

# SBVI VISIONS



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**Service to the Blind  
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## WINTER 2014

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### Director's Comments by Gaye Mattke

It is good to once again report on the many events in the world of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. We've been juggling a number of projects since the last VISIONS newsletter. I'll start with staff changes, which have been numerous in recent months. Eric Weiss accepted the position of Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services in September leaving the SBVI Assistant Director position vacant. Twyla Eggers accepted the position of SBVI Assistant Director effective December 9<sup>th</sup>. Read more about Twyla in this edition of VISIONS. We also experienced turnover in two counselor positions with the resignations of Jennifer Geuther, SBVI counselor in the Pierre district office and Lee Ann Sims, SBVI counselor in the Rapid City office. Staff have done a great job covering territories during these vacancies. The Pierre position has been filled by Dorothy Adams who will start on February 24<sup>th</sup>; read more about Dorothy on page 3. I'm pleased to announce that Gary Frentz has accepted the Rapid

City position and will transfer from the Division of Rehabilitation Services to SBVI on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Each year the Board of SBVI, in conjunction with the Division, is required to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report covers the status of the SBVI vocational rehabilitation program and contains information on the division's performance in the past year. You may access the 2013 annual report on the SBVI web site at:

[http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/documents/2013AnnualReportFinal\\_000.pdf](http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/documents/2013AnnualReportFinal_000.pdf)

There is also a text only version available for better access with screen readers. If you would like a different format of the annual report, contact my office.

Please see the article in the edition of VISIONS on Governor Dugaard's initiative to increase employment of South Dakota citizens with disabilities. SBVI will play an active role in activities related to the task force report.

Most of you will recall the SBVI media campaign materials developed with stimulus funds in 2011. We are working on recirculating the materials to promote services offered by SBVI. Watch and listen for ads on SBVI services in the coming months.

Annual public meetings have been scheduled for this spring and you are the key to making these meetings meaningful. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us at one of these events to give us your input on services offered by SBVI. See announcements on page 6 for more information.

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### **Gloria Pearson Appointed Secretary of the Department of Human Services**

Gloria Pearson was appointed Secretary of the Department of Human Services by Governor Dugaard in August of 2013, and began as Secretary in November of 2013. Prior to becoming Secretary, she served as Executive Director/CEO of Ability Building Services in Yankton from 2000 to 2013. She served as Executive Director of the Community Support Providers of South Dakota in 2000 and Executive Director of Dakota Milestones in Chamberlain, SD the prior 12 years.

Secretary Pearson is passionate about providing leadership in assuring quality services and supports for citizens with disabilities. For more than 25 years, she has worked to improve the standard of living for people with disabilities and how people with disabilities are viewed and supported. Originally from Sisseton, she earned a bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University and a master's degree from Northern State University.

Gloria and her husband, Jim, who is an Episcopal priest at Christ Church in Yankton, have three sons (Julian, James, and Joel), two daughters-in-law (Sandi and Hilary), and two granddaughters (Josie and Sydney). Pearson enjoys yoga, reading, travelling, and being outdoors. She especially likes getting the family together at Pickerel Lake, on the Missouri River, in the Black Hills, or any other beautiful place.

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## **Twyla Eggers - Assistant Director for SBVI**

Twyla Eggers began her role as the Assistant Director for Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired on December 9, 2013. Twyla was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, but has lived in the Redfield, SD area for most of her life. She is married to Rob and they have 2 adult children, Taylor, 23 and Dylan, 21.

She is a graduate of Northern State University in Aberdeen with Bachelor of Science degrees in Psychology & Sociology and a Minor in Gerontology. She received her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Montana State University. Twyla has worked for state government for over 30 years. During this time she worked for the South Dakota Developmental Center, Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Developmental Disabilities. When not at work, Twyla enjoys spending time with family and friends. Twyla very much enjoys the outdoors, gardening, canning, camping and going to auctions.

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## **New Rehabilitation Counselor Hired for Pierre Office**

We are pleased to announce Dorothy Adams has accepted the position of SBVI Rehabilitation Counselor for the Pierre District office. Dorothy comes to SBVI with valuable experience from delivering independent living services while employed with Western Resources for Disabled Independence. Dorothy has a solid understanding of resources in the state and has advocated for individuals who needed access to benefits and services. Dorothy received her Master's in Counseling and Human Services from Black Hills State University and she's excited to pursue certification in Rehabilitation Counseling. Dorothy will start her position on February 24<sup>th</sup> with several weeks of training at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center in Sioux Falls before working with individuals in seventeen counties located in south central South Dakota. She will be a great addition to the SBVI team!

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## **Governor's Employment Works Taskforce**

Governor Dugaard kicked off his effort to increase employment of citizens with disabilities by convening the "Employment Works" Task Force. The task force brought the private and public sectors together to ensure people with disabilities are a vital part of South Dakota's workforce. Task force members offered a broad spectrum of perspectives, including people with disabilities and their family members, the business community, representatives of state government, service providers and nonprofit stakeholders. The Governor said he will ask state government to act as a role model, starting with a focus on how state agencies can improve their own policies and hiring practices. The task force submitted a report with recommendations to the Governor which can be found on the Department of Human Services web site at:

<http://dhs.sd.gov/NewsandAnnouncements/EmploymentWorksTaskForceReport.html>

SBVI will be an active participant in implementing recommendations to improve employment for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

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## **Julaine Arient-Rollman Featured in Black Hills Woman Magazine**

Be sure to check out the Jan – Feb 2014 edition of the Black Hills Woman Magazine featuring the most fabulous women of the Black Hills. Our own Julaine Arient-Rollman is featured on page 12. Her zest for life and commitment to employment of citizens with vision loss are an inspiration! Congratulations Julaine, we agree you are fabulous!  
<http://www.blackhillswoman.com/issues.html>

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## **Assistive Technology News**

Exciting news for all Apex BrailleNote users, a free update is available! KeySoft 9.4 update can be downloaded for the Apex BrailleNote and will alleviate many of the frustrations when using Nemeth Code and PowerPoint. With the update you'll be able to input Nemeth Braille and subsequently create a translated print version. If a presenter uses PowerPoint (version 2007 or later) for their lecture, have them email you the PTTX file and follow along with the rest of the audience using your Apex BrailleNote. For more information contact JoMarie Laughlin, AT Instructor at SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.

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## **Glaucoma Awareness - Beware the “Sneak Thief of Sight”**

EyeSmart reminds readers that glaucoma remains a leading cause of preventable blindness worldwide. A condition in which the pressure within the eye is elevated and damages the optic nerve, glaucoma affects more than 2.7 million Americans age 40 and older. Half of all people with glaucoma do not yet know because the disease often has no early warning symptoms. Because glaucoma can quietly damage vision if left untreated, it is often called the “Sneak Thief of Sight.”

The good news? Knowing your risks for glaucoma and monitoring your eye health with regular visits to an ophthalmologist – a medical doctor specializing in the diagnosis, medical and surgical treatment of eye diseases and conditions – can save your sight.

Common risk factors for glaucoma include:

- Age
- Family history of glaucoma
- African, Hispanic or Asian ancestry
- Nearsightedness
- History of elevated eye pressure
- History of eye injury
- History of high-dose steroid use
- High blood pressure
- Conditions that affect blood circulation

Visit [geteyesmart.org](http://geteyesmart.org) to learn more about the [risk factors](#) and [treatments](#) for glaucoma.

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## Free Software For Persons With Visual Impairments:

A partnership between a small Fort Wayne company GW Micro and software giant Microsoft should make employment and education easier for millions of people worldwide with vision problems. The two companies announced earlier this month at the League for the Blind and Disabled in Fort Wayne that people now can download for free GW Micro's Window-Eyes screen reader for Microsoft Office software from 2010 and newer. The Window-Eyes software, which retails for \$895, is available for free download at [www.windoweyesforoffice.com](http://www.windoweyesforoffice.com).

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## Heading into the Snow? Don't Forget Your Sunglasses!

Before heading out into the snow this winter, make sure to grab your sunglasses. Sunlight reflecting off the snow can be extremely harsh and can sometimes result in damage to the front part of your eye, the cornea, similar to sunburn, called photo keratitis.

This painful injury, more commonly known by skiers and snowboarders as "snow blindness," causes extreme discomfort, described as the feeling of sand in the eyes, sensitivity to light and tearing. Even if the sun is hidden behind clouds, ultra violet (UV) light can be reflected off the snow and cause damage to your eyes. The best way to prevent snow blindness is to protect your eyes from prolonged exposure to UV light. To learn how to keep eyes safe and healthy this winter, visit EyeSmart for more on [winter sun safety](#).

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## Book Review - Out of the Whirlpool

Sue Wiygul Martin has written a deeply honest and moving account of the rebuilding of her life after a desperate, impetuous act in her youth ended in traumatic blindness. Since that day, she has greeted the world with her trademark determination and humor, accepting the challenges placed before her as she adjusted to being blind. She takes the reader through the process of blind rehabilitation in such a way that you feel you, too, are going through the process of learning new skills and making the emotional adjustment right along with her.

Now, after more than thirty years of an extraordinary recovery and reconciliation with the past, Martin shares the simple truth of her journey. Advance readers have called her book a "Must read" for anyone in the field of blind rehab or anyone going through the adjustment to blindness or other traumatic events in their lives.

Out of the Whirlpool is available online at <http://outofthewhirlpool.com/buy-the-book/> . Select chapters of the book can be found on the following website, as well as additional information about the author. <http://outofthewhirlpool.com/the-book/> . The book is available in audio or print formats, as well as an eBook.

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## **Donations in Memory of Loved Ones**

Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired continues to receive donations in memory of loved ones. Since the summer 2013 issue of VISIONS, SBVI received donations in memory of Norman Koehn, who was an active member and leader of the Brookings older blind peer support group. Norman's family and friends designated SBVI for memorials in his memory to support the Closed Circuit Television program. In addition, SBVI also received donations in memory of Francis Martilla and from the SD Order of the Eastern Star. Those who have made donations and the names of those to be remembered can be found at:

<http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/documents/SBVIMemorials1312014.pdf>

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## **Announcements**

- Statewide Independent Living Council Meeting, Pierre, SD, February 19<sup>th</sup>
  - Board of SBVI Meeting, Pierre, SD, March 28<sup>th</sup>
  - SBVI Public Meetings via DDN from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Central Time, April 10, 2014 with sites at SBVI offices in Aberdeen, Pierre and Sioux Falls (SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind)
  - Public Meeting, Adoba Eco in Rapid City from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Mountain Time
  - National Federation of the Blind State Convention, Adoba Eco, Rapid City, SD, April 25 – 26, 2014
  - Public Gathering at Sinte Gleska University, Mission, SD, on April 29<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Central Time, in conjunction with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council
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