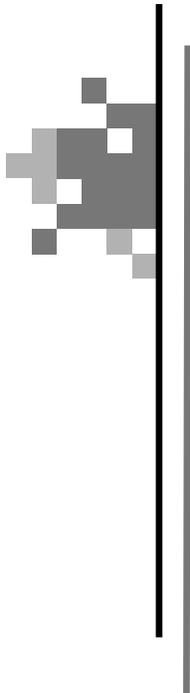


**Governor's Council on Blindness
and Visual Impairment**

2008 Annual Report



Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment

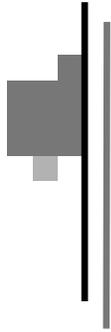
Our Mission To provide the leadership, advocacy, and guidance that promotes opportunities for Arizonans of all ages who are blind or visually impaired that result in increased dignity, respect, and independence.

Our Vision Create, foster, and sustain a climate of opportunity where all Arizonans who are blind or visually impaired are able to direct their own lives and reach their personally chosen goals and objectives.

Council Purpose

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI) was created by Executive Order 86-15 on December 8, 1986 (updated on May 29, 1992 by Executive Order 92-15) "to provide a mechanism to ensure that the specialized needs of blind and visually impaired Arizonans are addressed effectively." The GCBVI is charged with advising the Governor and Legislature on the needs and services related to blindness and visual impairment. The GCBVI also reviews services provided by all agencies serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired to ensure the specialized needs of this population are being met and encourages broad participation of interested organizations and individuals in matters that affect blind or visually impaired Arizonans.

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment is comprised of a diverse group of individuals. Twenty members are appointed by the Governor and represent the blind and visually impaired community, consumers of blindness related services, consumer and advocacy groups, and blindness and vision loss professionals. Four additional individuals are ex-officio members from related state agencies.



2008 Strategic Plan Objectives

- Make all Arizonans aware of assistive technology (AT) resources and services.
- Support the increase of qualified Assistive Technology teachers statewide.
- Improve the independence of blind and visually impaired individuals in Arizona through education and training opportunities that lead to competitive employment and independence.
- Promote legislation that encourages clients/consumers/individuals to achieve vocational and/or independent living goals.
- Elevate public awareness regarding blindness issues, resources, and services.
- Research and provide information to GCBVI members about relevant issues affecting the blind and visually impaired (including the combined hearing and vision loss population).

Council Accomplishments

- Co-sponsor of the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE).
- Sponsor of Assistive Technology Instructor/Specialist Roundtable event at the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo.
- Representation on Independent Living (IL) Planning Committee through the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
- Successfully advocated for increased funding of \$500,000 for independent living services for the blind and visually impaired.
- Speaker's Bureau developing forum for the City of Peoria regarding information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and impact on the city's planning in the area of accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Committees and Goals

Assistive Technology Committee

The Assistive Technology Committee involved members in reviewing the current Arizona Textbook Accessibility law for kindergarten to twelfth grade blind and visually impaired students. The committee focused on the resulting successes and barriers of implementation of the law as well as researching textbook accessibility for post secondary education students and determining the need for advocacy to support legislation for this population. In addition, committee members studied the implications of a separate assistive technology (AT) certification for the blind and visually impaired for AT teachers/specialists throughout the state of Arizona. The Council committed to sponsoring an AT roundtable discussion at the 2008 Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) on this issue.

The committee members have also taken on a review of current State of Arizona funding and training practices regarding AT for the blind and visually impaired and will be formulating recommendations in the coming year on that issue to present to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Legislature and community advocates.

Employment and Training Committee

The Employment and Training Committee members focused on researching two issues relevant to individuals that are blind and visually impaired; eliminating self defeating behaviors in the employment setting and compensation levels of blind and visually impaired professionals. Committee members plan to develop recommendations to educate the GCBVI as well as the general community on these issues.

Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee members focused on advocating for an additional \$500,000 for independent living services for the blind and visually impaired in collaboration with other community advocacy groups. Advocacy efforts resulted in the passing of SB1264. The funding was subsequently cut due to budget shortfalls in SFY2008 and continued to be cut into SFY2009. Committee members will continue advocacy efforts on this issue as well as continuing a dialogue with the Arizona Department of Economic Security on the needs of the blind and visually impaired.



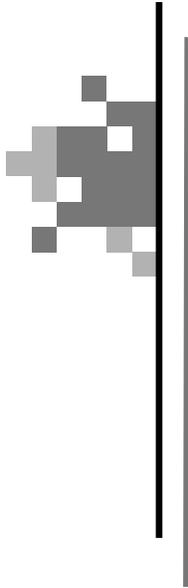
The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment is (back row, left to right) Fernando Tarazon, Juan Pablo Guzman, Ed House, Jim LaMay, Ed Gervasoni; (front row) Barbara McDonald, Ray Mungaray, Roma Vanduzer, Linda Montgomery, Dan Martinez, Bob Kresmer, Robert Crowe; (not pictured) Michael Kanitsch, Bob Tullis, Allan Curry, Hal Hoff.

Public Outreach Committee

The Public Outreach Committee focused on maintaining and improving the GCBVI webpage in order to provide a comprehensive site for individuals seeking information on blindness and visual impairment. Additionally, committee members developed a Speaker's Bureau to present topics on blindness and visual impairment issues to the community, legislature, and other interested parties. Members participated in numerous community events to promote the GCBVI, its activities and provide information on blindness and visual impairment such as; Arizona Bridge to Independent Living Caregiver Rally, Glendale Vision Fair, City of Surprise Human Services Fair, Rehabilitation Services Adjustment to Blindness Conference, Arizona Council of the Blind Annual Convention, the 11th Annual Assistive Technology Summer Institute, and the Arizona Industries for the Blind Grand Opening event.

Research Committee

The Research Committee focused on developing and presenting recommendations to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on vocational rehabilitation and independent living eligibility statements. Committee members also undertook a study of the issues affecting Arizona's deaf/blind population which resulted in the formulation of a new GCBVI committee to address those issues more specifically in terms of advocacy for funding and resource allocation.



ADVOCACY ISSUES

Textbook Accessibility

This issue refers to how well students that are blind and visually impaired are getting accessible texts in a manner that is equal to that of sighted classmates in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. A law currently exists to implement accessibility for grades K-12. Implementation of the current law has been a slow process and many students are still not receiving needed books in a timely manner. In addition, the current law does not apply to post secondary education students that are blind and whose need for textbook accessibility is just as great. Advocacy is needed to speed the implementation of the current law and extend it to include students that are blind and visually impaired in post secondary education settings.

Reinstatement of Increased IL Funding for the Blind and Visually Impaired

In 2007, the State Legislature approved \$500,000 in additional funding for independent living services for the blind and visually impaired. The funding was subsequently rescinded in SFY2008 and there was no allocation for the funding in the SFY2009 state budget. Increased funding for this population is imperative and requires the support of the Department of Economic Security (DES), the Governor, and the State Legislature to address this issue in the SFY2010 state budget and reinstate the funding.

Full Vocational Rehabilitation Program State Match

In SFY2006, the state Rehabilitation Services Administration/ Vocational Rehabilitation Program (RSA/VR) returned \$9.3 million in unmatched federal funding. Funding for the program is based on a 4 to 1 formula; 21.3% state dollars to 78.7% federal dollars. Strong advocacy in SFY2007 obtained full state match to federal funding. Full state match funding was not allocated to RSA in SFY2008 or SFY2009. A \$500,000 budget cut in VR funding was made in SFY2009 and when the loss of federal matching dollars are calculated in, the result is a \$2.3 million dollar loss not only to the VR program but the State of Arizona economy. This trend will likely result in decreased services, in

the near future, for individuals with disabilities who will be unable to receive independent living services or employment services.

Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) Procurement Exemption

This proposal exempts AIB from the procurement code for purchases of materials, components, supplies, equipment and services for use in the administration and manufacture of products and services for sale. The intent is to allow AIB the flexibility needed to operate in a rapidly changing federal market and to continue to increase employment for people who are blind.

Total Number of Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals Served by Rehabilitation Services Administration SFY 2008		
Independent Living Services	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	Total Served
1,276	808	2,084

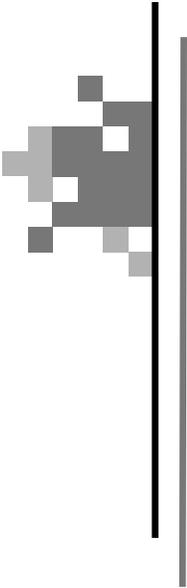
Total Arizona Estimated Visually Impaired Population for 2010: 212,712*
<i>* Arizona 2010 population figures based on Department of Economic Security Population Statistics Unit Projection 1997-2050, Projection #2, dated Feb. 1997.</i>

Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Operations

Several Council members met with a representative of the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) in 2007 to discuss and educate the ADC regarding compliance with the Arizona Revised Statute 23-504 which gives BEP vendors the authority to set up vending machines in state facilities. ADC has not complied with ARS 23-504, and although DES requested a formal ruling on this issue from the State Attorney General’s Office as to the legal ramifications, no opinion has been received to date. ADC has withdrawn the solicitation for vending machine services in their facilities. Strong advocacy is required to resolve this issue on behalf of blind and visually impaired operators.

Clarification on the Number of Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals in Arizona

The Council recognizes the need to advocate for the Department of Economic Security to implement a study to reflect accurate estimates of incidence and prevalence of blindness and visual impairment in Arizona in order that a well informed planning process can be developed to meet the growing independent living and employment service needs of the blind and visually impaired.



SUCCESS STORIES

Carol Harvey understands that she will be legally blind the rest of her life. “If I could run away from this, I would,” the 56-year-old Harvey says. As a child, she lost vision in one eye. As a cancer patient, she lost vision in the other. She has peripheral vision, and can make out light, dark, and color. “My comfort zone is this house, and I’ve got the bruises to prove it,” Harvey says. Outgoing and garrulous, she laughs easily.

“I thought the worst thing was not being mobile,” Harvey says. “But the worst is not being able to read. I lost my privacy. I needed somebody to read my bank statements.” She also had three school-age children to raise, and her husband died a few years ago. Carol had no idea what to do next.

She was unaware that DES offered independent-living services for the blind. After reaching someone who could help, Harvey was put on a waiting list. She became another case in an underserved community. “I had to wait eight months, thinking nobody cared,” Harvey says. In December, a DES rehabilitation teacher made a house call. “One of the first things she did—I’m almost emotional talking about it—she listened to me,” Harvey says.

For Carol, independent living is a matter of contrasts. Alternating black-and-white sticky tabs on her cell phone buttons help her distinguish one button from another. Dabs of bright red paint on stovetop knobs and the thermostat allow Harvey to determine proper settings. Her oversize wristwatch has large white numbers against a black face. “If I have a black coffee cup, then I’m not going to pour coffee,” Harvey says. For reading, a scanner projects large-print words onto a TV screen, against a high-contrast background. A talking alarm-clock announces the time. With a specially-shaped mirror, she can see her face.

With the help of a Department of Economic Security specialist, Carol is learning to use a cane. Crossing the street was frightening enough when she was sighted, Harvey says with a laugh. Now she crosses with a cane and with a growing sense of confidence. It’s the confidence that comes with taking charge of her own life.

Juan Pablo Guzman

Juan Pablo Guzman was born with Leber's Congenital Amaurosis, a genetic disorder that left him blind. He relies on a personal computer equipped screen-reader software called JAWS. "It reads everything on the screen back to me through the speakers," Guzman explained, adding that it includes a Braille display by the keyboard. "It's not a cheap program," he once told a reporter, "but the independence it provides me is worth every cent. It's beautiful."

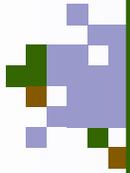


Guzman, 29, says he's just like any other person and that being blind hasn't stopped him from achieving success. There are daily problems to resolve "just like anyone else," he said. "I just do things a little different." He credits his success to the unity of his family, and the support of co-workers and friends. He is a self-proclaimed "family-oriented person." His father is his friend and adviser, Guzman stated. "He gives advice at

the perfect time." Guzman says he and his sister, who is also blind, have been successful because of and his mother's tenacity. My family has taught me there is a solution for everything." he said. "If there is an obstacle or a detour in the street, there's a way around it. It may cost you more effort and time, but you can get around the barricade." Mr. Guzman acknowledges the Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation Program for the assistance he has received in vocational counseling and guidance, education, and in Assistive Technology services. "My life has been a very beautiful life. I've done whatever I've desired to do," he said, acknowledging "There are a lot of things that are still coming."

Juan Pablo Guzman graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in political science, and a minor in Spanish, from the University of Arizona in 2000. He worked for the City of Nogales as the Public Information Specialist, providing information about city affairs to local, state, national and international media, and organizing media events for public ceremonies and projects. He was elected on his own merit as Clerk of the Superior Court of Santa Cruz County on September 2, 2008, following an original appointment to the office by Governor Janet Napolitano in December, 2007. Guzman is also a member of the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment, and a former board member of the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind and the United Way of Arizona.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program • Under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI & VII), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Department prohibits discrimination in admissions, programs, services, activities, or employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, and disability. The Council must make a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to take part in a program, service or activity. For example, this means if necessary, the Department must provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, a wheelchair accessible location, or enlarged print materials. It also means that the Department will take any other reasonable action that allows you to take part in and understand a program or activity, including making reasonable changes to an activity. If you believe that you will not be able to understand or take part in a program or activity because of your disability, please let us know of your disability needs in advance if at all possible. To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact 602-364-1773; TTY/TDD Services: 7-1-1.



**Governor's Council on Blindness
and Visual Impairment
1789 W. Jefferson St., Site Code 930A
Phoenix, AZ 85007**

For additional information about the
Council purpose, activities, and advocacy,
visit our Website at
www.azdes.gov/rsa/gcbvi.asp

OR

Contact Council Staff: Carolyn Maciel
602-364-1773
cmaciel@azdes.gov