

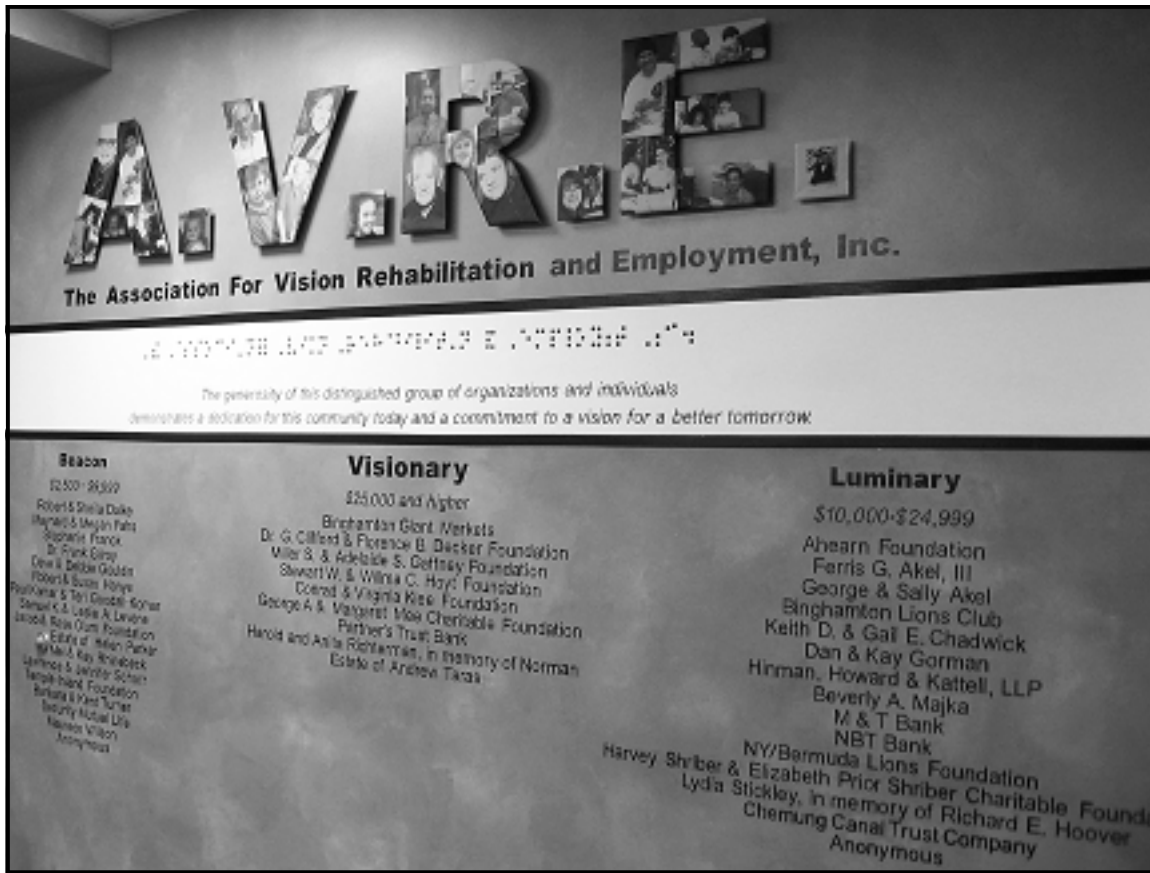


InSight

Summer 2009; Vol. 34 No. 3

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc.

PRESENTING..... OUR WALL OF VISION!



We recently reached another milestone here at A.V.R.E. with the official unveiling of our brand new donor wall. Located just a few steps away from the main entrance and lobby, the donor wall is actually an alcove with three walls. It is a welcoming space -- bright and attractive in our corporate colors of blue and teal green -- as well as being an informative one.

Our \$3.1 million capital campaign, which helped to finance our new Center of Excellence, ended in December of 2008, and it has been our desire to acknowledge the generosity of our donors and their dedication to our Vision. One wall does just that, with a complete listing of every individual, group, trust and foundation who gave at least \$2500.

Another wall holds photographs of some of the milestone moments in our history. Also featured are photos of the four Cornerstones of our Center – our Low Vision Center, ACCESS-Tech Center, ViewPoint Retail Store, and our Business and Manufacturing Division.

Sprinkled throughout the area are written our Mission and Vision Statements, and several quotes from well-known people who are, or were, blind or visually impaired, including Helen Keller and James Thurber.

The alcove design was the brainchild and creation of Cindy Rotella, a long-time Binghamton resident who is the owner of Regalo Gifts & Designs. Cindy is an art and color designer who specializes in interior and exterior murals, and faux finishes and decorating, and she is also an event designer and coordinator.

We invite you to stop in and visit us to see our new Wall of Vision!



“There are two kinds of light: the light that illuminates, and the glare that obscures.”

James Thurber

Our Mission: “To assist people who have a vision disability enhance life quality through attaining or maintaining personal and economic independence, and help remove obstacles imposed by vision disabilities.”

THE INTRAOCULAR TELESCOPE

A tiny device, no bigger than a pea, may soon be approved by the FDA as the newest treatment for some people who have advanced age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The device is a tiny glass telescope that has successfully been implanted in the eyes of people who have severely damaged retinas, due to this irreversible eye disease. In March of 2009, an advisory panel to the FDA unanimously recommended approval of the device, and it is expected to be approved later this year.

The intraocular telescope will not cure the disease, but it does improve visual acuity, by enlarging retinal images in the central visual field (the area that is destroyed by AMD). This enables patients to improve both distance and near vision. The telescope magnifies the images onto the retina, extending them so they fall on healthy cells around the damaged macula (the center of the retina).

The telescope is implanted during an outpatient surgical procedure, similar to cataract surgery. However, this procedure is a more complex one, due to the nature of the telescope, requiring considerable surgical skills by a specialized eye surgeon. The natural lens of the eye must be removed, as with cataracts, and the device put in its place.

While the telescope improves central vision, it causes a severe reduction in the visual field, or peripheral vision. For that reason, the patient's other eye must have an adequate amount of acuity with a good visual field (peripheral vision). Once the telescope is in place, the patient's eyes will no longer work together, creating monocular vision, rather than binocular. In other words, the eye with the telescope will see the magnified central view, while the other eye maintains the full field of peripheral vision. The patient's brain will need to adapt to be able to combine the two separate images it receives into one image. While this sounds impossible, with extensive vision therapy, it is possible.

Not everyone will be a perfect candidate for this surgery. Perhaps as few as 20 out of 100 patients will be able to get the telescope. There are a number of factors that may prevent being chosen, such as the shape of the eyes, or not having one eye with enough good usable vision, or a lack of good balance. There is a potential for falling when one eye sends a large image to the brain and the other eye sends a normal-sized image.

While not yet an easy procedure, it is showing great promise. Of the 206 patients who received the telescope implant in a 2-year clinical trial, 90% had a significant improvement in their visual acuity. Pending US Food and Drug Administration approval, this option may soon be available for patients, as the Implantable Miniature Telescope has the potential to improve vision-related quality of life in patients with untreatable end-stage AMD.



IN MEMORIUM

A.V.R.E. suffered a shocking and tragic loss with the passing of Eric Bohn on May 28, 2009. Eric was one of our Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists. He was very seriously injured in a car accident on May 6, while driving between appointments with consumers. Suffering a severe head trauma in the accident, Eric never awakened.

Eric came to work at A.V.R.E. in 2002, after graduating from the Orientation & Mobility Program at Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas in 2001. Armed with a personality that has been described as "quirky" and a penchant for teasing and pulling pranks, Eric soon worked his way into our hearts. His laid-back, devil-may-care exterior often completely hid the fact that Eric was very dedicated to, and passionate about, his job. He loved being an O & M instructor, and his calm and patient nature helped many frightened and confused people understand that they could still travel and get around independently, even with decreasing vision or no vision at all.

Condolences and testimonials came pouring in after Eric's death, from both consumers Eric had worked with and colleagues in the O & M field. Every one conveyed shock and a strong sense of loss, both personal and professional. One colleague wrote: "I have been blessed to know him and touched by his gentle, uplifting qualities." That sums it up very nicely for all of us who knew and worked with him.

Eric left us much too early, but he won't soon be forgotten. We miss him.



Eric S. Bohn
September 9, 1968 ~ May 28, 2009

"And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years."

Abraham Lincoln

THE RACE FOR SIGHT -- ANOTHER SUCCESS!

The annual A.V.R.E. Bicycle Race For Sight was held on Saturday, July 11th, and it was another fun, exciting, and successful race. The weather even cooperated with us once again, presenting us with a bright, sunny morning that was perfect for racing.

Presented each year by A.V.R.E., with assistance from the Binghamton and Windsor Lions Clubs and Tioga Velo Club, the Race For Sight has become one of the most popular bicycle races in the Southern Tier that benefits a non-profit, charitable agency. All proceeds from the race go to benefit the programs and services of A.V.R.E. and the vision programs of the two Lions Clubs.

The race is a road race that winds through the lovely Susquehanna River Valley in the Windsor area. Racers particularly love its uphill finish that challenges even the best riders. This year, we had a total of 111 riders, including three of A.V.R.E.'s staff. President and CEO Bob Hanye, Vice President of Operations Ken Fernald, and Director of Program Services Rick McCarthy all took part, and this year, all three finished the race. For amateur racers who don't train year round, that is quite an accomplishment!

The Race For Sight is actually two races in one, with two "fields" based on riders' experience. The A Field, for more experienced riders, is 38 miles long, and the B Field, for less experienced riders, is 27 miles long. The racers sped off from the village green in Windsor at 10 AM, and about 1-1/2 hours later, all were back at the green for refreshments and the awards ceremony.

Our winners this year are:

A Field Men

1st Place: Glenn Swan
2nd Place: Bruce Rhodenburg
3rd Place: Michael Kumiega

A Field Women

1st Place: Gaetane Perreault
2nd Place: Shelly Reynolds
3rd Place: Ruth Sherman

B Field Men

1st Place: Rich Jarvi
2nd Place: Michael Volo
3rd Place: Cliff Six

B Field Women

1st Place: Kathleen Purtell
2nd Place: Mary McNeil
3rd Place: Renee Scarinzi

B Field Junior Men

1st Place: Michael Fernald

B Field Tandem Team

1st Place: Ernie and Ellie Bayles



We want to say a great big "Thank You!" to each of our generous cash sponsors, who helped us reach our final income figure of over \$8,500!

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We also want to thank the sponsors who supplied our food and beverages.

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As always, we are grateful to all of the volunteers from A.V.R.E. and spouses, the Lions Clubs, and Tioga Velo Club. Thanks go to Licensed Massage Therapist Michelle Swan, who was on hand to provide relaxing massages to participants after the race, and to RN Patricia Comency at our first aid station. Very special thanks go to our Master of Ceremonies Extraordinaire, Ferris Akel III.

And finally, a race would not be a race without its participants. We are grateful to each and every rider who came out to ride and support people throughout the Twin Tiers who are blind and visually impaired.



FROM THE NEWS DESK --

A.V.R.E. LANDS BIG ORDER!

A.V.R.E. recently landed the largest manufacturing order ever received in its 83-year history. Under a \$1.2 million contract with the U. S. Census Bureau, A.V.R.E.'s Business and Manufacturing Division will fill a single order for 18 million manila file folders. That's a lot of file folders!

We are running overtime shifts, and creating a lot more work hours for employees who are blind in the process, to churn out 2 million folders per week so we can meet the September 28th deadline. We had previously filled multiple orders for the Census Bureau that totaled about \$1 million, but this is the largest single order we have ever filled for anyone.

Ken Fernald, A.V.R.E. Vice President of Operations, began working on the relationship with the Census Bureau back in the winter after he read an article in the Press & Sun Bulletin that noted the impact the 2010 Census would have on the local job market. Ken identified this as a great opportunity to sell our products into a large federal agency. He was right.

Immediately, Ken and other staff members began working with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) to meet with Census Bureau purchasers and administrators. They were able to showcase A.V.R.E.'s capacity for production and its commitment to excellence. Our employees have worked hard over the years to prove to our customers that we manufacture quality products and get them delivered on time. That good reputation helped to secure this order.



Employees remove completed file folders from the belt and pack them into boxes and cartons for shipping.

Employees are excited about the challenge and have stepped up to work longer, tougher hours. It has been a real morale boost. Ken stated, "Our entire staff is excited about the new business. We're hoping for sustained growth so that we can create more jobs. This is great news for A.V.R.E. and the local economy."

This huge order will go a long way toward reaching our annual budget goal of \$6.5 million, but it is not just a revenue generator for A.V.R.E. It will have a beneficial trickle-down effect on the local economy, as well. We purchase intermediate boxes and shipping cartons from Binghamton area suppliers. It takes a lot of boxes and cartons to hold 18 million file folders! Our sister agency in Utica – the Central Association for the Blind – is also benefiting from this order. They received an "overflow" portion of the order and will produce about \$400,000 worth of file folders for the Bureau.

A.V.R.E. RECEIVES UPWARD MOBILITY AWARD

This past winter, A.V.R.E. received an Upward Mobility Award from National Industries for the Blind. The agency was cited for our demonstrated commitment to increase employment and economic opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired. This is the second year in a row A.V.R.E. has received this award.

"We are proud to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind," said President and CEO Robert Hanye. "Our team members represent a qualified, dedicated, and loyal workforce. We employ people who are blind at all levels of our organization. We are honored to serve as an example in the community of the capabilities of people who are blind, and we continue to work to grow our business and create jobs."

A.V.R.E. HOSTS CONFERENCE

On May 13, 2009, A.V.R.E. sponsored a conference on "Opportunities for Growth." More than 20 executive, business, and operations managers from agencies employing blind and visually impaired people from across the state attended the day-long program. Attendees came from Brooklyn, Albany, Utica, Rochester, Elmira, Utica, and Binghamton. Expert presenters came from northern Virginia, St. Louis, and Albany. Attendees also toured our facility.



From the News Desk, cont.

A.V.R.E. CHOSEN AS BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

A.V.R.E. was recently chosen to be highlighted as the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce's "Business of the Week." During the week of July 6 – 10, we had the honor of displaying the Chamber's sign that formally announces this recognition in our lobby. We also received a personal visit from Chamber representatives and had a photo opportunity. The photo seen here was displayed on the Chamber website during that week. An article about our agency and what we do was also printed in the Chamber's monthly newsletter.



Each week, the Chamber of Commerce picks a member business to highlight, and we are pleased to be chosen for this.

DRY EYE SYNDROME

We see a lot of commercials on TV these days for over-the-counter products and prescription medications that are highly touted for the relief of the symptoms of a condition known as "dry eyes." But what, exactly, is dry eye syndrome?

To put it simply, dry eye syndrome (DES) is a chronic lack of sufficient lubrication and moisture in the eyes. Tears serve an important purpose – to bathe the eyes. They wash out dust and debris, and keep the eye moist. They also contain enzymes that neutralize the microorganisms that colonize the eye. Tears are protection for our eyes and are essential for good eye health.

If you notice a persistent dryness, with a scratchy feeling and a burning sensation, you probably have DES. Some people also experience the sensation of having something -- a foreign object -- in the eye. And although it seems strange, sometimes watery eyes can result from dry eye syndrome, because the excessive dryness works to over-stimulate production of the watery component of tears.

Tears are composed of three layers: the outer, oily, lipid layer; the middle, watery, lacrimal layer; and the inner, mucous, or mucin, layer. Each layer is produced by a different part of the eye, so a problem with any of those sources can result in dry eyes.

DES has several causes. It can occur as a natural part of the aging process (especially during menopause) or as a side effect of many medications, such as antihistamines, antidepressants, certain blood pressure meds, Parkinson's meds, and birth control pills. It can be caused by living in a dry, dusty, or windy climate, or by home or office heating and air conditioning systems. Other causes are insufficient

blinking, incomplete closure of the eyes, eyelid disease, and a deficiency of the tear-producing glands. DES is also the most common complaint among long-term contact lens wearers.

In addition to these external causes, DES is also a symptom of systemic diseases, such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, rosacea, or Sjogren's syndrome.

Mild to moderate DES is not necessarily dangerous, but it can be uncomfortable and even painful. However, if the condition is severe, actual damage (scratching) of the cornea can occur, which can result in loss of vision. For that reason, the condition should not go untreated.

Depending on the cause, DES may not be curable. However, the accompanying dryness, scratchiness and burning can be managed.

There are many over-the-counter eye drops that are quite effective for DES. However, it is important to choose the right ones. Drops that simply claim to "get the red out" may temporarily eliminate the redness that is caused by the irritation, but they don't treat the DES. In fact, they can actually make it worse. You should check with your eye doctor before buying any eye drops.

There are other methods to treat DES, according to the cause. These may include simply drinking more water, taking certain nutritional supplements, eliminating dust particles in your home with an air cleaner, or using a humidifier to add moisture to the air. Your eye doctor can give the correct diagnosis, as well as prescribe the correct treatment for your DES.

Eyesight is precious! Take care of your eyes!

Taken from an article on www.allaboutvision.com, by Judith Lee and Gretchyn Bailey.

HITCHIN' A RIDE!

It seems that everyone is "going green" these days, and with the skyrocketing cost of gasoline, driving less is one way to do this. Not only will our environment benefit, but your pocketbook will, too!

The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) has launched a new program called Broome-Tioga Greenride. This is a free, internet-based, ridesharing program

with the objective of helping people find a match for an opportunity to carpool or rideshare together. If you work full time or part time and travel to work on a regular basis, you may find someone who is going your way and would like to carpool. Even if you don't drive, you can still take advantage of this program.

To enroll, go to www.BroomeTioga.Greenride.com. There, step-by-step instructions will assist you in signing in and finding carpooling or other transportation options. You will need to provide some basic personal information, such as your name, address, email and destination. As a sponsor of Greenride, BMTS takes your privacy very seriously. When you are notified of a possible match, all you will see is the other person's first name and last initial. If you wish to pursue the



possibility, you may send an email message to the person.

The Greenride program helps you find carpool partners by searching for others who live near you and have similar schedules and lifestyle preferences, and you may choose your preferences for a match. For instance, you may be a woman who prefers to be matched only with other women, or you may be a non-smoker who does not want to ride with a smoker. The Greenride program will choose possible matches for you, based upon your preferences.

Personal safety is a concern, and BMTS highly recommends that you arrange a first meeting with potential matches in a public place. You may want to bring a family member or close friend with you to help you decide if the person would be a good travel partner for you. If you use common sense and courtesy, carpool matching is very safe.

If you would like more information about Broome-Tioga Greenride, please contact Scott Reigle, BMTS Greenride Administrator at 607-778-2443, or email him at sreigle@co.broome.ny.us.



FREE MATTER
FOR THE
BLIND

Association for Vision Rehabilitation
and Employment, Inc.
174 Court St.
Binghamton, NY 13901-3514



Address Service Requested

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174 Court St., Binghamton, NY 13901

607-724-2428 FAX: 607-771-8045

Email: avreinfo@avreus.org

www.avreus.org

Editor: Joyce Bucci

A.V.R.E. serves visually impaired individuals of all ages who live in the New York counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Tompkins and Schuyler, as well as the Pennsylvania counties of Bradford, Susquehanna and Tioga.

A.V.R.E. is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you would like more information about **A.V.R.E.** or its services, please feel free to contact us.

**Our vision is to be the first in choice
and quality with respect to vision
rehabilitation and employment services
in the Twin Tiers, and to be a model
for the broader community in
understanding vision disability.**

"Seeing Things Differently!"