

Expression Through Poetry

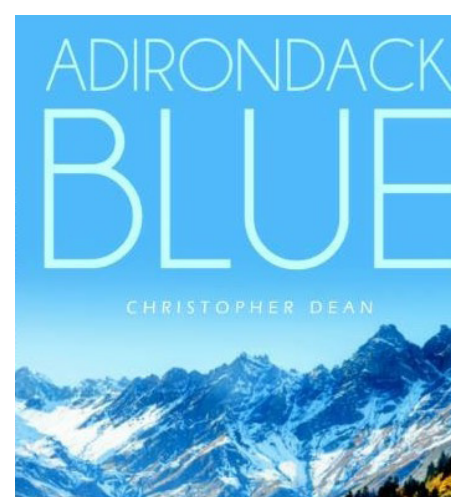
Writing has always come naturally to Christopher Dean. The Cooperstown native discovered his talent for writing poems while taking a creative writing course in college and has been writing ever since.

"It came so easily. I started writing for no other reason than I could." In 2008 he began writing a collection of poems that was eventually published as "Adirondack Blue."

All of Chris' poems are inspired by his spirituality and personal experiences, including his experience with vision loss. Born with Choroideremia, a rare, inherited eye condition that results in vision loss due to the deterioration of the choroid and retina, Chris is no stranger to facing challenges. Although he has lived with vision loss for most of his life, it has always been writing that helped him cope.

Chris recalled, "When I was diagnosed I understood what they were telling me, but I didn't register the severity of it until five or six years ago when the condition began to progress again."

Chris has been working with several AVRE rehabilitation staff members since June 2015. Even though he has worked with several employees including Vision Rehab Therapist Shawna Armstrong and Employment Specialist Tom Garruto, Chris states that the emotional support he has received has been the most valuable. According to Chris, "Being able to have an intellectually stimulating conversation with someone helped keep my mind from the brink of insanity."



Through AVRE, Chris has shared his story and his poetry, including one of his most powerful poems 'Senses' which portrays the challenges he has faced due to his eye condition.

"I wrote the poem 'Senses' because I was able to realize that although I was in fact losing more of my vision, you have to make the best of a bad situation."

And that exactly is what Chris has done. With one publication under his belt, he already has another one in the works, a new fictional novel centered on Greek mythology.

"Anybody that's got a talent for music, writing or drawing -- I feel that it is important for those talents to be encouraged."

Adirondack Blue can be purchased on digital readers or PagePublishing.com

Low Vision Expo

AVRE will host its 5th Annual Low Vision Expo in May 2016!

The Expo is open to the public and is an excellent opportunity for anyone who is interested in learning more about low vision resources. Tables will feature displays and demonstrations of the latest in adaptive/accessable technologies for reading, computer use, magnification, and other low vision aids and devices. AVRE's professional vision rehabilitation staff will also be on hand to discuss the services and solutions that are available to support independence.

Stay tuned for more information!

A blue, speech-bubble-like graphic with a white border and a drop shadow. Inside, the words "coming soon" are written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, slanted slightly upwards to the right.

Welcome Aboard!



Anthony Saccento, Chief Financial Officer

As our current Chief Financial officer, Anthony has experience in Public Accounting including tax, auditing, and general accounting. His Private Accounting experience includes senior positions in investment, publishing, oil and gas, architecture, and non-profit industries. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from St. John's University. He received both an MBA in Finance and an MS in Taxation from Fordham University. Anthony is a licensed Certified Public Accountant in New York, Pennsylvania, and California.

He periodically leads accounting seminars through a major financial newspaper and occasionally teaches accounting and finance classes at the university level. He volunteers on the Deacon Board at his home church and has performed certified audits for a children's mission in Kodiak, Alaska. He loves the outdoors and moved to Binghamton over a decade ago from New York City to pursue those opportunities.

Denise Scordino, Inventory & Purchasing Specialist

Denise joins Team AVRE as our new Inventory and Purchasing Specialist. After receiving her Bachelors of Science in Business Management and Economics from SUNY Empire State College, she spent eight years with Emerson Network Power Surge Protection as their Purchasing Manager. Denise also owned and managed a restaurant for over three years.

She currently resides in Vestal, NY and is an active member of her church. In her spare time she plays drums in a classic rock band and Christian rock band.

Denise states that she feels fortunate for the opportunity to work at AVRE and is very proud to be a part of the agency and its mission!



Staff Updates

- Kevin Burgher was promoted to Controller in September 2015. Kevin has been with AVRE for six years. As controller he oversees the day-to-day operations of agency, including finance and accounting.
- Assistive Technology Instructor John Ellzey completed the National Industries' For the Blind (NIB) Business Management Training program in August 2015 where he received a certificate of completion. John also received AVRE's Melvin E. Rhinebeck Career Achievement Award at the agency banquet in December.
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Margaret Opalka is continuing to work toward her dual certification in Orientation and Mobility from Salus University. During the summer of 2015, she spent 10 weeks in Philadelphia learning hands on techniques. This opportunity gave her experience to learn and teach traveling skills with individuals who have low and no vision. Margaret is currently completing the final portion of school and then will be able to sit for the certifying exam at the end of the semester in May.
- Rehabilitation Assistant Todd Birchard began attending classes through Salus University in January. 2016. This is Todd's first step toward receiving a Bachelor's degree in Orientation and Mobility as part of AVRE's "Grow Your Own" initiative.
- Shawнна Armstrong successfully received her certification in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy from ACVREP (Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals). The certification test was developed to improve the quality of service delivery that is provided to individuals with various visual impairments.



The Top 5 Recommended Aids or Devices

When our vision rehabilitation therapists meet with consumers, they often discuss incorporating different aids and devices into their home that can assist in creating a safer environment and maintaining independence. While there are all variations of aids and devices that can assist individuals with vision loss, there are five of them that our rehab therapists find most useful for everyday living.

Bump Dots: A simple concept, yet one of the most helpful. Bump dots, a plastic dot with a self-adhesive backing, were created to mark anything that needs to be identified by touch. They can become particularly useful on appliances like microwaves, stoves, or laundry machines.

20/20 Pens: These felt tip pens are easy to use and read. Writing notes or lists are more legible thanks to this pen that produces a thick, bolder line.

Large button telephone: A large button telephone can be an easy upgrade for someone who would like the buttons on a telephone more visible. Outgoing calls can become a breeze with the addition of a large button telephone in your home.



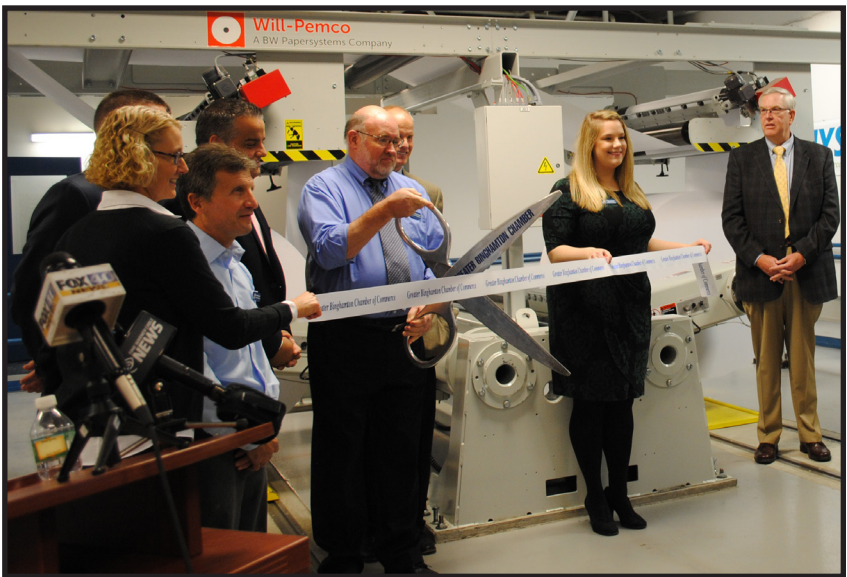
Cutting board and safety-blade knife: Safety is always a top priority and using sharp objects can be challenging when you are beginning to notice changes in your vision. Contrasting cutting board and low vision knives can certainly assist anyone in the kitchen.

Talking watch: Talking watches can be personalized depending on your needs and wants. Whether you prefer a leather or metal band, a watch with a bigger face, or a watch that tells you the day of the week, there are a lot of different options for individuals to choose from. With just a click of a button, the watch can tell you what time is, the date or set an alarm.

All of these aids and devices can be purchased in our ViewPoint store located at AVRE. If you would like to learn more or speak with someone at our office, feel free to give us a call at **724-2428**.

AVRE Unveils Its New Pemco Sheeter

It's been a long road, but we've finally completed the largest equipment upgrade in our history! The \$1.7 million project included upgrades to the manufacturing area and the purchase of a \$1.4 million Pemco DigiCut Sheeter. The new machine replaces 1960s vintage equipment that became increasingly difficult to operate and maintain. Copy paper is AVRE's primary product line and is sold into the federal, state, and local markets. It comprises over 25% of our annual budget. The new machine offers numerous advantages, but most importantly it is fully accessible for employees who are blind or visually impaired.



(Above) Mayor Rich David, Binghamton University President Harvey Stenger and AVRE employees gather together to cut the ribbon in honor of the new Pemco DigiCut Sheeter.

The sheeter's adaptations include control panel magnification, speech output for faults and warnings, specialized lighting, and color contrast. These adaptations work to enhance safety and product quality, while improving morale and increasing capacity and sales. The new sheeter will enable AVRE to produce in seven months what used to take twelve months. As a whole, the project protects valuable jobs and creates opportunities to create more jobs for people who are blind or visually impaired.

The project would not have been possible without support from our entire community. Funding for the project was made possible by several local foundations, including the Dr. G. Clifford & Florence B. Decker Foundation, the Stewart W. & Willma C. Hoyt Foundation, the Conrad & Virginia Klee Foundation, and the George A. & Margaret Mee Foundation. Additional funds were secured through the Regional Council of the Empire State Development Corporation and the National Industries for the Blind, Alexandria, VA. AVRE's Foundation for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc. committed \$500,000 to the project.

We're proud to be a part of Downtown Binghamton's revitalization, too. In an environment where manufacturing businesses are leaving our area, AVRE is creating good jobs and growing its manufacturing presence. Thank you for your continued support and for sharing in our successes.



Association for Vision Rehabilitation
and Employment, Inc.
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AVRE 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.

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