

FOCUS



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Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
live your vision

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FOCUS

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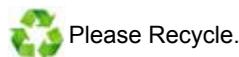
Cover photo: Camp Abilities in Motion! The lead story covers our first Camp Abilities in Motion and the impact it will have on children from birth to the age of ten.

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Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

live your vision



Rudy D'Amico
President and CEO

As the clocks fall behind, CABVI continues to move forward. This past quarter has provided us with several new additions to our family, and an exciting program for children that compliments Camp Abilities. Employment opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired are expanding and recreational winter activities are in full swing.

We are forever grateful for the support of our community and how dedicated our employees are to this organization.

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New Hires, Promotions, and Additional Duties



Brenda Crespo-Valle
Orientation and Mobility Specialist

We would like to recognize two outstanding individuals who recently joined the CABVI family - Brenda Crespo-Valle and Marc Giordano.

Brenda, the agency's newest Orientation and Mobility Specialist, moved to the United States from Puerto Rico in 2011 after completing her bachelor's degree in special education with a concentration of visual impairments. Her friend, Luis, inspired her to pursue her educational path because of his diagnosis of retinitis pigmentosa. A spark was started and she instantly knew this was her career path.

Brenda, her husband, and children, moved to New York shortly after she began a master's degree of education with concentration in orientation and mobility from the University of Massachusetts. During this time, she continued to engage in activities to further her education and worked as a teacher of the visually impaired. She became certified as an orientation and mobility specialist in 2016 and started her career with CABVI in October 2017.

Marc, the Adaptive Sports and Recreation (ASR) Supervisor, brings over ten years of experience working with clients of all ages in the health and fitness industry. He has been involved in sports and recreation



Marc Giordano
ASR Supervisor

his whole life and brings a strong passion for helping others. Marc received his physical therapy assistant degree from Herkimer County Community College in 2011 and his degree in sports management studies with a concentration in wellness and fitness from California University of Pennsylvania in 2017.

In addition to his degrees, he is a Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) through the National Academy of Sports Medicine and a Level 1 Sports Exercise Nutrition Coach through Precision Nutrition. Marc is a native of Central New York and currently lives in Utica with his girlfriend and young daughter.

Additional new hires and promotions: Betsy Harvey-Minutti - Senior Manager of Rehabilitation Clinical Services; Stephanie Fitzgerald - Rehabilitation Department Assistant; Suvad Dizdarevic - Production Manager; Liz Hance - Payroll Specialist; Brian Martinez - Warehouse Worker II; James Martino - Expeditor / Product Management; Amos Ackerman - E-Commerce Sales and Business Development Associate; Nicole Fleming - Human Resource Assistant; Wayne Clouthier - DOT Customer Service Representative; Matthew Sarazin - Facilities Mechanic; Benjamin Gelfuso - Warehouse Worker I

Lean Six Sigma Methodology



Bob Porter, Director of ISO (pictured right), analyzes the efficiency of the garbage machine process that is managed by Sinan Salkanovic, a Machine Operator, (pictured left).

As a company grows, so does the time spent on making processes more efficient. The Lean Six Sigma (LSS) methodology encourages a collaborative team effort to improve performance and eliminate unneeded waste.

“Lean Six Sigma implementation is important to CABVI because we are trying to change the culture of the agency,” says Dennis Webster, Senior Vice President of Production and Operations. “Instead of saying, ‘this is the way we always do it,’ we want our employees to have the mindset of what ways we can improve and make this more efficient.”

When shaving seconds from a process that is completed multiple times per hour, the long-term savings could add up to hours, days, or weeks.

By empowering employees to think outside the box, and to speak up when they believe a process is not efficient, it encourages change and creates a dialogue about ways to improve daily tasks. By removing waste and reducing stages of a process, it could produce more employment opportunities, build stronger teams, and minimize costs.

Currently, CABVI has six employees that are LSS green belts and two that are black belts. The agency’s green belts are Alan Zwierecki, Adam King, Sommer Simonds, Bob Porter, Matt Convertino and Enisa Hukic. In order

to receive a green belt, an employee needs three years work experience with solving and analyzing problems, and to be involved with Six Sigma, lean, or quality improvement projects.

CABVI’s two black belts, Joe Merlan and Jessica Watson, completed a rigorous process that involved in-depth training, complex process-related calculations to understand how to identify, address, and correct a problem, and a four-hour exam with 150 questions. Once a black belt is earned, ongoing education is mandatory to maintain the certification.

“By participating in the lean initiative, CABVI is making a commitment to our customers, both internal and external, so that we can continuously make improvements and be the best that we can possibly be,” says Jessica Watson, Vice President of Services. “It’s an exciting time for us and I can’t wait to see the improvements ahead for CABVI.”

CABVI is a forward-moving agency that wants to grow and help others achieve great success. By adopting the Lean Six Sigma methodology, it has enabled the agency to become more efficient, and expand employment opportunities to their employees and others.

Anne Sullivan Macy Scholarship



Ahmat Adam Djouma - ASM Scholarship Winner

In 1866, Anne Sullivan Macy was born. Until the age of 14, she was unschooled, had a bad temper, and was nearly blind from untreated trachoma, a bacterial infection that affects the eyes. Her mother passed away when she was only eight, her father abandoned her and her brother at the age of 10, and, a few months later, her brother passed away. Even with several tragedies in her life, she found the will to push forward. In 1880, Anne's quality of life grew tremendously when she began her education at the Perkins School for the Blind.

In a short time, she learned to read, write, and communicate with a friend who was deaf and blind. After just six years of schooling, she graduated and became Helen Keller's full-time teacher.

For 13 years, Anne taught Helen how to communicate with her hands and, in 1900, Helen was accepted into

Radcliffe College to start her undergraduate education. Since Anne attended every class, she informally received a college education, while Helen received a Bachelor of Arts degree.

This was an outstanding accomplishment for both women.

By 1924, Anne and Helen started working for the American Foundation for the Blind as counselors and advocates and, in 1931, received honorary degrees from Temple University for their great achievements.

To honor Anne Sullivan Macy for her efforts, a scholarship program was started at CABVI with help from Excellus Blue Cross/Blue Shield to support a worthy student who is legally blind and accepted or enrolled in an accredited two-or-four year college or university.

This year's winner was Ahmat Adam Djouma.

Born in Sudan, Ahmat immigrated to the United States in 2009 with his family. Next to his family, Ahmet makes his education a top priority. He participated in the CNY Ride for Missing Children by riding Tandem with a sighted pilot, he attends Camp Abilities-CABVI, and attended Lemoyne College's pre-college program last summer.

Ahmet, now enrolled at Mohawk Valley Community College, is a recipient of the Mohawk Valley Frontiers, has received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Student of the Month award each month since the award has been offered, and he is a member of the Utica Young Optimist Club.

If you are receiving this publication in error, please contact CABVI's public relations department at (315) 797-2233 x1303.

Adaptive Sports and Recreation's Ski Program [by: Tyler Kallasy]

The second annual "Learn to Ski and Snowshoe" program at McCauley Mountain started on December 17 and it is off to a strong start.

Children and adults will have the opportunity to experience the rush and excitement that comes along with cruising down a freshly powdered slope in the heart of winter, as their friends or family are following close by or watching from afar. The ultimate goal is to enable these individuals to ski or snowboard as confidently and independently as possible, so that they may enjoy the sport for many years to come. A volunteer guide provides each individual with one-on-one guidance and instruction with additional facilitation provided by professional instructors.

As the snow begins to pile up in Old Forge, CABVI's ASR Department is prepping equipment, recruiting participants, and welcoming new volunteers. The program will occur two to three times per month until March, weather permitting. Through programs like blind-adaptive downhill skiing and snowshoeing, CABVI is able to provide an avenue for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This will facilitate the possibilities of a new hobby, meeting new people, or reacquainting himself or herself with a sport or skill they once loved.

It is the independence, confidence, and pure enjoyment that these individuals experience that shows us all how much can be accomplished by those who are blind or visually impaired. We are reminded each and every day that you do not need sight to live your vision.

Contact Tyler Kallasy at tylerk@cabvi.org, if you are interested in volunteering or know someone who may want to participate.



A promotional banner for "Utica College Hockey Night". The text "Utica College" is in orange and "Hockey Night" is in black. There is a logo for Utica College featuring a moose head. A large black puck is shown with the date "February 3 2018" written on it. The CABVI logo is in the bottom right corner with the tagline "live your vision".

CABVI's First Cane Quest



For years, the white cane has been a symbol of independence and ease of travel for children and adults with visual impairments. It helps people with low or no vision navigate the world more efficiently and alerts other travelers that the carrier is visually impaired.

However, on October 28, 2017, the white cane became a tool in a fun, yet challenging, competition – CABVI Cane Quest. The event was held at CABVI's Kent Street location and the children experienced several activities that enabled them to utilize their mobility skills.

Created by Braille Institute of America, Inc. as part of its expanding National Program offerings, Cane Quest is a competition that tests the ability of blind and visually impaired youngsters to independently navigate the world around them. The Quest tested participant's independent travel skills by having them follow a secret route through residential and business neighborhoods via auditory instructions.

"The purpose of this event is to shine a light on the importance of building successful white cane navigation skills in children with visual impairments," said Braille Institute Assistant Vice President of National Programs, Nancy Niebrugge.

"When these kids are out in the real world, they are going to have to be able to navigate from their home, to the bus stop, to work, or to find their way to classes on a college campus. The skills they are building in this competition will ensure that they are prepared to face the sighted world with confidence."

"Cane quest is an amazing experience," said Megan Marshall, CABVI Orientation and Mobility Instructor. "To be able to challenge one's own orientation and mobility skills, socialize with others who have vision impairments, and have fun while doing, it is a tremendous opportunity! Our theme for this year was a Spooky-Fall Carnival. With our event so close to Halloween, we encouraged kids and their families to come dressed up in a costume.

Obstacles included physical, mental, and team work challenges, which upon completion, allowed the children to earn carnival coins that were used to win exciting prizes. Mobility can be fun, and we are here to help prove that."

CABVI Cane Quest motivated students to master their mobility skills, while also educating the sighted public about the abilities of blind youth to travel independently.

COVER STORY

CABVI kicks off Camp Abilities in Motion [by: Pamela Mustee]



Kathy Beaver, Vice President of Rehabilitation, pictured right, assists a child with beep ball.

The Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) recently designed a new program that focuses on the physical literacy of blind and visually impaired children from birth to the age of ten. The first CAIM took place at the New York Institute for the Special Education located in Bronx, NY.

With funding from the Jim and Juli Boenheim Foundation, the newly developed program, Camp Abilities in Motion (CAIM), will consist of six day camps that will take place throughout New York State.

CAIM will engage children in activities that provide the physical literacy skills needed to move forward with a healthy lifestyle. Engaging in sports builds self-confidence, strengthens character, greatly increases physical mobility, lessens the chance of injury, increases self-esteem, and encourages feelings of belonging within peer groups.

Parents and families are also highly encouraged to be involved in the day's activities, and to continue the work at home.

"It's important that children, sighted, blind, or visually impaired, learn these skills at an early age," said Kathy Beaver, CABVI Vice President of Rehabilitation. "Not only does it improve their confidence so they feel comfortable participating in activities in school and at home, but it conditions them to lead a healthy full life despite their vision challenges".

It can represent a paradigm shift in both physical and mental acuity and influence an individual's overall quality of life.

"The purpose of Camp Abilities in Motion is to serve as a prerequisite to Camp Abilities, which serves children from the ages of 8 to 18," said Rudy D'Amico, CABVI President and CEO. "Since CABVI is a United States Association of Blind Athletes Sports Club and a United States Paralympic Sports Club, our goal is to improve the overall quality of life for each child we can through the adaptation of health and wellness programs."

If you would like additional information on CABVI Camp Abilities in Motion, please call Stephanie Fitzgerald, Rehabilitation Assistant at (315) 797-2233. You can also email stephanief@cabvi.org.



CABVI Awarded Assistive Technology Centers Contract from NYS Office of Children and Family Services [by: Pamela Mustee]



CABVI is proud to announce it has been awarded the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Assistive Technology Centers (ATC) contract for the next five years.

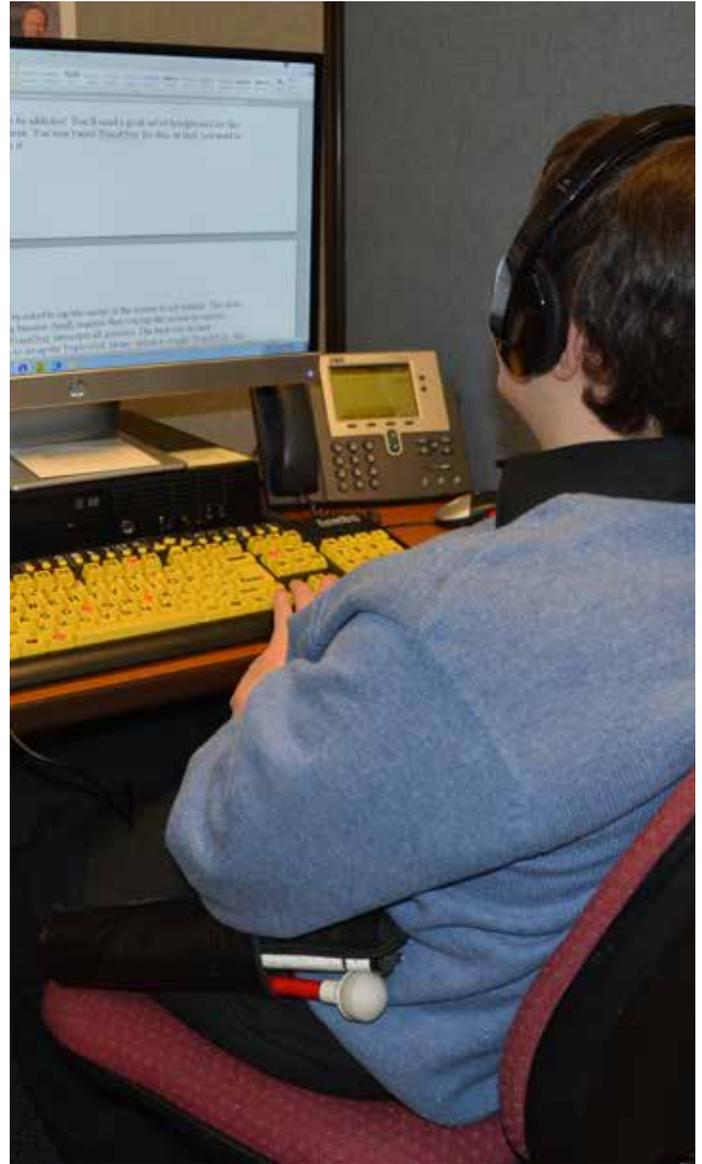
The contract expands CABVI services into additional counties in Upstate New York: Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Onondaga, Oswego, Tioga, and Tompkins. This added to CABVI's already expansive reach makes a total of sixteen counties in NYS that will receive adaptive technology services from the Utica based agency.

The contract began on January 1, 2018 at the agency's headquarters (507 Kent Street, Utica). CABVI is set to expand the contract's reach soon after to its Syracuse location and then eventually into a new downtown Utica facility.

CABVI will place eight teaching/training stations at its Kent Street location and two in its Syracuse building. Each of the centers will have a technology instructor on staff.

"CABVI believes consumers need reliable availability of services because they may not be able to attend training during the typical workday," said Rudy D'Amico, CABVI President and CEO. "CABVI's ATCs will be open to meet the needs of consumers with core service hours of operation Monday through Friday, 8am to 8pm."

The agency expects factors influencing scheduling to include transportation, consumer work or school commitments, consumer support staff schedules, and community demand.



Each referral to the center(s) will be considered on a case-by-case basis and services provided when convenient to the individual including evenings and weekends.

In Utica, because CABVI operates a contact center from 8 am to 8 pm, alternative hours for ATC operation will be commonplace. The center will be handicapped accessible and accommodate legally blind individuals. It will also take referrals from the New York State Commission for the Blind, providing services to individuals with the objective of securing employment.

Supplemental equipment will be available to consumers to create an optimum learning environment. This equipment will include a variety of monitor sizes, antiglare screens, sunshields, wrist supports, headphones, ear buds, tape recorders,

Braille writers, slate and stylus, note taking devices, desk lights, timers, an abacus, alternate keyboards and key caps.

“A Vision Specialist and Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, will be available to provide consultation on a more individual basis to meet consumer environmental needs,” explained Kathy Beaver, CABVI Vice President of Rehabilitation. “CABVI is sensitive to ensuring that we are reasonably responsive to the needs of the consumer, by creating an environment that can be easily replicated in the workplace or school.”

Highlights from the 2017 edition of Dark Dining presented by NBT Bank

[by: Pamela Mustee | photography by: Michael Marrone and Stephanie Fitzgerald]

Dark Dining, presented by NBT Bank, was held on Saturday, November 11 at the Double Tree by Hilton at The Hotel Utica. Now in the 11th year, Dark Dining has brought awareness to the community about visual impairments, experiencing an evening through senses other than sight, and helps support CABVI's mission.

This year's event featured the Focus on the Future initiative and highlighted an exciting announcement. "Our Focus on the Future Initiative will result in expanded vision care for Central New York, innovative physical and occupational therapies that are geared to the specific needs of people with vision loss, and new employment opportunities in Utica and Syracuse for people who are blind," said Rudy D'Amico, CABVI President and CEO.

"Guests experienced food, drink and conversation, as never before – without sight," explained Joannie Grande of Mac-Clark Restaurants and Dark Dining Event Chair. "Blindfolds or simulators are used that replicate different visual impairments: Glaucoma, Cataracts, Macular Degeneration, Diabetic Retinopathy or Retinitis Pigmentosa."

Dark Dining allowed individuals to expand their imagination and understanding of what individuals who are blind experience throughout their lives.

"Maybe it's yourself, a loved one, or a child of a close friend, vision loss can touch us all," began Kathy Beaver, CABVI's Vice President of Rehabilitation. "It is so important to help educate our communities on how vision loss can be managed through new and

innovative health and wellness programs we are bringing to the individuals we support." Over 250 guests attended the 2017 Dark Dining event, which helped raise more than \$150,000 for vision rehabilitation therapy programs at CABVI.





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Programs move forward with the Community Health Award from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield



Staff from left to right: Marc Giordano, Joe Scharf, Kathy Beaver, and Megan Marshall

Twelve nonprofit organizations in the Utica/Rome/North Country region have been chosen from among more than 40 applicants to receive Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's Fall 2017 Community Health Awards. Among the twelve organizations, CABVI was one of them.

Each award recipient received up to \$4,000 of the \$36,000 allocated by the company to help fund health and wellness programs in its 14-county Utica/Rome/North Country region.

Through a competitive application process, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's Community Health Awards support programs have clear goals to improve the health or health care of a specific population.

Awards focus on improving the health status of the community, reducing the incidence of specific diseases, promoting health education, and enhancing overall wellness. Decisions are made based on the scope of need, goals of the program, number of people

expected to benefit from the program, and the positive impact on the community's health status.

CABVI's application outlined our newly designed program for children who are visually impaired or blind, Camp Abilities in Motion.

The program provides physical literacy education to children, parents, and families through the introduction and development of both fine and gross motor skills while moving towards adaptive sports skill acquisition. Children with visual impairments between the ages of birth to age 10 are provided with individual instructional programs, day camps, and an intensive educational family weekend during the summer.

In addition to the day camps, a comprehensive parent manual was recently completed to provide parents and family members with step-by-step instructions of how to teach their children various physical literacy movements at home.

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CABVI *tributes* THROUGH 11/31/2017

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JOHN CALABRESE

Board member profile [by: Michael Marrone]

John Calabrese, a Utica native, has been intimately involved with CABVI since 2013. John currently serves on the CNY Vision Foundation Board and is involved with several of the agency's committees.

In 1990, he received his bachelor's degree in business and finance from Utica College. John's education paved the way for his future and enabled him to land a job with Pfizer, Inc. in New York City. During his tenure at Pfizer, Inc., he was able to work in over 50 countries and manage their global commercial operations for the Asia Pacific and emerging markets regions.

A mixture of his education and work experience brought him to where he is today. In 2012, John decided to move back to Utica and start Express Employment Professionals. His company is a full-service staffing firm that provides recruiting, placement, and human resource services to over 100 businesses throughout the Central New York region.



John Calabrese

From John's interactions with local businesses, he was approached by then board president, Mindy Barstein, to join the board. "CABVI is one of the organizations in our area that I am most passionate about and proud of," says John. "I am honored to be part of the CABVI organization. It is a privilege to volunteer on the board and be a part of such a meaningful mission."

John is especially partial to CABVI's Camp Abilities program. From his visit to the program in 2014, he stated it "solidified his passion and commitment

to CABVI." Both of John's sons have been camp counselors for the children and they deeply believe in the agency's mission and culture.

Outside of his busy life, John and his family love to be on the water in their boat. A dream of his son John Jr. and himself is to travel the full Intercostal Loop, which covers hundreds of miles of waterway.

We wish you and your son the best of luck with fulfilling your dream!