



VERMONT ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
HELPING ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE IN A VISUAL WORLD SINCE 1926

September 30, 2014

Ms. Cherilyn Brown
Town of Moretown
P.O. Box 666
Moretown, VT 05660-0666

Dear Ms. Brown,

Helen Keller, who helped found the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) in 1926, once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Throughout the years we have seen this to be true—especially of our home state's generous municipalities. Last year our local towns and cities provided us with over \$27,000 in support! These funds went directly to services for clients. As we enter our 89th year, we hope the Town of Moretown will continue to support VABVI so we can successfully carry out our mission of enabling Vermont individuals who are blind and visually impaired to achieve and maintain independence.

For many Vermonters who are blind and visually impaired, our services mean the difference between social isolation and being a vital part of the community; between students being sent out of state to residential schools and being able to attend local schools; between seniors moving to expensive assisted living facilities and staying in the homes they have created for themselves. With offices located in Brattleboro, Montpelier, South Burlington, and Rutland, VABVI provides free services to our clients in each of the state's 14 counties. We are the only private non-profit organization in the state to provide comprehensive support and services to the growing population of blind and visually impaired Vermonters.

In order to maximize efficiency, VABVI analyzes and tracks the number of clients we serve each year, which counties they are from, and which counties gravitate towards which services. During Fiscal Year 2014, VABVI worked with 1,409 Vermonters – including 296 children – across Vermont. We provided services to 103 adult clients and 20 students from Washington County. VABVI has also earned a reputation for managing our funding prudently and in a cost-effective manner; over 90 cents of every dollar donated to VABVI is spent directly on services provided to clients.

Adult Services – From reading, writing, and cooking to hobbies, recreation, and travel, VABVI helps visually impaired adults maintain their independence and dignity. Many of the adults VABVI serve are seniors. Most of these individuals have enjoyed good vision for the majority of their lives, but now suffer from age-related vision loss and need help adjusting to the practical, social, and emotional effects of visual impairment. Certified rehabilitation staff members work with clients at home or in VABVI offices, demonstrating techniques and showcasing aids that will enable these individuals to adapt to and work around their vision loss. Services for adults include: low-vision screenings; orientation and mobility training; assistance in adapting the home

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low-vision requirements; recommendations for service; and training in and procurement of the various aids and appliances necessary for completing everyday tasks without vision. VABVI also manages a volunteer transportation program to provide rides for clients when they cannot arrange transportation for themselves – these trips include medical appointments, shopping at the grocery store, or even visiting family and friends.

Children's Services - Children growing up with a visual impairment need special care, tools, and expertise in order to learn and develop at the same rate as their sighted peers, ensuring that they can mature into productive, independent adults. Students who are blind or visually impaired are expected to learn alongside their sighted peers in an environment designed to accommodate the needs of only sighted students. In order to better accommodate visually impaired students, our Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) begin to work directly with children as soon as the impairment is discovered in order to maximize his or her potential during the early, formative years of growth which are so critical for development.

VABVI's services for children include early intervention work with infants and toddlers, intensive one-on-one instruction with adolescents and teens in the classroom, lessons in Braille, and orientation and mobility training. TVIs provide visual assessments and suggestions for equipment, as well as helping coordinate assistance with other service providers. We also help parents and families learn about available resources, teaching techniques, and adaptive technology that can ensure the successful development of children in their home, school, and community. VABVI provides textbooks, tests, and other classroom materials in alternative formats and as well as offering assistance to teachers and educational aides in learning how to better engage visually impaired students in classroom activities. Once our students mature into young adults our TVIs also assist in the college application and enrollment process, the search for jobs, and provide further instruction in how to adapt to a predominantly sighted workplace using assistive tools and technology. All of these programs share the goal of promoting self-advocacy, independence, and coping skills in our students.

Request for Funding: We hope that you will consider supporting VABVI again this year with an allocation of \$500 to help fund our ongoing programs and services. VABVI is the only non-profit organization providing hands-on training and support services to blind and visually impaired Vermonters, and we would cease to exist without the help of supporters like Town of Moretown. If you have any questions or would like any more information, please feel free to contact me by phone at (800) 639-5861 extension 224 or by e-mail at araftery@vabvi.org. Together, we can do so much for Vermonters living with vision loss. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ayeshah Raftery
Director of Development

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