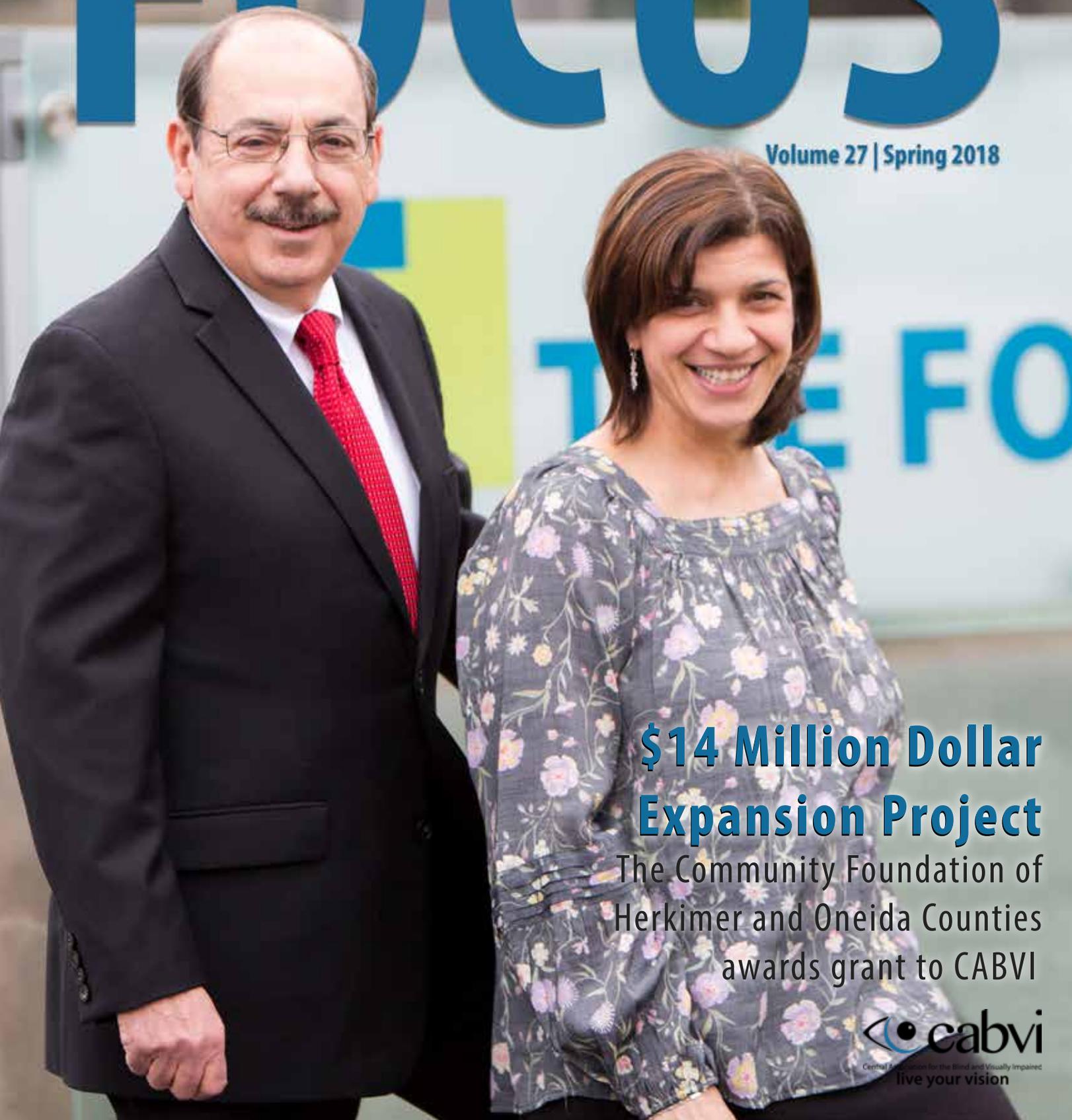


A Publication of the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

FOCUS

Volume 27 | Spring 2018



\$14 Million Dollar Expansion Project

The Community Foundation of
Herkimer and Oneida Counties
awards grant to CABVI

FOCUS

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Rudy D'Amico
President and CEO

Every day, our goal is to expand employment opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, and to provide the best rehabilitation services possible. In this edition of FOCUS, you will read about our winter Camp Abilities program, expanded employment in Syracuse, and our multi-million dollar initiative to build a state-of-the-art facility for rehabilitation services.

I hope you enjoy this edition of FOCUS and I truly appreciate your support for the agency.

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2018 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS



Adam King
Machine Operator
2018 Peter J. Samuelson Direct
Labor Employee of the Year

Adam joined the CABVI team in 2008 as a machine operator. For the past ten years, he has worked with CABVI's rubber band machine and the green chemical filling machines. Adam sets them up, manages their output levels, and makes sure product quality is meeting the needs of CABVI's customers. When asked how he felt about receiving the award, Adam said, "Thank you so much, I cannot believe it. This proves that you cannot let your disabilities hold you back."



Dan Phillips
Social Worker
2018 Milton J. Samuelson Career
Achievement Employee of the Year

Since 2015, Dan has been employed by CABVI as a social worker. He assists individuals ranging from childhood to the elderly with adjustment to vision loss, provides individual and group counseling sessions, and facilitates social groups including - CABVI Insight, CABVI Veterans' Group, and CABVI Adjustment to Vision Loss Support Group. Dan is very active in CABVI's Adaptive Sports and Recreation program, and is a tandem cyclist for the Ride for Missing Children. When asked about his award, Dan said, "It is an honor to be recognized as CABVI's nominee for the NIB Milton J. Samuelson Career Achievement Award and I look forward to representing them at the 2018 NIB/NAEPB National Symposium."



Mandy Zehr
Production Worker
2018 NYSPSP Employee of the Year

Mandy has worked at CABVI for five years as a production worker in the Pre-Vocational Training Center. Her job consists of various tasks including, but not limited to, packing pencils, assembling pens, assembling flashlights, and bundling washcloths. Mandy also participates in volunteer work for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, draws placemats for the Utica Rescue Mission, and creates artwork for CABVI. When asked how she felt about receiving the award, Mandy said "I feel good... shocked and proud".

Aside from CABVI's award, Mandy also won the 2018 NYSPSP Employee of the Year for New York State.



VISUAL CHALLENGES DO NOT STOP GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Meet Mike Blake.

In 1998, he was in his second semester of college studying graphic arts and communications, and working part-time in Central Industries packing gloves. Twenty years later, he is collaborating with the marketing team and designing the packaging that the gloves go into.

While attending an arts program at BOCES in his teenage years, Mike was introduced to the graphic arts by his teacher, Patricia. This was the first time he was encouraged to pursue a visual trade, despite his visual challenge.

“From day one, the arts resonated with me,” said Mike. “Having a hand in a design from implementation to execution makes you feel a large sense of accomplishment.”

In Mike’s time at CABVI, he started on the glove line, packaging gloves, working on file folder machines, packaging pencils, working in our warehousing and shipping department, and worked his way up to his current position, Product Management and Expeditor.

A few months ago, an initiative was set in place to redesign the packaging that CABVI’s gloves go into. Mike collaborated with the marketing team to develop a design that expressed the social aspect of working at the agency.



Mike Blake works on CABVI’s glove packaging design.

“There is a sense of foundation and support here,” Mike explains. “Many employees become friends here, meet their spouses here, and build lifelong relationships that may not have happened if it wasn’t for CABVI.”

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Leadership Mohawk Valley awards Dennis Webster

When we hear follow the leader, we think of our childhood. You lined up behind the leader, mimicked their actions and, if you made a mistake, you were out of the game.

In our adulthood, however, follow the leader means so much more.

Every year, Leadership Mohawk Valley (LMV) honors several individuals for their impeccable leadership in the workplace and the community. Honorees need to be LMV graduates and have a positive presence in the community.

Dennis Webster, Senior Vice President of Product and Operations at CABVI, was in the selected group of eight honorees for this year's LMV Follow the Leader award. Day in and day out, Dennis works hard to ensure the agency is running efficiently and that employees know they can talk to him about anything.

"Leadership Mohawk Valley deepened my love, admiration, and appreciation for the people, places, food, scenery, architecture, culture, and diversity of our wonderful area," said Dennis. "LMV made me proud to live, work, and play in our beautiful Mohawk Valley."

Dennis serves the community as a member of the Whitestown – New York Mills Lions Club, Engine 11, and Utica Council for the Blind. He is also a recipient of the Utica Rotary "Pride in Workmanship Award."

In addition to the aforementioned accomplishments, Dennis was named president of the board for Catholic Charities in 2018. He has been a board member for Catholic Charities Oneida/Madison County since 2015 and strives to be a positive influencer for the people around him.

Dennis graduated from LMV in 2005.



AN OKLAHOMAN COMES TO CABVI



BY: DONNA SHELTON

Donna Shelton, right, assists Sylvia Santos, left, in an English to Spanish translation.

My name is Donna Shelton, and I would like to share my volunteer story with you.

My husband Rick and I came to Central New York from Oklahoma, where both of us had worked at Northeastern State University since 2004. Rick joined SUNY Polytechnic as the Director of Distance Learning in April 2016 and, a year later, I took early retirement with the rank of emeritus professor of Spanish to join him.

We were happy to start a new chapter of our lives in the Adirondacks.

Although many people wonder what they are going to do when they retire, I had three goals: to work part-time in teaching or in textbook publishing, to take up painting, and to get to know my new community by contributing to it through volunteering.

My previous volunteer experiences were quite different from what I do at CABVI. For several years, I served on the board of the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teachers' Association as the liaison for university language programs. Through that organization, I conducted professional development workshops on technology

used in the classroom. I also interpreted at parent/teacher conferences and gave presentations on cultural topics to Spanish classes at local high schools.

When I arrived in the Utica area, I wondered where to start looking for opportunities to volunteer. My good fortune was meeting Mary Fletcher, CABVI's Development and Public Relations Coordinator, who knew Rick through Leadership Mohawk Valley. Mary told me about CABVI's work and suggested that I contact Paula Flisnik.

Since the organization's mission is to assist those who are blind and visually impaired to reach their highest levels of independence, volunteering at CABVI seemed like a natural fit for me as I have a visual impairment myself. When I toured the facility with Paula Flisnik in January of this year, it was immediately clear to me what a welcoming and accepting agency CABVI is.

In early February, I began working with Paula two days a week on a variety of tasks including database entry and editing. I have also enjoyed interacting with Spanish CABVI employees from Venezuela, Panama, and Peru. I look forward to continued volunteer service with CABVI.

CABVI MAKES A PERMANENT HOME IN SYRACUSE

BY: JESSICA WATSON



At the end of last year, CABVI opened the doors to our new facility, located in Dewitt, NY.

For the past three years, CABVI has been leasing a location in Liverpool, NY to test the market and to gauge the employment candidate pool. With high hopes, the area has offered us a flourishing of candidates and opportunities. Due to the positive reception and immediate growth, CABVI decided to make the expansion permanent by purchasing their own facility.

The 66,000 square foot facility houses the branch of Syracuse Industries manufacturing, warehousing, and business services. CABVI currently employs a total of 24 individuals within this facility, and they are performing various assembly and packaging projects on examination gloves, rubber bands, and more.

Now that they are fully functioning, their plan is to expand into additional products lines, such as paper wipes and incontinence products. In addition to products, they perform business services within the facility. CABVI currently operates a small contact center that manages inbound and outbound calls for a commercial company, as well as completing kitting projects for local companies.

With just under five months in the new building, CABVI has expanded operations, hired additional workers, and made renovations that improved the work conditions for their employees.



GROWTH AND PARTNERSHIP

CABVI and the Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties announce a partnership on a new building project

COVER STORY | BY: STEVE GANNON | COVER PHOTO: RUDY D'AMICO, PRESIDENT/CEO OF CABVI, ALICIA DICKS, PRESIDENT/CEO OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF HERKIMER & ONEIDA COUNTIES

The Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) has commenced a \$14 million initiative that agency officials say addresses the health and wellbeing of people with vision loss for decades to come.

The effort is comprised of three components to expand employment opportunities for people who are blind, according to the President and CEO of CABVI, Rudy D'Amico. "The agency acquired property adjacent to our headquarters at 507 Kent Street in Utica. We will begin construction on a \$7 million, 23,000 square foot vision rehabilitation and wellness center in a few months. We have purchased, and now occupy, a 66,000 square foot building in Syracuse – a permanent home for CABVI Syracuse Industries. The third component of the initiative is still in the works."

CABVI has secured funding assistance from a number of public and private partners, including The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

"This project helps fulfill important priorities for The Community Foundation, including advancing local

economic development, neighborhood revitalization and creation of new employment opportunities," said President and CEO of The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Alicia Dicks. "We're committed to social change and CABVI is helping to lead this change right here in our community."

CABVI is developing innovative new approaches to vision rehabilitation therapy, which have the potential for national influence. Its services impact everyone from infants to seniors and, in the end, the agency will create 20 new jobs in Utica, many of which will be occupied by people who are blind.

The Community Foundation awarded a \$200,000 grant to CABVI this year, and \$100,000 in 2017.

CABVI has received additional commitments from Empire State Development, and the New York State Non-Profit Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program, for both the Utica and Syracuse components of the project.



VISION AND WE

Residential Wing

Designed as temporary housing for individuals to fully immerse themselves in programs and treatments

Therapy Pool

Plays a vital role in developing coordination, range of motion, and increasing strength

Medical Services Suites

A full team of physical and occupational therapists, nutrition experts, and adaptive sports and recreation will be on site

Research Laboratory

Will help with testing new concepts, gathering data, conducting studies, and implementing the findings

Teaching Kitchen

Teach life skills to youth, teens, adults, and seniors

Fitness Center

Encourages consumers and employees to lead a healthy lifestyle, which can combat vision loss in certain cases

Multi-purpose Room

Space needed for trainings, support groups, and community education programs

Low Vision Suites

Five exams rooms will allow for expanded services and the ability to help more consumers with vision services



Adaptive Technology Center

The newest technology solutions to address the needs of individuals in school and work atmospheres

Optician Office

On site doctors can provide instant care to employees and consumers

Vision Wellness Services

Segmented rooms allow for specialized treatment for various types of visual impairments



WELLNESS CENTER



CAMP ABILITIES WINTER

Four days of
building new
friendships and
experiences

Imagine being a child who is blind and visually impaired, walking across a frozen lake for the first time, and spending four days with people you do not know. Scary, right?

For the 26 campers that attended this year's winter Camp Abilities program, they welcomed the experience with open arms. On February 16, as parents and children entered through the doors of CABVI's Kent Street location, the energy that reverberated through the building was extraordinary.

Everyone knew it was "Camp day."

"Winter Camp Abilities was developed to teach kids about a different kind of adversity," said Kathy Beaver, Vice President of Rehabilitation. "Summer is warm and inviting, but winter is cold, slippery, and is not pleasant at times. Different challenges arise and the kids learn how to overcome them."

A few of the fun activities the kids experienced were cross-country skiing, learning how to use iPads, snowshoeing, snowmobile rides, and watching nature experts build an igloo.

Some of the kids have never skied, snowshoed, or taken a ride on a snowmobile. Therefore, being in the woods for four days and doing these activities seemed hard for them. A few cried, a few fell, but they all pushed through it and succeeded.

CABVI'S UTICA COLLEGE HOCKEY NIGHT



(Top) Bob Porter, CABVI's Director of Public Policy, sings the national anthem.

(Bottom) Rudy D'Amico, CABVI's President and CEO, congratulates Bob Porter on his performance.



The newly renovated Adirondack Bank Center was filled with energy on Saturday, February 3, and the men's Utica College hockey team felt it. Thunder sticks were roaring, the fans were cheering, and CABVI employees were sharing laughs with each other.

It was CABVI's second year sponsoring Utica College's Hockey Night.

For this year's event, we asked the Director of Public Policy, Bob Porter, if he wanted to sing the national anthem. Within the agency, Bob is widely known for his singing abilities. He normally performs with the Knights and Delights of Mohawk and The Larks, but this was his first time as a solo artist.

"It was pretty scary realizing I would be singing solo in front of a bunch of people," said Bob. "Even though I am visually impaired, I could imagine a lot of people in their seats and, sure enough, the cheers at the end were gratifying proof of it."

As the flag flew, Bob sang our national anthem with confidence. He even got a little help from the crowd during "O say can UC."

He received praise from the crowd and a warm, congratulatory hug from CABVI's President and CEO, Rudy D'Amico.

When asked if he would do it again, Bob said "Absolutely! I consider singing the national anthem the most patriotic gift that I could offer my community and country."

Special thanks to CABVI's governing board Vice Chairman, Jim Turnbull, Turnbull Insurance Agency, for kicking off the game with the puck drop, and to UC's Hockey Coach Gary Heenan, CABVI staff, volunteers, and all fans who made this such a memorable night.

Utica College's men's hockey team won their game against Chatham that night, 8-0.

2018 Vehicles for Vision Invitational Car Show

\$50
per ticket

Hart's Hill Inn

Car Show 3-5pm

Dinner 5:30-7:30pm

JUNE 10

VISION RIDE 2018

Start at CABVI Headquarters at 2pm

End at Hart's Hill Inn at 3:30pm

\$30
\$35 with
passenger

CONTACT MARY FLETCHER FOR INFORMATION ON BOTH EVENTS: (315) 797-2233 | maryf@cabvi.org

CABVI *tributes* THROUGH 3/31/2018

In Memory

Anthony Filippelli

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Arthur Phillips

Nancy Phillips

Barbara Simmons

Elizabeth Simmons

Betty Bennett

Bonnie Baker

Betty Tayntor

Arthur and Linda Tayntor

Beverly Clarey

Andrew and Janet Clarey

Bill Ward

Lawrence and Ethyl Brown

Bob Knapp

Lawrence and Ethyl Brown

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Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Don Waller

Lawrence and Ethyl Brown

Dr. James Putnam

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

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Rudy and Anne D'Amico
Leta Laukaitis and Joseph Taurisani

Elizabeth Eschborn

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Elizabeth Kirwin

Barbara Kirwin

Ethel Planavsky

Diane Olin-White

Franics Garcea

Carrie Bonanza
Linda Garcea
Marguerite Kershaw
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Frank Traglia

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Mr. and Mrs. Michael DiMeo
Christopher and Samantha Roy

Geraldine Campola

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Helen Faraci

Sandra Allen

Isabel Mannino

Ashley Lomery

Jacqueline Fletcher

Mary Fletcher

Janice Gossin

Joni Dominy

John Gorea

Rudy and Anne D'Amico
Matthew and Julie Sisti

John Granato

Joni Dominy

John Graziano

Rudy and Anne D'Amico
Leta Laukaitis and Joseph Taurisani

John Phelps

Thomas Phelps

John Schief

Rudy and Anne D'Amico
Mitch and Margaret Hansen

Joseph Hobika Sr.

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Joyce Zipprich

Rudy and Anne D'Amico
Donald and Pat LoGuidice

Julius Perillo

Rebecca E. Schaafsma

Lena Grasso

Kevin Blosser
Diane Cecilia
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Marion Platt

Randall and Tanya Pifer

Marjory Fredlund

Laura O'Donnell

Mary Jane Salatino

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Leta Laukaitis and Joseph Taurisani
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Lawrence and Ethyl Brown
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Gilbert and Marguerite Scharf
John and Amy Scharf
Linda Scharf

Oliver Muldoon

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Robert Sukosh Fearon III

Rudy and Anne D'Amico
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Lutheran Care
William and Beverly Rudge III
Judith Schnier

The Martinez Family

Brian Martinez

Theodore Max

Melva Max

Thomas Yacovella

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

William and Jean LaClaire

Michael LaClaire

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Alan and Connie Leist Jr.

Charles Gaetano

Melva Max

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Michelle Broadbent

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Joan Davis

Monica Davis

Things sure are changing at the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. For nearly 34 years, I've been involved with this fine cause as the agency's certified low vision doctor. Together, with the aid of our wonderful, caring staff, we've made a difference in the lives of people of all ages with vision loss, throughout Central New York and beyond.

About a year ago, I decided the time had come to retire from my practice. I had hobbies to pursue and my wife and I like to travel. As an optometrist, I've also been involved with the Utica Lions Club. And now that I am retired I am REALLY involved with the Utica Lions Club - in particular, with a Lions project related to CABVI's new vision and wellness center. Construction on the center will begin in the next few weeks. This will be a multidisciplinary facility second to none.

The Lions Clubs International Foundation designated a challenge grant to CABVI for state-of-the-art low vision evaluation equipment. We must match the \$100,000 Lions award in order for CABVI to receive the money. If we do not reach the match by around July 1, then the Lions Foundation will not approve the grant disbursement.

We're making progress though. We're about half-way there but we need your help. Please make a tax-deductible contribution to this appeal so we can get this grant! A great aspect of this challenge is that you can double your donation - because your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Lions.

To make it happen though we need to reach that \$100,000 goal and we need you to make your contribution today. Please help again, so together we can make miracles happen!



Allen F. Zuck, OD

Allen F. Zuck, O.D., Honorary Chairman

P.S. I am grateful for your last gift of \$__. Your kind support has made an important difference to your neighbors of all ages coping with blindness, from children to working adults to the elderly.

507 Kent Street Utica, NY 13501

Electronic Service Requested

JOHN TRACY

Board member profile

John Tracy is the newest member to CABVI's governing board. Even though he is new to the board, he is not new to CABVI.

While working as the director of the Anne Sullivan Macy for the Residence of Deaf/Blind at the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths & Adults, John met his wife, who was completely blind.

When John's family moved to Utica in 1995, his wife found employment at CABVI's Central Industries on the glove line. Eventually, she made her way to the switchboard so she could interact with the public. His wife was a very educated woman, but she preferred living a simple life and interacting with people every day.

"After work every day, her and I would talk about the agency and what great progress it was making," said John. "I would encourage her to pursue a job in social work, but she preferred to have fun and be around people all day."



John Tracy

Recently, John became visually impaired. When interviewed, John said it was a "huge adjustment," but it does not stop him from doing what he loves. His undergraduate degree is in painting and his graduate degree is in sculpture. When he started losing his sight, he was determined not to lose his passion for the arts.

"For several years, I owned a fine arts gallery in New York City," said John. "I eventually sold my share to my partner, but my love for the arts is still alive and well. For instance, I recently attended

pottery class at 4 Elements Studio and I loved feeling the clay form in my hands again."

As a lifelong learner, John recently started playing the acoustic bass to expand his passion for arts. When he is not spending time with the arts, John attends various churches and participates in bible studies.