

DSB offers assistive technology services through its seven district offices as well as the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to assist people who require assistive technology (AT) to be successful with employment, training, education, and independent living goals.

DSB has six AT Consultants and one Rehabilitation Engineer. These staff are based in district offices and provide individualized technology assessments and services at a person's job site, school setting or home. AT Consultants conduct assessments, recommend equipment, facilitate the purchase of equipment, deliver and set up the equipment either in the home or at a job, and follow-up to make sure the equipment is being used as designed. Equipment and adaptations addressed may include computers, Braille displays, high tech low vision devices, mobile devices, lighting adaptations, and safe-

ty concerns. Consultation to employers of individuals who are visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind is also provided. Four Assistive Technology Instructors are available to provide individualized assessments of AT instruction needs as well as one-on-one and small group instruction across the state. AT Instructors are available to guide persons in maximizing their ability to utilize adaptive equipment. Each district office contains a selection of equipment for evaluation and training purposes.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind offers numerous classes on various types of technology including computers, mobile technologies and Braille technology. A Technology Resource Center based at the Center has adaptive equipment for large print, speech and Braille access. This equipment is available by appointment for demonstration and evaluation.

*AT Instructors  
are available  
to guide  
persons in  
maximizing their  
ability to  
utilize adaptive  
equipment.*



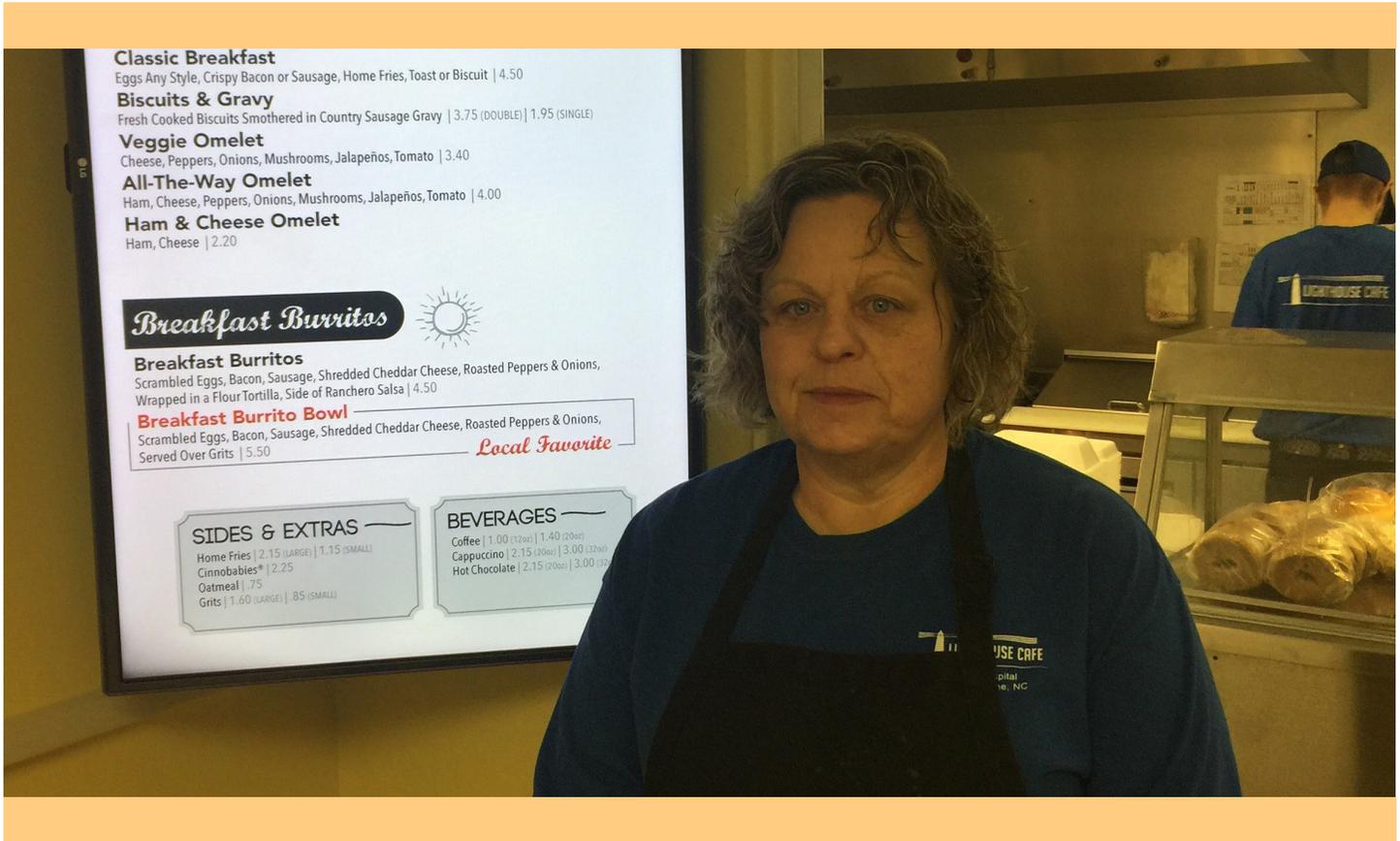
*Learning computer skills using JAWS software*

## DSB VR Assistive Technology Outcomes for FY 2017

Assistive technology is constantly evolving. Assistive technology staff meets yearly for in-service training to maintain expertise in providing AT services to blind, visually impaired, and deafblind consumers. This year, training was provided on the Braille Note Touch, Chromebook, Samsung Galaxy, Mac & iOS accessibility, best practices, job placement skills & AT services, upgraded Windows 10, and NuEyes Device.

***There were over 435 DSB VR clients served by Assistive Technology field staff.***

# DSB *Business Enterprises Services*



*Business Enterprise Operator, Brenda Miller, provides quality service and nourishing meals to soldiers at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, the United States military training facility in Jacksonville, North Carolina.*

During FFY 2017 gross sales from all BEP food service and vending facilities increased to \$10,869,835 compared to 2016 FFY \$10,811,989. There was a slight decrease in gross profit percentage, 38 percent for FFY 2017 compared to 41 percent for FFY 2016. Operators' net proceeds paid totaled \$3,481,080 during FFY 2017 compared to \$3,231,307 paid during FFY 2016. Because of a policy change, guaranteed minimum return for the FFY 2017 significantly declined to \$170 compared to \$30,540 for FFY 2016.

North Carolina Business Enterprises currently has 59 licensed blind operators who

manage 146 food and vending facilities on state, federal and private properties. The N.C. Business Enterprises administration consist of 11 employees. The administration in collaboration with the Elected Committee of Blind Vendors continue to focus on the overall growth of NC Business Enterprises. In 2017 a licensed blind operator, with the support of North Carolina Business Enterprises, teamed with Orion Foods to introduce a new food service model at the Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital. This model is designed to better meet the shifting eating habits of on-the-go customers while still providing restaurant quality food. This partnership has resulted in an 11% increase in sales for the operator.

## DSB School to Work Transition Services



*Learning essential skills to obtain overall independence*

School to Work Transition Services provides eligible North Carolina high school students with visual impairments a personalized set of services for successful movement through secondary school, post-secondary school, post-school activities and successful employment outcomes. The services can start as early as age 14, and include vocational counseling, career exploration, post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), independent living or community participation.

The services take into account the student's preferences and interests, and in-

clude counseling, community experiences, development of plans for employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In 11 school systems, specialized third-party agreements have been established, and specialized programs are in place to serve students at the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. These programs provide trained DSB VR Counselors and community employment specialists to work with students, as well as with school systems to enhance opportunities in students' home

communities. These students participate in summer jobs, World of Work (WOW) internships and other summer programs, such as learning independent living skills at available Mini Centers, STEM programs or summer camps.

Students needing education after high school to reach their vocational goals are assisted by a DSB VR counselor in planning and obtaining the required training. The counselor can assist in locating a vocational or post-secondary training site featuring classes that prepare them for their job goal, help identify financial resources to cover part or all of the training costs, including financial assistance from DSB, and in obtaining assistive technology required to complete the training. The counselor continues working 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 a DSB Community Employment Specialist and counselor. If the student requires additional one-on-one assistance, specialized job seeking and training programs, such as community-based work adjustment or supported employment, is available to help in many cases.

*The counselor continues working with the student throughout the post-secondary program to ensure success.*

DSB Transition Services provide summer programs for students who are blind or visually impaired, in collaboration with DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind's Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital for Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) programs in Raleigh. This program includes three focus areas: a WOW internship program, training for independent living skills and career exploration for younger youth and college preparation for older students.

Approximately 25 students with the Transition Program are graduating from high school this year, and DSB is prepared to support them as they transition to work, school-to-job training or post-secondary training.

Our Assistive Technology consultants provide AT assessments to youth transitioning from high school to post-secondary educational institutions. AT assessments are also performed for consumers who need accommodations at their worksite in order for them to maintain employment. For consumers already enrolled in college, DSB purchased the recommended technology needed to be successful in college, including computers, printers, portable CCTV's and JAWS or Zoomtext software.

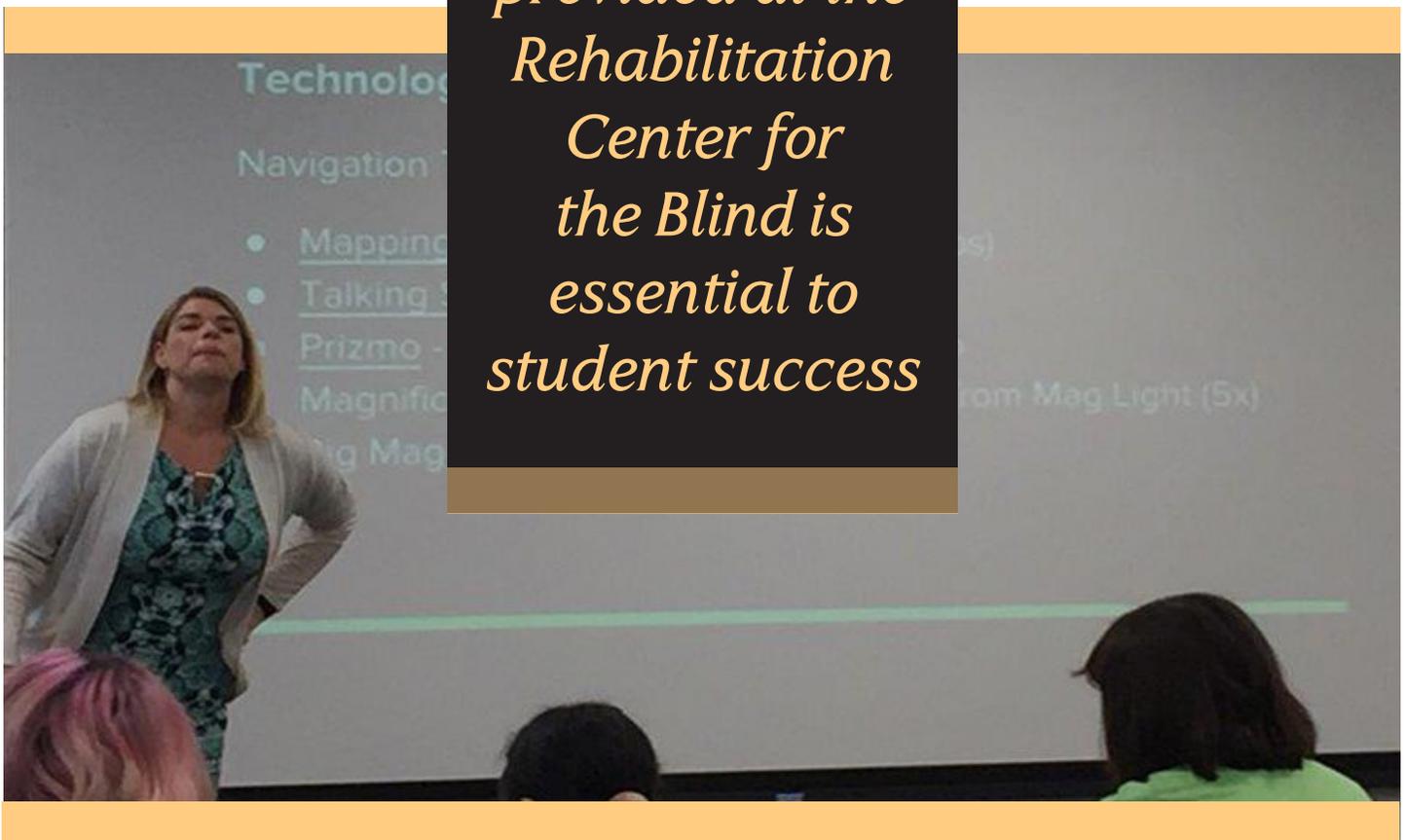
Transition counselors and community employment specialist throughout the state continue to seek job-shadowing opportunities and trial work experiences tailored to each student's vocational interest and career goals.

DSB transition counselors and community employment specialists also continue to seek internship opportunities with employers. This past year, the Transition Program provided 45 work experiences to youth in several settings.

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

***Total students, aged 14 – 21 active with DSB: 367***

***Classroom instruction provided at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind is essential to student success***



## DSB *Pre-Employment Transition Services*



*Students enjoy Pre-Employment Transition Services through an introduction to higher education opportunities at UNC-Greensboro*

DSB's Transition Program has continued to provide exceptional transitional services to youth with visual impairments in North Carolina that are eligible for DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation program. The program's continued partnerships with high school visual impairment instructors, and exceptional children staff at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and in various school systems remains very strong. These partnerships have been reinvigorating and the support of the administrative staff, guidance counselors, EC case managers, and EC teachers has proven beneficial in the growth of the Transition Program.

With the passing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that was signed into law July 22, 2014, DSB has begun a program of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities (including potentially eligible students) so they can successfully obtain competitive integrated employment. The law defines student with a disability as: "student with a disability" applies to all students enrolled in educational programs, including postsecondary education programs, so long as they satisfy the

age requirements set forth in final §361.5(c) (51) (ages 14 - 21). The definition is also inclusive of secondary students who are homeschooled, as well as students in other non-traditional secondary educational programs.

There are five Pre-ETS that the act requires to be provided. They are:

(1) Job exploration counseling

(2) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible

(3) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education

(4) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living

(5) Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

DSB continues to implement methods to ensure that these services are provided to students with visual disabilities across

North Carolina with the highest of quality. DSB as an agency has provided training to the DSB VR Counselors on Pre-ETS.

Another method to deliver the services was to hire PETS Associates for each district office. Two associates have been hired and have been working to identify potentially eligible students in the school system and to deliver a specific curriculum to them. Approximately 88 public schools, charter schools, community colleges and universities have been presented with the DSB Pre-ETS Program. Five students have completed the program from January to June.

DSB partnered with the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and post a Request for Application for the provision of Pre-ETS. The team has reviewed approximately 33 proposals. There are four that are still in the review stage of the process and approximately eight in the consultation or negotiation stage. At this point, eight contracts will be executed during the 2017 - 2018 fiscal year with seven more during the 2018 - 2019 fiscal year. These contract numbers are subject to change based on the outcome of the consultations and negotiations.



*Work-based Learning gives students the opportunity to have hands-on experiences in the real world*

## DSB *Transition Summer Youth* Mini Centers

DSB VR Counselors continue to provide a week-long Youth Mini Center in various parts of the state during the summer, in collaboration with DSB independent living counselors. During this week-long Mini-Center, transition counselors and community employment specialists assist ILR counselors and Mini Center instructors in teaching self-advocacy skills, life skills, cooking, cleaning, labeling, introduction to braille, and other self-help skills. DSB orientation and mobility specialist and nursing eye care consultants participate in the week-long Mini Center, providing orientation and mobility skills assessments and low vision assessments to students. They are also given an opportunity for cultural enrichment and community inclusion through participation in various recreational activities and programs offered in the local community. Many students participating this summer gained independent living skills training, while also learning from peers in a group environment.

There were six Youth/Pre-Ets mini-centers held from February through August, 2017. A total of 51 youth were served through these centers. Of those, all 51 were considered Pre-Ets students.

Some of the training/services that were received included: organizational skills training, workplace readiness training, career planning, time management, self-advocacy, job exploration, assistive technology, counseling on higher education, orientation & mobility training, low vision services, and writing techniques. Independent living skills were also taught in the areas of: cooking,

laundry, and personal grooming, labeling and color identification.

There were many different community inclusion activities offered during the weeks of the centers also. Some of the activities included: adaptive bowling, lunch at a restaurant, descriptive movie, painting pottery pieces at a local potter, visit to art museum, visit to the natural science museum and aquarium. Also, college tours and visits to disability services offices were held at several locations.

Many of the mini-centers had outside speakers to come in to talk with the youth. They ranged from professionals speaking on their individual careers to past clients of DSB talking about their success and how they got to where they are today. Community Employment Specialist and Business Service Representatives also talked with them regarding resumes and interviewing skills. There was a speaker at one center that spoke regarding financial independence.

For one of the six mini-centers, the Winston-Salem District office partnered with the Adaptables CIL to present DSB Youth Empowerment Program Mini Center. This was a five-day program of self-advocacy training. There were nine participants. There were presentations on goal setting/decision making, body language and job interviews, disclosure, self-awareness, self-advocacy and disability history. They were involved in interactive activities such as role-playing scenarios they could encounter with employers and mock interviews.

## DSB *Supported Employment Services*



*Competitive Integrated Work is the goal of all DSB Vocational Rehabilitation clients*

Supported Employment Services is designed for people with the most significant disabilities who struggle to find competitive employment. With the assistance of supported employment services, these people are able to obtain competitive work in integrated work settings, receive specialized on-site job training, then receive ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment is a way to move people from dependence on a service delivery system to independence via competitive employment.

The DSB VR program provides supported employment services for 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 person and the employer to ensure a good job match. Supported Employment services are purchased from various Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP), serving all 100 counties in North Carolina. Job coaches are employed by the facilities to provide

specialized on-site training to assist the employee with a disability in learning and performing the job.

The job coaches work with the employer for training of their staff for development of natural supports for these people at the job site. Natural supports are provided by supervisors and co-workers, and include 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 for enhancing social integration between an employee with a disability and his/her coworkers and supervisor. Natural supports are more permanent, consistently and readily available and greatly facilitate long-term job retention.

With WIOA, customized employment was added to the list of ways that a client with the most significant disabilities can work to accomplish their employment goals even when Supported Employment efforts have proven unsuccessful. To address this need, DSB has offered a more customized approach. This involves the construction of a very individualized and diverse team

of professional partners from varying agencies working together to support the counselor and the client in reaching the final goal of competitive integrated employment. This process has many team members and is inspired by the client's employment goal and determination to succeed.

*This process is inspired by the client's employment goal and determination to succeed.*

## DSB VR Supported Employment Outcomes for FY 2016

- *The number of individuals receiving services in community-based assessments, job development, placement, job coaching and training has almost doubled over the past year.*
- *Six Community Rehabilitation Programs were added as vendors for SE services over the past year.*
- *Four Community Rehabilitation Programs were granted contracts to provide Supported Employment Extended Services.*

## Community-Based *Work* Adjustment



*Many students learn best while working in the community.*

DSB created a community-based work adjustment training program in 2010 with services purchased from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). The outcome-based program involves a brief situational or community base assessment, work adjustment plan development, job placement services and job coaching services.

This program is designed for eligible people ready to go to work but who need 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 traveling skills training (outside of 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.

## DSB *Rehabilitation Center for the Blind* and Evaluation Unit



The North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB) and Evaluation Unit are located on the campus of the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. Consumers at RCB have the opportunity to participate in assessments of their rehabilitation needs, general vocational evaluations and hands-on training to help them develop personal and pre-vocational goals and skills needed to obtain, regain and maintain employment as well as increase independent living skills.

Evaluation and skills training areas available at the 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, community awareness and integration, increasing academic skills, improving study skills, self-advocacy, and developing job-seeking skills as well as workplace-appropriate interpersonal skills.

*The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind helps clients adjust to their visual impairment while working on skills that easily transfer to the home environment.*

## DSB Evaluation Unit Result

74 total consumers received EU services

65 general evaluations

48 low vision evaluations

3 small business stand evaluations (BEP)

5 college evaluations

2 psychological-only evaluations

4 vocational-only evaluations

## DSB Rehabilitation Center Results

71 VR eligible individuals received training in the Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment program

26 teens were provided transition services through the SAVVY Youth in Transition, College Prep and World of Work programs

68 individuals received assessments by classroom instructors

412 class assessments were provided

25 individuals received low vision evaluations and/or low vision therapy

4 adults participated in work experiences

## The DSB Evaluation Unit

The Evaluation Unit recently invested in new testing materials to provide a more comprehensive assessment of abilities. Q-interactive, offers advanced assessment tools used with current technology. It is a comprehensive digital system, that uses two iPads to administer testing. Administering tests in this manner improves administration accuracy and speed, provides real time scoring, and allows for unheard of flexibility in just a few simple taps. The NEO Personality Inventories provide a comprehensive and detailed assessment of

adult and adolescent personality. The new software system generates counselor and client-directed information and a professional development report that provides job-relevant information.

## NEST

During Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, thirty new DSB employees and community guests participated in the week-long NEST New Employee Sensitivity Trainings at the center. The employees were provided the opportunity to experience aspects of the center's training programs and were exposed to the skills essential for working with visually impaired people. The skills training included areas such as cooking and home management, orientation and mobility, Braille, adaptive computer usage, careers, college prep, consumer education and recreation therapy as well as sessions on the psychological effects of visual impairment, diabetes, low vision concerns and adaptations, issues related to deaf-blindness, business enterprises and 1Touch (self-defense). The employees resided on campus and engaged in evening campus and community activities of choice.

## Training Highlights

At this year's RCB annual in-service training, RCB staff participated in an eight-hour mental health first aid course sponsored by Alliance Behavioral Health. The program introduces the risk factors and warning signs of mental illnesses, builds understanding of their impact, overviews common supports, and teaches the common risk factors and warning signs of specific types of illnesses, like anxiety, depression, substance use, bipolar disorder, eating disorders and schizophrenia.

The RCB staff also participated in an online seminar and a one-day on-site Touch Signals seminar for the *Haptics Communication with Ashley Benton & Marilyn Trader, Touch Signals Trainers*. The online portion of the course focused on the fundamentals of touch signals including definitions, history and practical uses. During the on-site seminar, participants engaged in skills-based learning.

In April 2017, the Rehab Center for the Blind was the host site for two days of hands-on JAWS training by Freedom Scientific. In attendance were teachers and staff from the Rehab Center and staff from DSB offices throughout the state. The training covered setting up JAWS, including installation, configuration, and troubleshooting. Topics presented included basic shortcuts for reading and navigating text. The second day of training covered web navigation and more advanced topics.

1Touch coaches renewed their annual certifications and one coach attended the next level training which is designed for individuals in wheelchairs. Instructors taught 1Touch Self-Defense for the Blind to SAVVY students as well and have an



*SAVVY students learn cooking and food preparation skills to help foster lifelong independence and provide possible work-related skills*

ongoing program for teaching 1Touch during the ABLÉ program all year long.

## ABLE2 WORK

The ABLÉ2Work Program had four participants during the 2016-17 fiscal year. ABLÉ2Work allows eligible individuals to complete work experiences for up to 120 hours, while staying at RCB in either the dorms or an apartment on campus. While completing the work experiences, consumers regularly meet with the Careers Teacher to review their experience and expectations, and are given support through orientation and mobility, technology and skill areas as

needed. Each consumer learned valuable skills related to their specific vocational goals and general employment skills that can be applied to any career.

The ABLÉ2 Work Experiences for the 2016-17 fiscal year, included:

- Computer Technology Support Person at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind
- Program Support at RLCB, which led to a job placement at the same location
- Teacher's Assistant in assistive technology at the Governor Morehead School
- Office Assistant, data entry and customer service, at Faith Pediatrics in Raleigh



*Learning by doing in the community helps to reinforce travel, social and independent living skills.*

## SAVVY

The 2017 SAVVY Summer program theme was, “Dare to Prepare.” Participants were provided opportunities to engage in classes, workshops and recreation activities that promoted creativity, accountability, teamwork, and self-advocacy. Opportunities for innovative thinking, self-responsibility, leadership development, conflict resolution and effective communication were bountiful and woven into the daily schedule of activities. Participants also worked on enhancing goal setting, time management, interpersonal and daily living skills in a fun, exciting and educational setting. These skills were reinforced during the afternoon workshops and evening recreational activities.

## Youth in Transition (YIT)

The 2017 SAVVY Youth in Transition (YIT) program was another year of success. Twelve students participated in four weeks of classes and activities aimed at increasing their independence. In previous years, the students would pick the classes they were most interested in taking on their application and they would take those four classes for the entire program. This year, the students were given the opportunity to participate in all eight offered classes; two weeks in four classes and two weeks in the remaining other four classes. The classes offered include Assistive Technology/Computers, Education, Braille, Cooking Skills, Techniques of Daily Living, Consumer Education, Orientation and Mobility, and Ca-

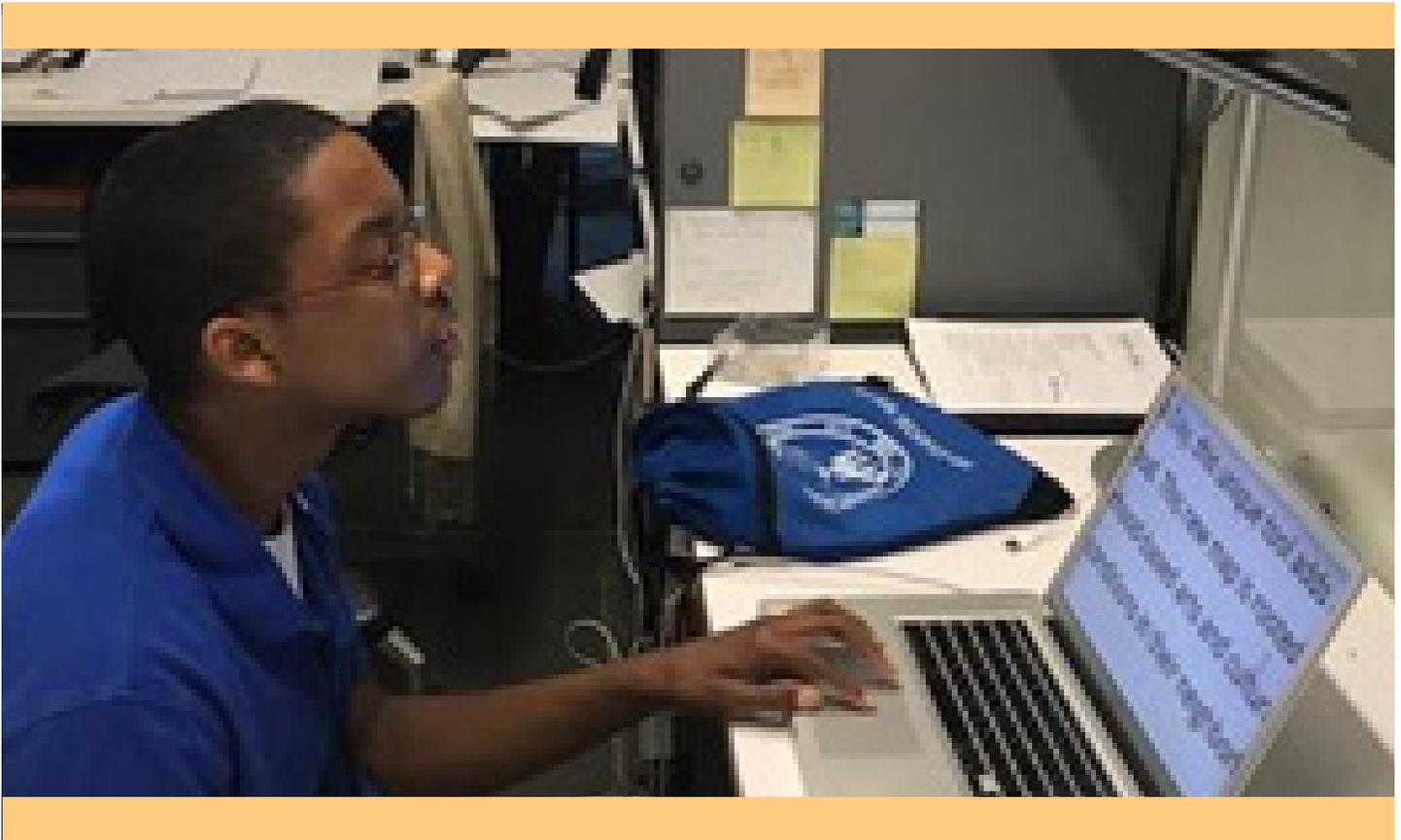
reers. This new class schedule allowed the students to have new experiences and gain many more new skills than they may have in previous years.

## World of Work (WOW)

Eight teens participated in the World of Work program. After participating in career assessments at RCB in June, students discovered more about themselves through designated work experiences with local employers during the summer program. WOW students also participated in activities and discussions structured to encourage self-awareness and self-advocacy. They also learned about Financial Literacy through a guest lecturer.

2017 Summer Worksite Placements included:

- Brooks Ave Church of Christ (Two students)- Light duty cleaning, organizing, collating materials, customer service, assisting in church organized community projects.
- CAM Raleigh (Contemporary Art Museum) Various clerical, research and design tactile touch tour for existing exhibition
- K&W Cafeteria- Bussing tables, assisting in food prep, working on front line serving food.
- McLaurin Parking- Office assistant, answering phone, greeting people, keyboarding, research using computer as assigned.



*Assistive technology and computer skills are vital to college and career success*

- Nature Research Center, N.C. Museum of Natural Science-Assisting in experiments in science labs at the Nature Center as assigned, explaining labs to museum patrons, researching information as assigned.
- RLCB (Two students)-Floor associate, organizing, hanging, folding clothes, stocking and assisting on commercial projects. Working in assembly area one day a week on various projects.

Employers provided feedback on worker performance at the end of the program, for example, "...has been a wonderful addition to our team. She is an extremely focused and competent individual and has been an immense help to us here."

Another employer said, "Lucas (pictured below) was a fantastic intern and team member. He researched and designed a tactile touch tour for one of CAM's exhibitions. He exceeded the rating system in all ways."

## College Prep (CP)

Six teens participated in the 2017 SAVVY College Prep program. The program emphasized exposure to soft skills that are vital to success in the college setting and work force such as taking responsibility, making effective decisions, setting goals, managing time, prioritizing tasks, persever-

*The activities provide opportunities to build self-confidence, community, social skills and knowledge about society...*

ing, giving strong efforts, working well in teams, communicating effectively, having empathy, knowing how to learn, exhibiting self-control, and believing in one's own self-worth.

The program started with the students being introduced to a young tomato plant and being tasked with taking responsibility for organizing care of the plant throughout the four weeks of their participation in SAVVY. Students also used the skills they were exposed to while participating in the Eye Retreat, where they conducted a research project

at N.C. State University on the accessibility of the Talley Student Union and presented their results and recommendations to the group. Field trips were taken to N.C. State, Wake Technical Community College and Campbell University. All of those trips included visits to the institutions' various disability service centers and AT centers if applicable. The students were able to attend a play at UNC-Chapel Hill's PlayMaker Repertory Company put on by fellow recent high school graduates.

During the evenings, the teens from YIT, WOW and CP participated in a variety of engaging activities and outings. The activities provide opportunities to build self-confidence, community, social skills and knowledge about society from the perspective of the visually impaired student. The highlight of the summer and favorite amongst the

teens was the surfing with IndoJax Surf School. This activity took place during the annual day trip to Fort Fisher Beach and Aquarium.

## ABLE College Prep

We have seen a number of former clients move on from what they learned through the college prep program to institutions of higher learning, such as North Carolina Central University, Wake Tech, UNC-Asheville, Atlantic Christian University, and Johnston Community. Besides the textbook, *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and In Life*, the students take advantage of opportunities to learn and use technology, such as smart phone applications like Learning Ally Link, which gives them digital auditory access to their study materials and SAS Flash Cards, which allows them to use a flash card system as an additional study tool. The iPhone remains the most dynamic AT device for many of our clients not to mention our college prep students, and we look forward to exploring more new exciting apps as we prepare our students for the realities of college life.

## Motivational Speakers

During this past year, the RCB invited a number of motivational speakers to address the consumers regarding visual

impairments and vocational skills in the workplace. Speakers included: Chris Costa, Manager of K&W Cafeterias; David Mills, a retired public educator of 41 years with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Auburn University, NCSU and NCCU; Mari Adams, a real estate professional and retired IBM project manager; Oslet Rene, from the Lions Club/ Industries for the Blind; Melaney Stein, DSB Social Worker for the Blind; and Ricky Scott and Robert

Parrish, former Alumni of GMS. Topics included returning to college, interviewing skills, vocational skills, job readiness and employment. Consumers were provided opportunities to engage in lively exchange and dialogue with speakers during and after sessions.

The RCB consumers also attended enriching presentations. A Celebration of Cooking was hosted by the N.C. Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which featured a presentation by Christine Ha, Master Chef winner, and featured a cooking

demonstration with a DSB client, Library Patron, as well as a GMS student. The presentation, "Spirit in Motion," the story of the Olympics and Paralympics, was presented by Renee Chou, WRAL-TV news anchor and reporter, and Lex Gillette, Blind Paralympic World Champion. Lex shared his experiences at the 2016 Rio Paralympics. His story was particularly inspiring to everyone.

*The GMS campus was chosen as a research hub for the BlindSquare app where anyone can download a free version...*

## Health and Wellness Initiatives

The RCB has responded to the call for action to help reduce accidental overdoses and deaths from opioids by developing a N.C. Rehab Center for the Blind Opioid Crisis Plan. With easy accessibility to heroin and fentanyl, more people are dying in our communities from decades of opioids being prescribed at an affordable price.

From 1999-2016, more than 12,000 North Carolinians have died from opioid related overdoses. Learning how devastating the opioid crisis is, the RCB has stocked the Narcan kits in each of the nurse's stations of the Crockett-Peeler, Cox and Millsap buildings. These kits have audio instructions and are easy to use in case of an emergency. Narcan (naloxone) is an opioid antagonist used for the complete or partial reversal of an opioid overdose. The Narcan kits are provided by courtesy of Project Lazarus, Moravian Falls, NC.

## New Technology Acquisitions

RCB Orientation and Mobility staff attended the "Hi-Tech O&M Workshop" sponsored by Perkins School for the Blind with Diane Brauner and Ed Summers on November 21 and 22, 2016. During this workshop the app BlindSquare was featured and each

participant received a free download of the app. The GMS campus was chosen as a research hub for the app where anyone can download a free version of the research app, called BlindSquare Event, that demonstrates the app's capabilities in a three mile radius around the GMS campus. The training, along with the free version of the research app, has allowed RCB O&M staff to expose consumers to high level, high tech travel through the BlindSquare

Event app. In less than a year of implementation, students have used the app to travel independently to places such as restaurants in downtown Raleigh, routes on the GMS campus, and at their local colleges such as Wake Technical Community College. It is an exciting time in the RCB O&M department as we stay up to date with the latest travel technology and see the results through greater independent travel with our consumers.

Assistive technology classes are converting from dictaphones to

BookPort DT. The Dictaphones are cassette-based and are becoming obsolete. For this reason, Assistive technology teachers have been looking for alternative methods to use for typing dictated reports. The advantage of the Dictaphone was that it had a foot pedal that allowed the consumer to control the playback with his/her foot. The BookPort has marked buttons so that

*We see  
the results  
through greater  
independent  
travel  
with our  
consumers.*

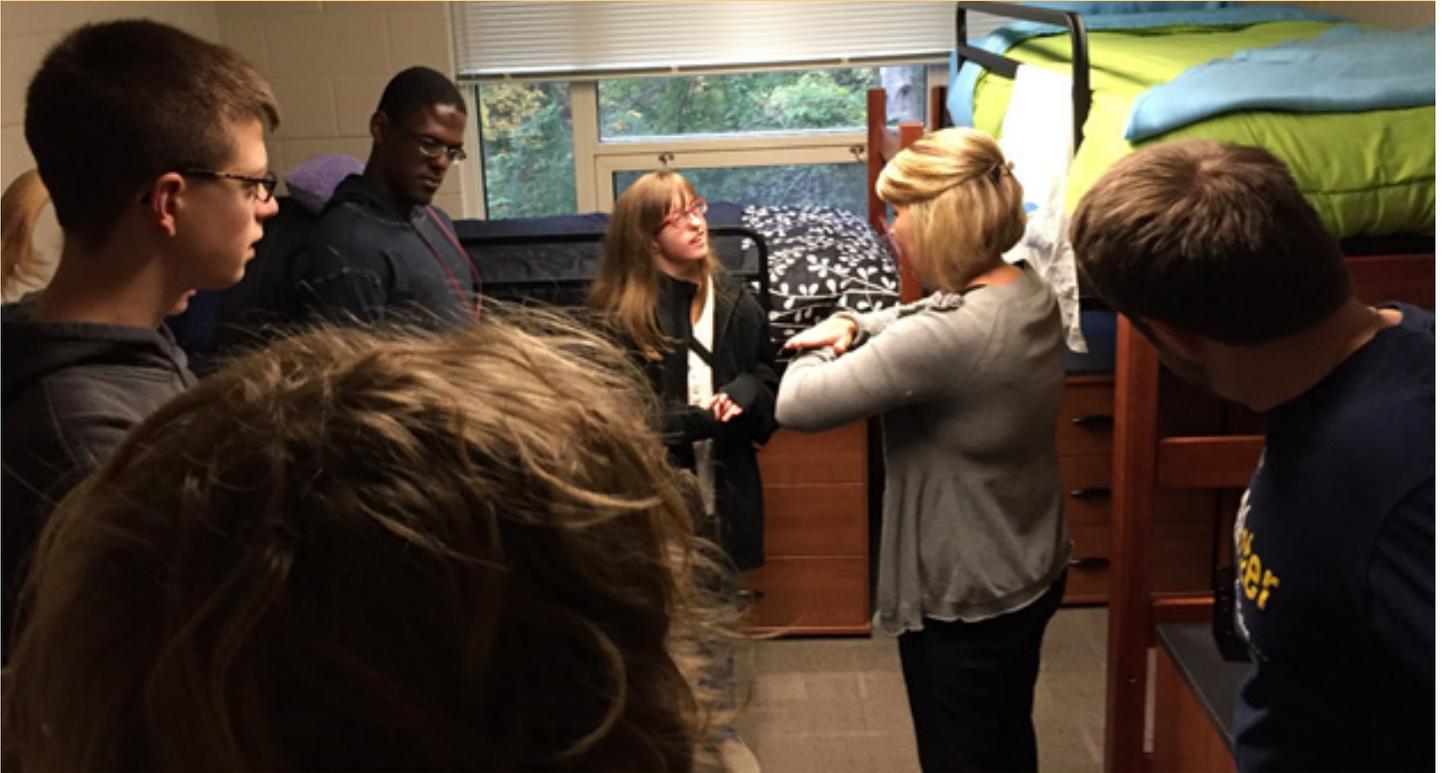
the user can easily press play and pause to control the dictation. We have also purchased auxiliary cable splitter so that the student can listen to the BookPort DT and JAWS using the same headphones. This method has worked well for typing dictated reports.

Other advantages of the BookPort DT are that its files can be stored digitally. When files are in a digital format, they can easily be copied and saved to a flash drive or SD card. The BookPort can convert a Word document to synthesized speech, so text documents can be listened to audibly. It can also download podcasts for use in class. It can be used for listening to instructions to help a consumer learn the steps to doing a task. We continue to find potential uses for the BookPort DT.

## University Partnerships

The RCB continues to partner with UNC-CH in providing opportunities for students to visit and tour the center, and observe the consumers as they participate in their programs. During the spring, the “Medical Aspects of Disabilities” class provides students a tour of the RCB, where they’d visit each classroom and engage in brief Q&As with the instructors. A short presentation from the Low Vision Specialist is also provided. During the fall, a small group of master’s level rehabilitation counseling students observe “A Day In The Life” of our consumers participating in the ABLE program. Student are assigned a consumer to shadow in various classes, such as Braille, techniques of daily living, assistive technology, Orientation and Mobility, etc. Interviews are also conducted with staff regarding their vocational rehabilitation role in the facility.

## DSB *Independent Living Services* Program



*Learning to live independently prepares students for higher education opportunities away from home.*

The Division of Services for the Blind is unique and fortunate to have 54 social workers on staff who are primarily located in the local Department of Social Services offices throughout the state. Social workers provide services to eligible individuals who are visually impaired, blind, and deaf/blind to assist them in managing daily living activities with the intent of reducing or preventing institutional care. The services are offered in all 100 counties. During SFY 2017, 4,213 consumers received adjustment services (counseling, basic instruction in adaptive techniques for daily living and assistive devices), assistance in securing health services available through Medicaid,

Medicare or other public/private providers and arranging in-home assistance provided by aides who assist with minor tasks within the home to enable eligible individuals to continue living safely within their homes. Most of the services provided are without regard to income and at no cost to the consumer. However, in-home aide assistance is a financial needs-based service. Twenty-five individuals benefited from this service during the 2017 SFY.

Social workers also cultivate relationships with other agencies and organizations to advocate for the specialized needs of consumers and their families. They work with

local agencies to identify resources and build support systems within the community that are so important for individuals who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind such as home health, targeted housing and mental health agencies, support groups, civic groups, doctors, charities, disability advocates, senior centers, adult care facilities, hospitals, community colleges, food banks and local school systems.

## Adjustment Services

The Social Workers for the Blind are on the front line in DSB to find the people who are struggling with their vision loss within their respective communities and counties who have vision loss and are no longer able to function in their homes by being totally reliant on their vision to do so. Little successes can have a huge impact on a person's quality of life who are living and struggling with vision loss. So many times, the social workers are told how much of an impact being able to set the dials on their ovens, microwaves, thermostats and telling time have made in their lives because they are now able to prepare a meal and do laundry without the assistance of another person. By utilizing basic cooking techniques and adaptive aids, preparing a meal is no longer something of the past. Being able to locate the numbers on a telephone and dial without the use of vision enables them to call and schedule their own medical appointments. The ability to learn to pay bills and manage money in private is an area of independence so often reported to the social workers as being important and missed after vision loss. These are just a few things we take for granted until lost.

With the help of social workers, people who might otherwise become isolated due

to vision loss are able to interact with others in support group settings across the state. They learn to function more independently by taking on roles of responsibility within the group settings and establishing strong friendship bases with others who are experiencing some of the same challenges. Throughout the group process, teaching and learning take place by the sharing of success stories. The social workers are often told by their consumers that feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and isolation are alleviated or may have altogether become a thing of the past!

## Client Success Story

This letter from a social worker for the Blind is an example of the dedication our SWB's have for the visually impaired consumers of the state of North Carolina. With minimal funding, the social workers often think outside the box to make sure the consumers do not fall through the cracks.

"I had a consumer referred to me from the VRC in Asheville who needed assistance with housing. The consumer stated he has Keratoconus, but no corrective devices. The consumer had just lost his job because of his vision. There was no eye report on this consumer less than three years old. I completed a Vision USA application with the consumer in order to get a current eye diagnosis. An optometrist from Denver, NC accepted the Vision USA referral on this consumer.

After the eye exam, I was contacted about the possibility of getting hard contacts for the consumer. Without correction, the consumer had a VAcc of 20/200 OU. This same Dr. believed he could be corrected to 20/50 OD and 20/100 OS, which would

enable him to continue working and driving, and knew the consumer was underemployed, and could not afford the hard contacts. Due to his six month income, he was not a candidate for Medical Eye Care. This doctor negotiated with the manufacturer of the contacts, and arranged to receive them at a 50 percent discount for the consumer, then agreed to reduce her clinic fees by 50 percent as well. At my request, she provided me with a quote so I could begin to find a funding source.

I staffed the case with the Catawba County DSS Adult Program Manager and it was decided this consumer was a good candidate for a local private fund for the visually impaired administered by the Catawba County DSS called the Buie Fund. This decision was based on the client's current unemployment and the fact that his current vision would never be corrected without the hard contacts. I wrote up the request for the purchase of the hard contacts using the Buie Fund and the purchase was approved. Catawba County DSS paid the \$388.50 for the contacts and fees for the consumer.

I was contacted yesterday by an excited doctor She was able to greatly improve the consumer's VAcc to 20/25. I got the medical bill paid today. The consumer is currently employed through a temp agency, but hoping to be hired on full-time with his current company. He is on several waiting lists for new housing, but he is very content and feels more at ease working due to his corrected vision.

Keep in mind, the entire process I have described above began on Oct. 19, 2017. The final bill was paid today Nov. 15, 2017. Other than my time and effort, and the time and effort of these other generous folks, all other services were provided through private funding, companies and individuals. The county and state government did not have to purchase any corrective devices to keep this consumer in the workforce."

## Community Partnerships

Our partnership with the N.C. Lions Clubs is crucial in meeting the needs of those we commonly serve. Many Lions Clubs also assist the social workers in providing eye exams and/or glasses for N.C. citizens with limited incomes, enabling 3,938 individuals to receive assistance during SFY 2017. Social workers coordinate with N.C. Lions clubs to support all aspects of the Annual N.C. VIP Fishing Tournament. The tournament provides an amazing opportunity for participants to engage in educational and recreational activities with peers from around the state. The tournament is reportedly one of the largest service projects of its kind in the world, with typically over 500 visually impaired participants and their guests in attendance.

Camp Dogwood, located on the shores of Lake Norman, is the headquarters of the Lions Clubs International and hosts VIPs from across the state every summer for education, fellowship and fun. VIPs have the opportunity to experience water sports, do crafts, dance and perform or simply enjoy the rocking chairs on the lakefront porch.

## DSB *Medical Eye Care* Program

The Medical Eye Care Program's goal is to provide services to help save or restore sight, and prevent blindness. The program offers financial assistance for individuals who have no comparable benefits and limited resources to pay for medication, eye treatments and surgeries.

These services are rendered by our nurse eye care consultants. During SFY 2017, 967 medical eye care services were

authorized for eligible North Carolinians. This program utilizes state funds only.

The Nurse Eye Care Consultants also provide additional services that are not based on income eligibility. The services include, but are not limited to, evaluations for video magnification systems and diabetes education. During SFY 2017, 1,732 individuals were provided low vision services.

*...to provide services to help save or restore sight and prevent blindness.*

### Program Achievements:

- **967** eye exams and treatments and/or surgeries sponsored
- **847** children screened for amblyopia and other vision defects
- **378** diabetic education sessions provided

## *DSB Independent Living Rehabilitation and Independent Living Older Blind Programs*

DSB's Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR) program provides services for individuals of any age and the Independent Living Older Blind program provides services for individuals age 55 or older. DSB's 14 Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors (ILRC's) serve as case managers for both programs which seek to maximize the ability of individuals who are blind or visually impaired to function independently in the family, home, community or employment.

Comprehensive independent living skills training are provided in Mini Centers and/or the home. Mini Centers are community-based learning programs in which individuals receive instruction in adaptive living skills, cooking, safe travel techniques, peer support and hands-on instruction with a variety of low and high-tech devices. Instruction and adjustment counseling is also provided in the home for individuals unable to attend Mini Centers or before and/or after attending a Mini Center to ensure successful achievement of independent living goals.

ILR and ILOB services are available in all 100 counties in NC. ILRC's work collaboratively with numerous partners to ensure successful outcomes for service recipients by coordinating services as needed with other DSB case managers including Social Workers for the Blind and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, as well as DSB Specialists including Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Nursing Eye Care Consultants, Deaf-Blind Specialists and Assistive Technology Specialists. DSB's ILR and ILOB

services are only as strong as our community partnerships and ILRC's work throughout the year to build and maintain partnerships with local transportation services, churches, senior centers, Lions Clubs and other civic groups, fire and police departments, local health departments, and many other invaluable community resources.

The need for assistive technology services among individuals receiving services continues to grow. We had five iPad Mini Centers with 55 consumers participating. With the use of assistive technology rapidly changing, the ILRC's received updates and training on trending technology including the Echo Dot and Scrip Talk. DSB's ILRC's also received training on coaching for improvement to assist consumers and Mini Center Instructors on achieving positive outcomes as well as training on working with individuals with dementia. The ILR program collaborated with the Vocational Rehabilitation program on three Youth Mini Center for 24 Pre-Employment Transition Services consumers.

### **Program Outcomes for 2017:**

- ***935 eligible individuals served***  
- ***332 ILR and 603 ILOB***
- ***358 eligible individuals rehabilitated***
- ***23 Mini Centers held***
- ***277 eligible individuals attended Mini Centers***

## Success and Innovation *Go Hand in Hand*

Delcine Townes was approved for ILOB in October 2015. At that time, she reported having vision problems since childhood. Her visual acuity was reported as counting fingers in both eyes due to retinitis pigmentosa. Prior to reaching out to our agency for help, this consumer had earned a master's degree and worked as a psychotherapist for 10 years. She now lives alone and has major responsibilities taking care of her mother. Delcine reported issues with getting organized, labeling, locating community resources, and accessing technology, including the iPhone and her computer. She also expressed interest in learning Braille.

Early on, her ILRC connected Delcine with the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired. She contacted Hadley and began taking classes to learn Braille. In addition to referring the consumer to Hadley, the counselor also connected her to another consumer who had enrolled in the Braille program in recent years, and encouraged her to call her for moral support. Delcine also attended a Wake County Mini Center. During the Mini Center, she was very impressed with the organizational tips

and options taught, as well as the variety of speakers. Delcine found the adaptive devices for the kitchen very useful. Early on, she acquired a talking label wand which she used to label all her spices. At the end of the Mini Center, she received a George Foreman grill, cafeteria trays, safe slice

knife, the Ove Glove Hot Surface Handler, and flexible cutting mats. She is now cooking curried lamb, and sautéing vegetables to making elaborate dishes for friends and family.

Labeling and organization were two priorities for this consumer, and after completing three levels of Braille instruction with Hadley, she is now labeling her files so she can keep track of important papers.

Delcine spent considerable energy building her technology skills. She was referred to the Rehab Learning Center for the Blind for 10 hours of training in using her iPhone. She now confidently uses her phone, sending

and receiving texts, setting reminders, and using apps, including Uber, to meet her daily needs. To reinforce these skills, Delcine joined a support group, which met every other week, for two hours, to

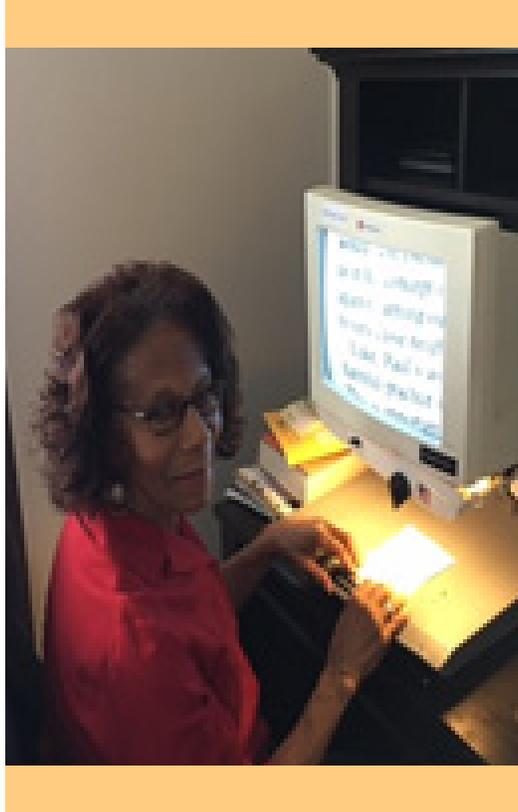


*Low-tech devices and cooking skills are used to prepare a family meal*

consult with other graduates of the program. She learned more tricks for navigating her phone and encouraged the education of others in the community. In addition to the iPhone, she acquired a laptop computer and again sought out training to learn how to navigate it using NVDA, which is a free screen reader. Delcine can use her computer routinely to send and receive emails, and to type more extensive documents.

DSB's Rehabilitation Engineer was called in to set-up her computer for training. Delcine was invited to talk to her ILRC's Mini Center class to explain that there is "life after a Mini Center." She shared some of the ways in which she had received help from her education but also continued to get out and network with her community in a positive manner. The class was bolstered by her comments and she enjoyed sharing her stories.

While Delcine was slow to accept the use of her long white cane, she sought out the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist



*Accessing print with the use of a CCTV (Closed Circuit Television)*

to learn to navigate more safely and with greater confidence. Within six months, this consumer moved close to a grocery store to walk there, but the most direct route had a crossing that was not particularly safe. At the encouragement of the O&M Specialist, she contacted the City of Raleigh and presented an explanation of need that resulted in the city agreeing to install an audible signal. She also contacted the Alliance for Persons with Disabilities. Through this contact, Delcine was trained to independently use three new bus routes. She now takes the bus to the fitness center and to

Green Elementary School so she can pick up her grandchildren after school. Now, where Delcine goes, her cane goes.

In addition to taking care of her mother and spending time with grandchildren, Delcine volunteers at the Thrift Store three days a week, and volunteers at Christian Library International once a week, stamping books to be distributed to over 1,300 prisons throughout the United States.

## DSB *Deaf-Blind Services*

Each year, DSB serves individuals with vision and hearing loss through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and our Independent Living programs. Since the inception of the agency in 1935, with assistance from Helen Keller, DSB has provided support, training, and other services to people with hearing and vision loss. DSB's goal is to empower individuals with hearing and vision loss to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

When someone experiences both vision and hearing loss, serious issues and self-doubt can arise. Many times, initial assessments are conducted with people who are skeptical of services, since dealing with a dual sensory loss can be overwhelming. With the help of DSB services, individuals can feel empowered and thrive again. DSB has five Deaf-Blind Specialist positions serving all 100 counties in North Carolina who provide leadership in the provision of services to deaf-blind consumers by engaging in direct services to consumers and serving as consultants to other staff. This year, Deaf-Blind Specialists provided services to 123 qualified individuals served through our programs.

*DSB's goal is to empower individuals with hearing and vision loss to achieve their goals of independence and employment.*

The division works closely with our sister agency, DSDHH, on the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). This program exists to provide 21st century telecommunication assistive technology to individuals who are Deaf-Blind. Our five DB Specialists are uniquely qualified to provide assessments on assistive technology needs based on the goals, communication mode, and the level of AT knowledge of deaf-blind individuals. DSB

has been an active partner working with DSDHH since the NDBEDP pilot, and will continue to assist with completing assessments, as this ongoing program became permanently funded by the Federal Communications Commission. Our Specialists complete the assessment, deliver the equipment to the consumer's home, coordinate trainers, and provide a 60 day follow up session. In SFY 2017, our DB Specialists served 13 out of 21 Deaf-Blind individuals in this program.

The agency also collaborates with other organizations that serve deaf-blind individuals. DSB collaborates with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Deaf-Blind Project, and has an active member on the Deaf-Blind Advisory Council facilitated by the

DPI DB Project Director. We work together on issues and concerns related to Deaf-Blind consumers and their families that are in the school systems age 14 and older.

In addition, the Division of Services for the Blind is a member of the National Community of Partners (NCOP) sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). This national forum discusses issues and concerns related to DB consumers and their families. We also collaborate with the HKNC Regional Representative for North Carolina as appropriate.

DSB has been an active supporter of the North Carolina Deaf-Blind Associates, (NCDBA) since its inception. We assist Deaf-Blind individuals across the state with finding sponsorship to the annual Camp Dogwood Deaf-Blind Weekend.

We work closely with our local NC Lions clubs who sponsor many of our DB campers based on what county they live in.

Our DB Specialists also assist with transporting our campers and working as a Support Service Provider (SSP) while at Camp. That means we serve as the eyes and ears of our DB campers as needed. In the SFY 2017, 54 Deaf-Blind Campers attending Camp Dogwood Deaf-Blind Weekend. NCDBA has many additional activities throughout the year that we gladly support including the NCDBA Conference, the NCDBA Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness

Day, the NCDBA Holiday Party and quarterly Board meetings. DSB is honored to actively better the lives of our deaf-blind consumers in employment, independent living, and full participation in society.

*DSB  
is honored  
to actively  
better the  
lives of our  
deaf-blind  
consumers...*

## N.C. Division of Services for the Blind VR Staff, 2017



## New DSB Staff, 2017



## How to Contact DSB

Administration:  
(866) 222-1546.

Office of the Director:  
(919) 527-6700

Aids and Appliances:  
(919) 527-6770

Business Enterprises Program:  
(919) 527-6790

Communications Unit (for materials in  
alternate format):  
(919) 527-6760

Evaluation Unit:  
(919) 527-6800

Independent Living Services:  
(919) 527-6780

Medical Eye Care Program:  
(919) 527-6780

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind:  
(919) 527-6800

Rehabilitation Services:  
(919) 527-6711

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Deaf/Blind Services
- Independent Living Rehabilitation Program
- Supported Employment Services
- VR Business Services
- School to Work Transition Services
- Rehabilitation Engineer
- Staff Development

Technology Resource Center:  
(919) 527-6698

DHHS Customer Call Center  
1-800-622-7030 for access to a  
Spanish Interpreter

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dsb>

## District Office Locations

### **Asheville**

50 South French Broad Avenue  
Asheville, NC 28801  
(828) 251 6732  
1 (800) 422 1881

### **Charlotte**

5501 Executive Center Drive,  
Suite 102  
Charlotte, NC 28212  
(704) 563-4168  
1 (800) 422 1895

### **Fayetteville**

225 Green Street  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
(910) 486 1582  
1 (800) 422 1897

### **Greenville**

404 St. Andrews Drive  
Greenville, NC 27834  
(252) 355 9016  
1 (800) 422 1877

### **Raleigh**

307 Ashe Avenue  
Raleigh, NC 27606  
(919) 527 6740  
1 (800) 422 1871

### **Wilmington**

3240 Burnt Mill Road,  
Suite 7  
Wilmington, NC 28403  
(910) 251-5743  
1 (800) 422 1884

### **Winston Salem**

4265 Brownsboro Road,  
Suite 100  
Winston Salem, NC 27106  
(336) 896-2227  
1 (800) 422 0373  
TDD: (336) 896-7047

## Fisher Building, Governor Morehead Campus, Raleigh, N.C.



The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a long and rich history of providing specialized and individualized services to people who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. Established in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, the NC Lions Foundation, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind and others, DSB offers an array of programs and supportive services funded with federal, state and county resources. The division provides services statewide covering all 100 counties, through staff located in seven district offices, third party agreements with local Departments of Social Services offices and county school systems, and through the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.

DSB continues to strive to meet the needs of visually impaired, blind, and deaf-blind North Carolinians to assist them with reaching their goals of independence and employment. According to the American Federation for the Blind as of 2015, North Carolina was home to 270,685 citizens with some level of visual impairment or blindness. According to the Centers for Disease control (CDC), the leading causes of blindness and low vision in the United States is primarily “age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma.” DSB works with clients that are dealing with all of these conditions and more. We are committed to making sure that such a diagnosis is not the end of a person’s story. It, instead, is a call to innovate. A chance to create an opportunity. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act gives strength and structure to that mission and overall goal. DSB is on board and making lives better day by day!



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