

# Washington

## State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

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October 2015 - September 2016

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Department of Services for the Blind  
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## ANNUAL REPORT INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) is an advisory group of volunteers, appointed by the Washington State Governor, who provide counsel and guidance to the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB.) In Washington State, the DSB has primary responsibility to deliver Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), and Independent Living (IL) skills training to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. DSB provides services for individuals crossing the entire life span.

The SRCB reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations to DSB on its plans, policies, and activities to insure that blind or visually impaired people in our state receive the most effective and efficient rehabilitation services possible.

In addition to providing direction to the Director of DSB on behalf of the public and consumers, the SRCB also advises and reports to the Governor; makes recommendations to the State Legislature about services that impact the lives of blind people; and, works closely with other state councils, agencies and organizations to enhance the services, opportunities, and rights of Washingtonians who are blind.

The SRCB is authorized by the federal Rehabilitation Act under the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, and in Washington State statute RCW 74.18.070-74.18.100.

REFLECTING ON 2016: A LETTER FROM THE SRCB CHAIR

**Dear Deputy Commissioner Finch and Governor Inslee,**

On behalf of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB), I am pleased to present our 2016 Annual Report.

Our SRCB members are passionate volunteers who represent recipients of rehabilitation services, their families, service providers, educators, advocates, and policy makers. We work together and alongside the DSB to promote excellence in service leading to independence and meaningful employment for blind and visually impaired people in Washington State. Our collaboration and partnership is highlighted throughout this report.

In 2016, significant SRCB activities included conducting public forums and preparing comments on proposed Department initiatives; increasing our collaboration with other counsels authorized under the Rehab Act; strengthening our organization by adopting new Bylaws and revising our committee structure; and hearing updates from our community partners and from all DSB programs. Finally, we said good-bye to several departing members and welcomed new individuals to the SRCB who represent the SILC, the Client Assistance Program, consumer organizations and former recipients of services.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind since 2011. One of our accomplishments was a retreat for the Council where we negotiated with DSB to fund a half time position to support our activities. This has allowed the SRCB to be much more engaged with the Department and to develop a much stronger partnership. This is particularly important as we face the future challenges of implementing WIOA.

Sincerely,

**Sue Ammeter, Chair**



GET TO KNOW OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council members are appointed by the Governor for no more than two 3-year consecutive terms. The Governor actively encourages us to seek demographic and ethnic diversity of membership in addition to meeting the federal requirements for representation.

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

CURRENT MEMBERS

DOUG TRIMBLE:

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*Vancouver, WA*

Doug has worked at the Washington State School for the Blind since 1999 where he currently teaches Orientation & Mobility to middle and high school students. Doug is also a contracted service provider with the DSB Independent Living Blind Skills Services. He joined the SRCB in 2014. Doug is married with 2 daughters. He enjoys traveling, hiking, and watching football (Go Hawks!), basketball, and baseball. Doug also likes to tinker with technology, but his kids clearly know more than he does, of course!

EVA L. DELEON:

QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

*Seattle, WA*

Eva grew up in the Philippines and moved to Seattle with her parents in 1992. She works at the University of Washington, Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation as an Assistant Director, managing activities for an ADA grant that provides training and technical consultation related to disability, vocational rehabilitation, and accessibility. Eva is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and spent nearly 14 years as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at DSB.

GLORIA WALLING:

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR

*Olympia, WA*

In 2008, Gloria became a licensed operator in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) where she has managed cafeterias and other locations. Gloria is active in her local chapter of the Washington Counsel of the Blind and the BEP Vender's committee.

JERRY JOHNSEN:

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

*Seattle, WA*

According to Jerry: Jerry is a hair impaired white male whose weight is proportional to his height and with hands bigger than Donald Trump's. He graduated from WSU when they still had a live cougar as a mascot and Debbie Cook first considered retiring. He has been CAP Director for 38 years and also serves on the DVR SRC and the GCDE. Jerry is married with two children; he loves photography, cycling and hiking. Finally, he Has a low tolerance for BS

KIM CONNER:

STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

*Olympia, WA*

Kim is the new Executive Director of the SILC and is excited to meet and work with the people in the Independent Living programs and partnering agencies. She has worked as a consultant providing strategic planning, program development, and partnership building for non-profits and small businesses. She has served as the Executive Director for the Council for the Homeless in Vancouver and Operations Manager for the NonProfit Technology Network in Portland. In her free time, Kim likes to paddleboard, paint and spend time with her partner of 12 years.

LOU OMA DURAND:

DSB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (EX-OFFICIO MEMBER)

*Seattle, WA*

Lou Oma was appointed Executive Director of the DSB in July 2005. Previously she served as Deputy Director, and held other executive and administrative positions at DSB. In addition to over 25 years of service in state government, Lou Oma was employed for 3 years at Boeing, and has served on numerous education, arts and other non-profit boards, advisory councils, literary arts organizations, and legislative task forces.

MARCY CARPENTER:

CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

*Seattle, WA*

Marci Carpenter is the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington. A Washington native, she has been a lifelong advocate for blind children and adults. Marci lives in West Seattle with her husband, Raymond, and enjoys baseball, and serves as Chairperson of the Seattle Transit Advisory Board.

NATE MARSHALL:

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM

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*Port Townsend, WA*

In 2016, Nate was the Employment Consultant for the Port Hadlock Office of Concerned Citizens where he provided job placement and job coaching skills for disabled youth and adults in Jefferson County. Prior to this, Nate worked at Tacoma Goodwill Industries as a Placement Specialist with the YouthBuild program and as the Projects with Industry Career Consultant where he became acquainted with DSB. He is currently relocating back to Tacoma and is actively looking for employment closer to his new home.

SHEILA TURNER:

BLIND, WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

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*Pasco, WA*

Sheila Turner is the second of 3 generations of blindness, inheriting bilateral congenital cataracts from her mother and passing it to her kids. Sheila is employed as the Independent Living Blind Skills Services teacher for the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kennewick. Sheila is enrolled in the University of Northern Colorado where she is working towards dual certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

STEVE FIKSDAL, 2016 VICE CHAIR:

BUSINESS, LABOR AND INDUSTRY

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*Federal Way, WA*

Steve is 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 and the resources to succeed in a sighted world and embark on a new and exciting career. Steve is President of the Washington Council of the Blind. He is the newly elected SRCB Chair for 2017.

SUE AMMETER, 2016 COUNCIL CHAIR:

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Port Hadlock, WA*

Sue has been a disability civil rights advocate for over 40 years. She 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, and has served as Chair of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, the Patron Advisory Council for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, and the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program Advisory Council.

TIM PAULDING:

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

*Spokane, WA*

Tim is an Orientation and Mobility instructor at the Lighthouse for the Blind in Spokane. He also contracts with the states of Washington and Idaho, teaching children and adults adaptive technology and O&M. He has worked in the blindness and disability field for 10 years and is certified in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and Orientation and Mobility. He received his master's degrees from Western Michigan University and an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan. He is a technology enthusiast, musician, and proud father of five.

TRACY KAHLO:

PARENT INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTER

*Tacoma, WA*

Tracy has lived in Washington since 1992. For 8 years, she oversaw an Individual Employment Program serving persons with developmental disabilities residing in Pierce, King, and Thurston counties. Tracy has a Master's in Not-for-Profit Leadership from Seattle University and 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:

NATIVE AMERICAN

*Bellingham, WA*

Yvonne is employed part time at the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation Program on the Lummi Reservation as an Outreach Specialist. 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 graduated from Evergreen State University and also 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.

Departing Members

BOB HUVEN:

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

*Seattle, WA*

We benefited from Bob's wisdom as a person with a disability and his 30 years' experience working with blind, deaf, and other people who experience life with a disability. Bob retired and left the SRCV in December 2015 after many years of service.



DEBBY PHILLIPS: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Spokane, WA*

Debby resigned from the SRCB after she accepted fulltime employment with the Inland Empire Lighthouse for the blind. We were sorry to see her go, but we think that getting a job is a great reason for leaving and will welcome her back in the future.

EMILIO VELA: WASHINGTON STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

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*Olympia, WA*

Emilio was a strong advocate for the Independent Living Philosophy, consumer empowerment and self-determination through his work as the Executive Director of the Washington State Independent Living Council,. In the spring, Emilio accepted a position in Missouri to manage a large IL Center.

ERICA HANSEN: STATE WORKSOURCE

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*Olympia, WA*

Ms. Hansen was appointed in 2014, but in 2015 requested to be removed from the SRCB stating that the appointment was made in error.

VAUGHN BROWN: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Vancouver, WA*

Vaughn is a graduate of the Washington State School for the Blind and graduated from Berklee College of Music in Boston with a Bachelor's of Music. He recently accepted employment as a music teacher at the School for the Blind and has resigned from the SRCB.

STAFF
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DEBBIE COOK DSB APPOINTED LIASON

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*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.

## A CHANCE TO CONNECT, LEARN FROM, AND WORK WITH EACH OTHER

The SRCB met 4 times in Seattle during 2016. All meetings were open to the public; 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. In addition to special presentations and subcommittee updates, meetings consist of a report from the DSB Executive Director about progress towards goals outlined in the state plan and a report from the SRCB Chair about Council activities.

The agenda always offered an opportunity for public comment on subjects related to Council business including the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs, and issues impacting the employment or independence of blind Washington State citizens. Although the SRCB received public comment at each meeting, it has been some time since community forums have been held on a specific topic.

Key agenda items this year included:

- Budget impacts resulting from required set asides in WIOA implementation
- WorkSource accessibility initiatives to address needs of underserve populations
- Update on DSB's Strategic Initiatives
- Washington Technology Services presentation on State Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) Policy 188 requiring accessibility of web sites and software in State government. The presentation highlighted how consumers had been instrumental throughout the development process and how the new policy would be implemented in state government.
- Department program presentations which provide a snapshot of the good that DSB programs impart.

## COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2016

The SRCB has four standing committees that do the work of the Council. Every member is expected to serve on a committee.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This committee provides overall leadership, vision, and guidance. It includes the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Chairs of the other standing committees. Responsibilities include: supervising SRCB staff; developing and managing SRCB resources; planning meeting agendas;

strategic planning and work plan development; meeting federal and state mandates on time and within budget; and submitting this Annual Report.

In 2016, this committee strengthened our organization by adopting new Bylaws and revising our committee structure to more accurately represent our role with DSB in the implementation of the WIOA.

#### MEMBERSHIP AND COLLABORATION COMMITTEE

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This committee works to maintain a strong, active, and high-functioning Council. This includes: member recruitment, training and support; public relations and outreach; and coordination of collaborative activities with partner councils.

In 2016 this committee made recommendations to fill 4 vacancies. There will be at least 3 vacancies to recruit in 2017.

This committee also increased collaboration with the WSRC by initiating an important presentation from the General SRC staff and Chairperson about DVR's placement in state government. Significant changes at DVR would impact DSB since they share responsibility for providing VR services.

#### PROGRAM AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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This committee evaluates customer satisfaction and other DSB performance measures, and makes suggestions for program improvement based on findings; sponsors opportunities for public feedback; and drafts the SRCB Annual Report.

This committee oversees the anonymous satisfaction survey for VR customers closed in the federal fiscal year, conducted on behalf of the SRCB by The University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies. This year, the survey was conducted quarterly rather than annually. Surveys were completed online or by phone. Questions address categories identified in the Governor's Results Washington initiatives. The target for all satisfaction measures is 80%.

Overall satisfaction: for 2016 was 78%; for 2015 was 80%; for 2014 was 89%

Training offered: for 2016 was 78%; for 2015 was 80%; for 2014 was 79%

Accuracy of staff: for 2016 was 83%; for 2015 was 84%; for 2014 was 74%

Respectfulness of staff: for 2016 was 83%; for 2015 was 84%; for 2014 was 79%

#### POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

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This committee provides input to DSB's internal policies and practices by: identifying opportunities to engage in DSB internal workgroups; giving input on policy changes affecting DSB participants; and supporting DSB's State Plan forums.

In 2016, the SRCB reviewed and commented on the VR State Plan required under WIOA, and at the end of the year we were learning more than we ever wanted to know about the process of proposing amendments to DSB's operational rules in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). This committee also partnered with the WSRC and the two VR agencies to write a joint letter to the 12 Workforce Development Councils expressing concern at the lack of supports for people with disabilities in their proposed WIOA Plans. Finally, the SRCB also assisted DSB to conduct public forums on DSB's portion of the State Workforce Combined Plan and on proposed WAC changes developed in response to the WIOA.

## DSB PROGRAMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

### BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF A HAPPY AND INDEPENDENT CHILD

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The DSB serves children who are blind or have low vision from birth through 8. To the often overwhelmed parents of this most challenging population, DSB provides assistance in understanding the nature and potential impact of the child's visual disability. Parents are trained alongside the children, receiving training in parenting techniques and understanding the child's developmental needs. Of course, daily living skills are also taught to the child (and their family) to help the child become more independent at home and participate in household chores.

In 2016, 24 children from birth to age 8 received services, including counseling, family consultations, and basic independent living skills.

Children and Families webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/children-and-families.shtml>.

### A NATIONWIDE EMPHASIS ON YOUTH TRANSITION

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A national emphasis in the VR program is services to ensure smooth transition for youth who are moving from school to post-secondary activities. DSB helps students, as young as age 9 to as old as age 24, 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
- 4 summer programs are available for students in transition, as well as a growing handful of day long programs. Programs have different focuses depending on the age of the participants. The youngest participants are working on social skills and the oldest participants are taking college classes while living on campus.

In 2016, DSB provided a variety of services in addition to the summer programs to 357 youth. Of all individuals who currently have an open VR Transition case, the average age at the time of application is 18 years old. DSB assisted 166 participants with their higher education tuition.

School to Work Transition webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/school-work-transition.shtml>

## GETTING PEOPLE TO WORK AND HELPING THEM KEEP THEIR JOBS

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is for people interested in getting a job or keeping a job. The comprehensive program considers the needs of each individual and provides quality services to customers rather than just placing people in jobs. DSB consistently gets higher wages than most other VR programs and consistently has the highest ratio of individuals who earn enough to reduce or eliminate Social Security financial benefits. Services are wide-ranging and encourage the participant to take an active role. Participants often need training in adaptive skills of blindness, computer technology for on-the-job success, career exploration and matching, or internships and other work experiences.

At the end of 2016, 165 participants achieved successful employment outcomes with an average hourly wage of \$20.46. 68 of these participants were receiving job retention assistance. 8 of them are Honorably Discharged Veterans. 4 participants now have all of their medical health insurance paid by their employers. 41 participants are no longer relying on Public Assistance as their primary source of income. And, the oldest participant, who needed help retaining employment as a real estate broker, was 82 years old.

A complete list of jobs and employers can be found online, but a few examples of employers include Amazon.com, Boeing, Dollar Store, Everett Public Schools, Gray's Harbor Veterinary Clinic, Microsoft, Port Angeles Senior Center, Shilo Breachfront Restaurant, South Brooklyn Legal Services, and Washington State University.

VR Services Website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/employment.shtml>

## OTC GRADUATES ARE CONFIDENT, INDEPENDENT, AND SUCCESSFUL

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The Orientation and Training Center is primarily a residential program for VR customers who need intensive daily instruction in adaptive skills of blindness and employment-related experiences. Students participate in a variety of classes, including Home Management, Keyboarding and Computers, and Orientation and Mobility. OTC students participate in other activities and learning experiences. Challenge Activities, like tandem bike riding, help students build confidence with vision loss. The skills they learn and experiences they have enable them to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job, and in their communities.

In 2016, the OTC had 40 graduates from its regular training program. As part of the program, two participants had the opportunity to participate in a Student Training Employment Program internship. This year the Seattle Art Museum offered an internship for an office assistant and the other was as a production worker at the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind.

OTC's website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/orientation-and-training-center.shtml>

### LEGALLY-BLIND INDIVIDUALS LEARN TO BE INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURS

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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. Over five to six weeks of classroom and hands-on experience, participants complete training in all facets of food service facility operation to become BEP Licensees. They can apply to be operators of program locations and the program will provide the essential food service equipment and provide ongoing guidance to the operator. The Licensee of each location is solely responsible for the success of the business.

In 2016, there were 18 BEP operators. The average income for operators increased by 18% in 2016! Average income was over \$85,000 in 2016 and only \$72,000 in 2015. BEP is hoping to soon add a location at the FAA Headquarters in Des Moines.

BEP website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/business-enterprise-program.shtml-1>

### LIVING INDEPENDENTLY WITH VISION LOSS

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The Independent Living Program (IL) provides the skills, the tools, and the confidence individuals with recent vision loss need to live independently in their homes and communities. IL providers offer a wide range of services, including training, brief counseling, info and referrals, and supplying aids or devices. For most participants, the goal is simply to regain what was lost: the ability to call a friend on the telephone, heat up leftovers in the microwave, know what time it is to get to a doctor's appointment on time, use a magnifier to look at pictures of a loved one, or take a walk in the fresh air.

The IL Program serves clients 18 years old to over 100 years old. In 2016, IL served 20 centenarians! Most of the participants are actually 55 or older. More than two-thirds of them are women; the majority have macular degeneration; and the average age is 84 years old. Of those clients 54 or younger, the average age is 35 and more than a third suffer from depression. Most participants live in their home or apartment rather than in a nursing or assisted living setting; in 2016, IL services were provided to 6 homeless people.

As 2016 came to a close, the program's nine providers statewide served 1571 clients. 158 of those cases were 54 or younger. Despite an emphasis on outreach to the Asian and Hispanic minorities, these populations are still significantly underserved, falling well short of Washington State's general population percentage who are Hispanic or Asian individuals. Overall, IL service delivery to underserved minority populations has increased, but more work is clearly needed but the program is moving in the right direction.

**A LETTER OF RECOGNITION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND DIRECTOR**

**Dear Deputy Commissioner Finch and Governor Inslee,**

Representing a broad spectrum of Washington citizens, the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) is vitally important in our current economic environment. Council members actively seek and convey the input of their respective constituents. They are strong partners in helping the agency to clarify values; assess options regarding our budget, policies and strategies; and achieve our agency mission: Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality for People with Visual Disabilities.

As a result, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) continues to demonstrate the positive impact our services have on children and families, youth transitioning from school to work, adults seeking competitive employment, employers who need qualified workers, and elderly citizens wishing to remain independent in their homes. The focus of the SRCB along with the successful outcomes achieved by our professional staff contribute to Washington's economic and cultural vitality by emphasizing the skills and abilities of all its citizens including those with disabilities. Every day, people in Washington 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. These individuals have taken charge of their lives, can support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

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.

Our Council members, nine of whom are blind or have other disabilities, use those same key tools to be well-informed advisors and advocates. 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 recognize the work of these dedicated volunteers.

Sincerely,

Lou Oma Durand, Director

2016 Outcomes website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/2016-outcomes-and-results.shtml>