



Vision Loss  
Resources



# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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## 2015 BOARD MEMBERS

### Board Chair

Lisa David - eCapital Advisors

### Vice Board Chair

Jackie Peichel – Minnesota  
Department of Human Services

### Secretary

Patricia Durst – U.S. Bancorp

### Treasurer

Mary McDougall – Merrill Lynch

### Member At Large

Deb Swenson - Lommen Abdo, P.A.

### BOARD MEMBERS

Joan Arbach, Saint Paul, MN  
Ron Beauchane, Plymouth, MN  
Dr. Herbert L. Cantrill, M.D.,  
VitreoRetinal Surgery, P.A.  
Joan Gilbertson, WCCO-TV  
Dr. Robert Hersman, O.D.,  
Hopkins Eye Clinic  
Lori Kamin, Midwest Immunology  
Clinic & Infusion Center  
Jean Machart, Ameriprise Financial  
John Priestley, Plymouth, MN  
Jim Shear, H Park Seating  
Debbie Wygal, Saint Catherine  
University

### EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Katharine Grathwol, Ph.D.,  
President and CEO  
Mauricio Lopez, Controller  
Linda Guzman, Director of  
Manufacturing  
John Filek, Director of Programs



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

As we prepared this annual report, we reflected on the many ways Vision Loss Resources improves the quality of life for our participants. It is not just in practical ways – like using tactile bump dots to help participants navigate their kitchen safely, or improving participants' technology skills to help them communicate with their family and friends, or developing the hands-on skills they need to return to work or school.

It is in the intangible ways that I believe we have the greatest impact.

Living with vision loss can be sometimes frustrating, sometimes overwhelming, but it can also be a journey of finding yourself. One of the reasons our older adult participants as well as our working age Rehabilitation students choose VLR is because our programming allows individuals to share with one another their life experiences and the unique bond that keeps them growing and learning and creating new experiences.

The success for Vision Loss Resources is in seeing a participant participate.

No other organization in the State of Minnesota offers the wide range of services and activities for people – especially seniors – living with vision loss.

One of the most common anecdotes we hear from participants is this: "I do more now than I did before I lost my vision, and it is because of the support and opportunities here at Vision Loss Resources." You will read in our 2015 annual report about the many ways we are building a community of care for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Thank you, for sharing the last year with us,

Kate Grathwol, Ph.D.  
President/CEO

Lisa David  
Board Chair

## OUR MISSION

to create a community of services, skills and support for people with vision loss.



# COMMUNITY SERVICES

**1,162** clients served

**5,931** contacts with clients

**586** assessments performed

**143** volunteers

**8,554** volunteer hours

**31** training given to professionals and clients

**266** individuals attended community center activities and events

**658** community center activities and events



## PEER MENTORS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

**179** support group sessions held

**30** locations where support groups were held

**383** people attending support groups

## REHABILITATION TEACHING: INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS CLASSES

**96** clients attended

**16** teaching sessions

## DEAFBLIND SERVICES MINNESOTA, LLC

**75** Adults receiving services

**54** Deafblind children/youth receiving services

**10,000** Hours of direct services to adults to help them maintain their independence

**8,000** Hours of direct services to children to help them communicate with family, friends and teachers

## REHABILITATION CENTER

**58** students who took classes at rehabilitation center

**40** students who successfully completed the full adjustment to blindness training program

**15,994** teaching sessions

# 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebrates 25 Years

In July, VLR was recognized by the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities for excellence in service and supporting independence, inclusiveness, and accessible environments and services for individuals with disabilities. In his presentation of the award, Ken Rogers, Chair of the committee, proclaimed VLR the “jewel in the city.” The award was presented as part of the City of Minneapolis’ celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

VLR was nominated by Lynda D’Heilly, a student in our Rehabilitation Center. In her nomination D’Heilly, who lost her vision from an acute illness, wrote about the importance of regaining her sense of self and maintaining her independence after losing her vision. Through Vision Loss Resources she found the tools and support of her peers to face those challenges.

We are delighted to reprint the essay D’Heilly submitted:

Being blind is like being in a box with no windows. And until you find a door, you’re not going to get out. Vision Loss Resources (VLR) built that door for me.

When I came to VLR I had lost my vision. I had a brain tumor and it destroyed the optic nerve in my left eye; surgery to remove the tumor destroyed the optic nerve in my other eye. I was originally told by the doctors that my vision would come back, but the damage to my eyes was permanent, making me blind. When I lost my vision I also lost myself.

I was going through a lot of changes, physically and emotionally, and I didn’t know why. I had lost my identity. I was depressed. I was in a box, and that box was empty, and when I yelled nobody could hear me. Then my husband started looking for people who could help. Thankfully, we found Vision Loss Resources.

My world was transformed when I started rehab at VLR and when I became involved with programs like technology class and woodworking. I can navigate a kitchen once again because the staff at VLR taught me how to use adaptive techniques to prepare food—to do the daily tasks so many people take for granted. When I became blind I realized I could no longer use the microwave, and not being able to do something as simple as use a microwave is the worst feeling in the world. But with the Life Skills classes at VLR, I learned how to make adjustments to my environment and to my pattern of thinking, allowing me to remain independent in my own home. VLR also offers support groups and peer counseling and recreational activities, among other things—the list goes on!

What makes VLR extra special is their responsiveness to emerging needs among the blind (and deafblind) community. They are developing a

meditation class to instruct students on mindfulness breathing and ways to reduce stress. This responsiveness and openness to new ideas, and the ability to translate ideas into specific activities, is a sure sign of an organization that goes above and beyond normal requirements or expectations—and that’s not to mention the terrific staff.

The staff and volunteers at VLR teach you that anything is possible—that you can do whatever you want. Sure you may have to do it differently, but you can still do it. There is life after blindness, and when you learn how to adapt, that life can be really good. I thought I’d never use the internet again, or read, or enjoy TV. But I can do these things. I can even go bowling! If somebody had come to me a year ago and said, “Let’s go bowling.” I would have said that I can’t and probably never will. Here’s a secret: I’m a better bowler now than I was with normal vision!

I am currently taking orientation and mobility classes at VLR and I’m learning how to navigate the city. My instructors have shown me what to do if I lose my sense of direction. I am learning how to use the public transportation system and how to safely cross the street, and with these skills I will be able to enjoy the city like everyone else. Before VLR, I didn’t walk outside the house by myself. Now, I walk about a mile to get to class. I have the confidence to get out and about and to be a person again.

At VLR I found people like myself; I found a sense of belonging. I am happier now, and my family is happier. This is who I am. And I know in my heart that I could not have gotten to this place without Vision Loss Resources, and that’s what makes them excellent.

– Lynda D’Heilly



## National author brings humor and insight to life with vision loss

Nationally-recognized speaker Nicole Kear joined us in April to read from her 2014 memoir, *Now I See You*. Kear was diagnosed at age 19 with retinitis pigmentosa and inspired guests with insightful anecdotes about her own touching story about facing a life with vision loss head on with spark and creativity.

As a professional writer Kear contributes essays and articles to publications including *The New York Times*, *Psychology Today*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Salon*. And most recently she began chronicling her continuing adventures in motherhood on her blog, *A Mom Amok*.

A native and current resident of New York, she admitted that even in a town like New York City where not everyone drives, she, too, found it hard to finally give up her driver's license. For nearly everyone in the room, that message of hope and resilience resonated.



# PROGRAM AREAS

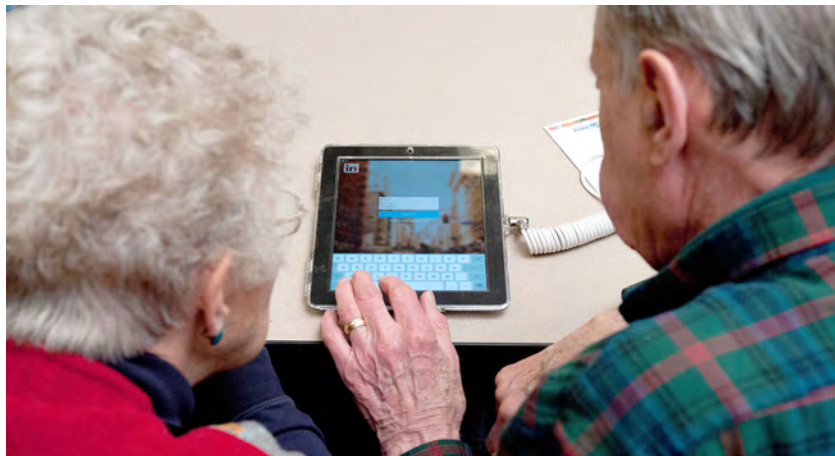
## Community Services

Training and supporting adults with vision loss throughout the 9-county metro area

Our Community Services program fills a crucial gap in services for older adults. The vision rehabilitation and support services we provide are not available through another provider. While older adults have many services to choose from, only VLR's services are specifically tailored to vision loss and helping older adults to manage the progressive nature of their vision loss.

Our Community Specialists provide programs to enhance the quality of life for clients and educate the community about vision loss. Programs include in-home assessments, life skills classes, support groups, volunteer services, peer mentoring, and the community center, which offers educational, social, and recreational opportunities. During the year, 1,230 individual clients were served with 5,860 total contacts. 650 assessments were performed with 31 trainings to professionals and clients. 173 support group sessions with 383 clients served with total attendance of 1,170. There were 659 activity sessions in the community center with 266 clients served with total attendance of 3,560. 271 volunteers reported 8,741 hours.

Our vibrant Community Center enjoyed a year of activities that included a luncheon at the Woman's Club of Minneapolis with 100 clients in attendance, the Minnesota State Fair, and fishing – just to name a few. Plus new classes in gardening, technology, and art.



## Volunteer Programs

271 volunteers reported  
8,741 hours

Partnerships included: Target Corporation, TCF Bank, Hamline University, and North Hennepin Community College

Our volunteers continue to serve our participants in ways that make a participant's experience with VLR personal and meaningful. Opportunities for volunteers this past year have included serving as personal shoppers and readers to help senior participants remain independent in their own home.

Volunteers also share their time in the Community Center as activity helpers and in the Rehab Center helping students learn new skills like woodshop. Popular outings for participants with the help of volunteers as sighted guide: Guthrie Theater, the Science Museum, volunteering at Feed My Starving Children, Twins games, and the very popular "lunch bunch" and dinner outings.

Important volunteer-led programs at VLR include our phone pals, peer mentors and support groups. Peer mentors and peer co-facilitators of our support groups help our older adult participants to overcome feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety that often accompany vision loss.

# Rehabilitation Center

## Individualized training for workforce-aged adults

Our Rehabilitation Center provides comprehensive training for greater independence at home, work and school including orientation and mobility training, rehabilitation services, teaching, and assertiveness training for the visually impaired. In 2015, 58 students attended classes, 15,994 teaching sessions and 40 students successfully completed the adjustment to blindness training program. The Rehabilitation Center also put many students' skills to the test in a variety of community events such as a winter outdoor adventure trip and trips to Twins games and the Mall of America.

## DeafBlind Services MN

DeafBlind Services Minnesota, LLC, provides support services and independent living training to deafblind adults, and intervener services to deafblind children. In 2015, 75 deafblind adults were served with over 10,000 hours of direct services to help deafblind adults to maintain their independence. 54 deafblind children/youth were served with over 8,000 hours of direct services to learn communication strategies and integrate into their community. We began a new initiative: pro-tactile training to professionals and the deafblind community. Pro-tactile is a method that enhances communication so deafblind individuals can be aware of environmental information when speaking with other people.



# CONTRACT PRODUCTION SERVICES

Vision Loss Resources operates for-profit business enterprise Contract Production Services (CPS) providing high-quality, fast-turn packaging, assembly, and manufacturing services. CPS invests 100 percent of its profits into Vision Loss Resources and the community it serves.

As an early champion of the social enterprise business model, VLR recognized a demand in the marketplace and the potential to translate for-profit best practices into a social good. Earned revenue from CPS contributes to a stable and diversified funding stream that enables VLR to advance its mission, expand its impact, and create innovative new programming. This positions VLR among the most highly-regarded, top-performing not-for-profit organizations in the Twin Cities.

Director of Manufacturing, Linda Guzman said that Contract Production Services has built relationships with companies throughout the Twin Cities and the Midwest, including General Mills, Hormel, Best Buy, Caribou Coffee, Kohl's, and others. Most clients have been with CPS for more than 20 years, and CPS maintains a preferred supplier designation with 3M. "Our commitment to quality and lean manufacturing strategy makes us an appealing option for businesses to contract locally and, in so doing, to support the blind, deafblind, and visually impaired community and their families and caregivers," said Guzman. "In other words, CPS allows companies to outsource for a cause."

# VISION LOSS RESOURCES, INC. AND RELATED ENTITIES

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

December 31, 2015 and 2014

### ASSETS

	2015	2014
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,397,004	\$ 3,572,571
Receivables, net	1,787,516	984,350
Inventories	1,963,755	1,523,651
Investments	2,831,626	2,987,870
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	237,520	245,287
Total Current Assets	9,217,421	9,313,729
<b>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT</b>		
Property and equipment	6,051,838	5,989,856
Less accumulated depreciation	3,101,347	2,881,469
Net Property and Equipment	2,950,491	3,108,387
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$12,167,912</b>	<b>\$12,422,116</b>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable	\$605,875	664,754
Accrued expenses	252,249	437,850
Total Current Liabilities	858,124	1,102,604
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted	10,977,018	10,982,950
Temporarily restricted	142,741	146,533
Permanently restricted	190,029	190,029
Total Net Assets	11,309,788	11,319,512
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$12,167,912</b>	<b>\$12,422,116</b>

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.)

# VISION LOSS RESOURCES, INC. AND RELATED ENTITIES

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES

For the Year Ended December 31, 2015  
(With Summarized Totals for the year ended December 31, 2014)

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporarily Restricted</u>	<u>Permanently Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2014</u>
Revenues, Gains and Other Support					
Sales, net	\$10,648,105	\$ -	\$ -	\$10,648,105	\$9,648,125
Contributions	199,158	-	-	199,158	283,384
Fees and services	1,854,973	-	-	1,874,973	1,778,226
United Way allocation	289,350	-	-	289,350	285,409
Legacies and bequests	115,332	-	-	115,332	86,056
Investment income	49,725	-	-	49,725	48,939
Realized gain on investments	343,314	-	-	343,314	267,622
Unrealized loss on investments	(399,901)	-	-	(399,901)	(51,398)
Miscellaneous	15,809	-	-	15,809	13,345
	<u>13,115,865</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,115,865</u>	<u>12,359,708</u>
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	<u>3,792</u>	<u>(3,792)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	<u>13,119,657</u>	<u>(3,792)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,115,865</u>	<u>12,359,708</u>
Expenses					
Manufacturing	10,442,988	-	-	10,442,988	9,689,380
Program Services					
Rehab center	781,600	-	-	781,600	788,094
Social services	1,386,173	-	-	1,386,173	1,300,006
Supporting Services					
Management and general	370,867	-	-	370,867	471,743
Fundraising	143,961	-	-	143,961	259,272
Total Expenses	<u>13,125,589</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,125,589</u>	<u>12,508,495</u>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS BEFORE INCOME TAXES</b>	<u>(5,932)</u>	<u>(3,792)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(9,724)</u>	<u>(148,787)</u>
<b>UNRELATED BUSINESS INCOME TAXES (RECOVERY)</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(12,349)</u>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<u>(5,932)</u>	<u>(3,792)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(9,724)</u>	<u>(136,438)</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<u>10,982,950</u>	<u>146,533</u>	<u>190,029</u>	<u>11,319,512</u>	<u>11,455,950</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<u><u>\$10,977,018</u></u>	<u><u>\$142,741</u></u>	<u><u>\$190,029</u></u>	<u><u>\$11,309,788</u></u>	<u><u>\$11,319,512</u></u>

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.)