

AVRE hosts 1st Annual Dining in the Dark

AVRE hosted its first annual Dining in the Dark on April 26th at the Holiday Inn Binghamton. The event focused on raising awareness and funds to support AVRE's programs and services. It took guests on an unforgettable blindfolded dining experience. While under guidance from our Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, they learned about the skills used every day by individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

President and CEO, Ken Fernald explained, "It's just understanding the challenges that are associated with vision loss."

The evening included a cocktail hour, silent auction, wine wall, and a beer tasting sponsored by Galaxy Brewing Co. and Binghamton Brewing. Several local businesses, Board members, and staff donated generously to make the event successful.



(Above) Guest speaker Aly Farnsworth and her guide dog, Clare.



(Above) Guests enjoy navigating their entree plate while wearing blindfolds.

Over 20 local companies sponsored the event, and nearly 180 guests attended. Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield and M&T Bank were our Gold level sponsors; Bob Carr 2.0 was our print sponsor; Ophthalmic Associates was our "Pay-to-Peek" sponsor; and, several other companies and individuals participated by purchasing a table, tickets, or ad space in the program.

Before dinner was served, our emcee for the evening, Bill Emmons, Foundation Board Member and Dining in the Dark Committee Chair, introduced Ken Fernald and Marena Gonz, Foundation Board Chair who welcomed guests and thanked the sponsors, attendees, Board, Committee, and staff for all of their hard work in making the event a success.

Guest speaker Aly Farnsworth, a classical violinist of 20 years, teacher, and mother of four spoke about her journey to overcome obstacles after losing her vision in 2017. Because services were not readily available close

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Our Mission:

"To create opportunities for success and independence with people who are blind or visually impaired."

to her home, Aly taught herself to use the white cane and to adapt and navigate her surroundings before being paired with Clare, her guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind. At Guiding Eyes training, she met Ken Fernald, who gave her great encouragement as they both trained to run with their new guides. Aly graciously shared her musical talent with us during the evening.

Nolan Robinson, Foundation Board Member and Dining in the Dark Committee member, commented, "Our Dining in the Dark event was a great way to showcase how extraordinary AVRE is, both as a business, and as a service organization.. something that we are extremely fortunate to have in the Binghamton area."

The event not only successfully raised awareness about AVRE and the consumers we serve, but also raised nearly \$35,000 to support AVRE's programs and services!

AVRE's 20/70 Program

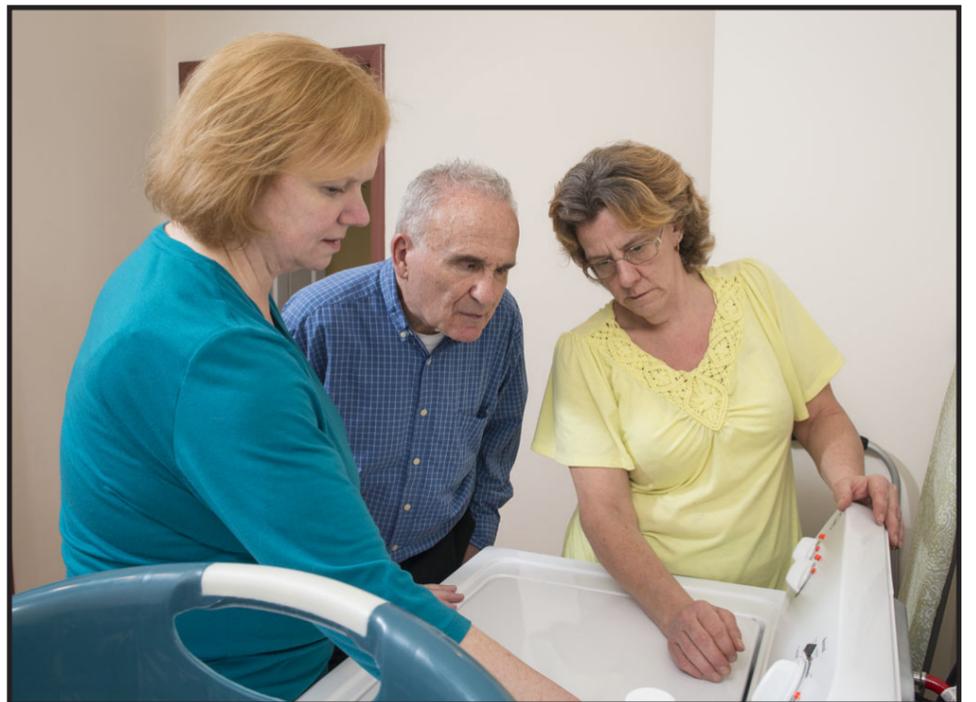
One of the questions our agency often asks itself is: how can we assist more people in our communities who are experiencing vision loss? AVRE launched a 20/70 program this year to provide concentrated vision rehabilitation services to individuals who have not yet been declared legally blind. The 20/70 program is available to anyone within the nine counties we serve who has received a functional vision assessment at AVRE or in their home with a certified low vision therapist.

If the low vision therapist and the individual determine there is a need for the 20/70 program during the assessment, we will obtain the necessary contact information to follow-up via telephone to set up an appointment.

The 20/70 program is facilitated by a vision rehabilitation therapist who will come to the home to complete a brief assessment to determine the individual's needs based on areas of concern related to vision loss. During the assessment you will be offered a variety of adaptive equipment "free of charge" to assist with daily living skills.

The trained professional will provide instruction on how to use the recommended equipment and may suggest additional adaptations within the individual's home to increase their ability to complete tasks independently. Some aids and devices such as talking thermometers, large print calendars, or bump dots may be suggested depending on individual needs.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing changes in their vision and may be interested in receiving a functional vision assessment or learning more about our 20/70 program, please call us at 607-724-2428.



Above: Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and Orientation Mobility Specialist Margaret Opalka demonstrating how to use bump dots on a washer and dryer.

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

125,000 eye injuries each year in the U.S. are caused by household items.

About 90% of sport injuries are preventable by wearing protective eyewear.

Source: www.allaboutvision.com

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Top 50 Best Non-Profits to Work For

We are thrilled to announce that AVRE placed in the top 50 nationwide of the *2018 Best Non-Profits to Work For* by The Non Profit Times (NPT). NPT's annual rankings are based on 10 key drivers that include employees feeling valued and part of a team, confidence in leadership, and employees feeling like they accomplished something every day.

Director of Health and Rehabilitation Services Teri Chamberlin, encouraged employees to apply and led the agency through the application process. The NPT application involves compiling detailed organizational information and surveying employees, including management.

Nationally, AVRE ranked 41st among all organizations and 22nd among mid-size. At the state level, AVRE placed 3rd among mid-size companies in New York.



Ken Fernald stated, "We consciously believe in the work/life balance. We believe in trust, family-first and the freedom to make good decisions. Our employees are committed to our mission and are all working towards the same goals".

We are honored to employ such dedicated and hard-working individuals here at AVRE. Without our employees, AVRE would not be the organization that it is today!

For more information go to <http://www.thenonproffitimes.com>.



(Above) Employees Danny Hine, Sarah Buckner and Pam Letts folding and sorting hand towels for Bates Troy.

New Partnership with Bates Troy

Last winter, New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) contacted us about a potential partnership with a local laundry company, Bates Troy. Bates Troy is well known for dry cleaning, but we soon learned that they also offer comprehensive industrial laundry services throughout the Southern Tier. For many years, Bates Troy partnered with Achieve to service laundry contracts with New York State medical and nursing facilities. Achieve and AVRE are members of NYSID as part of the Preferred Source Program. The Preferred Source Program offers NYS contract opportunities to agencies that employ people with various disabilities. Bates Troy is able to secure some of these contracts by partnering with

a NYSID agency. Unfortunately, Achieve was forced to cut back some of its industries programs, leaving Bates Troy in need of a new partner.

AVRE employees are folding various items such as washcloths, adult bibs, and fitted bed sheets – sometimes in the thousands per day! AVRE has experienced significant growth over the past two years and has often been faced with a shortage of people who are blind or visually impaired who are willing and able to work. This new business has provided AVRE an opportunity to hire individuals with disabilities other than vision impairment. Our partnership with NYSID enables us to hire people with various disabilities. The disability community in general faces a 70% unemployment rate. We are excited to offer new employment opportunities for more people with disabilities.

As soon as the management teams from AVRE and Bates Troy met, we knew the project would be a success! We are thrilled to be working with a local, family-owned business that is committed to its community and the people who live here. We share a work culture that is inclusive and forward-thinking. Stay tuned as we move ahead with Bates Troy!



Association for Vision Rehabilitation
and Employment, Inc.
174 Court St.
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**Store hours: Monday—Friday
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607-724-2428**

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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.

AVRE is an Affirmative Action and
Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you would like more information about AVRE
and its services, please feel free to contact us.