



# InSight

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc.

## From the AVRE Archives: “When you meet a Blind Person”

A peek into AVRE’s archives reveals how society’s perceptions of individuals who are blind have changed over the past several decades. We recently found a small pamphlet entitled, “When You Meet a Blind Person...,” published when AVRE was the Blind Work Association. The cover displays a man in a business suit walking with a cane. While the advice offered in the pamphlet is still relevant, it implies that vision loss only occurs in men by using phrases such as “When you walk with him” or “When you dine with him.” Of course, we know that vision loss impacts both men and women.

The pamphlet reminds us that thirty or forty years ago, sighted people may have feared or shied away from individuals who are blind. “Remember,” the brochure assures the reader, “there is no such thing as a typical blind person. He is a human being with a visual problem.” In the twenty-first century, we cringe at such language. Would we not know that “he” is a human being? We need to remember, however, that the Americans with Disabilities Act was only signed into law in 1990.

Perhaps the greatest change the pamphlet reveals, when compared to AVRE’s current website, is the language used to describe what AVRE does. The pamphlet’s back page lists “Services” which included Arrangements for Eye Care, Visits Blind Persons at Home, and Supplies Aids for Blind Persons. AVRE today frames these services in a way that shows how far society has come in respecting individual needs.

Our services include Low Vision Exams, Functional Vision Assessments, Vision Rehabilitation, Orientation and Mobility, and Case Management Services. The ViewPoint Retail Store offers consumers low vision aids and adaptive devices. Despite the pamphlet’s dated advice to its readers that “Temperament, personality and ability among the blind are just as variable as within any other group,” AVRE has always recognized that there is no generic category of “the blind” or “Blind Persons.”

Finally, AVRE has come a long way in the employment services and opportunities it offers. Although we still manufacture products and provide “subcontract services for industry,” we are not a workshop employer. AVRE operates on a hybrid business model where the revenues generated from our Business Division offset the cost for consumer services. Our employees enjoy substantive, meaningful jobs manufacturing and assembling products that keep us in business. In addition, our Health and Rehabilitation Services staff prepare adult and teen consumers for employment.

This pamphlet is a reminder that although social perceptions, language, and services may change, AVRE’s mission remains the same.



### *Our Mission:*

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

## 2017 Year in Review

By Ken Fernald

AVRE's goal is to be more visible in our community and better connected with individuals who are blind or visually impaired who need our vision rehabilitation services. Thanks to the generosity of the Lavelle Fund, in 2017 we engaged in a comprehensive advertising campaign. You may have seen or heard our commercials on TV and radio asking you to "Define your vision." Our advertising campaign has also included a more focused social media effort, (follow us on Facebook and Twitter), to better communicate all that we do to as many people as possible. We understand that there are individuals in our communities who may not know AVRE exists or perhaps do not understand what we have to offer to help them find success and independence. We are working to close that gap and become better known to ensure we are able to assist those in need of our services.

Our staff are proud to live, work, and play in the Greater Binghamton community and to know that we are a quality paper supplier to many of community partners. Thank you to our customers. Their purchases create jobs with good pay and good benefits for individuals who are blind. We are on pace to have a very good year thanks to increased sales of products manufactured right here in Binghamton and sold into our local, state, and federal markets.

AVRE staff believe in giving back to our community. In 2017, we had a very successful fundraising effort to support the Binghamton Relay for Life. Over \$5,000 was raised and several employees walked in the relay. We also participated in, and cheered on the runners during the Binghamton Bridge Run. The YMCA's Corporate Challenge brought us together with our community partners to have some fun and competition. In addition, our staff supported disadvantaged children during the holidays with Christmas gifts.



(Above) CEO/President Ken Fernald and his guide dog, Winnie.

At the beginning of 2017, I would not have believed we would have a group, led by a board member, planning to walk from Binghamton to MetLife Stadium for the opening home game of the NY Giants. After eight days of walking and covering over 154 miles, they arrived at the stadium. Along the way, they brought much attention to AVRE and the services we offer. Thank you to all of the donors, walkers, board members, staff, and friends. A GIANT thank you to the NY Giants organization for your support and hospitality to make "AVRE's Giant Walk" a very successful fundraising and outreach event.

We have also begun the process to become ISO certified. The International Standards Organization certification (ISO) will bring our quality program to a new level and position us to continuously improve our processes. To complement this new certification, three AVRE staff members recently completed Lean Six Sigma training. We are excited to begin this 18-month long journey and are ready for the work and the challenges in front of us.

A big change in my life occurred in October 2017. I completed training with Guiding Eyes for the Blind for my first guide dog. Winnie, a small yellow lab, has become an everyday presence in the office. Not only does Winnie guide me safely and independently as I navigate through everyday life and travel, she is specially trained as a running guide dog. We are one of only about 12 teams in the country to receive this training so far. I am so fortunate to have been selected as Winnie's person, and I cannot express enough the level of freedom and enhanced independence she brings to my life.

In 2018, we look forward to continued growth and opportunities to achieve our mission.

# DID YOU KNOW?

**Just 1% of the blind population is born without sight. The vast majority of blind people lose their vision later in life because of macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetes.**

Source: [www.NFB.org](http://www.NFB.org)

Follow us on social media!



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[@AVREBing](https://twitter.com/AVREBing) 2

## Support Groups in our Community

Peer-to-peer support groups offer people who are visually impaired the opportunity to share and connect with others going through similar experiences. There are several support groups in our nine-county service territory that are open to people who are legally blind or visually impaired.

### Broome County

Meeting Date: the 1st Thursday of each month

Time: 10:00 am until 11:00 am

Place: AVRE facility at 174 Court Street, Binghamton, NY

Contact Person: Annie van der Wal, AVRE Vision Rehabilitation Specialist

Phone: (607)724-2428; call to become a member!

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### Cortland County

Meeting Date: 3rd Friday of each month

Time: 11:45 am until about 12:45 pm

Place: Cortland County Office Building, 60 Central Avenue B-40, Cortland, NY

Contact Person: Sue Preston of Cortland County Area Agency of Aging

Phone: (607) 753-5166

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### Tioga County

Meeting Date: the 1st Wednesday of each month

Time: 11:00 am until 12:30 pm

Place: Long Meadow Senior Apartment, 5 Browns Lane, Owego, NY

Contact Person: Shawna Armstrong, AVRE Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist

Phone: (607) 724-2428; call to become a member!

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## Giving Back to the Southern Tier

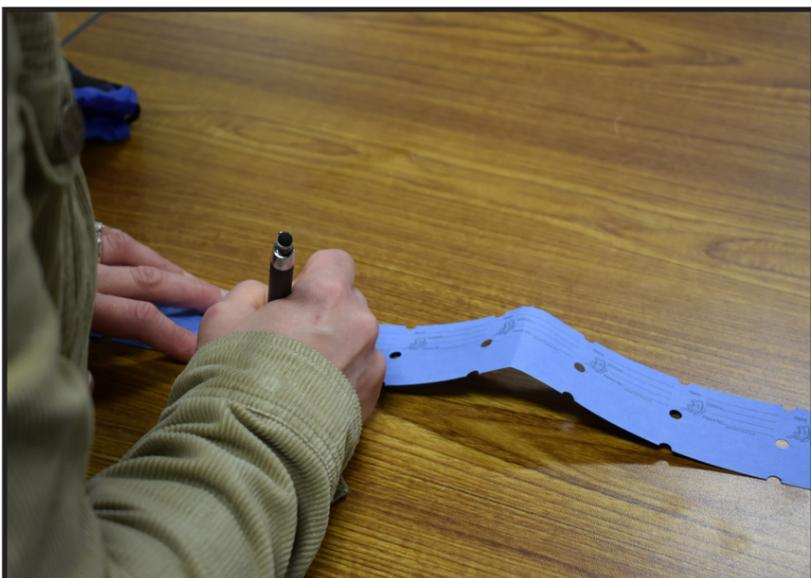


“At AVRE we are always asking the question, “What can we do to give back to our community?” Last year our Health and Wellness Committee assembled a team committed to raising money for the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life. We raised over \$5,000.

This year the Committee decided to raise funds for a different local organization each month. Some of the area non-profits include the Animal Care Council, the Boys and Girls Club of Western Broome, Mom’s House, and Rise NY. AVRE holds a 50/50 raffle every Friday that allows employees to raise money for that month’s selected non-profit. We also collect returnable cans and bottles to put toward our monthly total.

“We had such a great time raising money for the Relay For Life last year,” said AVRE’s Cassie Burgess, who chairs the committee. “This is a collaborative way for everyone to give to several organizations and support those who have supported us.”

We have raised just over \$500 thus far in 2018. We are hoping the contributions we make inspire others to continue giving back!



(Above) Executive Assistant Christina Dorunda and Production Manager Luigi DiRusso selling 50/50 tickets to employees.



Association for Vision Rehabilitation  
and Employment, Inc.  
174 Court St.  
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**One coupon per customer.  
One time use for current purchase.**

**Store hours: Monday—Friday  
8:00 AM—4:30 PM  
607-724-2428**

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**InSight** is available in the following formats:

Large Print (14 pt), Braille, emailed text,  
Word document on disk or CD,  
and regular audio cassette.

If you would like to receive InSight in a different  
format, please call us.

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.