

# Annual Report 2013



**Blind & Vision Rehabilitation  
Services of Pittsburgh**

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*Changing the lives of persons with vision loss  
and other disabilities by fostering  
independence and individual choice.*

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# Message from the President & Chairman

Dear Friends,

It’s hard to believe that we are looking back on another completed year at Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh. Where does the time go? Although the year seems to have passed in the blink of an eye, we have accomplished so much.

As we reflect on the past year, we are very proud of the achievements of our clients and staff. Each year, they find new and creative ways to support our organization as well as others. Our clients hosted art shows, baked delicious goods, collected food donations and so much more. Our staff also reached out to New View Oklahoma, an organization similar to Blind & Vision Rehab, and donated more than \$2,000 to support its reconstruction efforts after a devastating tornado. It is rewarding to work where giving back is part of our daily culture.

We are delighted to report that we ended our third consecutive year without a deficit because of your

generosity. This would not be possible without each one of you sharing your time, talent and treasure with us. The kindness of our donors allowed us to redesign our fitness room to a state-of-the-art fitness center for the community; have a beautiful sensory garden for our clients to enjoy; provide activities for our teens in the summer program, just to name a few.

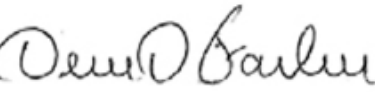
This was a special year for our agency: St. Lucy’s Auxiliary for the Blind donated \$200,000 and surpassed the \$3 million mark for its 49 years of support. These woman, their daughters and granddaughters work tirelessly to support the mission of our agency. Thank you.

As we end this letter to you, our loyal friends, we would like to share a favorite quote from Helen Keller: “Alone we can do so little. Together, we can do so much.” This statement is a true reflection of who we are as an agency. Thank you for your continued generosity.

Best Regards,



Erika Arbogast  
President



Dennis Farkos  
Chairman



# Statements of Activities

## BLIND AND VISION REHABILITATION SERVICES OF PITTSBURGH

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES  
YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2013 AND 2012

	2013	2012
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets:</b>		
Support and revenues:		
Service income	\$ 1,925,449	\$ 2,170,297
Sales	2,368,793	2,001,912
Donations and grants	1,393,820	1,384,118
Investment income	526,930	460,438
Realized/unrealized gains (losses)	518,124	85,494
Other revenues	133,617	139,804
Net assets released from restrictions	142,568	65,293
Total support and revenues	7,009,301	6,307,356
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Industries	2,057,859	1,825,523
Rehabilitation	1,293,487	1,252,849
Vocational services	1,019,379	1,095,815
Community and support	261,740	258,763
PBA Products and Services	295,877	313,940
Total program services	4,928,342	4,746,890
Management and general	984,160	959,961
Development	475,427	393,638
Total expenses	6,387,929	6,100,489
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	621,372	206,867
<b>Temporarily Restricted Net Assets:</b>		
Donations and grants	57,336	157,506
Net assets released from restriction	(142,568)	(65,293)
Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	(85,232)	92,213
<b>Permanently Restricted Net Assets:</b>		
Realized/unrealized gains (losses)	274,974	27,658
Change in Net Assets	811,114	326,738
<b>Net Assets:</b>		
Beginning of year	16,217,816	15,891,078
End of year	\$ 17,028,930	\$ 16,217,816



## Individuals Served in 2013

Rehabilitation Programs	Vocational Services	Community Services
Personal Adjustment to Blindness Training 19	Community Transition 20	Vision Screening: Children 11,665
Low Vision 459	Senior Transition 8	Adults 93
Access Technology 84	Employment Transition 34	Transportation 116
Career and Community Adjustment 15	Employment Support 292	Information/Referral 552
Community Based Training 55		Public Education 5,085





Children's Vision Screening is our foremost contribution to the prevention of blindness. We provide free vision screenings to nearly 12,000 children each year.



Each summer youth ages 16 to 21 who are blind or vision impaired come and stay with us for five weeks as they learn to transition from high school to adult life in college or the workforce. The teens also participate in leisure activities in the evenings and on weekends.



We are one of only a few U.S. residential adjustment to blindness training models that teach individuals how to live independently in their homes and communities. Our students come to us from all across the U.S. and around the world.

## Did You Know...

### ... about our Manufacturing Division?

Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh has maintained a manufacturing facility since its inception. Our predecessor organization, Pittsburgh Blind Association, was founded in 1910 primarily to provide employment opportunities for persons who were blind or visually impaired recognizing that those individuals could be productive if trained as skilled workers. As Blind & Vision Rehab expanded into social and rehabilitation services as well as blindness prevention, our PBA Industries, named for Pittsburgh Blind Association, retained this facility. And employees continue to benefit not only from the financial stability a job provides, but the independence and dignity that come with rewarding employment.

The PBA Industries division has grown and prospered due to the workmanship of our employees, 96 percent of whom are blind or visually impaired. Craftspeople at our North Side facility create a variety of goods for both public and private sectors such as construction safety products, portable highway signs, signage, textiles and silk-screened items. Additional employees work for our PBA Products and Services division, which offers cleaning and other contract services for businesses.

PBA Industries received the 2012 Employment Growth Award from National Industries for the Blind. Despite sequestration and recent economic constraints, our Industries program increased its labor hours by 5,000 and added four full-time positions and one part-time position, all of which were filled by individuals who are legally blind. This increase in labor hours is 38 percent higher than in 2011.

In addition, our Industries program not only creates jobs for individuals who are blind or vision impaired but also helps provide financial support to the agency. Industries contributed \$142,000 to the agency's bottom line at the end of last fiscal year. This is an increase of 44 percent over the prior fiscal year. As costs increase for our rehabilitation programs and payments remain steady or decrease, we rely on our Industries program to help fund these deficits in our programs, which are core to our mission.







# Blind & Vision Rehab Provides More Than Training for This Accounting Professional

So, how do you tell your boss that you're losing your eyesight? And you're the assistant controller? And you've enlarged the font on your computer screen as much as possible?

Fortunately, when Sarah Lucas felt it was time to tell her employer that she had serious vision problems, there was no problem. As a matter of fact, the heavy duty trucking company in Kentucky offered fantastic incentives to keep Sarah as its assistant controller even when her husband's company transferred him to Pittsburgh in 2010. She could have a full week off each month to

travel to be with him; she could work from home.

Sarah loved her family, her friends, her church, and her job, where she had been employed for 13 years. She did not move to Pittsburgh at first. They wanted to make sure her husband liked his new job and the new city. He did. So, Sarah tested the job market in Pittsburgh via a temp job but encountered unwillingness to accommodate her need for accessible computer technology. The 37-year-old professional woman with an impressive resume — multiple college degrees including a bachelor's in accounting and associate's in applied science and management and information systems — was given menial tasks.

"I always had confidence in myself and I've always had a good job. I wasn't used to this transition," Sarah says of her first months of working in Pittsburgh. So she went back to Kentucky and the trucking company that was willing to make more than just technological accommodations. But she missed her husband.

Sarah and her husband have since sold their home in Kentucky and Sarah made a permanent relocation this year. During her transition, she was referred to Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh through the state Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services and initially received training through the Access Technology Center on ZoomText, computer magnification and screen reading software for individuals who are visually impaired. She then participated in a job readiness program funded by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, which she credits as helping to regain her confidence in the employment arena and teaching her to be assertive in explaining her eye disease.

Sarah has Stargardt's disease, a progressive reduction of central vision. Up until the year 2000 when she was diagnosed, Sarah had near perfect vision. There is no cure.

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***"Tracey, Spero and Art  
do all that they do  
because they love doing it.  
They are just super."***

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"Coming here (to Blind & Vision Rehab) really helped me," Sarah says. "It's been such a blessing. Tracey, Spero and Art do all that they do because they love doing it. They are just super." Tracey Morsek, Spero Pipakis and Art Rizzino make up the Access Technology Center staff.

More than the techniques and technology, Sarah's time at Blind & Vision Rehab has led to new friendships. She and others who were part of the Highmark job readiness program have banded together as a computer users group — EyesFree Pittsburgh — meeting twice a month at Blind & Vision Rehab's Access Technology Center.

"We're all from different backgrounds, and I just love meeting with all of them. This experience has helped my quality of life," Sarah says.

And, it likely will continue to help her when she returns to the workforce. Sarah's eyes are sensitive to light and she has difficulty being in front of a computer screen for more than 30 minutes. During users group gatherings, she noticed others using JAWS®, a screen reader developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content. JAWS reads aloud what's on the PC screen, so once Sarah learns how to use it she will not need to turn on the computer screen.

"I went from large font to CCTV to ZoomText, and now I'm transitioning to JAWS. I love accounting and I love working in the corporate world," Sarah says. "I won't let it stop me just because I can't see normally." She laughs at her own passion. "I'm like this because of my faith."

She adds, "I don't want to be average in my job. I want to be extraordinary at my job. By the time I was 29, I was assistant controller for a big company. I don't think your circumstances define your success."

Not at all.  
Especially for  
Sarah Lucas.





» The agency's newsletter was christened "The Spectacle." We're not quite sure of the last time the newsletter had an official name, but thought it was time. All Blind & Vision Rehab staff were invited to submit suggestions. We had 47 nominations for "Name That Newsletter" from 21 employees and the judging was intense, even with whimsical entries like "Busy BVRs" and "Hocus Focus"! "The Spectacle" is courtesy of Kimberly Hunter, Employment Transition Services employment specialist.



» Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh's manufacturing division, PBA Industries, was honored by National Industries for the Blind (NIB) for its efforts to increase employment retention, growth and upward mobility for people who are blind. The 2012 Employment Growth Award recognized our success and commitment to increasing economic independence for people who are blind, along with our efforts to increase upward mobility in the workplace and job placements.

» Our fitness center was redesigned and named in honor of Michael A. Romano, Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh former board chairperson and retired senior vice president of risk and administrative services for Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. The fitness center occupies a larger space with new exercise equipment thanks to funding from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Robert and Mary Weisbrod Foundation and the William B. McLaughlin Charitable Trust.



» Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh President Erika Arbogast was named a 2013 Diamond Award winner by the Pittsburgh Business Times. Diamond Awards honor the region's top presidents, CEOs and executive directors. Erika is among the four nonprofit leaders named and among the 16 leaders in both nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

» BNY Mellon awarded the agency a \$70,000 grant — \$20,000 for Preschool Vision Screening and \$50,000 for Youth Workforce Development. Altogether, 2,000 children and teenagers benefited from this funding.



» Our Community Transition Program artists went wild with pink in honor of October Breast Cancer Awareness Month and sold their art projects including vases, candle sets and key chains. Their efforts raised \$276 for the Susan B. Komen Foundation.

» On White Cane safety Day, Oct. 15, BVRs staff and volunteers from The Auxiliary, BVRs, distributed information on white cane safety at various sites during the morning rush and afternoon lunch hours in Downtown Pittsburgh.

» St. Lucy's Auxiliary to the Blind, a volunteer organization founded in 1957 to encourage volunteer service in young women, gave us a \$200,000 gift — proceeds from the annual Medallion Ball recognizing young women for their volunteer efforts. Since 1959, St. Lucy's Auxiliary to the Blind has given Blind & Vision Rehab \$3,155,366.

» The grounds at Blind & Vision Rehab have been adorned with a sensory garden designed and created by Matthew Scotti, an Eagle Scout candidate and volunteer for our summer program for teens. This garden is specifically created to be accessible and enjoyable to persons with a disability and provides individual and combined sensory opportunities that they may not normally experience.



» Blind & Vision Rehab honored Art Rooney II, president and co-owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers, as its 2013 Person of Vision. The event raised more than \$135,000.

» Our new Young Professionals Group kicked off its agency affiliation with a successful evening of sushi rolling taught by Penn Avenue Fish Co. experts at the Toon-Seum in Downtown Pittsburgh.



THE CHUCK NOLL ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

The Chuck Noll Road to Independence Society was established to pay tribute to Mr. Noll. When he retired from the Steelers, Mr. Noll joined the Board of Directors of The Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind, noting the similarity between his approach to success in football and the agency’s success in rehabilitation. When the Guild consolidated with Pittsburgh Blind Association, Chuck Noll became the first Chairman of the Board of the new agency, now called Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh.

Members of the prestigious Chuck Noll Road to Independence Society pledge unrestricted gifts of at least \$1,000 per year for five years.

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Richard P. & Bonnie B. Anton	Robert A. Gordon	Leslie Montgomery-Reidenbaugh
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	Mr. Thomas Merriman	+deceased

LEGACY SOCIETY

The Society was established to honor the volunteer work of individuals committed to the mission of Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh.

Michele Antonelli	Lin M. Getz	Elizabeth McCarthy
Diana Kay Bills	Julia Sheridan Gleason	Penny McKenna
Regina M. Callahan	Terri A. Hastings	Mary Ann McKnight
Helen Hanna Casey	Terry Jancisin	E. Patricia Constantin Orringer
Annie Hanna Engel	Mary Ellen Maher	Roseanne Wholey

Donations were made during fiscal year 2013. While every donation is appreciated, only donations of \$50 or more are listed due to printing costs. Thank you for your understanding.

Businesses

84 Lumber	Giant Eagle
A. C. Dellovade, Inc.	Gordon Terminal Service
A. Martini & Co.	Greer Industries, Inc.
Allegheny Valley Bank of Pittsburgh	Grossman Yanak & Ford, LLP
Allstate Employee Giving Campaign	Grow Pittsburgh
American Eagle Outfitters, Inc.	Guardian Construction Management Services, Inc.
Ameritas Group	Henderson Brothers, Inc.
Aramark	Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
Arizona Carolina Football Club	Hinkel-Hofmann
Avalotis Corporation	Hoffman Electric, Inc.
Bayer MaterialScience	Howard Hanna Real Estate Services
Bechtel Plant Machinery, Inc.	IBM Employee Charitable Contribution Campaign
BNY Mellon	IKM Incorporated
Bognar and Company, Inc.	IKON Office Solutions
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney, P.C.	Indianapolis Colts, Inc.
Burchick Construction Company	Industrial Rubber Products Co.
Calgon Carbon Corporation	Integrated Environmental Systems, Inc.
Centria	ISS Facility Services
Chima, Inc.	Johnson & Johnson Matching Gifts Program
Chloe’s Adornments	Landau Building Company
Chubb & Son, Inc.	Landmark Event Staffing Services
Clarion Ford Mercury	Lennon Smith Souleret Engineering
Clark Hill Thorp Reed, LLP	Mascaro Construction Company, LP
Conrad Hotel & Lounge, Inc.	Matcon Diamond, Inc.
Cost Company	Maxim Crane Works
Creative Minds Learning Center, Ilc	MBM Contracting, Inc.
dck worldwide, LLC	Miami Dolphins Foundation
Deckman Company	Minnesota Vikings Football, LLC
Dell Fastener Corporation	Mobili Office, LLC
Desmone & Associates Architects	Mosites Construction Company
Detroit Switch, Inc.	New York Football Giants, Inc.
Dollar Bank	NFL Foundation
Ductmate Industries, Inc.	Orafol Americas, Inc.
Eat’n Park	Oxford Development Company
Elizabeth Carbide Die Co., Inc.	P.J. Dick Contracting
Elizabeth United Methodist	Palmetto Partners, Ltd.
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Franklin Interiors	
GAI Consultants, Inc.	
Gateway Engineers, Inc.	

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Specified Solutions
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Target Office Products
Teris Parking, Inc.
The Buncher Company
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Tucker Arensberg
UPMC Health Plan
Vista Metals, Inc.

Community Groups

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Bethel Park Lions Club
Center Presbyterian Church
Clairton Lions Club
Consumer Provider Council of the Blind
Delta Gamma Alumni
South Hills Chapter
Duquesne University
Elfinwild Lions Club
Ewing Hills Preschool, Inc.
Forest Hills Lions Club
Hamilton Presbyterian Church USA
Hillcrest Preschool
Homestead Lions Club
Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Grand Lodge of PA
McKeesport Lions Club
Monaca Center Lions Club
Mt. Lebanon Lions Club
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Oakmont Lions Club
Pitcairn Lions Club
Pittsburgh Lions Club
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Pleasant Hills Lions Club
Praise Christian Day Care

St. Lucy's Auxiliary  
St. Peter's U.C.C. Sunday School  
South Park Lions Club  
Tarentum Lions Club  
The Auxiliary, BVRS  
The Ciloets  
Tiny Tykes Academy, LLC  
Tuscarora Intermediate Unit No. 11  
Upper St. Clair Lions Club  
Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, USA  
West Mifflin Lions Club  
Wexford Community Presbyterian Church  
Whitehall Community Lions Club  
Wilmerding Lions Club

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Estate of Peter Burnett  
Estate of Bernice Kennedy  
Estate of Joseph Knoerdel  
Estate of Alice B. Lytle  
Estate of Betty L. McCurdy

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