

visions

Summer 2019 Issue 12

Insights Newsletter

VISIONS Staten Island Advisory Board

VISIONS is proud to highlight the hard work and dedication of Holly Bonner, the new Staten Island Borough Coordinator in her use of creative and engaging events. She has already expanded the knowledge of VISIONS services on Staten Island. These events stem from VISIONS Staten Island Advisory Board under the leadership of Ms. Bonner. The members are a dedicated group of individuals living and working within the borough. Advisory Board Members help to promote public awareness regarding the needs and abilities of those with vision loss. They reach out to various organizations and local businesses to inform them about VISIONS presence on Staten Island and the FREE services offered to the blind and visually impaired residents of the borough.

Staten Island Eye Exams

On Sunday, March 31, VISIONS hosted free eye exams at Pro Youth Recreation and Family Center on Staten Island's North Shore. Dr. Bryan Wolynski and Dr. Jan Weitz conducted full eye exams! Special thanks to Staten Island Advisory Board members Heather Butts, Sonia Yulfo and the 120 NYPD Explorers Program for volunteering. Thanks to a generous grant from the Staten Island Foundation, we will have a second exam day on Sunday June 30, 2019! Be sure to follow us on Facebook for more details.



Staten Island Egg Hunt

For the second year in a row, Staten Island families gathered at the COMMONS cafe to experience the borough's annual beeping egg hunt. Organized by Holly Bonner, VISIONS Staten Island Borough Coordinator, and her husband, NYPD Detective Joseph Bonner, the April 12, 2019 event attracted more than 150 families. Members of the New York State Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives Unit (ATF) built the beeping eggs that emit a chirping noise so blind participants can audibly find them. NYPD mounted horses, canine dogs, and highway patrol vehicles were on hand to provide the children with other tactile experiences. Lois & Richard Nicotra, proprietors of the COMMONS cafe, donated 100% of the profits from the event to VISIONS services on Staten Island.



Staten Island First Annual Awards Dinner

VISIONS Staten Island Advisory Board hosted their first annual awards dinner at the Hilton Garden Inn on May 2, 2019 with a crowd of over 100 guests. The event was emceed by CBS 2 News anchor, Lisa Rozner. Awards recognizing advocacy and civic engagement were given to two sets of high school sisters, Grace & Katherine Garlisi and Tatiana & Angelica Santos-Mroczek. The Staten Island Business Leadership Award was presented to Lois & Richard Nicotra's

Commons Cafe for their annual support of the Staten Island Beeping Egg Hunt. The Staten Island North Star Lions Club was also recognized for their continued support of VISIONS events and services. Twelve winners from grades K-8, who participated in the VISIONS: Sights Unseen art and poetry contest were recognized. The children were awarded medals for their outstanding submissions. Nancy D. Miller, Executive Director/CEO, concluded the successful evening by presenting Lisa Rozner with the Excellence in Journalism Award for her inclusive news coverage of various events throughout New York City highlighting the disabled community.



Lois & Richard Nicotra



North Star Staten Island Lions

The Staten Island Advisory board is actively recruiting new members. If you are interested in joining our volunteer team, contact Holly Bonner, Staten Island Borough Coordinator hbonner@visionsvcb.org.

Executive Director/CEO Nancy D. Miller



We are currently preparing for a busy summer season at VISIONS Center on Blindness in Rockland County, VISIONS pre-college program at Manhattanville College, VISIONS transition program

for blind teens at Queens College and VISIONS paid Work Experience Training internship programs. Along with VISIONS 100 full time and part time employees, the seasonal staff is getting ready for the many program offerings. With a staff turnover rate of only 6% compared to a nonprofit average turnover of 19%, we rely on our experienced professional staff to enable our participants to reach their individual goals. VISIONS has had a growth spurt with expansion in Staten Island and Westchester. We have added many hard working volunteers to our advisory boards, programs and golf and tennis event committee. Along with staff, the volunteers, including VISIONS dedicated Board of Directors, help us spread the word about VISIONS free services and raise the funds to serve over 7,000 people annually. On a sad note, we lost one of our cherished volunteers and Board members, Mannie Corman, at age 100. His affiliation with VISIONS lasted over 25 years. We mourn the loss and offer condolences to his wife Judy Goldman and family. We are pleased to report an increase

in media coverage, podcasts, radio interviews and conference presentations. We continue to receive rave reviews from our participants and volunteers as well as thoughtful advice on how to add to and improve our services. We thank you, our donors and supporters, for your investment in our outcomes. Together we have enabled VISIONS to be #1 in job placements of legally blind New Yorkers for 3 years in row; serve over 160 older persons with vision loss each day at VISIONS Center on Aging; offer six evidence based health and physical activity classes along with nearly 50 classes each week at VISIONS at Selis Manor; increase the social networking and health and wellness of over 700 participants at VISIONS Center on Blindness; support 750 unpaid caregivers of older persons where either or both are blind or visually impaired. Please visit our website www.visionsvcb.org for more information and remember to designate VISIONS as your charity when you shop at Amazon Smile.

Our Vision is For Everyone to See What is Possible

Our Website: www.visionsvcb.org



GOING GREEN! If you want to receive future newsletters and appeals by email, please send an email to info@visionsvcb.org with your name, email and mailing address. As we transition, you may receive email and print copies.

A Publication about VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

President, Board of Directors - **Nancy T. Jones**

Vice President, Board of Directors - **Steven E. Kent**

Vice President, Board of Directors - **Dr. Cynthia Stuenkel**

Treasurer, Board of Directors - **Burton M. Strauss, Jr.**

Assistant Treasurer, Board of Directors - **Kenneth J. Gralak**

Secretary, Board of Directors - **Jasmine M. Campirides**

Executive Director/CEO - **Nancy D. Miller**

Editor, Senior Director of Development - **Russell Martello**

Newsletter Design & Layout, Communications Coordinator - **Tara Factor**



What's His Secret?



Teddy Kern, VISIONS Director of Occupational Therapy and Medical Coordinator and her client Suleiman

Suleiman Rifai was born in Tanzania and is a 58-year old man with an amazing spirit and a secret. His story is many years in the making and VISIONS is proud to play a part in Suleiman's most recent training and success. Suleiman is totally blind due to Retinitis Pigmentosa, diagnosed at age 14. He stopped school in the 7th grade, unable to read school books; he subsequently stayed home for 5 years, thinking his "life was over", although he was able to read large print until age 20, when he became blind. Suleiman soon became depressed, at which time his sister from New York City visited, and said there was hope in the USA. After discovering that he was eligible for services, Suleiman came to NYC at age 19.

He lived with his family in Washington Heights and attended a vocational program. He received vocational counseling until his visa expired, and for 8 years he languished, with no services, until in 1988 he applied for amnesty and got a green card, then citizenship at age 28. Suleiman earned his GED in 1989 and graduated from LaGuardia

Community College in 1990. He then transferred to Adelphi University and received his BSW and MSW in Social Work, all in 3 years! Suleiman got his first job while living independently for the first time in Long Island, but he wanted to live in NYC; his family helped him find a place in Washington Heights, where he has lived since 2005. And what, you ask, is his "secret"?

Suleiman, a confident and totally independent man who rises at 4:30am 5-days a week to travel to Brooklyn's Samaritan Village Men's Shelter to his job as a Social Worker and he loves to COOK!

Suleiman shares many ethnic and family recipes. He was, however, having difficulty managing cooking weekly, to prepare food for the week, doing his laundry, shopping, labeling, house cleaning and other household tasks. He needed adaptive devices, rehabilitation training to review his mobility and travel skills.

Suleiman was referred to VISIONS by the NY State Commission for the Blind, in 2018, for rehabilitation training and an orientation & mobility evaluation. From VISIONS professional staff, he received instruction in meal preparation, communication skills, organization/labeling, financial management, and household management. He learned how to use adaptive devices and techniques, including a Library of Congress player for "Talking Books", cooking devices, storage containers, safety skills in meal preparation, a Braille and talking wand for labeling, currency reader, adaptations for financial management, devices for time identification and for identifying colors of clothing enabling him to "dress for success", writing skills, a Micro Speak note-taking device. He completed O&M instruction in travel skills. Suleiman was referred to VISIONS at Selis Manor's Computer lab, for training with his iPad. He has completed his training successfully and enthusiastically, and

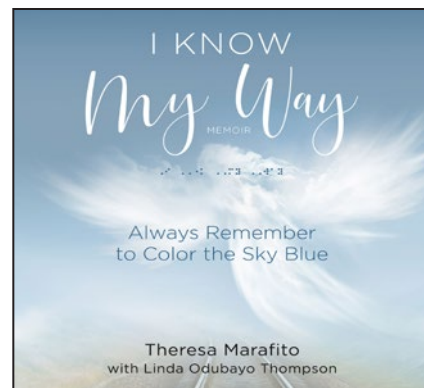
says he is now more confident and safe, is a better cook and household manager, and expressed his gratitude to VISIONS and their dedicated staff members.

Memoir Highlights VCB: "I Know My Way"

VISIONS VCB (VISIONS Center on Blindness formerly known as Vacation Camp for the Blind) is highlighted in the recently published Memoir: "I Know My Way" by Theresa Marafito with daughter Linda Odubayo Thompson.

VCB in Spring Valley, NY was an integral part of the Marafito clan for over 50 years. As a family they spent many summers in the VCB family unit along with friends each year at VCB. "I Know My Way" is the story of Theresa Marafito, a woman who refused to allow her disability to control her life. Born blind in one eye with only partial vision in the other, Theresa decided early on that she was going to live her life to the fullest. Read along as Theresa experiences the heartaches and triumphs of fighting for a "normal" life despite the odds being stacked against her.

To learn more about this inspirational memoir and receive a 40% discount off retail on all formats including, Kindle, ebook, soft cover and audio MP3 use the link: <http://www.iknowmywaymemoir.com/visions-vcb>



All soft cover books will be signed and include a custom bookmark!

Third Generation Board Member: Burton M. Strauss Jr.



Meet Burton M. Strauss, Jr. a 3rd generation VISIONS Board Member and current Treasurer of the Board of Directors. He highlights his family's rich history with the organization and discusses an exciting initiative he and his wife Harriette (former VISIONS Board Member) recently created.

"My relationship with VISIONS started almost at birth. My grandmother was one of the founders of Vacation Camp and Dormitory for the Blind in 1923. Her husband and a handful of men solicited

the funds to provide our services with an annual budget barely in six figures. I began volunteering as a photographer at events as a teenager. My father was the first male president and my mother worked with residents of the dorm as their bookkeeper. Her sister and her husband also both played important roles in the organization.

VISIONS has been blessed with some of the most outstanding thinkers in the world of blindness services including Irving Miller and Harry Minkoff. Our current Executive Director for the last 32 years (Nancy D. Miller) continues to find programs and financing that places us as one of the leading agencies for the visually impaired population. Our President of the Board for the last 34 years (Nancy T. Jones) has provided the guidance to give us a significantly larger presence in the world of blind services.

Personally, I have actively participated in the growth of the organization. I joined VISIONS board with Harriette in the early 1960s when we left the Westchester Advisory Board and moved to Manhattan. I have been Treasurer of the Board for over 30 years and

participated in the merger with the Fund for the Blind in 1984. The merger placed VISIONS in its secure financial condition. It enabled us to open the VISIONS Vocational Rehabilitation Center. This \$9 million facility located at the VISIONS Center on Blindness in Spring Valley is a unique operation providing young blind students with the opportunity to prepare for and find gainful employment. Another very important service we provide is our NYC DFTA supported Center on Aging, which furnishes meals and services for over 160 people daily at Selis Manor.

As a measure of ongoing attachment to VISIONS, we have established the Harriette and Burton Strauss, Jr. Tuition Assistance Fund. This endowment will provide an annual grant to one of our staff members pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree in areas that will benefit both the grantee and VISIONS in assisting our consumers. We believe this program will help continue the staff's attachment to our agency which is shown in our outstanding employee retention rate over the years."

In Memorium of Mannie Corman

Mannie Corman, Age 100, passed away April 12, 2019. He was born and lived his whole life in Brooklyn. His first marriage was to Dr. Francis Bell who predeceased him. He owned several children's clothing factories, Jane Darling Dress Inc. and Storyland Fashion. He was an active philanthropist. After losing sight in one eye, in 2006 he became a volunteer and board member of VISIONS and supported their centers in Rockland County and Selis Manor, a residence for blind people, on 23rd Street in New York. He was a member of the Brooklyn Bridge Lions Club along with several VISIONS staff and Board members. He celebrated his 100th birthday in August 2018 and married Judith Rock Goldman at the party. His wife and loving family and friends will miss him. He was truly one in a million.



Grand Re-Opening of VISIONS at Selis Manor



VISIONS Board of Directors and Staff Members cutting a ribbon in celebration of the Grand Re-Opening of VISIONS at Selis Manor

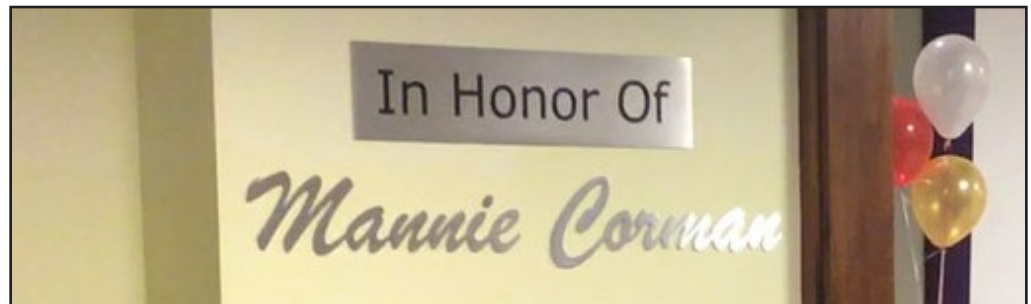
On Wednesday May 1, 2019 VISIONS held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the Grand Re-Opening of VISIONS at Selis Manor. We celebrated the resilience and renewal of the center following catastrophic events such as 9/11, a bombing and flooding, the great partnerships and support the center benefits from including funders, volunteers, government officials and the building owners; and a celebration of the life of longtime VISIONS Board Member Mannie Corman who recently passed away. VISIONS Executive Director and CEO Nancy D. Miller began the evening by speaking about the rich history of the center and thanking the Board of Directors for their support in all of the innovative programs that have been added since the opening in 2001. She thanked the building owner The Associated Blind, Inc., the Tenants Association President Joyce Carrico and our funders and supporters including The Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Marble Collegiate Church, The New

York State Commission for the Blind, the NYC Department for the Aging, and representatives from the offices of Senator Brad Hoylman, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, Speaker Corey Johnson and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

VISIONS Board of Directors, led by President Nancy T. Jones, cut a red ribbon signifying the re-birth and bright future ahead for VISIONS at Selis Manor. This was followed by a heartfelt tribute to longtime Board Member Mannie Corman when Chief Program Officer Ruben Coellar and Senior Director of Selis Manor Ann DeShazo unveiled a

sign in honor of Mannie while his wife Judy Rock Goldman and family looked on. This beautiful sign will remain at the front of the auditorium at VISIONS at Selis Manor, a vibrant center for over 1000 participants, which was near and dear to Mannie.

The evening concluded with the performance of two beautiful songs by The FMDG Music School Vocal Ensemble and a reception for the more than 150 guests. We are proud of the rich history of VISIONS at Selis Manor and excited about what the future holds.



This sign is located in the auditorium of VISIONS at Selis Manor.

VISIONS Events in Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Queens

VISIONS 34th Annual Charity Golf and Tennis Outing

On Tuesday May 21, 2019, VISIONS hosted its 34th Annual Charity Golf and Tennis Outing at beautiful Quaker Ridge Golf Club in Scarsdale, New York. We are excited to announce that this was our most well attended event to date including 80 golfers and 10 tennis players. It was a beautiful day, 70 degrees and sunny, perfect for participating in the day's events with more than \$50,000 raised benefiting VISIONS Center on Blindness (VCB) in Spring Valley, New York. Golf and tennis players enjoyed gifts provided

by Nike, free professional stretching provided by Total Form Fitness, a lavish brunch, and of course refreshments. Athletes showed additional support for VCB with the purchase of Mulligan's (which we're sure no one needed to use!), while dinner guests and athletes alike participated in raffles for door prizes and auction items. All attendees enjoyed a beautiful reception complete with an informative and fun-filled Q&A session hosted by Nelson Figueroa Jr., former New York Mets pitcher and current pre and post-game studio

analyst for New York Mets Broadcasts on SNY. We thank all of our players, guests, supporters and sponsors for their generous support, making this a most successful event. A special thank you to the professional staff at Quaker Ridge, VISIONS Staff and our fantastic Golf and Tennis Committee: Ric C. Apter (Co-Chair), Robert A. Davis (Co-Chair), Frank Cerza, Bud Hammer, Cathy Hoffman, Nancy T. Jones and Theodore Klingos. If you would like to join us next year please email golf@visionsvcb.org

Queens

On Saturday, February 9 2019, VISIONS Queens Advisory Board held its 2nd Annual Cocktails for a Cause Fundraiser at Good Company Tavern in Little Neck NY. Those in attendance enjoyed delicious food prepared by Chef Franco Raicovich donated by the Douglaston Manor. Thank you to Mike Sackos, Owner of Aegea West Gyros & Pizza for donating both Greek and Italian fare. Alexa Politis, local singer, for singing Broadway tunes. VISIONS Queens Advisory Board Member, Stephanie Belanich, Keller Williams Greater Nassau, who volunteered as guest bartender and to all the local businesses that donated prizes to our raffle!



Enjoying the afternoon out in support of VISIONS, left to right Andrea Balzarini, Maxine Conlin and Toni Vatier

Bronx

VISIONS Bronx Advisory Board's Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony took place at Tosca on March 8, 2019. Many thanks to our wonderful honorees: Bobby Jaen, President, Throggs Neck Merchants Association and Owner, Anthony's Flower Farm; Derrick Lovett, President/CEO, MBD Community Housing Corp.; Drs. Anthony and Michael Pisacano, Pisacano Eye Surgery & Laser Specialists. Thank you to emcee Gary Axelbank of thisistheBronx.com and to Bronxnet for creating a wonderful video about VISIONS. The video was shown that evening and will be a great marketing piece. This year's dinner raised a net of \$30,000 to support VISIONS programs in the Bronx.



Bronx Advisory Board

Brooklyn

The Brooklyn Advisory hosted two great events this past winter, raising thousands of dollars to support VISIONS free services in Brooklyn:

Viva VISIONS, an afterwork networking evening on December 6, 2018, was a brand new event for the group. Hosted at Yayo's, we had a great crowd that enjoyed terrific drinks and food, exciting door prizes and many guests who were new to VISIONS.

The Applebee's Flapjack Breakfast on March 2, 2019 was, once again, a huge success, greatly enjoyed by our advisory board members, their families and many seniors from the community. Many thanks to Joe Corace and Kiwanis for underwriting the breakfast.

Manhattan

Not to be outdone, the Manhattan Advisory Board hosted their own Viva VISIONS at Tacombi Empire State Building. Lots of fun, lots of conversation, many new faces. The event raised net proceeds of more than \$2,000 for VISIONS free services in Manhattan.

For more information about the advisory boards, contact Amy Gordon amygor2@aol.com



Left to right: Leon Pollack, Ric Apter, former MLB pitcher and studio analyst for New York Mets Broadcasts on SNY Nelson Figueroa Jr., and John Heffer



Left to right: Harry de la Cruz (caddy), Doug Borck, Jim Baumann, Michael Greenspan, Richard McMann (caddy), Robbie Davis



Front row: Steve Satran, Melanie Satran, Josie Yee, Jen Hinkle, Cheryl Eustis
Back row: Jag Rao, Anthony Scovotti, Chris Scovotti, Steve Rosenblatt, Bob Schonbrunn

VRC: Ushering In Success



Stephen P. is a 22-year old legally blind client from Brooklyn, who directly experienced the challenges of transitioning from youth to adulthood. He graduated high school confused, fearful, and unfamiliar with the ways of the adult workforce and

the responsibilities that came with adulthood. He then decided to receive services from VISIONS. Stephen attended the Vocational Rehabilitation Center (VRC) where he received intensive workforce training and counseling and took classes, which equipped him with the professional skills necessary to obtain and sustain employment. He participated in internships, resume/cover letter development, interview prep/practice, career exploration, and technical training that enhanced his marketability and self-confidence.

After graduating from the VRC program, Stephen was connected to an employer through VISIONS placement services. This employer had a customer service position that was a good fit for Stephen, who by nature was very shy, and somewhat anxious about going

to work. He completed the interview process and was hired for the position of Usher/Customer Service agent at the Kings Theatre in Brooklyn. In this role, Stephen has successfully excelled stating that “this is a good fit for me. I meet all types of people each day and I’m more confident now interacting with individuals.”

Due to Stephens’s new found dedication, hard work, and reliable training from the VRC and the Workforce Development Department, he also returned to college in addition to work and thus far has an A average.

Stephen now has a clear vision and drive that is rooted in a newfound sense of confidence in his abilities, potential, and opportunities. “Everything is going good! I’m working and I’m in college and I have an A average!”

From New Jersey to VISIONS Center on Blindness VCB



Meet Jeruziah F. age 10 - a fun-loving and energetic VCB participant from New Jersey, who looks forward to playing the various pianos onsite, loves arts and crafts and can't wait to partake in the evening programs that feature talent shows, dances, and cultural nights. This year marks his second year attending the summer program, along with his brother, age 7.

Our featured participant Jeruziah was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at age 2, and only has partial use of his vision, with the ability to see more clearly in the daytime. Jeruziah, who is also color blind, struggles with concurrent challenges, including Oppositional

Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and is the embodiment of a child who truly puts his best foot forward in all that he does. His mother, Martha has utilized many services for her son.

Martha explains, "While there are services in New Jersey, resources are limited and there is nothing in place like the summer program that VCB offers." Jeruziah gets to be independent here, and is learning so much. He has become more organized and his mood has improved immensely." VCB has also helped Martha gain valuable information as a parent, citing helpful workshops that have contributed to her enhanced awareness about her son. "You get to meet a lot of parents who have children with the same issues. You get a lot of information, and you give information back, so it's great."

Up until last school year, Jeruziah was embarrassed to use his mobility cane, but with the encouragement from his mom and VCB staff, they persuaded Jeruziah to utilize his cane, and helped him to recognize the importance of asking for help when it's needed. Martha heard about VISIONS from a staff member that is part of an online community for visually

impaired individuals and their families. Martha reports, "there has been a tremendous improvement in Jeruziah's social cues which have developed during his time at VCB. He has greatly benefited from the mobility training, which has given him a great sense of independence, and he even learned about financial management, which is vital information for him to retain into his adult years." Martha cannot say enough good things about the activities in place at VCB, emphasizing that they are critical in getting her son going, and really engaging.

As far as additional feedback, Ms. Ruiz reports, "I think that this is a resource that we should have in New Jersey. There should be different sections throughout the year. I recommend having the sessions dispersed throughout consecutive weekends because, for parents, you have to take time off of work, and may have other commitments."

Ms. Ruiz' final remarks, "Sometimes my son gets down and depressed and VCB really helps him. He loves it—he even wants to move here! He is having so much fun, and learning so much. Jeruziah gets to be around people that are like him and he knows he is not alone."

Westchester Expansion

We are excited to announce that VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is increasing its footprint, and expanding its services in Westchester. VISIONS proudly stepped in to provide services in Westchester when a previous provider left the area, leaving blind residents in the region with very limited vision rehabilitation services. Since January 2019, VISIONS hired 3 new staff members to provide services in the region: Anuola De Four-Howard COMS, Julie Spodnick CVRT and Wojciech Jacobi O&M and has already received referrals for over 150 blind Westchester residents

from the New York State Commission for the Blind.

Westchester legally blind and totally blind residents now have the opportunity to receive free services and training they need to gain independence and employment. Services are provided in the home, in the community, and overnight services at VISIONS Center on Blindness (VCB) located in nearby Spring Valley, NY.

VISIONS has joined the Business Council of Westchester (BCW). We have been networking with Westchester nonprofits so they know how to refer someone that is blind for VISIONS services and we have made new connections with employers for internships and jobs for blind

participants. On March 28, VISIONS staff attended the Westchester Business Expo at the Rye Hilton. VISIONS had a table at the expo displaying our literature, and staff was available to provide additional information and answer questions about our programs. On June 3, 2019, Nancy D. Miller, VISIONS Executive Director/CEO, was interviewed on WVOX radio by BCW Executive Vice President John Ravitz.

VISIONS expansion was welcomed in a meeting with County Executive George Latimer, VISIONS Board Member Jagadish Rao and Westchester Volunteer Robert A. Davis.

VISIONS 4th Annual Business Partners Networking Breakfast

VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired held its fourth Annual Business Partners Networking Breakfast on March 22, 2019 at VISIONS at Selis Manor. The breakfast brought together over 120 hiring managers, NYS Commission for the Blind staff, blind job seekers and other stakeholders to learn more about the abilities of blind people to become productive and valuable employees of nearly any business. Keynote speaker Jim Sinocchi, Head of Disability Inclusion at JPMorgan Chase & Co, who himself has a disability, gave an inspiring talk on overcoming adversity while building a successful career in corporate America. Alonso Moreno, a VISIONS workforce client, spoke about how VISIONS helped him land a position as an Aviation Fellow with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Employer appreciation awards were given to Amazon, Rennert International, Port Authority of NY and NJ, AHRC and Usable Net for their commitment to diversifying their workforce. Contacts were made between the employers and job

candidates who were present, and thus far, at least two clients have received job offers as a result of this event. Dawn, Chris, and Wayne received diversity inclusion certificates at VISIONS 2019 Employer Award for their Breakfast for hiring employees who are legally blind and for making their workplace's an inclusive environment. Jessenia, representing Amazon NYC, received

VISIONS annual employer award for going above and beyond in their commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. To learn more about how blind people make great employees, contact Michael Cush, Senior Director of Workforce Development and Technology Training mcush@visionsvcb.org.



Left to right: Dawn Henning, Vice President of Business Development Rennert International | Rennert Translation Group; Chris Telander Head of HR/People Director UsableNet, Inc.; Khadija Bari, Student Career Coordinator, VISIONS Services; Natalie Marc, Workforce Counselor, VISIONS Services; Michael Cush, Sr. Director of Workforce, VISIONS Services; Heather Hanlon-Emeka, Director of Workforce Programs; Jessenia De Jesus, Talent Supply Chain Engagement Sr. Coordinator -NYC, Amazon; Wayne Turner, HR, Port Authority of NYNJ

VISIONS Grants

VISIONS is thrilled to share our success in working with local employers to hire blind job seekers as a trainer of staff at ABVI/Goodwill in Rochester, NY and Elizabeth Pierce Olmsted Center for Sight in Buffalo, NY through a grant from the Lavelle Fund for the Blind. The first all day training took place on May 15, 2019 provided by Nancy D. Miller, VISIONS Executive Director/CEO and Michael Cush, VISIONS Senior Director of Workforce Development and Technology Training.

Allene Reuss Memorial Trust has provided a grant to VISIONS to reach out to the graduate schools with programs for vision rehabilitation therapists (VRT) and orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists. There is a severe shortage of these

specialists throughout the country. VISIONS is pleased to have recruited VRT and O&M staff and interns from Hunter College, University of Massachusetts at Boston and Salus University in Philadelphia. William Hixson, Senior Director of Rehabilitation Services in managing the outreach and supervising the new recruits.

VISIONS continued working with the Brother Kearny Scholars with a grant from the Lavelle Fund for the Blind. Khadija Bari, the scholar program coordinator, has been working with 20-30 blind college and graduate students each year. With her support and training, they are more likely to graduate and land jobs in the field of interest that is commensurate with their education and experience. On May 23, 2019 with VISIONS mental health counselors, Natalie Marc with Khadija Bari, offered a

presentation on the successful project at the Vision Rehabilitation and Employment Institute in Troy, NY sponsored by the NYS Commission for the Blind and the New York Vision Rehabilitation Association.

VISIONS continues to receive valuable financial support for youth and senior services (and general operations) from Con Edison, David Kimmel Foundation, Ed Lucas Foundation, Moses L. Parshelsky Foundation, Norman and Bettina Roberts Foundation, NYU Community Fund, William G & Helen Hoffman Foundation, the NYS Commission for the Blind, the NYC Department for the Aging, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer And City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and members of the City Council. We are grateful for a grant from the Drue and H. J. Heinz II Charitable Lead Trust.

Save the Dates

Bronx Bartending

6:00-9:00pm

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Residence Inn by Marriott

1776 Eastchester Rd,

Bronx, NY 10461

Get Cool in the Pool

12:00-4:00pm

Saturday, August 10, 2019

Home of Timothy & Jaime Ray

34 13th Avenue, West Babylon, NY 11704

Manhattan Award Reception

6:00-8:30pm

Thursday, September 26, 2019

AIG Headquarters

175 Water Street

New York, NY 10038

For more info email
amygor2@aol.com

VISIONS New Advisory Board News

Bronx

Vanessa Baijnauth, Ridgewood Savings Bank

Manhattan

Robbie Guevarra, Quintessentially & Brian
Nguyen, Syska Hennessy Group

VISIONS Staff

New Full-time

Kimone Coley

Anuola De Four-Howard

Phyllis Greenberg

Phillip Keys

Russell Martello

Julie Spodnick

New Part-time

Alain Karmichael Clavio (DHS)

Wojciech Jacobi

David Jordet

Nikolay Pakhomov

Interns

Laurie Claret

Demitris Marcano

Thainawan Medina

Lions Volunteer Work Day

On June 1, 2019, VISIONS Center on Blindness (VCB) hosted 119 Lions Volunteers. They acted on the mission "We Serve" by preparing VCB for the summer sessions. Cleaning, pruning, cutting grass, moving leaves, setting up the dining hall were all part of the day's work.



VISIONS Board News

After 34 years of dedicated service, Nancy T. Jones will be stepping down as Board President in September 2019. We are very grateful for her years of commitment to VISIONS in this leadership role and for continuing as a member of the Board of Directors and Trustee of the Fund for the Blind.

In September 2019, Robert Schonbrunn will be presented on the nominating slate as the new Board President of VISIONS. Bob has been a VISIONS Board member since 2016, and chair of the development committee. He is an active AARP tax preparation volunteer at VISIONS at Selis Manor, helping low income blind persons.

Tidbits and Testimonials

VISIONS was featured in the May 29, 2019 Issue 4 of OSCONY New York Insights E-Newsletter. This is the E-Newsletter of The Optometric Society of the City of New York, an affiliate of the New York State Optometric Association and the American Optometric Association.

Having worked with VISIONS for a number of years to provide creative writing and arts programming to visually impaired and legally blind seniors, I can say that VISIONS is an amazing organization. They provide caring and thoughtful attention to the people they serve, and offer much needed services to NYC.

-Volunteer

Dear Natalia,

I would like to express my gratitude to you, VISIONS Services, Travis, Teddy, and others in your organization for their generosity and warmth. I was particularly overwhelmed by Travis who checked my home to make certain that everything that could be done to ensure my safety, comfort and well-being was taken care of. All of these were accomplished efficiently and in a most pleasant fashion. My family and I thank you and your staff.

I count my blessings.

Sincerely, Helen Kaplan

Hello everyone, I am Sakina, I am a volunteer with VISIONS from 2016. It is a pleasure and a privilege; and I consider myself fortunate to be associated with such, humble, sincere and dedicated people. The staff is amazingly cooperative and helpful. They endeavor with determination and perseverance to help the visually impaired and make sure that all their needs are met. I take great pride in quoting Ms. Natasha and Ms. Rocky, who take that extra step further beyond to help and serve.

-Volunteer

Dear VISIONS,

I want to let you know I had a great teaching experience with Travis Joseph.

Thank you, Esther

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