

In-Sight

For People Affected by
Blindness and Low Vision

Proudly serving Berks County since 1929

*Check out
the new look
to our
website!*

SUMMER | 2017

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What is *Dine in the Dark*?

Vision Resource Center of Berks County is currently busy planning our 4th annual Dine in the Dark dinner event, this year to be held on Thursday, September 28th at the Crowne Plaza in Wyomissing!

This annual fundraiser has been held for the past 3 years at our agency, on a weekend evening and has been a successful, albeit modest affair. This year, it's our hope more folks are ready to experience this enlightening dining event as we move to a larger venue at the Crowne!

VRC partners annually with Kutztown University in this fundraiser which encourages participants to experience what it is like to live with visual impairment for a little while, as all dinner attendees are blindfolded before the meal is served. After the blindfold is on, students from Kutztown's Special Education program on Visual Impairment serve as the attendee's eyes; providing verbal instructions for locating food and drink throughout the meal.

This enlightening dinner event has been a successful fundraiser, proceeds benefitting the VRC, and for two Kutztown University Student Ambassadors of the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Visual Impairments to attend the annual conference in San Diego.

For tickets and more event info, please visit our webpage at www.vrcberks.org

In-Sight



President's Message

Lori Schermerhorn, President/CEO

Happy Summer everyone! While some people may think summer is a time to slow down, that is not the case at VRC! The summer months mean a hectic time as we plan and implement camps and other summer activities for our clients!

After camps are over, we will continue to focus on our Dine in the Dark event that has been scheduled for Thursday, September 28th at Crowne Plaza. This year's event will be bigger and better than ever before! We hope that you will join us for an amazing and enlightening evening of inspiration, food, and entertainment.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who came and participated in the Vision and Hearing Expo. It was definitely a huge success! Please check our website www.vrcberks.org for upcoming events and like our Facebook page!

Until next time...

Our Mission

Our mission is to strive to prevent blindness and visual impairment, and to advocate and provide quality education, support services, and rehabilitation to enrich the lives of blind and visually impaired persons and their caregivers.

Contact us at 610-375-8407

Lori Schermerhorn President and CEO
Carolyn Krick Vice President of Operations
Rosann Strauss Director of Workshop Services
Ann Heiser Caseworker for Vision Screenings
Mark Levensgood Counselor
Alicia Santiago Social Worker
Joyce Morgan Activities/Transportation Coordinator

ext. 112
ext. 110
ext. 118
ext. 114
ext. 120
ext. 122
ext. 125

VRC Services Center Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday **8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Chairperson, Board of Directors **Steve Bobick**
President/CEO **Lori Schermerhorn**
Editor **Carolyn Krick**
Advertising **Carolyn Krick**
Printed by **Reading Eagle Company**

Calendar of Events

JULY

Wednesday, July 19: Lunch Bunch at 11:30 at Mimmo's Restaurant and Pizzeria, located at 290 Morgantown Road, Reading 19611

Wednesday, July 26: Lunch and Learn at 11:30 with Cynthia Celi from Mom's Meals NourishCare, to be held at the VRC, located at 2020 Hampden Blvd. Reading 19604

Wednesday, July 26: Sight Loss Support Group from 1:00-3:00 at the VRC

Wednesday, July 26: Caregiver's Support Group from 2:00-3:00 at the VRC

AUGUST

Tuesday, August 1: Insight on BCTV at 10:00 – Interviewing a Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Wednesday, August 2: Social and Recreational Activity

Wednesday, August 16: Lunch Bunch at 11:30 at The Pourhouse American Grille, located at 3341 Pricetown Road Fleetwood, 19522

Wednesday, August 23: Sight Loss Support Group from 1:00-3:00 at the VRC, located at 2020 Hampden Blvd. Reading 19604

Wednesday, August 23: Caregiver's Support Group from 2:00-3:00 at the VRC

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, September 5: Insight on BCTV at 10:00 – Personal Experiences and Testimony from Dine in the Dark with Scott Maulick

Wednesday, September 20: Lunch Bunch at 11:30 at CrossRoads Family Restaurant, located at 4643 Pottsville Pike Reading, 19605

Wednesday, September 27: Lunch and Learn at 11:30 with Amy Strawser from Pennsylvania Relay Service, to be held at the VRC, located at 2020 Hampden Blvd. Reading 19604

Wednesday, September 27: Sight Loss Support Group from 1:00-3:00 at the VRC

Wednesday, September 27: Caregiver's Support Group from 2:00-3:00 at the VRC

*All questions, registrations, and transportation requests for Lunch Bunch, Lunch-Learn, Sight Loss Support Group, and Social/Recreational Activities should be directed to Mark Levensgood at 610-375-8407 ext. 120

The Caregiver's Support Group is dependent upon caregivers actually attending and/or requesting support.

Please do not register for events more than one month in advance.

Please feel free to consult the VRC Activity Line at 610-375-8407 ext. 123 for an audio recording of that specific month's events.



by Mark Levensgood

TECH Authority

An important skill for any visually impaired individual to develop in working toward independence is that of labeling items that can be identified when needed. Certainly many devices and methods can be used for labeling, but I have found few better than the PenFriend. The PenFriend is a small, handheld device that is shaped at one end like a microphone and at the other like a traditional pen.

The PenFriend labels are created when an individual presses and holds the "record" button and touches the pen tip to a sticker. The PenFriend will ding, like a bell, signaling when to speak their desired label into the microphone end. When finished speaking, the person simply releases the "record" button. From that point forward, every time the pen tip touches a specific sticker, they will hear their voice repeating back whatever they spoke into the microphone. The PenFriend and coinciding stickers create a personalized voice recorded label. Uses for these stickers are endless; cleaning products, a person's collection of movies and music...even containers of leftovers can be labeled!

One final use of the PenFriend labels is on clothing. Special PenFriend stickers can be ordered that are machine wash and dryer friendly. Once applied, the individual can record their voice on the label to know the color of that article as well as what to wear it with or even how to launder it. I placed PenFriend stickers on the backside of neck ties, recording my voice onto the label with instructions for which color shirt and pants to wear with each tie.



PenFriend available at: www.maxiaids.com.

Workshop Employee Spotlight



Meet Valued Employee John Knott

John Knott became an employee of VRC's workshop 31 years ago! Through out the years, John has been a much valued employee. He is hardworking, dedicated, and a perfectionist with any task he is given.

John is much loved by his co-workers for his easy-going, friendly personality. His hobbies include bowling, dancing at the Reading Liederkrantz and helping out at the Temple Greenhouse , which his sister and brother-in-law own and operate!

Thank you John, for your many years of service to our workshop! We appreciate you!

Anyone interested in seeing what our workshop can do for your business, please contact Jim at 610-375-8407 ext. 113 or email at jwelde@vrcberks.org

Become a Vision Resource Center Supporter!

Yes, I would like to support the programs and services of VRCBC in prevention of blindness.

Enclosed please find my tax deductible gift: \$100 \$75 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

Designate your gift:

- Unrestricted Support - Use Where Needed
- Care Givers Support Group
- Building Fund
- Children's Vision Screening
- Sight Loss Support Group
- Workshop Services

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

In Memory/Honor of (please circle one): Please acknowledge my gift to:

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I would like my gift to remain anonymous I am interested in learning more about Planned Giving VRCBC is already in my will

Thank you for your support! Make checks payable and mail to:
Vision Resource Center of Berks County, 2020 Hampden Blvd., Reading, PA 19604
or donate on-line at www.vrcberks.org

The official registration and financial information of Vision Resource Center of Berks County a 501©3 may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free (800)732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



**Vision
Resource
Center**
of Berks County

Making new connections Vision and Hearing Expo



*Vision Resource Center of Berks County
and Berks Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services*



Our second year partnering with Berks Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for our annual Vision and Hearing Expo, was held on Wednesday, May 17th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Wyomissing.

We had 30 vendors and a wide ranging list of guest speakers who gave presentations through out the event. BDHHS offered free hearing screenings, KidSight offered free vision screenings, and we had a live remote with Mike Faust from WEEU! The vendors were all very pleased with the crowd turnout, and enjoyed the opportunity to make connections with many new prospects!

A BIG thanks to our trusted crew of volunteer drivers who help make it possible for so many of our clients to attend Expo, speak with the vendors, and attend the informative seminars!

A special thanks to our event sponsor, Eye Consultants of PA, and to Berks ENT for being this year's WEEU Live Feedback sponsor! Thanks also to Dr. Heidi Sensenig, O.D. for her help with securing our guest speakers!

We hope all who attended this event had a great time, and we look forward starting the planning process for next year soon!

Exhibitions at Expo 2017



Visitors are able to gain valuable information and make new connections at Berks County's only gathering of vision and hearing experts!



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**Thank you
to District 14P
Lions Clubs**

VRCBC Insight Advertising Policy

All ads submitted to VRCBC Insight for publication will be reviewed by staff for suitability. If there is a question concerning the content of any proposed advertisement, a staff member will contact the advertiser to see if any adjustments can be made.

VRCBC Insight reserves the right to refuse any advertisement deemed inappropriate for VRCBC Insight.

The publication of any advertisement in VRCBC Insight does not imply endorsement of that product, service or company/organization supplying their product/service by VRCBC Insight.

Contact Carolyn Krick for advertising information at ckrick@vrcberks.org

VRCBC In-Sight is published quarterly and is funded by advertising revenues and other donations. You will receive your next VRCBC Insight in September 2017.



July: Eye Injury Prevention Month

- Preventing injuries to eyes in the workplace is primarily this month's focus.
- It is estimated that out of 2,000 eye injuries each day, about 1,000 occur in the workplace.
- According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, almost 70% of eye injuries on the job are caused by either falling or flying objects, or sparks hitting a worker's eye.
- Tips for Safety:
 - Wear appropriate eye protection for the job you do.
 - Make sure that eye protection is fitted correctly in order to be effective.
 - Continue to have regular eye exams to retain healthy vision.

For more information: www.foh.dhhs.gov



August: Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month—a great signal for you to get your child's eyes checked before school starts. Most children have healthy eyes. But there are conditions that can threaten good vision. Because you can't always "look" into your child's eyes to tell if they have eye health problems, set up some time today for an eye exam:

- Your child's eyes should be examined during regular pediatric appointments and vision testing should be conducted around age three.
- Parents should be aware of signs that may indicate their child has vision problems, including:
 - Wandering or crossed eyes.
 - A family history of childhood vision problems.
 - Disinterest in reading or viewing distant objects.
 - Squinting or turning the head in an unusual manner while watching television.

For more information: www.hap.org/health/topic/eyemonth.php



September: National Guide Dog Month

- This month of awareness was inspired by Dick Van Patten who was "impressed by the intelligence and training of guide dogs."
- After learning that the cost to raise and train a guide dog is over \$40,000 and takes more than two years, Van Patten was committed to raising money and awareness.
- National Guide Dog Month was initially set in May, but was changed due to conflicts with other national fundraising drives.
- Beneficiaries of fundraising during this awareness month include Leader Dogs for the Blind and The Seeing Eye, Inc. Fundraising is collected and distributed by Petco Foundation, Inc., a non-profit corporation.

For more information:
www.wikipedia.org



In-Sight Awareness



Back To School Thoughts

Pink Eye

As the new school year begins, and children spend more time in group settings, parents and teachers may see an increase in conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye. Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the transparent membrane that lines your eyelid and covers the white part of your eye, causing the whites of your eye to appear reddish or pink. Pink eye is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection and may affect one eye or both. While it can be irritating, it rarely affects your vision. Because pink eye can be contagious, early diagnosis and treatment can help limit its spread.

Symptoms of pink eye include: redness, itching, a gritty feeling in the eye, tearing, and a discharge that forms a crust during the night that may prevent the eye from opening in the morning. If you notice these signs and think it may be pink eye, make an appointment with your doctor. Pink eye can be highly contagious and treatment should begin early.

Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic eyedrops or ointment, and symptoms should begin to decrease in a few days. Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions and complete the length of treatment to prevent the infection from recurring.

Information taken from www.mayoclinic.org

Why Vision Problems Start When School Starts

Vision problems often become evident right after the beginning of the school year, and parents may wonder why. There are a number of reasons why this happens.

As a child moves from one grade level to the next, school work becomes more difficult, with more things to read and write. In addition, the size of the text print may become smaller and children may be required to read for longer periods of time.

Parents and teachers may also become more aware of possible vision issues as the child's learning is affected. Previous difficulties focusing on tasks or completing school work, may have been attributed to other things, such as behavioral concerns or the child's maturity. Most schools perform periodic vision screenings on students in an attempt to detect any vision problems. Since these are just screenings, and not a complete eye exam, parents are notified if a concern arises so a complete exam can be scheduled.

Some Common Vision Problems In Children Are As Follows:

Refractive errors: myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness) and astigmatism. Refractive errors can usually be corrected with glasses or contact lenses.

Amblyopia: also known as "lazy eye", can usually be corrected by glasses, surgery or patching of one eye.

Strabismus: when the eyes are not properly aligned, also known as "cross-eyed". Glasses may be used to improve focusing.

In all cases, the earlier the vision problem is detected, the earlier the treatment can begin.

Information taken from www.rebuildyourvision.com and www.itriagehealth.com





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**Vision
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In-Sight

For People Affected by Blindness and Low Vision

Services provided by Vision Resource Center of Berks County

Vision Screenings The Prevention of Blindness program targets the children of Berks County. This is a free screening service that is provided to children between 3-5 years of age. This service is provided at day care centers, preschools, nursery schools, Head Start Centers, and kindergarten registrations. These screenings are designed to detect eye issues at an early age because the earlier the detection, the earlier treatment can begin. Adult vision screenings are provided at various health fairs and community events throughout the year. These screenings are designed to assess an adult's vision changes.

Sight Loss Support Group This group meets monthly to provide support and problem solving for clients. This meeting is open to individuals who are blind or are visually impaired and their family members, friends, and caregivers. This meeting is designed to discuss the latest technology and medical breakthroughs that may be of interest to the attendees.

Caregivers Sight Loss Support Group This group meets bi-monthly to help other caregivers be a support for their visually impaired family member. Caregivers need the support of others that have experienced the difficulties with complete or partial vision loss and the changes that occur in everyone's life.

Counseling Is available for individuals who are struggling with the adjustment of a visual impairment or blindness. Counselor and client will work together to reach goals that are obtainable. The meetings will be adapted for each client's needs and desires.

Lunch Bunch This group meets monthly at various restaurants throughout Berks County as a means of socialization. This group is open to those with visual impairments or who are blind and their family members, friends, and caregivers.

Assistive Devices A variety of assistive devices are available for individuals to purchase or lease. These items are available to assist an individual with vision issues to lead a more productive and independent life.

Spanish Speaking Sight Loss Support Group This group meets monthly to provide support for those within Berks County who are blind or have vision loss that feel more comfortable within the Spanish speaking community. This group meets to discuss problems and possible solutions for difficulties they are having dealing with everyday life with their visual impairment.

Education Programs Several education programs are available for different age groups of children. These programs are designed to discuss eye health and eye safety rules. Adult education programs can also be performed concerning specific eye issues or ideas for continued independence within the home with a visual impairment.

Information and Referral Services Following an individualized home visit, information and releases are obtained to discuss the best way to assist the client. If further assistance is necessary, referrals are made to the appropriate agencies to best address the client's individual needs for success with their visual impairment.

Workshop Services Employing over 50 visually impaired, blind, or challenged individuals, the workshop promotes developing skill sets unique to each person's abilities and interests. Pride in work done produces a quality product for the customer. Each employee is paid for their specific amount of work performed. All work is done specific to the customer's specifications.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 610-375-8407 or visit our website at www.vrcberks.org