

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

October 2014 - September 2015

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SRC 2015 ANNUAL REPORT INTRODUCTION

MANDATE

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Blind is mandated by the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and is authorized in Washington RCW 74.18.070-74.18.100. The SRC for the Blind serves as a separate Council to the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) which administers the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation services for individuals who are blind.

MISSION

The major purpose of the Council is to develop, analyze, and make recommendations to state strategic plan goals, the state vocational rehabilitation plan, state policies, and Department activities to insure that persons who are blind in the state of Washington receive the most effective and efficient vocational rehabilitation services possible.

In fulfilling its duties, the council:

- Provides direct guidance to the Director of the DSB on behalf of the public and consumers;
- Where appropriate, advises or reports to the Governor or makes recommendations to the State Legislature to promote efficient and effective services; and

Enhances the services, opportunities, and rights of Washingtonians who are blind by working closely with other state councils, state agencies and state organizations whose programs may impact such services.

In addition, where appropriate, this Council provides guidance and makes recommendations about other programs and services provided by the Department including the Independent Living Program services provided to children and adults, the Older Blind Independent Living Program, and the Business Enterprise Program.

HIGHLIGHTS

The SRC for the Blind met 4 times in 2015, discussing, among other topics:

- the department's Strategic Plan initiatives for the next five years,
- curriculum changes in the OTC,

- WIOA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and other WIOA implementation issues including the draft Combined State Plan,
- funding for the Older Blind Program and other budget impacts,
- website and document accessibility in state government, and
- Department performance.

See page 18 for additional Council activities.

The SRC for the Blind has 2 vacancies. See Council Membership on page 9.

100 children, ages birth to 13, received a variety of services, including family counseling, adaptive skills of blindness, group activities. See page 23.

19 high school students had paid summer work experiences in a variety of job settings through the YES 2 program. See page 27.

172 Vocational Rehabilitation customers went to work in competitive jobs with an average hourly wage of \$20.34. See page 24.

77 students and staff participated in the Orientation and Training Center's challenge activities, including kayaking and bowling. See page 28.

Over 1,600 individuals in the Independent Living Older Blind Program were able to stay in their own homes due to increased independence. See page 32.

CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor, Washington State

Janet LaBreck, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration

As chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), I am pleased to present to you, and to our friends and public stakeholders, our Annual Report for 2015.

The SRC for the Blind met 4 times in 2015 at the DSB office in Seattle, Washington. Members provided feedback to the Director in the areas of planning, policy, performance, cost savings-meeting the challenges of continuing budget impacts, and information accessibility. Each meeting included time for public comment. Individuals and stakeholders from across the state gave input to the SRC in person or by conference call.

Other presentations throughout the year included: Older blind program conference; Deaf blind Service Center; benefits planning and other customer support services; customer satisfaction survey; Motivational Interviewing; summer youth employment and skills programs.

During 2015, the SRC for the Blind also heard updates from our members who represent various entities as required by the Rehabilitation Act. Reports were given by the State Independent Living Council, the Client Assistance Program, the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, the Parent Training and Information Center, and a Community Rehabilitation Service Provider. We did not have a presentation from the State Workforce Investment Board because the appointed representative did not attend any meetings.

In 2015, 4 members left the SRC for the Blind and 4 new members were appointed. We continue to experience difficulty recruiting applicants who represent business and labor and currently have 2 vacancies in this category. We welcome and appreciate any assistance that the Governor's Office could give us in recruiting qualified applicants.

Although a Workforce Board representative was appointed to the SRC for the Blind, she has failed to attend any meetings or show any interest. The Council therefore considers that it still does not have a meaningful Workforce Board representative which is a crucial position in meeting our federal mandates and has advised the Governor's Office.

The SRC for the Blind prepared extensive comments on the proposed regulations for the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and actively participated in preliminary development of the agency's 5-year strategic plan and the new Workforce Combined State Plan.

The SRC for the Blind is proud of the relationship we have with the Director and staff of DSB, and the partnerships we have with key stakeholder groups. We are passionate about representing individuals who are blind and we look forward to receiving continued support from the Governor's Office.

Sincerely,
Sue Ammeter, Chair



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor, WA State

Janet LaBreck, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Representing a broad spectrum of Washington citizens, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Blind guides our agency mission:

Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality for People with Visual Disabilities

The role of the SRC is particularly important in our current economic environment. Council members actively seek and convey the input of their respective constituents, and are strong partners in helping the agency to clarify values and assess options regarding our budget, policies and strategies. As a result, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) continues to demonstrate the positive impact of our services on children and families, youth transitioning from school to work, adults who want to be competitively employed, employers who need qualified workers, and elderly citizens who want to remain independent in their homes. The strong focus of the SRC for the Blind along with the successful outcomes achieved by our professional staff contributes to Washington's economic and cultural vitality by emphasizing the skills and abilities of all its citizens including those with disabilities.

The good news is that every day in Washington people with vision loss are going to work in competitive jobs, starting up their own businesses and employing others, or keeping their current jobs by acquiring new skills and assistive technology. Services for the Blind is celebrating because this year 172 of our customers completed their rehabilitation programs and went to work in competitive jobs with an average hourly wage of \$20.34. This means that these individuals have taken charge of their lives, can support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

Jobs are about all of us. In order for our state and our communities to thrive, all of us must thrive. People come to us at Services for the Blind because they have vision loss, but that is often only a part of what is happening in their lives. You may already know this because someone with vision loss is in your family, or is a neighbor or friend.

This year the youngest individual getting his first job through Services for the Blind was a 20-year-old going to work as a customer service representative at Safeway. Two 84-year-olds, an electrical engineer and a piano technician, were able to keep their respective positions. 8 transition age youth went to work. We assisted 3 individuals to start up their own small businesses. 3 blind military veterans became employed or kept their jobs.

Additionally, the Independent Living Older Blind Program successfully served 1,600 individuals, age 55 and over, who wished to maintain or increase their independence at home and in the community after vision loss.

We create these successes by being innovative in how we manage our resources, providing our state employees an environment of recognition and development, maintaining a strong relationship with our stakeholders, and keeping the public informed. As a state agency, we continue to emphasize accountability, performance outcome measures, and careful analysis of data as the drivers for strategic planning, as well as the key tools for our Council members to be well-informed as advisors and advocates.

9 of our Council members are blind or have other disabilities. They continue to thoughtfully share their expertise, resources, and life experiences with our customers. Both as a group and individually, they function as role models for an engaged Washington committed to the well-being of all its citizens and are persistent on behalf of the economic and cultural vitality of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce the work of these dedicated volunteers.

Sincerely,

Lou Oma Durand, Director



COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND BIOGRAPHIES

Council members are appointed by the Governor for no more than two 3-year consecutive terms. The SRC for the Blind actively seeks demographic and ethnic diversity among its members in addition to meeting the challenge of its statutory membership requirements.

The Council currently has vacancies for 2 Labor and Business Representatives.

CURRENT MEMBERS

BOB HUVEN, M.ED., CRC

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Seattle, WA

Bob has a Bachelors' in Habilitation/Rehabilitation and American Sign Language as a Second Language from Antioch University. He also has a Master's in Vocational Education from the University of Washington and is certified both as a sign language interpreter and rehabilitation counselor.

He brings to the SRC his experience as a person with a disability and 30 years' experience working with blind, deaf, and other people who experience life with a disability.

Bob is leaving the SRC at the end of December. His contribution will be missed and we wish him success in his retirement endeavors.

DEBBY PHILLIPS

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

Spokane, WA

Debbly Phillips grew up in Oregon, attending the Oregon School for the Blind. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Services from George Fox University and a Master's in Theological Studies from Mount Angel Seminary.

Following several social service jobs, Debbie worked for the IRS for 10 years. During that time, she worked as a volunteer receptionist at a church office, among other volunteer activities. When she moved to Spokane with her husband Craig, Debby realized she had little confidence in herself. She asked the DSB to send her to the NFB Training Center in Colorado. When Debby returned, she was hired by the Inland Northwest Lighthouse as their Braille Instructor. She is now employed as a Production worker at the Lighthouse and is enjoying it very much.

Debby serves as Secretary for the National Federation of the Blind of Washington. She also serves as the Secretary for Patron Advisory Council for WTBBL. Debby and Craig live in Spokane with her Seeing Eye dog, Neena, my retired dog, Lamar, and our cat, Flounder, whom they rescued. She enjoys singing in the choir at Saint Charles Boromeo Catholic Church.

DOUG TRIMBLE

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Vancouver, WA

Doug Trimble has spent most of his life in the Vancouver/Portland area. He has been working at the Washington State School for the Blind since 1999. He currently teaches Orientation & Mobility to middle and high school students. Doug also works as an Older Blind Program provider, which he finds extremely rewarding.

Doug is married with 2 daughters who are in middle school. In his leisure time, he enjoys traveling, hiking, and watching football (go Seahawks!), basketball, and baseball. Doug also likes to tinker with technology, but his kids clearly know more than he does, of course!

Doug joined the SRC in October of 2014.

EMILIO VELA

WASHINGTON STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

Olympia, WA

Emilio Vela, Jr. has been in the field of Behavioral Health since 1983. He began his professional career as a chemical dependency counselor and moved into program administration with the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse at the state level in 1991. He has extensive experience in services to disabled communities, homeless, veterans, monolingual, and criminal justice populations. From 1998 to 2004, he was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the statewide treatment delivery system, directly overseeing implementation and delivery of treatment services to co-occurring populations, disabled veterans, tribes, vulnerable/special populations, and low income individuals.

Emilio served at the national level as the President for the National Treatment Network/National Association of Substance Abuse and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) and sat on the NASADAD Board of Directors. In this capacity he integrated returning disabled veteran issues into Washington's Co-Occurring Disorder (COD) Issues Policy Team by making a veteran/consumer the co-chair of the WA COD Policy Team and opened the dialogue of returning veteran issues into the State Action Plan at that time.

Emilio is a strong advocate for the Independent Living Philosophy through his current work as the Executive Director of the Washington State Independent Living Council. He is an expert at

nonprofit management and leadership, and a strong supporter of consumer empowerment and self-determination.

He is a graduate of the University of Washington, and obtained his Masters in Public Administration with a specialty in Nonprofit Management and Leadership in 2011. Emilio is married to his wife Quina, and they have a daughter, a son and two grandchildren.

ERICA HANSEN

STATE WORKSOURCE

Olympia, WA

Erica Hansen is the Executive Assistant and Board Secretary for the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. She was appointed to the SRC for the Blind in October 2014. From programs that target teens in danger of dropping out of high school to industry skill panels that help bridge the gap between high-demand jobs and the training workers need to succeed, the Workforce Board advocates for a better educated, better prepared Washington workforce.

EVA LAURRARI

QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

Seattle, WA

Eva grew up in the Philippines and moved to Seattle, WA, with her parents, in 1992. Eva is multi-lingual (Tagalog, Bicol, and English) and has a 13-year old husky named Juno.

Eva joined the University of Washington, Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation as a Training and Information Specialist in March of 2014. She answers the NW ADA Hotline and provides face-to-face and webinar training related to ADA guidelines and disability issues, employment services, language and etiquettes, assistive technology and more.

Eva received her undergraduate degree from the University of Washington and her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Western Washington University (WWU), and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. She spent nearly 14 years in the field of vocational rehabilitation counseling and employment services as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at DSB. She currently serves as an Advisory Committee member at WWU's Rehabilitation Counseling graduate program. Eva has also been an appointee to the Governor's Committee on Disability and Employment Issues (GCDE) since 2009, and is the Co-Chair of the Youth Leadership Forum, a subcommittee of the GCDE.

GLORIA WALLING

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR

Olympia, WA

Gloria grew up in New Mexico. In 2007, she enrolled in the DSB Business Enterprise Program (BEP). Through the BEP, she received training and became a licensed operator in 2008, managing cafeterias and other locations.

Gloria is involved in her community and currently serves as President of the local chapter of the Washington Counsel of the Blind and has been a member of the Legislative committee. She is also Vice-Chair for the BEP Vender's committee.

LOU OMA DURAND

DSB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (EX-OFFICIO MEMBER)

Seattle, WA

Lou Oma Durand was appointed Executive Director of the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) in July 2005. Previously she held the position of Deputy Director, as well as other executive and administrative positions since beginning her career at DSB in the late 1970's when it was the State Commission for the Blind.

Lou Oma left state government from 1984-86 to work in the private sector for the Boeing Corporation, where she was responsible for corporation-wide programs, including the Injured Worker Return to Work, the Medically Impaired Employee, and the Handicapped New Hire programs. Lou Oma received a Special Achievement Award for the "Return to Work" program, saving Boeing millions of dollars and enabling Boeing workers to remain employed.

Lou Oma worked for 3 years as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and 2 years as a rehabilitation teacher for Washington State Department of Services for the Blind. She spent 3 years as a high school English and humanities teacher at the Washington State School for the Blind and Vancouver School District. In addition to over 25 years of service in state government, Lou Oma has served on numerous education, arts and other non-profit boards, advisory councils, literary arts organizations, and legislative task forces.

Lou Oma is proud to lead a state agency that ranks in the nation's top 3 among agencies providing services to people with visual and other disabilities, using a variety of job placement quality indicators. Lou Oma believes it is a privilege to help people take charge of their lives and become contributing members of their community.

NATE MARSHALL

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Port Townsend, WA

Nate graduated from the University of North Dakota with a Bachelor's of Arts Degree from the Department of Philosophy and Religion. He moved to Washington State in 2002. He served in AmeriCorps as tutor in Oakville and Olympia and then became a VISTA staff member for Solid Ground at a high school in Seattle. While there he began working as an educational program assistant for the Seattle Jewish Film Festival. Nate then attended the University of Washington-Tacoma's Non-Profit Management Program.

In June of 2014, Nate became the Employment Consultant for the Port Hadlock Office of Concerned Citizens, a regional social service agency, where he provides job placement and job coaching skills for disabled youth and adults in Jefferson County. Prior to current position, Nate worked at Tacoma Goodwill Industries in a number of different positions, including as a Placement Specialist with the YouthBuild program and as the Projects with Industry Career Consultant, which included working as a job placement vendor for the DSB.

SHEILA TURNER

BLIND, WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

Pasco, WA

Sheila Turner, a lifelong Washington resident, has been legally blind since birth due to bilateral congenital cataracts. She is the second of 3 generations of blindness, inheriting the condition from her mother and passing it to 2 of her kids. Her mother was Sheila's role model for self-advocacy, who, along with her dad, taught Sheila to believe in herself and her abilities. They have always supported and encouraged her and still do. Sheila is now trying to pass this value on to her children and to be an example for everyone in her life.

Sheila graduated from Washington State University in 2000 with a BA in Social Science. She is currently attending graduate school at the University of Northern Colorado. There, she is working towards a Master's in Teaching of the Visually Impaired and becoming a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

Sheila is a single mother, sharing custody with her kids' dad, and working full time as the Independent Living Older Blind teacher for the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kennewick. She works with people aged 55 and older in south eastern Washington and has enjoyed the position for 13 years.

STEVE FIKSDAL, VICE CHAIR

BUSINESS, LABOR AND INDUSTRY

Auburn, WA

Low vision brought a 25-year career in real estate brokerage management to a quiet conclusion. He is now the owner of ConnectEd Institute, which provides character strength assessment and education to individuals and teams. Steve says DSB played a significant role in the establishment of his new company and career by providing him the skills to succeed in a sighted world and the resources to form his own company, thus allowing him to embark on a new and exciting career.

In addition to his role on the State Rehabilitation Council, Steve is newly elected President of the Washington Council of the Blind, a consumer organization promoting advocacy and independence for Washington's blind and visually impaired citizens.

SUE AMMETER, COUNCIL CHAIR

DISABILITY ADVOCACY GROUP

Port Hadlock, WA

Sue has been a disability/civil rights advocate for over 40 years. Sue worked for the City of Seattle, Washington State, and King County in the areas of civil rights, disability accommodations, and employee training. She served on the Board of Directors of the American Council of the Blind, as President of the Washington Council of the Blind for several terms, as Chair of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, and as Chair of the Patron Advisory Council for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. She is now Chair of the SRC for the Blind since June 2011, and serves on the Assistive Technology Program Advisory Council.

Following her retirement in 2005 Sue and her husband John moved to their retirement "dream home" in Port Hadlock.

TRACY KAHLO

PARENT INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTER

Tacoma, WA

After moving to Washington in 1992, Tracy oversaw an Individual Employment Program serving persons with developmental disabilities residing in Pierce, King, and Thurston counties for a local employment vendor. This position achieved a personal goal of doing what she loved to do and getting paid to do it. It was during those 8 years that she had the pleasure of collaborating with Linda Wilder from the DSB to find and secure employment for 2 individuals who are blind. Both gentlemen became employed at a statewide organization thanks to the joint partnership with the DSB, DVR, and DDD. In 2000, Tracy had her most rewarding educational experience

while earning a Master's in Not-for-Profit Leadership at Seattle University. She then enjoyed 7 years as Vice President for a national not-for-profit in Seattle. In 2008, she was hired as the Executive Director of PAVE fulfilling her dreams to return to her home community of Pierce County and serve families in Washington State with loved ones who have a disability.

YVONNE THOMAS-MILLER

SECTION 121 NATIVE AMERICAN

Bellingham, WA

Yvonne has been employed part time by the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation Program on the Lummi Reservation for over 4 years as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Outreach. She is certified by the PET-AIR (Post Employment Training-American Indian Rehabilitation program) and is working to obtain her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Yvonne is a graduate of Evergreen State University in Olympia, Washington and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Yvonne's past vocation was as a fine artist, specializing in drawing, painting, silkscreen, and sculpture. She was employed by the tribe as a Graphic Artist and worked on the local tribal newspaper.

After losing most of her vision, Yvonne attended DSB's Orientation Training Center. As an active member of the United Blind of Whatcom County and the Washington Council of the Blind, she welcomed the opportunity to work for the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation program as a good match for her volunteer experience and education.

VAUGHN BROWN

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

Vancouver, WA

Vaughn joined the SRC with the goal of improving services and community awareness through sharing a fresh perspective. His experience of passing an animal massage law in 2007 gave Vaughn an understanding of the complexities of developing new ideas and an appreciation for politics and governmental affairs. He is a current recipient of VR services and a graduate from the Washington State School for the Blind.

Vaughn Brown resides in Vancouver, Washington. Growing up horseback riding, camping, and fishing, he believes in independence. Vaughn graduated from Berklee College in Boston with a Bachelor's of Music and is now a self-employed as a music teacher.

DEPARTING MEMBERS

ALCO CANFIELD

QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

Walla Walla, WA

Alco was born in Seattle, WA and lived there until 1976. After graduating from the University of Washington School of Social Work, she worked for the DSB for 14 years as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) and Rehabilitation Teacher. Following her time at the DSB, she worked for the Division of Developmental Disabilities for 12 years, and retired in 2004. Alco joined the SRC in 2012. Alco is active in her community, serving in her church, and participating in the activities of the United Blind of Walla Walla chapter.

DALE KOSIER

STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

Puyallup, WA

Dale worked from 1981 to 2010 for the DSHS Division of Developmental Disabilities as the Coordinator for Sensory Impairment at the Rainier school in Buckley. In 1982, he co-founded Washington State Deaf-Blind Citizens and served on the task force which created the Deaf-Blind Service Center in Seattle. Then, in 1985, Dale was appointed by Governor Booth Gardner to serve on a task force that reviewed parks to ensure that they met federal standards to accommodate people with disabilities.

Dale has 3 daughters, 5 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

GAYLEN FLOY

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

Federal Way, WA

Gaylen has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for agencies and newspaper for 27 years. She received skills training at the OTC that allowed her to finish her bachelor's degree. Now Gaylen teaches Zoomtext and the Office Suite at the Orientation and Training Center part-time. She is also a part-time Marketing and Communications Intern at the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind.

LORI PULLIAM

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Vancouver, WA

Lori has worked at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) since 1982. Lori has had a wide range of experiences while at the school, beginning as a teacher of the deaf-blind and moving on to work with WSSB students who attend classes in the Vancouver Public Schools.

She has worked with the WSSB career and work experience program, as the transition specialist. Currently, Lori is the Director for the Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) Program, a postsecondary independent living program. In the summer of 2010, Lori additionally became the Director of the Residential Program at WSSB. As well as the various roles she has held at the WSSB, Lori has also been very involved in the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) program, a summer career and work experience program, from its inception.

Lori resides in Vancouver with her husband Roy and has 3 grown children.

STAFF

DEBBIE COOK

DSB APPOINTED LIASON

Seattle, WA

Debbie works for the University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies where she manages the Older Blind Independent living Program as a sub-recipient grant of the DSB and serves on DSB's Executive Team as a consultant. Prior to her employment at the UW, Debbie worked 16 years at DSB as a VR Counselor, rehabilitation teacher and program manager and 6 years as an Independent Living service provider.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC MEETINGS

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

The Council continues to have a strong, collaborative relationship with the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB). 4 new members have been appointed to the Council as a result of the Council and Department's collaboration in recruiting. Current vacancies include 2 labor/business representatives.

The Council Chair and SRC staff presented at the Department's New Employee Orientation, educating new DSB employees about the purpose and role of the Council. In addition, there is open communication amongst Council members and DSB staff (executive, management, direct service) to discuss areas of interest and/or areas of concern.

ADA Celebration: The Council co-sponsored the 25th Anniversary ADA Celebration held in Westlake Center in collaboration with the Washington State Rehabilitation Council, the Washington State Independent Living Council and many other organizations.

Strategic Planning: SRC members participated in the department's strategic planning initiative with a stated goal of determining the agency focus for the next five years. This included completing online surveys, participating in a two-day staff event, and working on various subgroups for specific initiatives. This is the first time the SRC was actively involved in agency wide strategic planning.

Combined State Plan: The SRC began discussions of the Workforce Combined State Plan which will be adopted in 2016. The Council is also planning ways to seek public comment on DSB's portion of the Plan when it becomes available.

OTC: In March, the SRC was consulted by the Department regarding a decision to drop keyboarding training from the OTC curriculum and require keyboarding proficiency for incoming students except those enrolled in ESL or who had an exception for other reasons. The SRC asked for and subsequently received data from the Department showing that this change resulted in more efficient use of the adaptive skills program in the OTC, that there were resources elsewhere to meet the keyboarding training needs of most customers, and that the department would continue to monitor the impact of this change as it relates to adaptive skills development for customers.

BEP Manager: The SRC was represented on the selection panel to fill the position for the Business enterprise Program manager. This is a key management position in the department and the SRC was pleased to provide input into the selection.

DSB'S RESPONSE:

The agency continues to be impressed by the talent, representation, and experience that have come to the SRC as a result of targeted recruitment efforts. The SRC has shown eagerness to learn about how the agency operates, extending invitations, and allotting extensive council meeting time for each program in DSB to present an overview of our current work initiatives. Having information about the SRC integrated in DSB's New Employee Orientation continues to be a great opportunity for all. The new staff is given the chance to learn, on a personal basis, who and what the SRC is. Overall, communication and collaboration remain strong.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

WTBBL: In its role as outlined in State RCW and WAC to advise the Governor and legislature regarding matters impacting individuals who are blind, the SRC voted to take any necessary action in order to advocate in support of the funding stabilization proposal for the WA Talking Book and Braille Library. Working with consumer organizations and the Legislature, the Library funding is secured through HB 2195 which was signed by the Governor in July 2015.

WIOA: The SRC developed extensive comments on proposed rules for the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. Comments discussed the definition of competitive integrated employment, new transition expenditure requirements, and how services would be obtained for those who had been formerly served as homemakers.

DSB RESPONSE

The agency is very appreciative of legislative advocacy by the SRC and our other community stakeholders. The SRC's continued monitoring of issues that may affect the agency and the relationship building and education efforts they put forward have provided agencies that serve the blind with stronger local legislative support.

SRC SURVEY

The Council, in collaboration with the DSB and the University of Washington Center on Technology and Disabilities Studies, made major revisions once again to the customer satisfaction survey in 2015 to better align with the Results Washington data collection requirements. A summary of the results is included on page 34.

DSB RESPONSE

The agency appreciates this survey as baseline data in which to maintain high ratings and improve low ratings towards creating a consistently high quality customer experience. DSB is pleased that the Council continues to further refine the data collection process to make it even more meaningful to the Department and to the community.

STATE PLAN REVIEW AND INPUT

Under WIOA, DSB is required to participate in development of a combined plan in collaboration with other Workforce agencies. Throughout the year, the SRC has taken initiative to learn about and understand the new requirements and how they will impact the VR program at DSB. In December, the Council will provide formal input to the Department's Combined Plan section including a written summary of the SRC's activities and participation in the Plan development. The Council's input is important in setting priorities. Resources and strategies must be aligned with performance measures and targets in the Strategic Plan and with Results Washington targets and measures. The Council is responsible for some inputs such as the Customer Satisfaction Survey and the results of public forums.

DSB RESPONSE

The on-going input of the SRC is invaluable in reviewing, assessing, and reinvigorating State Plan goals and strategies for the agency.

STATE BUDGET

The SRC actively discussed WIOA and other budget impacts with the agency. The required 15% set aside for students in transition, COLA's and reclassifications for staff, infrastructure support requirements for the WorkSource System, termination of the training grant from RSA, a pending federal audit penalty, and state budget revenue challenges are all impacting available dollars and resources for VR customers.

When the agency was considering reduction of the Older blind Program budget by eliminating Social Security reimbursement funds, the SRC strongly advocated for maintenance level funding of the program for at least the first year of the biennium, and the agency agreed.

DSB RESPONSE

The SRC is an outstanding and articulate advocate for the DSB budget in the community and with the Legislature when necessary.

ADVOCACY

The SRC continues to advocate to the Governor's Office from meaningful and active representation for the State Workforce Board. We anticipate a resolution early in 2016.

The SRC continues to work with the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment regarding accessibility of information and web sites in state government. The Council is advocating particularly in situations that impact conditions of employment.

DSB RESPONSE:

The advocacy efforts of the SRC have been instrumental in moving forward very important accessibility initiatives in State government. It is exciting to see the SRC take its role so seriously and gratifying to see progress being made.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) met 4 times in Seattle during 2015. All meetings were open to the public, including a phone conferencing system with call-in information advertised ahead of time allowing interested consumers to take part regardless of where they live throughout our state. The agenda included a public comment period, allowing the opportunity for input on any subject related to the business of the Council including the vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs, and issues impacting the employment or independence of blind Washington citizens.

Agenda items included the following:

- State Budget
- Implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act including the Combined Plan
- IL Part B grant funding through the SILC
- Older Blind Services program and funding
- Customer Services performance in relation to RMAP and as required by WIOA standards to the extent they can be anticipated
- Results Washington and its application to DSB
- Governor's Executive Orders on employment of people with disabilities and veterans
- Accessibility of state information and information technology systems
- VR employment outcomes
- VR employment initiatives and state plan update
- OTC program and services
- Agency outreach and communications plan

- 2015 SRC Customer Satisfaction Survey
- SRC Annual Report
- Deaf Blind Service Center
- Services to children and students

DSB CORE SERVICES

DSB OVERVIEW

DSB has offices statewide: Spokane, Yakima, Vancouver, Lacey, Tacoma, and Seattle. Assessments and services are frequently provided in the customer's home, community, and workplace. Working in regional teams, most of DSB's programs are delivered by multidisciplinary teams including:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who provide case management and work with customers to determine employment goals and what services are needed to reach those goals.
- Rehabilitation Technicians who assist with paperwork and also conduct some of the career assessments and other prevocational activities with customers.
- Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists who conduct adaptive skill and low vision evaluations, and they arrange or provide the necessary skills training.
- Assistive Technology Specialists who provide support for any technology needs in training or on the job and they also perform job site assessments to determine what accommodations will be required.
- Low Vision Specialists who identify appropriate magnification strength and lighting needs, when appropriate, in order for individuals to maximize their remaining vision.

DSB provides services to and has programs for individuals of all ages, crossing the entire life span.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

The DSB serves children who are blind or have low vision from birth through 13, providing:

- Assistance in understanding the nature and potential impact of the child's visual disability.
- Training in parenting techniques and understanding the child's developmental needs.
- Daily living skills training for the child and their family to help the child become more independent at home and participate in household chores.

For FFY 2014, 22 children (and their families) from birth to age 5 received services, including Counseling and Basic Orientation & Mobility. For children ages 6 through 13, 88 children received services including Education Consultation and Adaptive Life Skills Training.

RECREATION ACTIVITY

Debbie Brown, IL Specialist, arranged a beeping Easter Egg Hunt and it was a big success! DSB received lots of thank you's and sincere appreciation for the event. The "beeping devices" were soccer-sized balls with a variety of sounds. Spokane area Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) rounded up as many balls as they could, and we still needed to add "stations" so some parents/grandparents brought out their iPads and created noises to cue the kids. Siblings joined in, too. Great fun was had by all. Next year, parents and the TVI's would love an event in the Tri-Cities area, too!

SCILS (AGE 9-13)

SCILS (Summer Camp for Independent Living Skills) is a camp that focuses on an expanded core curriculum: self-care, social skills, recreation, technology, and orientation and mobility. 9 children attended a 5-day day camp held in Seattle and 9 children attended an overnight weekend session held in Spokane. Their activities included bus trips, biking, making lunches, making beds, learning to sweep and dust, and a lot of adventures, but nobody wanted to do karaoke!

A SCILS EXPERIENCE, BY ELIJAH MCCALMONT

This last summer I went to SCILS camp for the first time. The thing I liked the most about camp was going to Jack Straw and learning to tap dance. I like the tap dancing because I've never done it before and I liked hearing the rhythm of the taps. We also went on a sailboat during camp. It was so fun because we got to steer the wheel.

I also met a friend at camp. I don't normally get to meet other visually impaired kids. I think it's a good experience at SCILS camp because you get to do things that sighted people do. I can't wait for next summer to go again!



Elijah McCalmont getting ready for SCILS camp.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) PROGRAM

Vocational Rehabilitation is for people interested in getting a job or keeping a job. It is a very comprehensive program that considers the needs of each individual. It has the bulk of DSB's resources. The program provides quality services to customers rather than just placing people

in jobs. There is freedom to explore and to work with the customer. DSB consistently gets higher wages than most other Washington State VR programs and consistently has the highest ratio of individuals who earn enough to reduce or eliminate Social Security financial benefits.

To meet eligibility requirements, an individual must have functional limitations associated with a vision impairment that could be overcome by VR services. Examples of services include:

- training in adaptive skills of blindness such as home and personal management, Braille, independent travel and orientation, use of low vision devices and other specialized technology, etc.;
- provision of computer technology or other job equipment;
- higher education or other job training;
- career exploration and matching, internships and other work experiences; and
- placement and follow-up services.

In FFY 2015, 172 customers achieved successful employment outcomes with an average hourly wage of \$20.34. This is a decrease in outcomes from 192 in 2014.

Other 2015 results:

- 1341 individuals received VR services.
- 410 individuals applied for VR services.
- 48 sixteen year olds entered VR services which is more than any other age
- An additional 25 current participants applied for VR at age 14.
- 22.6% of all VR participants served were age 55 and older.
- The average age of all VR participants is 40 years old.
- 72 individuals (or 42%) received job retention assistance.
- 43 individuals no longer rely on Public Assistance as their primary source of income.
- 3 individuals with successful employment outcomes are Honorably Discharged Veterans.

A complete list of jobs and employers can be found in the Successful Employment Outcomes for 2015 Table beginning on page 37. Just a few employers for FFY15 include:

- Children's Home Society of Washington (Child & Family Therapist)
- U.S. Internal Revenue Service (Customer Service Representative)
- Little Safari Daycare & Preschool (Daycare Worker)
- Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (Industrial Insurance Account Manager)
- American Building Maintenance (Janitor)
- Northwest Horticulture (Nursery Worker)
- Safeway, Inc. (Seafood Clerk)
- Jack Straw Productions (Sound Engineering Technician)

YOUTH TRANSITION VR

A national emphasis in the VR program is services to ensure smooth transition for youth (ages 14-24) who are moving from high school to post-secondary activities. School-to-work transition helps students, as young as age 14, and their families think about and plan for life after high school. The DSB provides:

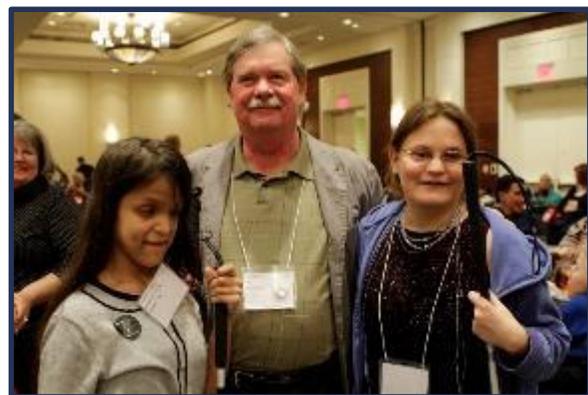
- Career counseling: including consulting on part-time employment and internships
- Assessments to help students determine their interests for their future careers.
- Information regarding services for adults, including job counseling and training in the adaptive skills of blindness
- Collaboration with students, parents, and high school staff on IEP development and post-school activities
- 3 summer programs are available for students in transition as well.

DSB's VR caseload is about 22% transitioning youth. Overall, DSB served 300 youth. Services included Community Based Assessment, Work Experience and Job Placement, and IEP Advocacy. Of all individuals who currently have an open VR Transition case, the average age at the time of application is 17 years old.

A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: THE APRIL 2015 CONFERENCE IN VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

Debbie Brown, DSB Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, attended the APRIL Conference (Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living) in Virginia Beach, Virginia in October 2015. Debbie brought two DSB clients along with her, 14 year old Arianna and 16 year old Becca. There were almost 375 people registered from all over the U.S. Arianna and Becca were just two of the 74 youth (ages 14 to 24) in attendance and 2 of the 9 Washington State participants. They were the youngest in the youth track of the conference, which included non-stop seminars about youth with a variety of disabilities. They talked about empowerment, advocacy, medical and health issues, and modifying everything from recreation to rural transportation.

Becca and Arianna learned about every mobility obstacle imaginable as we traveled 4 airports and 3 airplanes both ways. Becca is a Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) student who has a lot of traveling experience going between her home and



Arianna and Becca at the APRIL Conference, with new acquaintance and friend, Bob Maffit, CEO of Montana Independent Living Project Inc.

WSSB, so she felt up to challenging herself. Arianna is quite shy, yet on the closing day she took the mic and spoke eloquently about all that she learned about all disabilities. Becca's "speech" was in the form of an acapella song she wrote about being a blind teen. She has a beautiful voice; she was mobbed by groupies, both adults and teens, after her performance who showered Becca with compliments.

The trip allowed Debbie to learn a lot about the girls' daily living skills along with training that needs to be done. She also had the opportunity to teach the girls a new word: lollygagging. Becca and Ariana thought Debbie had made it up and burst out laughing when Debbie said it the first time: The conference schedule was jam packed so there was very little time for lollygagging.

YES 1 (AGE 14-15)

YES 1 (Youth Employment Solutions) is a 2-week program offering students the opportunity to explore interests and careers. 19 students practiced the skills needed to find and procure a job including filling out applications, participating in mock interviews, and building a resume. They were given the opportunity to visit work sites and participate in community service projects.

YES 2 (AGE 15-18)

19 high school students who are blind or have low vision had paid summer work experiences in a variety of job settings. Employers included the National Association for Mental Illness, NOAA Café, Little Anchor Daycare, YMCA day camp, Museum of Flight, Pacific Science Center, and the UW Arboretum. In addition, as residents of the YES house in Seattle's University District, many students lived away from home for the first time: shopping, cooking and cleaning for themselves, earning and managing money in checking accounts. Various seminars for the students to learn about services and other issues related to moving from school to work are provided. This year, students had a special visit from Washington State Representative Melanie Stambaug, youngest woman elected to the Legislature since the 1930's, who gave a lively hour long talk and answered questions from the students.

BRIDGE

The Bridge program enrolled 11 high-school graduates in summer courses at Eastern Washington University, where they learned how to advocate for accommodations in higher education programs and experienced life in the dorm. The students were provided with O&M, mastering routes to the cafeteria, dorms, classes, and recreational facilities.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING CENTER (OTC)

The Orientation and Training Center is a primarily residential program open to VR customers, where they can receive intensive daily instruction in adaptive skills of blindness and other employment-related experiences. DSB Field staff provide many of these same services but they can usually only see a customer once a week. Those with significant service needs benefit from the intensive daily program at the OTC. It is an expensive, high risk program but VR could not provide the level of skills customers need without the OTC.

In 2015, the OTC provided training to 45 fulltime students. Of those, 35 were full-time residential students and 10 were full-time commuting students. While attending the OTC, these students participate in a variety of classes, including Home Management, Braille, Keyboarding and Computers, Orientation and Mobility, and Home Maintenance. The adaptive skills they learn enable them to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job, and in their communities.

OTC students complete a Capstone Project, a special project based on their individual needs, interests, and skills. For some, this is could simply be planning and taking an independent bus ride to the grocery store and for some the projects are more complex. A current student designed a Capstone Project that included her newfound mobility skill and cooking skills. She cooked an entire meal, transported it from the OTC to a designated location, and served the meal to her family and friends. The student, who hadn't been comfortable with cooking before attending the OTC, was thrilled to have cooked and served an entire meal!

OTC EXTRA CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

OTC students participate in other activities and learning experiences. Challenge Activities help students build confidence with vision loss. In 2015, students participated in

- bowling at the West Seattle Bowl;
- kayaking at Magnuson Park in North Seattle with Outdoors For All
- tandem bicycling and lunch at Seward Park with Outdoors For All; and
- participating in the 25th ADA Anniversary Celebration at Westlake Park in Seattle.



OTC students kayaking with Outdoors For All volunteers on Lake Washington.

This year, four students and two staff had the special opportunity to attend the annual mock flight demonstration at an Alaska Airlines hanger at the Seattle-Tacoma International

Airport. The experience is designed to give people who are blind or visually impaired confidence to comfortably fly with little assistance. Participants receive tours of the plane's cockpit and learn about an airplane's safety features. While the aircraft remains on the ground, flight attendants and volunteers guided participants in and around the main passenger cabin.

Two advanced Orientation and Nobility (O&M) students served as peer mobility tutors. They reviewed inside mobility skills with two first-term students. This utilized all mobility training time for the two first-term students since we were down one mobility instructor this term.

Six weeks of iPhone training was offered in the evening at the apartments. Two hours each week were dedicated to this training: one hour for beginning students, and a second hour for intermediate students. Six students took part in this training with support from their VRCs.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NON-OTC STUDENTS

The OTC also offers training to DSB participants who are not fulltime OTC students.

- Intensive Workshops were conducted to provide adaptive skills training to 21 VR customers. The subject areas include home management, careers, mobility, Braille, and computers with accessibility software. 2 took a newly developed long-distance introduction to the Unified English Braille class. 3 of the intensive workshop students are now wanting to come to the OTC as fulltime students after participating in the intensive workshop offering.
- The Dependable Strengths workshop, which lasted for 4 days, had 7 participants.
- ESL/literacy class provided to 4 individuals. In addition to the ESL classes offered at the OTC, the program is being expanded to offer remote training. The location, in Snohomish County, has already been identified and the weekly schedule is set.
- Distance Braille classes were provided to 10 VR customers.

SELF ADVOCACY: THE KET TO SUCCESS, BY ZACHARY ABERNATHY

When I started at the Orientation and Training Center, I was not happy about being there and I did not handle it well at all; my health, my attitude, and my actions were terrible. All the negativity resulted in some bad choices and I was eventually asked to leave. I was terribly upset about getting kicked out: I had failed. I was told that I could come back and finish my training program, if I got my physical and mental health issues ironed out. I was extremely disappointed in myself, so I vowed to return.

I started the arduous job of getting all my doctors to sign off on my delicate health and I continued VR counseling via Skype. I returned to the OTC in June 2014 for the next phase of

my OTC journey. I was determined to make it through. My student life at the school was better this time around, as I made friends and started helping people which in turn made me happy.

Upon graduating in December 2014, I was thrust into the unknown. How was I supposed to use my computer skills to gain employment back home? My OTC education didn't include computer classes, since I already had extensive computer skills. But it worried me that I hadn't received any additional training. At my final case conference, I started to self-advocate. I spoke up loudly, sharing my concern that no computer classes meant no success for Zachary. A few days after I returned home, I got an e-mail from my counselor asking if I was interested in returning to the OTC as an intern.



Zach receiving his OTC diploma from OTC Home Ec teacher Donna Lawrence.

In January 2015, I returned to the OTC again, this time as an intern for Al Yardley, I started training with Mr. Yardley to learn the different screen readers and screen magnifiers. I spent time observing and assisting Mr. Yardley as he worked with students and learned the material I would eventually teach. Now it's 2016 and I am going strong under Mr. Yardley's guidance and have started teaching both JAWS and ZoomText to OTC students.

Throughout my whole OTC experience, the one thing that has been made apparent to me time and time again is that I am responsible for my own destiny and only I can decide whether I succeed or fail. Of course it helps to have enthusiastic counselors and instructors who believe in your ability. Sometimes even if you are not clear on your destination, you can find your direction with support. By being my own advocate and building a partnership DSB, my outlook has changed dramatically and I have tangible, attainable goals.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides training and opportunities for qualified legally-blind individuals to become independent entrepreneurs, operating successful food service businesses, including delis, cafeterias, and espresso stands, in government buildings. Currently, there are 25 BEP locations and BEB is expanding their vending machines at rest stop locations.

BEP training educates blind individuals in all facets of food service facility operation. The training program is five to six months of classroom and hands-on experience. Upon successful

completion of training, participants will become BEP Licensees, allowing them to apply for program locations as they become available. The program provides locations with essential food service equipment, assists new operators in opening their business, and provides ongoing management guidance. The Licensee of each location is solely responsible for the success of the business.

BEP operators are leading the way in developing strategies, along with agency Wellness Coordinators, to increase the amount of healthy food items available in response to Governor's Executive Order 13-06, "Improving the Health and Productivity of the State Employees and access to Healthy Foods in State Facilities". Customers appear to be liking the changes. Goals for healthy food items must be fully implemented by December 2016.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (IL)

IL primarily serves people under age 55 who are not going to work at time of services. Individuals could be medically fragile adults who need skills of blindness or they could be children participating in DSB's youth programs. Some adults, 55 or older, are served through this program if they have employment goals but need to learn extensive adaptive skills first.

In FFY 2015, IL served 119 adults, age 21 through 63, which is nearly a 10% increase over FFY 2014. Services included Adaptive Life Skills Training, Basic Orientation and Mobility, and Advanced Communications.

PROVIDING SERVICES "INSIDE": A UNIQUE SUCCESS STORY, AS TOLD BY DEBBIE BROWN

A few weeks ago, as I was exiting the Spokane DSB office, there was a lawyer-looking gentleman walking down the hallway. This isn't an unusual sight because the high rise building across the street is full of law offices. This man stopped, turned around, and asked if my name was Debbie. I suddenly recognized him from a few years back when he was representing an Independent Living participant, AB.

AB was in prison when I met him for IL services. While incarcerated, this client was assaulted by an inmate who gouged out both of his eyes. The prison called the IL program to see if some services could be provided while AB completed his sentence. At the time, I was a little intimidated and I wasn't sure we could even provide services under the circumstances, but indeed we can. AB was provided with a white cane and mobility lessons. He enrolled in Hadley to learn Braille. We talked a lot about DSB's other programs after his release. We also talked a lot about his fears of being totally blind and in prison.

Providing services “inside” is not easy to do. Each time, the O&M instructor or I went inside, we had to clear security and have a guard with us at all times. But AB was able to participate in mobility lessons allowing him to get to the dining hall and visiting room. His slate and stylus had to be returned to an officer after each lesson and his white cane frequently received extra security scrutiny.

Now, standing in the hallway years after I first worked with AB, his lawyer offered his thanks for “all that you did for AB while in prison, and for the O&M services DSB is providing now that he’s been out of prison for almost a year.”

OLDER BLIND SERVICES

The Older Blind Services (OBS) program empowers older adults to live independently in their homes and communities. OBS clients are age 55 and older and have lost, or are losing vision, who need tools and to learn alternative skills to remain independent. Utilizing a network of 10 contractors statewide, OBS providers offer a wide range of services, including training, brief counseling, info and referrals, and supplying aids or devices.

More than two-thirds of OBS clients are women; the large majority of our clients have macular degeneration; and the average age of OBS customers is 86 years old. Most live in their home or apartment rather than in a nursing or assisted living setting. Many need recurring services because their limitations change over time. Services usually span about 3 or 4 appointments of about 2-3 hours each, costing the program an average of about \$555 per case.

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

At the conclusion of the federal fiscal year, providers served 1,673 clients, exceeding last year’s total service delivery by more than 100.

Despite an emphasis on outreach to the Asian and Hispanic minorities, these populations are being significantly underserved. 11% and 7% of Washington State’s general population identifies as being Hispanic or Asian. But, Older Blind service delivery is only 2.4% for each group. Overall, OBS service delivery to underserved minority populations has increased from 10% to 11%; more work is clearly needed but the program is moving in the right direction.

6 clients were served who are homeless, which is a 300% increase from only serving 2 homeless clients in 2014.

7 OBS clients were referred to the program by the VA.

Nearly half of OBS clients have additional age related impairments, among them are depression, arthritis, and diabetes. 35% of OBS clients have hearing loss.

2 Older Blind customers, 1 VR customer, and the Older Blind Services Program Director attended the Confident Living Program (CLP) sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and the Oregon Commission for the Blind. CLP provides information, resources, and an introduction to skills necessary for senior citizens with vision and hearing loss to maintain as independent a life as possible. Four our four participants, it was an intense week of skills training and adjustment counseling taught by HKNC staff along with Older Blind staff from Washington and Oregon. We have not had this opportunity since 2007.

OUTREACH AND AGENCY ACTIVITIES

The outreach emphasis continues to underserved communities, specifically Asian and Hispanic/Latino communities in Washington State. DSB staff engaged in multiple half-hour radio shows conducted in Spanish, Conozca Su Gobierno (Know Your Government) through the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, to inform Spanish-speaking residents of our services. DSB staff further developed connections and relationships with agencies that serve Asian and Latino communities. The numbers of VR participants served within both groups has been steadily increasing for the last couple of years.

VR staff regularly network with a wide variety of companies, including Holland America, Xerox, and Starbucks to increase job opportunities for VR customers.

DSB and the SRC both actively participated in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). 700 people were in attendance at the Celebration Rally in Seattle and 1000 welcome bags were handed out, containing brochures from agencies and organizations around the state supporting individuals with disabilities, including the DSB's agency brochure. During the event, DSB presented plaques honoring the ADA warriors from Washington State, including SRC Chair Sue Ammeter.

DSB received a grant for a Strategic Planning Project with technical assistance from University Massachusetts – Boston. The work began in earnest in January 2015 during an all-agency staff meeting; six strategic themes were identified as a result of the meeting. Focus groups, which included an SRC council member, met in May to identify issues and strategies for each theme. As a result of the focus groups, three statewide initiatives were identified, combining portions of the six original themes.

- Communications and outreach.
- Capacity building and expertise.
- Employment focus throughout the VR process.

SRC CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies conducts an anonymous satisfaction survey, on behalf of the SRC for the Blind, for VR customers who were closed in the federal fiscal year. This year, the survey was conducted in November 2015. Surveys were completed online or by phone

Following the completion of the 2014 survey, the SRC for the Blind made clarity revisions to the wording of the questions, then reviewed and approved them during a quarterly meeting. The questions are aligned to the Results Washington initiatives. Questions were designed to address the three categories that the Results Washington initiatives focus on, including Accuracy, Timeliness, and Respectfulness. Two additional categories were reviewed for satisfaction, including Training.

The Respectfulness category questions that were specifically designed to capture this information were not included in this survey. Through an administrative error, they were left off of the survey. The Respectfulness satisfaction percentage was captured using the responses from a related question in the Accuracy section. The Respectfulness category questions will be inserted into the survey for all 2016 surveys.

53% of the customers surveyed responded. Of those responding, 61% of the customers experienced successful employment outcomes at the time of closure.

RESULTS

Table 1. Overall Satisfaction by Region and Office. *Data based on, “Overall, how satisfied were you with the services you received from DSB?”*

Regions and Offices	Overall Satisfaction by Office
East Region: Spokane	94%
East Region: Yakima	90.5%
North Region: Seattle	83%
South Region: Lacey	87%
South Region: Tacoma	100%
South Region: Vancouver	78%

Table 2. Customer Satisfaction by Category.

Regions and Offices	Overall Satisfaction by Office
Overall*	80%
Training offered	80%
Accuracy of staff*	85%
Timeliness of staff*	78%
Respectfulness of staff	84%

* Responses to multiple questions were combined to best meet satisfaction element.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions at the end of the survey. The majority of comments simply expressed their gratitude for the services they received, either from the Department or from specific people and counselors at the DSB.

The **Top Seven Concerns**, in order from most to least, are:

- Lack of communication
- Lack of sympathy, compassion, or respect
- Lack of staff
- Insufficient training provided
- Concerns over staff conduct, qualifications, or training
- Lack of outreach
- Lack of funding

The **Top Seven Most Useful Aspects of the DSB**, in order from most to least, are:

- Training the clients received
- Assistive technology (from low tech to high tech)
- Supportive staff, counselors, teachers
- Personal development and growth
- Community resources
- Orientation and Mobility training
- Finding or maintaining employment

COMMENTS FROM THE ANNONYMOUS SURVEY

“The personnel--Kim, Sharon, and Lena--were just superb. They were very kind and helpful, took all the time I needed, and were very generous and accommodating in providing what I needed. I could not be more grateful for them.”

“I needed some assistance with a few things around my apartment. I was very satisfied with the help I received. A few small things have made a big difference. A simple thing like labeling the microwave for me made using it so much easier. My main purpose in opening my case was to obtain some financial assistance purchasing a new hearing aid. While my hearing will never be normal with the use of a new hearing aid it is considerably improved which enhances the quality of my work. Also, I received a recommendation regarding the purchase of a new braille display for my job. The agency I work for followed the recommendation and I have a fantastic new braille display making it much easier for me to do my job as all the braille dots are firm and easy to read.”

“The most useful aspect of DSB's services was the Dependable Strengths class that I took. The class along with persistent reinforcement from my counsellors allowed me to gain enough confidence to return to school, to graduate and to enter the job search process. DSB needs more classes like this.”

“I would not be where I am without DSB. They listened to what I wanted and needed. I am glad that I had to justify what I needed for success because it allowed me to grow my self-advocacy skills. I have a job because of DSB. The reality of it is that companies will not hire folks who are visually impaired given that there are usually ten sighted folks in line ahead. DSB leveled the playing field.”

“Going blind and dealing with serious health issues has made life a little harder for us but this program has been a blessing for us. Talking to the staff they seem to know what is going on in my head and seeing how they get around has inspired me.”

SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

172 people who are blind or have low vision successfully found jobs in a variety of occupations at the organizations listed below.

Job Title	Employer Name
Accessibility Test Specialist	Expedia, Inc.
Accounting Assistant	Inspire Development Center
Accounts Manager	Summit Safety Shoes
Activities Support Care Provider	ARC of Spokane
Adjunct Faculty Member	Centralia College
Adjunct Instructor	Spokane Tribal College
Administrative Assistant	Multnomah County, Oregon
Administrative Assistant	Washington State Department of Health
Administrative Clerk	Orion Industries
Alternate Product Administrator	Seattle Times
Application Analyst	Catholic Health Initiatives
Assistant Manager	Affordable Tire Factory
Assistant Pet Groomer	Emerald City Pet Rescue
Assistant Teacher	University of Washington Children's Center
Assistant to the Coroner	Grays Harbor County Coroner's Office
AT Instructor	SightConnection
Bookkeeper	Les Schwab Tire Center
Bowling Alley Attendant	Paradise Bowl Entertainment Center
Buyer	Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Certified Nurse's Assistant	Mountain View Private Companionship Care
Certified Nursing Assistant	Supplemental Health Care
Chief Executive Officer	Omnitech Design, Inc.
Child & Family Therapist	Children's Home Society of Washington
Chiropractor Assistant	Collins Chiropractic
City Attorney	City of Mercer Island
Computer Programmer	Washington State Employment Security Division
Computer Programming Assessor	Skills, Inc.
Consultant	Deloitte, LLP

Job Title	Employer Name
Content Quality Editor	Amazon
Corporate Accounts Representative	Hertz
Courtesy Clerk	Safeway, Inc.
Customer Relationship Specialist	Orion Industries
Customer Service Helper Clerk	Walmart Stores, Inc.
Customer Service Representative	U.S. Internal Revenue Service
Customer Service Representative	U.S. Internal Revenue Service
Customer Service Representative	U.S. Social Security Administration
Customer Service Representative	Xerox
Customer Service Representative	Xerox
Customer Service Representative	Xerox
Customer Service/Freight	Fred Meyer
Customer Services Clerk	Macy's
Daycare Worker	Little Safari Daycare & Preschool
Dining Facility Attendant	Gulf Coast Enterprises
Dining Hall Attendant	Gulf Coast Enterprises
Director of Business Development	2nd Sight BioScience
Dishwasher	Ernie's Steakhouse
Dispatcher	Helpful Hands
EEO Coordinator	Seattle Public Utilities
Electrical Engineer	Heritage Panelgraphics
Emergency Financial Assistance Coordinator	Catholic Charities Spokane
Engineer	Boeing
Equine Instructor	Langley Equine Studies
Fabrication Manager	Reliable Automatic Sprinklers Co., Inc.
Family Services Coordinator	Children's Medical Clinic
Ferry Supervisor	Washington State Department of Transportation
Food Preparation Worker	The Pearl Café
Food Service Manager	O Taste & See Catering
General Manager	Pavement Surface Control
Geologist	King County, Washington
Greeter	Johnny Carino's Italian Restaurants
Heavy Equipment Sales Representative	Kitsap Tractor & Equipment

Job Title	Employer Name
Helper Clerk	Safeway, Inc.
High School Science Teacher	Scriber Lake High School
Home Health Aid	Aging & Long Term Care
Home Health Aide	Beneficial In-Home Care, Inc.
Hostess	Applebee's
HR Generalist	Sound Mental Health
Human Resources Manager	Walmart Stores, Inc.
Industrial Insurance Account Manager	Washington State Department of Labor & Industries
Interpreter	CTS LanguageLink
IT Specialist	Fuji Film
Janitor	American Building Maintenance
Kennel Assistant	Classy Canine
Laundromat Assistant	Five Mile Wash & Dry
Lead Toddler Teacher	Children's Villa Childcare
Legal Assistant	Suttell, Hammer, & White, PS
Machine Operator	Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Maintenance Worker	Rimrock Cove RV Park
Manager	R Cafe & Espresso
Massage Therapist	Hand & Stone Massage & Facial Spa
Massage Therapist	R-n-R Salon
Meat Department Worker	Walmart Stores, Inc.
Medical Assistant	Joanne M. Gormley, DPM
Music Teacher	Naselle School District
Nursery Worker	Northwest Horticulture
Nursing Assistant Registered	Van Care, Inc.
Occupational Therapist	Portland Public Schools
Office Automation Assistant	U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs
Office Clerk	Head to Toe Kids Clothes
Office Clerk	Washington State Department of Social & Health Services
Office Clerk	Washington State Employment Security Department
Office Helper	Verl's Autopro Details
Office Manager	Lilac Services for the Blind
Office Manager	Mariano Morales Jr. Law Firm

Job Title	Employer Name
Office Manager	Merit Electric
Office Specialist	State of Oregon Department of Transportation
Operations & Data Project Manager	Interactive Data Partners LLC
Operations Manager	Revival Energy Group
Outreach Coordinator	Opportunities Industrialization Center
Owner & Manager*	Abacus Hospitality
Owner*	Oasis Café
Owner*	VIP Auto Sales
Para-educator	Edmonds School District
Para-educator	Vancouver Public Schools
Personal Care Worker	Northwest Regional Council
Piano Repairman & Tuner	School of Piano Technology for the Blind
Probation/Day Reporting Monitor	Seattle Municipal Court
Product Demonstrator	Club Demonstration Services
Production Worker	Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Production Worker	Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Professional Development Specialist	Swedish Medical Center
Professor of Biblical Studies	Whitworth University
Program Assistant	Washington State University
Project Manager	CH2M Hill
Project Manager	Sound Transit
Project Team Leader	AIG
Property Manager/Owner*	Inside Out Property Management
Quality Assurance Representative	Direct Interactions, Inc.
Radiologic Technician	MedTemps
Real Estate Assistant	Wonder Reva
Receptionist	Gary Penar Law Offices
Receptionist	Glass Eye Studios
Receptionist	POP! Gourmet Foods
Registered Nurse	Auburn Medical Center
Rehabilitation Teacher	Lilac Blind Foundation
Rehabilitation Teacher	Washington State Department of Services for the Blind
Retail Associate	Nordstrom, Inc.

Job Title	Employer Name
Review Judge	Washington State Employment Security Division
Sales Agent	Cadman Concrete Company
Sales Associate	Best Buy
Sales Representative	Better All Auto Sales
Seafood Clerk	Safeway, Inc.
Security	FPK Security & Investigations
Security Representative	Staff Pro
Set-Up Specialist	Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Social Media & Content Marketer	Acronis
Social Security Benefits Planner	NAMI Southwest Washington
Software Developer, Lead	Microsoft Corporation
Software Engineer	Indeed, Inc.
Software Test Engineer	AAA of Washington
Sound Engineering Technician	Jack Straw Productions
Special Education Teacher	Portland Public Schools
SSP Coordinator	Deaf-Blind Services Center
Staff Assistant	Office of Congressman Jim McDermott
Store Labor	Ranch & Home
Student Achievement Manager	Washington State University
Teacher Assistant	King's Way Learning Center
Teacher for the Visually Impaired	Kennewick School District
Teacher for the Visually Impaired	Washington State School for the Blind
Teacher in Training for the Blind	Washington State School for the Blind
Teacher of the Visually Impaired	Puyallup School District
Teacher of the Visually Impaired	Tacoma Public Schools
Technical Support Representative	Teleperformance USA
Trainer	The Genesis Group NW, Inc.
Tutor	Club Z In-Home Tutoring
Tutor	Grade Potential Tutoring
Tutor	Wenatchee School District
Usability & Compliance Tester	Skills, Inc.
Usability & Compliance Tester	Skills, Inc.
Utility Worker	Yakima Legends Casino

Job Title	Employer Name
Vision Screening Liaison	Comprehensive Health Services
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Wood Splitter & Stacker	Inocenio
Cosmetologist	Self Employed
Music Teacher/Musician	Self Employed
Piano Repair	Self Employed
State Foster & Respite Care Provider	Self Employed
Writer	Self Employed
Writer/Editor*	Self Employed
Homemaker**	
Homemaker**	
Homemaker**	

** An individual's increased independence has allowed a caregiver to return to competitive employment.

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

JAY INSLEE

Governor

BRAD OWEN

Lieutenant Governor

JAY MANNING

Chief of Staff

LOU OMA DURAND

DSB Executive Director

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Debbie Cook

Department of Services for the Blind

3411 S. Alaska Street

Seattle, WA 98118

debcook@uw.edu

Toll-free: 1-800-552-7103

DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind