

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

FOCUS

Volume 28 | Summer 2018



THE CHALLENGE
to raise \$500,000
in partnership with 


Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
live your vision

FOCUS

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Rudy D'Amico
President and CEO

Summer brought us to new heights. We celebrated our tenth Camp Abilities, we broke ground on our new Vision and Wellness Center, and we secured a grant from The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties to support the new center.

The gracious support of the community has enabled us to employ more people, and extend our services to new areas.

As always, thank you for all you do for this agency.

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TURNING YOUR DREAMS INTO REALITY



Jim Martino tells his story about his life with a visual impairment and how he overcame it

Some people consider their visual impairment a disability. Jim is not one of those people.

Jim was born without both irises, which regulates the amount of light that comes in. Being visually impaired is all he knows, but he sees that as a challenge, and not as something that would defeat his way of life.

From an early age, Jim was taught how to do things as a fully sighted person. He did chores around the farm, rode his bike, and aspired to be a firefighter. As he grew older, though, becoming a firefighter was more than an aspiration; it was his top priority.

When he applied to be a volunteer firefighter, people doubted his ability to do the job because of his vision. When one of the board members said, "In an actual fire, even sighted fireman have trouble because the smoke is so thick and they have difficulty seeing," Jim replied, "I guess that's where I have an advantage because I'm used to doing things by feel." Everyone looked at each other and approved Jim on the spot to be a volunteer fire fighter.

His dream came true.

For the next 30 years of his life, he volunteered as a firefighter and worked part-time at various companies in the Utica/Rome area. However, working part-time was not something Jim enjoyed. There were no benefits, paid time-off, or options for retirement.

One day, Jim received a phone call from Katlyn Baughman, CABVI employment and outreach specialist, and was informed of a new, full-time position that opened up at CABVI. He immediately went online and applied. Within a few weeks, Jim left his two part-time jobs, and became a full-time employee.

For the next three years, he moved his way up to his current position as a product expeditor. Jim looks for bid opportunities, conducts cost analyses, measures gross profit, and does time studies to make sure the agency is meeting the needs of their customers.

Despite his visual impairment, he fought for his success and never once doubted himself. Jim graduated from CABVI's Quest program in 2017, is a Leadership Mohawk Valley alumni, and is currently enrolled in a National Industries for the Blind 15-month business management training class that is through George Mason University.

Volunteer of the Year Awards



Every year, Paula Flisnik, director of community relations and chair of the volunteer committee, gives thanks to all of CABVI's loyal volunteers by hosting a luncheon that brings them all together. During the luncheon, two volunteers are selected for the Roger Sinnott Volunteer Leadership Award, and the Elizabeth C. Crandall Volunteer of the Year Award.

With over 400 volunteers, and 21,000+ logged hours, it is hard picking which volunteers will be presented with the awards. The committee chose Gary Scalzo, president of Scalzo, Zogby & Wittig and chair of CABVI's CNY Vision Foundation Board of Directors, as the recipient of the Roger Sinnott Volunteer Leadership Award, presented by Barry Sinnott.



Gary is well-known throughout the agency. When he participates in events, he is a true advocator for CABVI's mission and is always willing to lend a hand. Gary's leadership and dedication is what solidified the committee's decision to present this honorable award to him.

For the Elizabeth C. Crandall Volunteer of the Year Award, the committee chose two people this year. Typically, one person is chosen, but Janet Burt and Eilene "Pie" Edwards' commitment to the agency is admirable.



Both ladies are a part of the Mohawk Valley Brailist team that assists in putting braille on text books, church bulletins, restaurant menus, and other various materials. Without their support and willingness to volunteer their time, individuals who are blind would not be able to read printed materials. They are truly a blessing to CABVI.



LUCA AWARD

Brian Daniels awarded for enhancing employment opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired

At CABVI's Annual Meeting in May, Brian Daniels, associate commissioner of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commission for the Blind, was presented the Luca Award.

The Luca Award is presented to an individual or organization that has made a significant impact on employment and upward mobility opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired.

The award honors former CABVI vice president of manufacturing, Luca Esposito. Luca played an integral part in developing product lines that employ most of CABVI's blind and visually impaired workers. Employment growth under Luca's leadership went from a small sewing group of several people in the basement workshop at Court Street to well over 100 at the Kent Street manufacturing facility.

"Receiving this award in Luca's name, and having the impact to influence me from the first time I visited

CABVI, means so much to me," said Brian Daniels. "He taught me that whenever you speak of jobs and blindness, you speak of them together."

Brian has been instrumental in providing employment opportunities throughout the state to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. He oversees all aspects of operations for the New York State Commission for the Blind, and supervises 140 employees in multiple locations throughout the state of New York. Brian is also ex-officio director of the Empire State Employment Resources for the Blind and a member of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind.

"Whenever you speak of jobs and blindness, you speak of them together."

Pictured from left to right: Carrie Laney, Brian Daniels, and Rudy D'Amico



cabvi Quest Graduation

Imagine a room full of your colleagues, sitting, intently watching, and you are behind a podium giving a presentation about how influential the past ten months were. For nine “Questers,” that was the exact scenario.

As each graduate took the stage, their words prompted standing ovations and a symphony of clapping. The Quest program made an impact that will last a lifetime.

“You cannot sit around and wait for others to live your life for you while you sit in the shadows,” said Jason Belisle. “You are the only one who can create the life you want.”

For many of the Questers, it prompted a change in their personal life, and their professional life. The ten-month program provided the resources the participants



needed for upward mobility within a company. It taught participants proper work attire, professional communication, how to develop a professional resume, and other various professional developmental tools.

“I’ve noticed a big change in our Quest graduates,” said Laura Yakey, COMS/VRT, CABVI employment specialist and Quest mentor. “They are more confident, dress more professionally, and are more inclined to initiate conversation with new people. It makes me very proud knowing we had the opportunity to make a positive change in their lives.”

This program would not be possible without the advisement of Roe Polczynski, president of RD Advisory Group, LLC, and the help of CABVI’s Quest leaders Jill Koch, CFO, Julie Byrne, vice president of human resources, and Laura Yakey, COMS/VRT, employment specialist.

Pictured above are the nine Quest graduates. Bottom row from left to right – Jing Lin, Kirsten Parker, Sharice Moon, Lisa Simons, Tonya Corujo. Top row from left to right – Tara Capponi, Eric Grippe, Jason Belisle, Al Boulерice



CABVI BREAKS GROUND ON VISION AND WELLNESS CENTER

Construction starts on CABVI's new building project on Elizabeth Street in Utica

May 17 marked a milestone for CABVI. Nearly 20 shovels went down in the dirt, and came up to start the nearly \$7 million dollar project that will allow the rehabilitation department to expand their footprint.

Currently, CABVI's rehabilitation department operates out of a 4,000 square foot area located at their

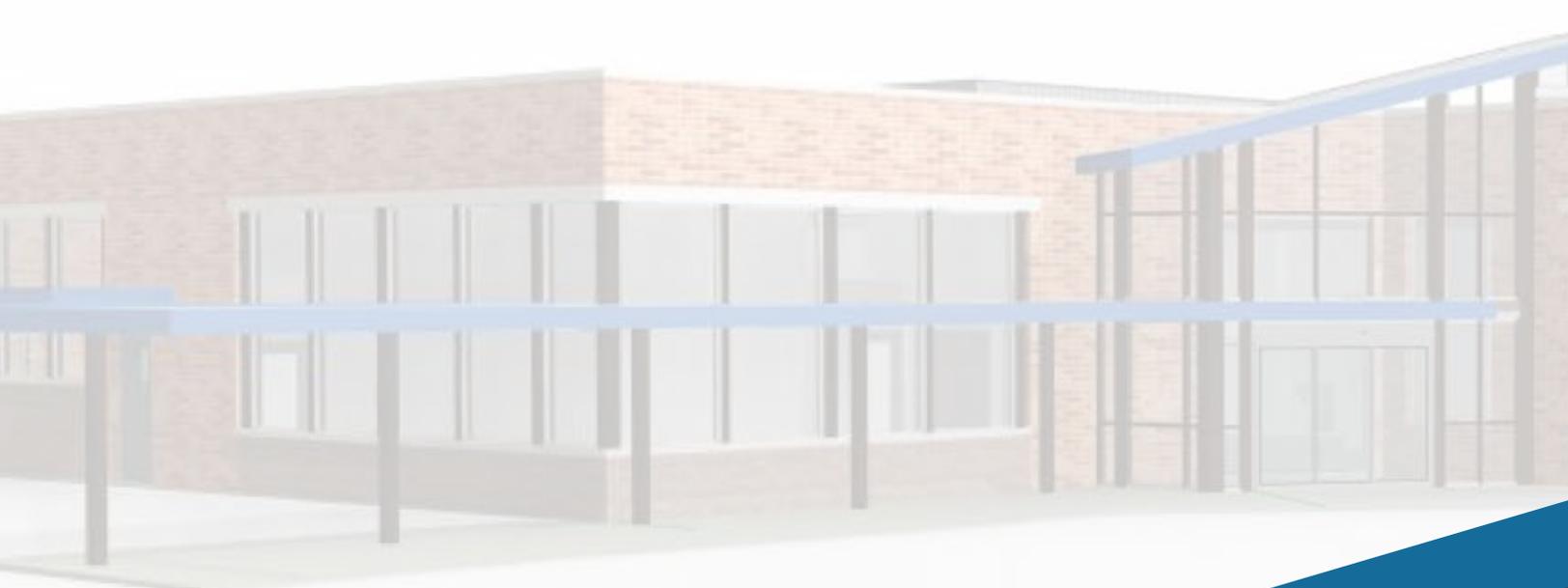
headquarters, 507 Kent Street in Utica. The new building will provide a 23,000 square foot area that will consist of a research laboratory, fitness center, therapy pool, low vision suites, and much more.

"Our new facility will allow us to expand our rehabilitation department and treat more individuals who live with vision loss," said Rudy D'Amico, president and CEO of CABVI. "In 2017, we served over 1,600 consumers within our eight county region. Once our new building is complete, it will provide the space we need to dramatically increase the number of individuals we serve."

It is anticipated that, over the next ten years, the number of individuals with vision loss will exceed 2,700. These consumers will need inventive new programs that will ease the stress of vision loss on their everyday lives.

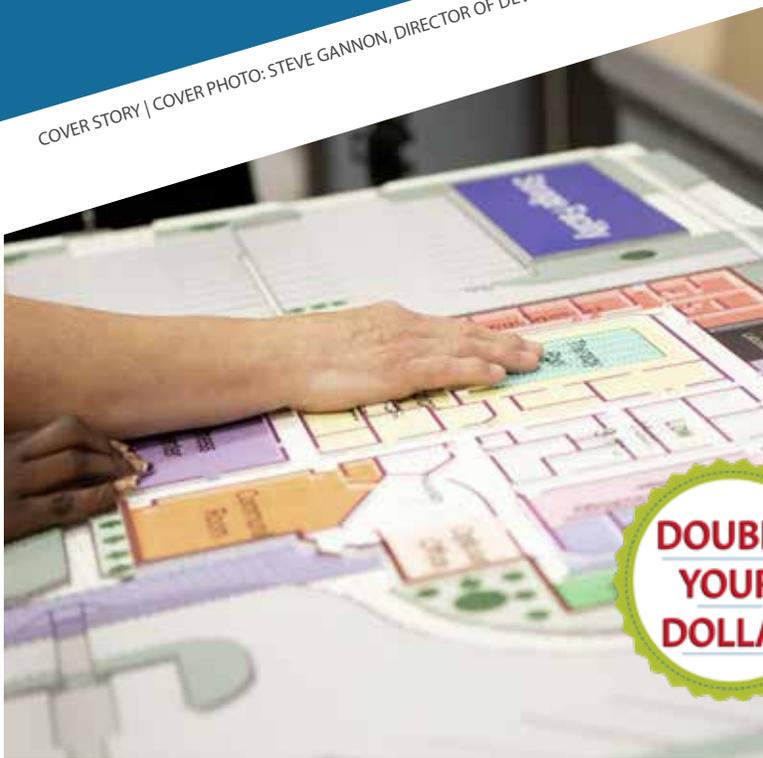
CABVI's innovative approach to vision rehabilitation therapy will impact everyone from infants to seniors, and have the potential for national influence. In addition to treating more people with vision loss, this project will create over 20 new jobs, many of which will be filled by individuals who are blind and visually impaired.





THE CHALLENGE

COVER STORY | COVER PHOTO: STEVE GANNON, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, EXPLAINS TO WAYNE LEGAULT, PRODUCTION WORKER, THE TACTILE MAP OF THE VISION AND WELLNESS CENTER



In the last edition of FOCUS, CABVI announced the largest initiative in their 89 year history. Complete with three major components:

- Construction of a 23,000-square-foot vision and wellness center in Utica
- Renovations to CABVI's headquarters in Utica
- Purchase and renovation of a building for CABVI Syracuse Industries in DeWitt

To assist with this monumental initiative, The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties awarded CABVI with the largest challenge grant in their organization's history.

The Trustees at The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties were inspired to award a \$500,000 grant with the promise to match every dollar CABVI raises, adding up to a total of one million dollars.



E to raise \$500,000

“Central New York is an extremely generous community,” said Rudy D’Amico, president and CEO of CABVI. “Every dollar our community gives will go twice as far, thanks to the challenge. This is a wonderful opportunity to make a huge impact in the lives of people with vision loss.”

The new center has the potential for national influence, and to pave the way for advances in vision rehabilitation therapy. Additionally, it will create 20 new jobs for the area, many of which will be occupied by individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

“This project helps fulfill important priorities for The Community Foundation, including advancing local economic development, neighborhood revitalization and creation of new employment opportunities,” said Alicia Dicks, president and CEO of The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties. “Through the challenge grant, we hope to inspire community members to support the mission and vision of this great organization and the work they are doing to transform our community.”

To donate, please visit www.cabvi.org/the-challenge, or utilize the enclosed envelope.





FUN in the SUN

Every summer, and every winter, CABVI hosts a Camp Abilities for kids with visual impairments. As time moves on, each camp becomes better and better. The activities are more refined, the kids are more engaged, and the quality of their lives increases. On July 28, CABVI celebrated their tenth Camp Abilities program by welcoming 28 campers to Camp Nazareth.

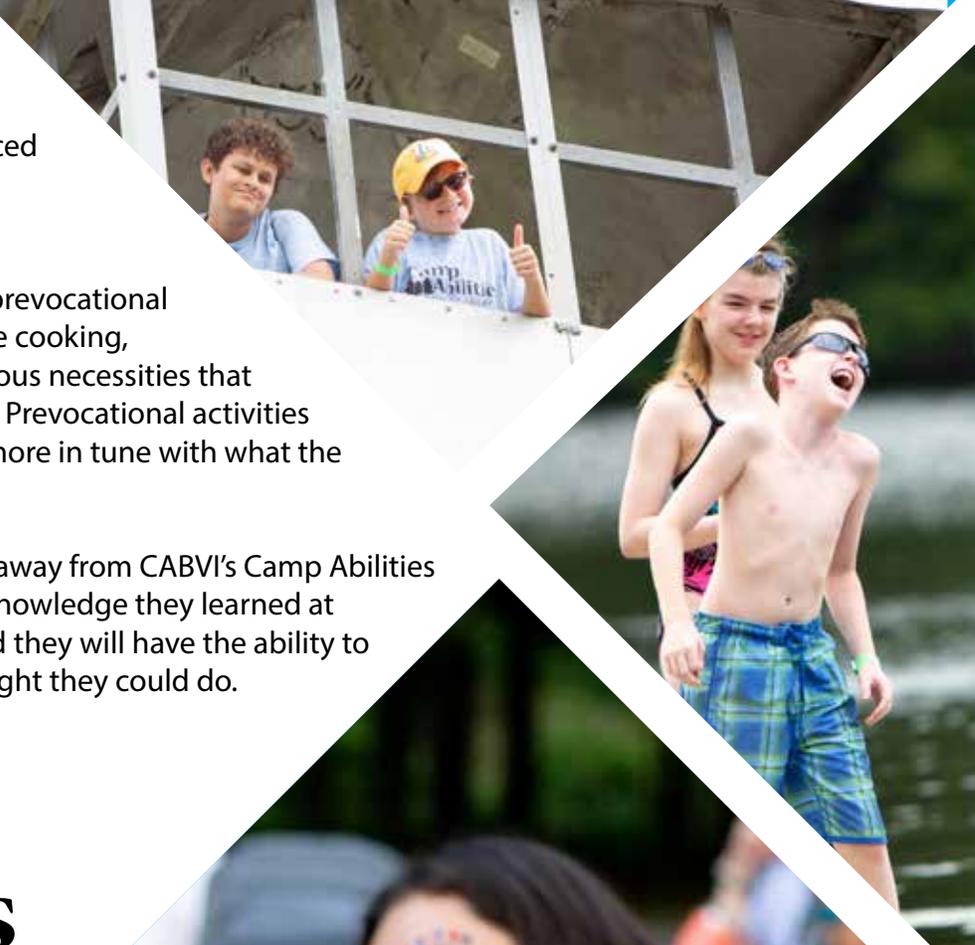
From sunrise to sunset, the kids experienced what it was like to go fishing, paddle a kayak, how to orientate themselves in a maze, and much more. Camp teaches the kids how to adapt to their surroundings, to be aware of the sounds they hear, and, if they use a cane, to track the ground for objects.

Each camper has a counselor they spend the week with. The one-on-one time helps with developing interpersonal skills, and with developing relationship skills with fellow peers.

Since the first CABVI Camp Abilities, the children that turned into teenagers experienced dramatic shifts in their willingness to be adventurous and outgoing.

At a certain age, campers transition into the prevocational part of Camp Abilities. They learn life skills like cooking, cleaning, how to apply for job, and other various necessities that people need to know to live a productive life. Prevocational activities provide insight for the kids so they become more in tune with what the real world looks like after school.

Whether a child is eight, or 15, they will walk away from CABVI's Camp Abilities program with the anticipation to utilize the knowledge they learned at camp. Their life skills will be more refined, and they will have the ability to participate in more activities they never thought they could do.





CABVI Partners with USA Blind Hockey

USA Blind Hockey and the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) teamed up to bring the country's first US blind hockey team to the area.

The para-sport of Blind Hockey is played by athletes whose level of vision ranges from legally blind – approximately 10% vision – to completely blind. The biggest adaptation is the puck, which is larger than a traditional puck and makes noise.

In April, the 14th Annual Toyota-USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival took place in Chicago. The event welcomed players that were deaf/hard of hearing, warrior/standing amputee, and blind/visually impaired. In attendance was CABVI's vice president of rehabilitation, Kathy Beaver.

"Since we work closely with Utica College and their hockey team, I was curious to see how individuals who are blind and visually impaired played hockey," said Kathy. "When I attended the festival, I was very intrigued by how well the athletes played the game."

After returning to Utica, Kathy and her team worked diligently on a proposal to bring the first USA Blind Hockey training camp to Central New York. After a month of preparation, the proposal was submitted to the board of directors for USA Hockey.

"We knew we needed a training camp that encompassed every aspect about being a blind and visually impaired athlete," said Michael Svac, USA Blind Hockey general manager and head coach.

"CABVI offered the rehabilitation side of things that we were missing with other organizations."

Customer of the Year Award

Creating employment opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired in New York State



“We wanted to recognize our strong partnership and to show them how grateful we are to have them as a loyal customer. Without them, expanding employment would not be possible,” said Katie Humphreys, vice president of products and distribution.

Currently, over 450 blind employees are working under the Preferred Source Program in New York State. NYC Health and Hospitals has a lot to do with why those individuals are employed. Many products the employees provide are used by someone in their hospitals. Their partnership continues to evolve, and CABVI is thankful to have an organization that supports their mission to employ more people with vision loss.



For over a decade, NYC Health and Hospitals has enabled CABVI to grow as an organization and employ individuals that are blind and visually impaired. In fact, they are currently the largest New York State Preferred Source customer for the agency.

NYC Health and Hospitals is the largest public health care system in the United States. They treat more than one million patients per year, and reach over 70 locations across the New York City’s five boroughs.

“This is a very special award presentation for our agency, and NYC Health and Hospitals has been chosen as our Customer of the Year,” said Rudy D’Amico, CABVI’s president and CEO.

Pictured above, Joe Wilson, NYC Health and Hospital’s senior assistant vice president of strategic sourcing, stands with Bob Porter, CABVI’s director of public policy, as they cut the cake to celebrate the success that comes from the partnership.

NYC
HEALTH +
HOSPITALS

CABVI *tributes* THROUGH 3/31/2018

In Memory

Josephine Carcone

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Laura Coles

P Daniel and Cindy Freudenberger

Donna Durant

P Daniel and Cindy Freudenberger

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The Applewood Reside

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Mitch and Margaret Hansen

Madelyn McAvoy

Family of Madelyn McAvoy

Lion Nate Meyer

Lions Club of Clinton

Doris Norton

Alan and Janet Davis

Rudy and Anne D'Amico

Lee Kelly

Bernard and Gaile Lepper

Joseph Taurisani and Leta Laukaitis

David and Demis Washburn

Helen Parrott

Douglas Parrott

Julius Perillo

John Perillo

Lt. Col. John Penree

Laura O'Donnell

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Gilbert and Marguerite Scharf

George Spinella

Vincent and Ann Salatino

John Steffens

Tammilee Wike

Marjorie Turnbull

Johanna Armstrong

George Waters

Donald and Pat LoGuidice

Michael Walker

Elaine Mullins

Therese Zeh

Laura O'Donnell

In Honor

Gary Heenan

First Source FCU

Meet The Challenge with an IRA Qualified Charitable Contribution

Are you 70 ½ or older and not in need of your minimum IRA distribution this year?

If the answer is no, there's a tool you can use to double your support of CABVI through The Community Foundation Challenge called the qualified charitable contribution (QCD).

With a QCD, you make a donation to CABVI directly from your IRA. Designate your gift to CABVI's Focus on the Future Vision & Wellness Center and it will be matched dollar-for-dollar by The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties.

Under a QCD, a charitable contribution made from an IRA is not included in your gross income. You do not take a deduction for the contribution. The QCD counts toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.

Suppose your RMD for the year is \$17,000. If you make at least \$17,000 of QCDs, you've satisfied both your RMD and \$17,000 of your charitable giving for the year. There's no additional gross income on your tax return. You don't deduct the QCDs as charitable contributions.

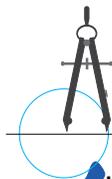
Confusing? Speak with your tax advisor, attorney or IRA administrator.

You must make the charitable contribution directly from your IRA custodian or trustee to CABVI, 507 Kent Street, Utica, NY 13501, Federal ID No. 15-0543587.

You must be at least age 70½ by the date of the charitable contribution.

Please contact Steve Gannon, Director of Development at 315-797-2233 ext.1265 for more information.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE



Gift Commitment Form

Yes!

I/We want to strengthen CABVI's capacity to assist more people who are blind or visually impaired to get jobs, receive specialized services, and achieve their highest level of independence.

Name (As you wish to be recognized)

Organization/Firm (If applicable)

Title

Address

City / State / Zip Code

Email / Preferred Telephone (Home / Business / Cell)

Signature

Date

My check in the amount of \$ _____ is enclosed. I want my gift to count toward the **Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties Challenge**:
Please make checks payable to CABVI.

I wish to contribute a gift over a period, up to five years, and have my gift count toward the **Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties Challenge**:

2018: \$ _____ 2019: \$ _____ 2020: \$ _____ 2021: \$ _____ 2022: \$ _____

I wish to pay my gift, in part or entirely, on my credit card.

Visa Master Card AMEX Discover \$ _____
 Monthly Quarterly

Card Number

Expiration

Security Code / CV

Authorization Signature

MAKE A LEGACY GIFT TO KEEP CABVI STRONG!

I/we would like to make an estate or planned gift to ensure that CABVI can continue to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their highest levels of independence. Please contact me.

507 Kent Street Utica, NY 13501

Electronic Service Requested

KYLE STRIFE

Board member profile

Kyle Strife is in his second term as a CNY Vision Foundation board member. He was born and raised in the Mohawk Valley, graduated from Utica College, and is a partner at the Nelson and Strife Financial Group.

Growing up, Kyle and his siblings worked in the family business. His family owns and operates a local restaurant and tavern, which he had the opportunity to join, but decided to pursue a career in financial services instead. Kyle chose this route to help make a positive impact on the people's lives around him, whom are his family, friends, and neighbors.

"Operating a small business is very rewarding, but not the typical nine to five type of job," said Kyle. "I experienced certain aspects of the business when I was younger, so it influenced my decision to attend college and earn my degree in business."

Once Kyle started his career, he decided to become active in the community around him. He is a part of the Catalyst Group, serves on the Membership Committee of the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce, is on the



Kyle Strife

Community Investment Committee of the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, and is a board member on CABVI's CNY Vision Foundation board.

Gary Scalzo, chair of the CNY Vision Foundation board of directors, had a significant impact on Kyle's decision to join the organization. As an advocator for CABVI, he explained the agency's mission to Kyle and the rewarding feeling of giving back to the community. After seeing the passion behind Gary's statement, Kyle knew he needed to be involved.

"It's very hard to explain the feeling you get when you know you've impacted a person's life," said Kyle. "Because of that feeling, I find it easy to connect with an agency like CABVI because I have the opportunity to help people, and build friendships at the same time."

When Kyle is not working or volunteering his time, he enjoys golfing, skiing, Utica Comets hockey games, hiking in the Adirondacks, and taking short vacations with his fiancé to experience different cultures around the world.