

PRISM

Your Resource for Independent Living

The Times They Are A-Changin'

In 1964 Bob Dylan told us “the times they are a-changin’”. And were they ever! Just one year later, with lots of community support and help from United Way of King County, Community Services for the Blind was born from the merger of 3 small agencies. Then, we only served King County and saw just a few hundred people a year.

Now, 43 years later, the times are a-changin’ once again. Over the years we have grown and expanded to serve most of 4 counties, seeing nearly 1,500 people a year and providing many other educational and volunteer services. Support for that growth has come from many sources: individual donors, funds from sales of donated clothing, government funding and United Way. Some of the funding sources that have supported us in the past are no longer there. For example, United Way of Snohomish County provided funding for us for 20 years. This past year, they decided that funding for services for people who have impaired vision is no longer a priority. And there went \$30,000 a year. Changes in the reimbursement model used by our partner for used clothing sales have also resulted in significantly less money from that operation. And government funding – just 8% of our total revenue comes from that source.

You may be asking, “Why is the situation so critical now?” In a recent *Forbes* article, Tara A. Cortes, Ph.D., R.N. and CEO of Lighthouse International summarized our challenge:

With the graying of our country’s baby boomer population, the U.S. is on the verge of a vision loss epidemic. More than 16.5 million Americans age 45-plus self-report some form of vision impairment – defined as vision loss that cannot be corrected with glasses, surgery, or medication – even when wearing glasses or contacts. This figure is expected to grow to a staggering 20 million by 2010.

We anticipate the challenge of trying to serve many more people at the exact time that our funding is decreasing. As a result of current funding reductions, we have eliminated our Information & Referral Specialist position. In addition, we will not be able to fill a staff vacancy on our low vision team. Our remaining staff is working hard to meet all of the needs, but our ability to serve is being compromised.

CSBPS staff and Board members are exploring

means to fill our revenue gaps and identify new sources of financial support. We remain committed to focusing our attention on independence and well being despite vision loss. There are many ways that you can help us prepare for the future:

- Financial support with a monetary donation
- Name CSBPS as the beneficiary of your will, IRA or life insurance policy;
- Ask friends and family to donate to CSBPS;
- Donate clothing and household goods (800) 472-2244;
- Donate that car you may no longer need to drive (877) 870-3659;
- Encourage the service club you belong to to make a donation;
- If you contribute to United Way of Snohomish, directly designate your contribution to CSBPS. Although we no longer receive grant funding, directed designations will come to us.

With your help, we hope for a brighter future and an ability to serve those you can remain active and independent despite vision loss.



Matthew O. Weed
Chair, Board of Directors



June W. Mansfield
President/CEO

DONATE YOUR VEHICLE

Tax deductible! Free pickup!

Call today! (877) 870-3659

Have an old car you can't or don't drive anymore? Want to get a break on your taxes this year?

Donate your used car or truck to CSBPS, and both problems are solved! We'll pick the vehicle up at your house and handle all title transfer and other paperwork.

Visit www.irs.gov to learn more about documenting and receiving credit for vehicle donations.



SORTING THROUGH THE MAGNIFIER MIX

All too often we hear the despairing remark: “I’ve got a drawer full of magnifiers, and none help!” For many folks, magnifiers can help – the challenge is understanding your options and choosing those best suited to you and your needs.

Here we will briefly walk through the different types of magnifiers and the most common uses for each.

The purpose of magnification is to increase the size of the retinal image so that you can see print or objects more easily. There are four basic ways to do this:

- Enlarge the actual object. Increasing the type size of printed materials is one example.
- Bring the object closer. This is something many of us do instinctively as our vision begins to change, and depending on the task and the magnifier you choose you may still need to do this.
- Make the object appear larger. Magnifiers are the most common way of doing this.
- Enlarge the object by projecting it electronically onto a screen. Closed circuit televisions, commonly known as CCTVs, are designed for this.

Which is the best? It all depends. First, think about the different kinds of things you’d like to do. For some folks, reading the mail is a priority; for others, doing crafts is important; many people want to be able to read the newspaper. So keep in mind that you may need to use different magnifiers for different tasks. For many, it is helpful to actually make a list of the things you want to do. Then take the list with you to your eye doctor or low vision clinic so you can focus on these.

Second, what you see through a magnifier (your field of view) depends on the strength and design of the magnifier. The stronger a magnifier, the smaller its field of view, and the closer you will have to hold your material. This is often a difficult point for people to accept.

Third, you will need training to effectively use high powered magnifiers. Practice is important. Many folks stop using magnifiers because they try to do too much too soon and become tired and frustrated.

When considering a magnifier, you need to be honest about your willingness to learn new skills. Attitude can make a difference. It’s understandable to be angry or depressed about losing your vision. That’s why we encourage folks to talk with their doctor, a counselor, or other resources such as support groups, for help dealing with these emotions.

Finally, it’s important to recognize any physical limitations imposed by your eye or other conditions. For example, if you have limited arm strength, a hand magnifier may not be best for you.

Hand magnifiers are the most familiar type of magnifiers. Portable and relatively lightweight, they can be used with or without glasses. The distance between the eye and the lens is controlled by the user, which provides a flexible working range. However, hand magnifiers must be held steadily to work best. The farther the eye is from the lens, the smaller the field of view, and magnification is decreased if the magnifier is moved closer to the object.

Many people suffering from central vision loss (as with macular degeneration), find hand magnifiers most useful when combined with “eccentric viewing.” This is where you learn to use the undamaged portion of your eye.

By contrast, stand magnifiers are designed to sit directly on the surface of the reading material; a dome magnifier is one example. Stand magnifiers can be helpful to people who cannot easily hold a hand magnifier or maintain a correct focal distance.

Disadvantages include a small field of view; to widen the field you have to move closer to the magnifier, which can be awkward. You must look directly down into the lens; viewing from an angle creates distortion. This is why our low vision specialists often recommend using a lap desk on a table or desk to hold reading material when using a magnifier. Both hand and stand magnifiers are designed for short term tasks such as scanning headlines, reading labels, seeing controls on appliances or reading recipes.

Magnifying glasses are strong reading lenses worn like conventional glasses. One advantage of spectacles is that both hands remain free. Spectacle magnifiers have a larger field of view compared with hand and stand magnifiers, because they are worn close to the eye. However, a spectacle magnifier has a shorter working distance than conventional eyeglasses, and requires you to hold the material close in order to read.

SightConnection sells many low powered magnifiers, which are also increasingly available in the general marketplace. However, over the counter magnifiers are not strong enough for people with serious vision loss. If you find that low powered magnifiers no longer help, there are many other devices to try.

These stronger devices are offered through low vision clinics, most of which include loaner programs. This allows you to go home and practice with the recommended devices, then return for a follow up visit to learn more about proper use and to purchase only those that work best.

To learn more, please visit our website at www.csbps.com or call us at (206) 525-5556 or (800) 458-4888.

CAN A CCTV HELP YOU?

CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISIONS (CCTVs) were first developed as a government surveillance tool, but other applications were soon discovered! CCTVs are now an important security tool throughout the private sector, an invaluable tool in dangerous industries and YES, an important resource for people with impaired vision.

In their application as a vision aid, CCTVs allow people with impaired sight to read conventionally printed or written materials, continue to craft and write letters, journals and other media. How? They use a hand-held or stand mounted video camera to broadcast a magnified image to a television screen – some can magnify text to more than 60 times its normal size! They offer a convenient alternative to heavy, high magnification hand magnifiers.

CSBPS offers FREE CCTV demonstrations. To make an appointment, contact us by phone at (206) 525-5556 (toll free 800-458-4888) or via email at csbps@csbps.com.



Need Help Paying for Assistive Technology?

Leverage your money with an IDA Savings Account. Washington Assistive Technology Foundation is excited to announce the launch of a new “Individual Development Account” (“IDA”) program for purchases of assistive technology. Low income individuals and households who establish a special Assistive Technology savings account and save at least \$10 per month will be eligible to receive matching funds from United Way of King County and the State of Washington towards the purchase of their Assistive Technology. For more information, please contact Frances Pennell by phone at (800) 214-8731, or via email at fpennell@watf.org. WATF is located at 100 S King Street, Ste. 208 in Seattle.

CCTVs at SightConnection

Desktop

Desktop CCTVs are ideal for prolonged reading tasks because they allow many words to be displayed at once. They also work well for prolonged writing tasks, viewing photographs and medicine bottles.

Prices from \$1,000 - \$4,000

Handheld or Portable

Portable CCTVs are ideal for daily living tasks such as filling in forms, checking an address in an address book, writing checks and other short reading or writing tasks. Many portable CCTVs are small enough to comfortably fit in a shirt pocket or purse.

Prices from \$300 - \$1,000

CCTV Rentals

If you are interested in CCTVs, but aren't ready to commit to a purchase quite yet, CSBPS has a monthly rental program intended just for you! Please call us at (206) 525-5556 to discuss options and schedule an appointment!



Community Services
for the Blind and
Partially Sighted

ASSISTIVE TECH BYTES



Lan Nguyen helping a client in our assistive technology center

The Victor Reader Stream is a small talking multiple function device, only slightly larger than a pack of cards, that is specially designed for blind or visually impaired people who need to travel light. The Victor

Reader Stream can play talking books from a variety of sources such as NLS (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped), Bookshare, RFB&D (Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic), audible.com and audio books recorded on CDs. It can also play magazines and newspapers available from NLS, NFB and Bookshare.

It doubles as a talking music mp3 player because it can play music in .mp3 or .wav format. It can be a recorder too! Users can record short notes or lectures. It's an exciting product, the likes of which the visually impaired community has not had for a long time.

For more information about the Victor Reader Stream visit the Humanware website at www.humanware.com.

For more information about screen reader or screen magnifier technology, call Lan Nguyen, Assistive Technology Specialist at CSBPS at (206) 525-5556 or (800) 458-4888. Email lnguyen@csbps.com.

How to Reach CSBPS

Phone: (206) 525-5556
Toll Free: (800) 458-4888
Fax: (206) 525-0422
Email: csbps@csbps.com

Agency website: www.csbps.com
Store website: www.sightconnection.com
Donation website: www.donatecsb.org

Office/store location:
9709 Third Ave NE, #100
Seattle, WA 98115-2027

Office hours: 8 am - 5 pm, M-F

Store hours: 9 am - 5 pm, M-F



The PRISM is published by CSBPS and is available free upon request in large print, Braille, recorded on cassette tape or PC disk. If you want to be removed from the mailing list, please let us know. CSBPS does not sell or lend its mailing list to any other organization.



Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE WA
PERMIT NO 40

Visionary Society

YOU CAN LEAVE A LEGACY. Make a lasting difference in the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired by remembering Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted in your will or estate plans.

Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted works with individuals, families and communities to restore, maintain and enhance the independence and well being of people with impaired vision.

Founded as a private, not for profit agency in 1965, CSBPS has developed into the Northwest's leading vision rehabilitation agency and specializes in helping individuals develop strategies and skills designed to promote and enhance safety and independence despite vision loss.



9709 THIRD AVE NE #100
SEATTLE, WA 98115-2027

Community Services
for the Blind and
Partially Sighted
C · S · B · P · S

Winter 2008

PRISM