



ASSOCIATED SERVICES
FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

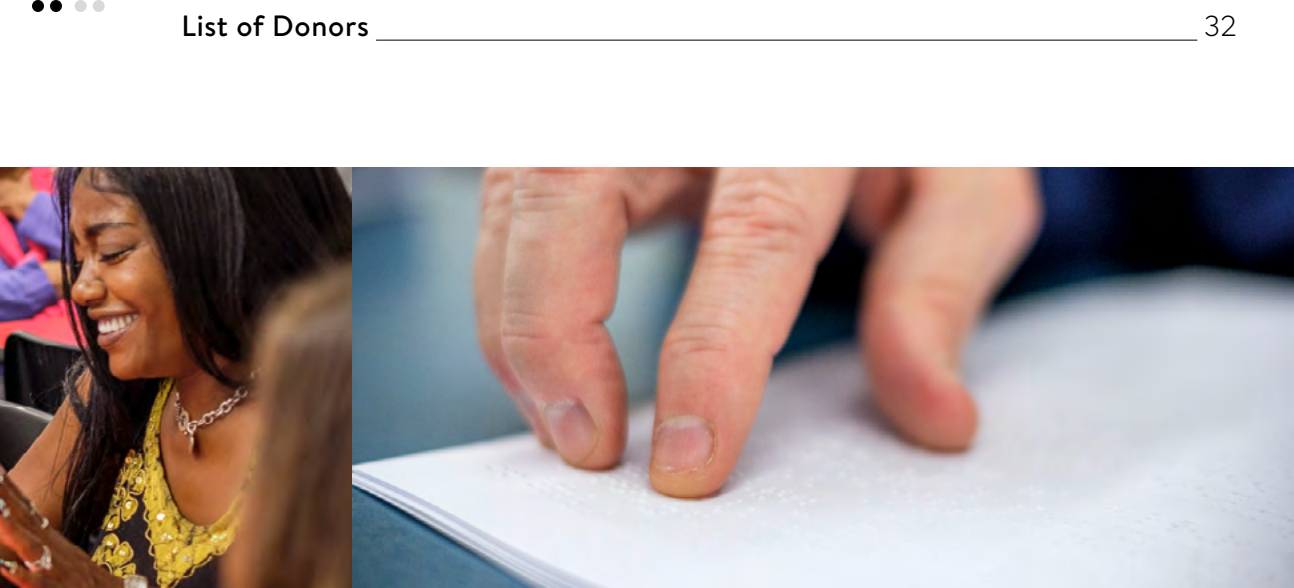
2017-18 FISCAL YEAR

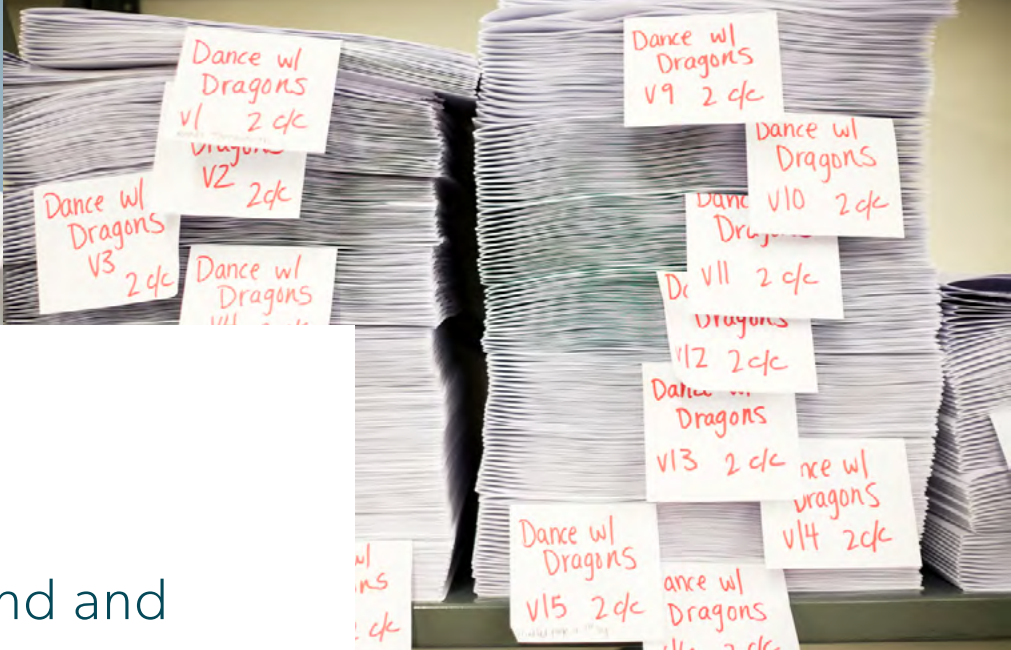
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



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Mission and Vision

Associated Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASB) is a human services organization that acts as a liaison for those in the Philadelphia region facing blindness or a loss of vision. We foster connections among the region’s many diverse resources, working with our partners to advance health and well-being, harness technology as a tool, and expand



“At ASB I’ve been exposed to blind people who can do and make some amazing things.”

—Eric Coleman, ASB client



the reach of the arts and cultural offerings in our vibrant communities. Building on a history of nearly 145 years, ASB promotes independence and self-determination through education, training, and resources, as well as community action and public engagement. We support clients in setting and working toward their own individual goals for achieving the quality of life they desire. Our resources, experience, and expertise help clients facilitate their autonomy and community involvement.

"Looking back at all that I've learned and experienced as an ASB client brings a smile to my face."

—Marsha Levy, ASB client



Message from the President & CEO and Board Chair

It is with great pride that we showcase the dedication and commitment of ASB's educators, trainers, and volunteers—as well as the accomplishments of the diverse constituency that we serve. It has been a busy year as we have embarked on a strategic planning process, and we continue to refine and reinvigorate our role as a resource for clients and their families. We are eager to report to our many partners, clients, funders, and friends on the improvements we have put into place, as we strengthen and expand our programs and services.

This is a timely moment of transition within the organization, and an important one for the community we serve. In the coming decades the residents of the Commonwealth—now home to the nation's second-oldest population—will experience the effects of aging even more dramatically than the rest of the U.S., where visual impairment currently affects 1 of every 28 Americans over age 40. We strive to serve as a gatekeeper to a broader continuum of excellent care available in this region, from human services agencies and medical care to mental health support and education. We are committed to a holistic approach in which we connect clients to the web of available resources.

We have used this foundation year to continue to improve our strong relationships. To this end, we have expanded partnerships with organizations throughout the region, to widen our community and our reach. We have also invested time in evaluating our facilities as well as our programs, and made important renovations to an entire floor of our historic Walnut Street location.



*Karla S. McCaney
President & CEO*



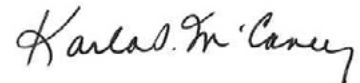
*Ronald E. Bowlan
Board Chair*

Here we share stories about how clients are using our services to improve and even transform their lives. Equipped with knowledge, compassion, and insight, our experienced and qualified staff help our clients to meet their goals. This can mean learning to use a white cane, navigating the streets of Center City with confidence, using adaptive techniques in our Hands-on Garden in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, enjoying a play or a Phillies game with others in the ASB community, or adapting a smartphone into a powerful—and empowering—tool for accessibility.

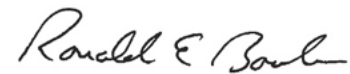
At ASB we are making use of the latest technology and implementing the best practices in the field, all the while making a daily commitment to the sustainability of our service so that our clients are empowered to live the personal and professional lives they choose. We look forward to more progress and growth as an organization as we continue to serve this dynamic and engaged community.

"I feel at home at ASB."

—Clarence Humphrey, ASB client



Karla S. McCaney
President & CEO



Ronald E. Bowlan
Board Chair



SECTION 1



Above: Instructor Bette Homer (second from right) leads a Life Skills class on audio book player technology.

Who We Are

ASB's history is a testament to philanthropy, charitable giving, and volunteerism in Philadelphia and the surrounding communities. Throughout the decades ASB has remained steadfast in its commitment to continually improve, innovate, and build on a comprehensive array of client-centered services.

A Proud History

In 1874, the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men, ASB's forerunner, opened its doors. After World War II, Volunteer Services for the Blind (VSB), an independent agency, formed to transcribe books and magazines into braille and later record college-level textbooks. In the 1970s, VSB expanded its braille program to include government contracts, and moved to ASB's current location at 919 Walnut Street in Philadelphia's Washington Square West neighborhood. In the early 1980s, VSB united with two other local agencies—the Information Center for the Blind and the Nevil Institute for Rehabilitation and Services—to form an advocacy organization for people who are blind or visually impaired. We are committed to living up to this legacy today, and serving the needs of the blind and visually impaired as they continue to evolve amidst the demands of modern life.



The original site of the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men was at 3518 Lancaster Avenue.



SECTION 2



Above: Our trainers teach clients the essential skill of using a white cane so they develop self-confidence in negotiating stairs and other obstacles.

How We Serve

ASB is client-centered at our core. Our staff welcome each new client as an individual with unique life experiences, goals, and motivations. From the initial intake, we talk through our comprehensive list of classes that offer information and training, as well as our many support groups, recreational programming, and case management services. We strive to ensure that our clients not only learn the skills they need, but also have the ongoing support to continue building on their knowledge over time. We continually revisit and adapt our programs to be responsive to the goals that our clients tell us they set for themselves.

A

Navigating the Physical World:
Facilitating Life Skills



B

The World at Your Fingertips:
Technology as a Tool



C

Quality of Life:
Social Programs and Recreation





Navigating the Physical World: FACILITATING LIFE SKILLS



Mobility instructor Eric DiFiore (right) works with client Gloria Nathan. Clients learn basic orientation mobility such as spatial relationships, object perception, traffic flow, navigating intersections, and safe techniques for crossing the street.

Orientation and Mobility

For many of our clients, our Orientation and Mobility Training offers a supportive context for taking steps toward a more independent life. After a full evaluation of the client's current abilities and needs, our staff help them learn skills to optimally navigate their homes, workplaces, community, and the world.



“

“Like so much of what I’ve learned as an ASB client, I learned about Access Link [for help with transportation] from a blind member of the ASB satellite group in Northeast Philadelphia. Last summer I asked an ASB staff member to help me apply to New Jersey’s Access Link. How neat to be able to travel from Center City to anywhere in New Jersey! When a friend invited me to her summer home in Ventnor, New Jersey, I was equipped to make the journey.

After downloading the New Jersey-New York map onto my talking GPS device, so I could orient myself, we walked on the boardwalk, and to the pier, restaurants, and stores in the area. My friend is also visually impaired, so she enjoyed hearing the names of streets as we walked around her new surroundings. I also brought my portable talking book and Internet radio Victor reader stream player, which has a recording function. I used it to record the sounds of the waves while standing on the pier over the ocean. It was a blast being there! I look forward to going back. I was fortunate to learn about the various devices from other ASB clients who used and demonstrated them for me. Looking back at all that I’ve learned and experienced as an ASB client brings a smile to my face.”

—Marsha Levy, social worker and ASB client since 2014



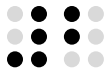
Mobility instructor
Eric DiFiore

“

“ASB provides some of the best mobility instruction I’ve ever had. The trainers helped me learn to use my ears to navigate the city, go with the flow of the traffic, and cross the streets with confidence. One of the good things about ASB is that the groups offer you the chance to learn from other visually impaired people how to manage. I’ve developed my own way of handling myself, and now that I’m one of the veteran clients around here I can share some of my ways with others. I’m not Superman, and I do need some help, but I try to be as independent as I can. I’m also motivated not to have to rely on my wife or my son too much. At ASB I’ve been exposed to blind people who can do and make some amazing things.”

—Eric Coleman, former juvenile justice consultant and ASB client since 2006

MOBILITY MEANS FREEDOM



Life Skills Education

ASB staff members work alongside our clients to support them in developing practical skills, in one-on-one tutorials in the field as well as workshops in the classroom. We provide the support individuals need to gain independence, with a focus on safety. Life Skills Education classes address a wide range of topics, such as personal adjustment to blindness, sensory development, self-esteem building, peer support, introduction to assistive technology, health management, and safety.

As an ASB life skills educator, Bette Homer (center) introduces ASB clients to skills they need to live more independent lives. Herself blind, she offers hands-on experience with adaptive equipment, such as screen readers and magnification adaptations. She trains clients on skills as diverse as managing currency, identifying colors, and preparing food safely to empower clients with low vision. Always at Bette's feet is her service dog, Aaron.



Each Fall clients benefit from ASB's partnership with Temple University's Recreational Therapy program, when Assistant Professor Gena Bell Vargas and her team of Rehabilitation Services students provide need-based life skills training. Their focus is on helping clients reduce stress, increase activity levels and exercise, and improve overall health.

Client-Centered Goal Setting: Evaluations, Referrals, and Case Management

ASB acts as a gateway to an extended network of organizations that provides services our clients can use at any level of vision loss, including human services organizations, schools, cultural institutions, and advocacy groups.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Beth Deering Director of Human Services

Initially a client services specialist, Beth Deering began her tenure at ASB identifying what services clients needed and making referrals to partners, nonprofits, and other city, state, and federal agencies. In 2017 she assumed a broader role, overseeing all client service activities, including supervision and training of Life Skills programming, Support Groups, Access Technology, and Orientation and Mobility. She also oversees how ASB recruits and engages clients, including the intake process, and ensures that the organization's standards and programs comply with requirements of governing agencies.

“ *Over the last few months we've developed a much more intentional focus on client-set and client-centered goals. When an individual comes in for services, whether it's their first visit or they've been here for a year, we ask them to identify personal goals. Sometimes their answer may be simple and straightforward, such as wanting to take the bus independently, or learning how to identify their medication without assistance. We strive to meet the clients exactly where they are by customizing our trainings based on trends in individual needs.*

At an intake we begin a discussion about the client's most pressing need, and then find ways for ASB to fit into that support. In some cases, this translates to helping the client identify what technology is going to serve them best in their workplace, which may be an important aspect of adjusting to vision loss. We provide resources to help clients advocate for themselves at any level. We've increased the frequency of our staff check-ins, so that every three months we revisit the goals and timelines clients have set for themselves.



Whether it's finding new employment or learning to use a kind of adaptive equipment, we're here to work alongside the client and support them in their process.

Part of my role is to look at the trends in terms of what the entire range of clients are seeking from us, including those who have engaged our services for a day, a week, or a year. I ask, what kind of services are they coming—and staying—for? How can we be sure we are giving clients the support they need? As we capture more information and continue to listen to our clients, I am able to tailor our services to meet their needs in the most effective and responsive ways.”

*Beth Deering with
ASB client Joe Eiland*





The World at Your Fingertips: TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL



Access Technology instructor Andrew Godwin, who is visually impaired, works with clients on learning the accessibility options of an iPhone.

Access Technology Center (ATC)

At the Access Technology Center, students further their education in assistive and adaptive technology. While some clients come to ASB looking for an introduction, we are also equipped to support clients who are highly experienced with technology as they adjust to varying degrees of vision loss. Overall the ATC teaches skills that enable clients to better carry out activities of daily living and achieve greater independence. Training takes place with individuals or in small groups.



The instruction includes personal computer and software use, internet navigation, e-mail and social media savvy, and use of other assistive devices such as screen readers and magnification software. Due to increasing client interest in portable devices, the ATC also provides smartphone and tablet training as well as an introduction to accessibility software.

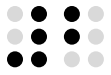
ASB has expanded the availability of both devices and software this past year. These upgrades enabled the development of several new initiatives and programs that will be fully implemented in the coming months, such as access technology software training sessions on LookTel, KNFB, TapTapSee, Be My Eyes, Seeing AI, BARD Mobile, AT College Prep, iOS shopping, and Amazon Alexa.

Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind

Thanks to this endowed fund, ASB is able to provide grants to clients who demonstrate a financial need for adaptive equipment and access technology, such as readers, tablets, talking watches, magnifiers, and more. In fiscal year 2017–2018, this program made possible grants for 166 devices, including 15 talking watches, 8 voice recorders, and 10 talking clocks.

“ I am proud that the Lighthouse fund has made it possible to provide dozens of products for ASB clients in need, to help them succeed in their endeavors and live life to the fullest. Each year the board receives more requests, and we are pleased to be able to honor so many of them.”

—Art Seidner, Chair of the ASB Board committee for the Philadelphia Lighthouse of the Blind



Collator Rich Patterson has seen a lot of changes over the years at ASB, having been on staff since 1978. A graduate of Overbrook School for the Blind, he initially commuted back and forth to Syracuse University, working at ASB on weekends. For many years he worked as an engineer and producer in the broadcasting program, when ASB housed a radio station. Now he works in the Braille Division, preparing the numerous pages for binding into books.

Communications and Publishing: Braille Program and Alternative Formats

Part of ASB's history is operating a full-scale braille production facility onsite, one of several in the United States. The Braille Division converts and produces a wide variety of print material into alternative formats for people who have vision impairment. Our customers include restaurants, utility companies, educational institutions, and the Library of Congress.

Over the last year, ASB's Braille Division produced over 11 million pages of braille, with more than 55 braille books, transcribing approximately 35,000 braille pages, equaling over 8,500 volumes, and producing 13 monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly magazines. We also created alternative formats for Educational Testing Services (ETS), textbooks, and smaller publications, such as handbooks, menus, newsletters,



audio for SEPTA and New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and custom materials for individuals.

Our braille, large print, and custom audio materials are available for individuals and organizations on a local and national scale. Individuals demonstrating need can receive our materials at low or no cost.



Staff Member Maggie Cicala won the 2018 Frances Williams Volunteer Service Award from the Philadelphia Regional Chapter of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind.

Transcription and proofreading services are fundamental to the Braille Division (top). A machine operator oversees the Heidelberg Press (bottom left). The collating process on the press floor prepares books for delivery (bottom right).





STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Jessi Rivera Braille Transcriber

Jessi Rivera, who has worked at ASB for 6 years, spends a significant amount of her time creating tactile graphics, taking the maps and diagrams that appear in books and devising three-dimensional solutions to convey this complicated visual information to the average braille reader. This work is strategic as well as creative, methodical, and technical. It also requires research and asking questions—even sometimes writing to the author for clarification. “Authors are generally eager to communicate with me when they learn I’m translating their work into braille,” she says.

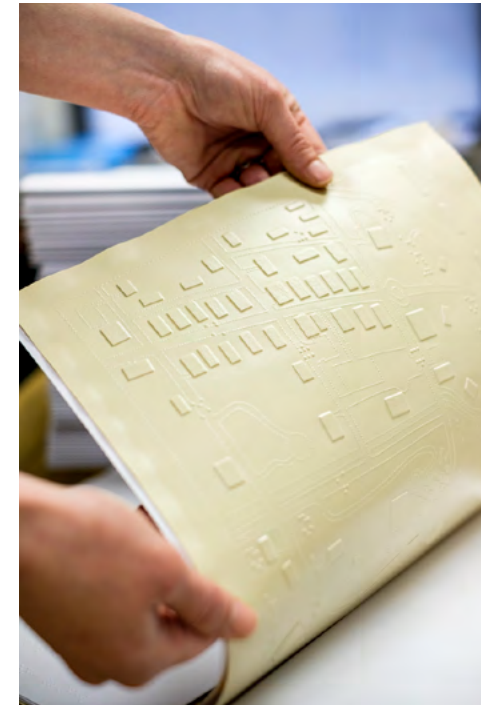
“*During the planning process, I devise textures, braille keys, and the zoom ratio. I choose textures like burlap, canvas, and leather, to represent elements such as castles, bodies of water, and other structures on a map.*

I create the graphic master on plain braille paper, and use spur wheels to represent borders and rivers/roads. I add the braille labels from the key I made, gluing on the different textures. Next the Thermoform machine uses heat and vacuum to create a version on plastic paper for the copies that ultimately go to the National Library Service and the libraries.”





This year Jessi, who reads braille by sight, was named treasurer of the Braille Authority of North America. For several years she has been ASB's board representative to the prestigious organization, which provides guidelines and rules for braille throughout North America.



This year ASB transcribed a 300-page Game of Thrones book into braille for the Library of Congress. The resulting braille version was 11 volumes.



Quality of Life: SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND RECREATION

Enriching our clients' lives is as essential as teaching concrete skills. ASB is committed to a holistic approach, one that reflects how we focus on the whole person, including cultivating the wide range of abilities of those who engage our services. The supportive community at ASB stems from the clients' close interactions with instructors and staff as well as with their peers.

Alumni find they have built lifelong connections among their peers at ASB.





Building the ASB Community: Peer Support

One of ASB's most important roles is facilitating networks of peer support, both formal and informal. Clients find that our peer groups provide a safe space to talk about the realities and challenges of blindness or low or changing vision and to learn from the experiences and insights of others.

As part of a Peer Mentoring Program, which launched in spring 2018, new clients have the opportunity to access social support through a partnership with a veteran client. In the Low Vision Support Group, clients engage with individuals facing similar conditions and have the opportunity to share stories, concerns, and triumphs.



“

“When I came to ASB I learned about a lot of the different conditions leading to vision loss. My vision loss was gradual but I was not aware of it. I retired from the federal government, after working for the Office of Housing and Urban Development, and began working for an airline, and I was using computers there when I started to become aware that I was losing my sight.

I feel at home at ASB because over time I had a chance to get to know the other clients, and they could get to know me. I'm a listener—that's how I like to learn. I'm more comfortable staying quiet until I have something to say. One of the good things about the Low Vision group is I have a chance to hear others share their experiences, what they are doing to help themselves. At 80, I think I'm the oldest member of the group. I've come to learn that no two people took the same path to where we are.”

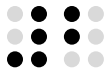
—Clarence Humphrey, retired HUD employee and ASB client since 2012

LEARNING BY LISTENING

“

“I came to ASB in 2014, looking for opportunities to get out of my house and socialize. One learning experience [at ASB] leads to another. I've attended ArtReach events at local theaters, and [I remember] hearing audio description for the first time. I've participated in popular dance instruction with rec[reational] therapy students. I've joined monthly book and international cuisine club groups. I love my ASB 'family!'”

—client Marsha Levy




Gardening at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Center

Our gardening program, located in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park, provides countless opportunities for clients to develop hands-on skills as they become creative and connect to nature. Clients learn adaptive techniques for this nourishing and gratifying activity.

Recreation Programs and Cultural Opportunities

ASB offers a supportive community for clients to socialize, make new friends, and enjoy themselves among peers who have similar interests. Strong partnerships with ArtReach as well as the Pennsylvania Ballet, Walnut Street Theatre, and other local cultural organizations provide accessible experiences for our clients.



SECTION 3



Above: An ASB Men's Group meets regularly.

Partnering with the Community: Outreach, Education, and Advocacy

ASB strives to serve as a resource to the community by partnering with local organizations interested in improving or learning from interactions with individuals with visual impairment.



In September 2017 staff member Bette Homer (far left) presented an in-service training to first-year nursing students at Thomas Jefferson University School of Nursing.

Educating the Sighted: ASB as a Resource

ASB staff members make presentations throughout the year, having spent many years building relationships with local healthcare and human services organizations as well as nearby colleges and universities. In 2017–18 our staff made presentations to the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging and JCC KleinLife as well as hosted interns and students from Temple University, Cairn University, and LaSalle University. ASB staff also participated in Thomas Jefferson University's Health Mentor Program.



Every Fall, Dr. Angela Nace of the Jefferson College of Pharmacy brings to ASB a group of her students from the Department of Pharmacy Practice, to work with Bette Homer's Diabetes Information group. For two hours each week over the semester, the students share relevant medical and health information with clients. In exchange the students gain firsthand clinical experience and valuable insight from the members of the group. In 2017, the students presented on topics including dehydration, heat stress and exhaustion, and managing blood glucose levels.

Bringing Resources Onsite: Partnerships and Speakers Program


Each month, ASB hosts staff from local community and government organizations who speak on services and activities that are of interest to our clients. Some of the participants this year included the City of Philadelphia's Office of Adult Education, the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, and the Social Security Administration.



In 2018, the Free Library of Philadelphia's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped hosted a summer reading program at ASB for six weeks, having chosen to read and discuss the book *The Miracle Worker*. Library volunteers were on hand to answer questions about the library's various services.

The Legal Clinic for the Disabled also made several visits to ASB this year, including a general presentation about the services the organization offers, as well as a credit workshop where attorneys helped clients to pull their credit reports and dispute any false information.

ASB is grateful for the partnership of these and other organizations that provide information and education for our clients.



SECTION 4

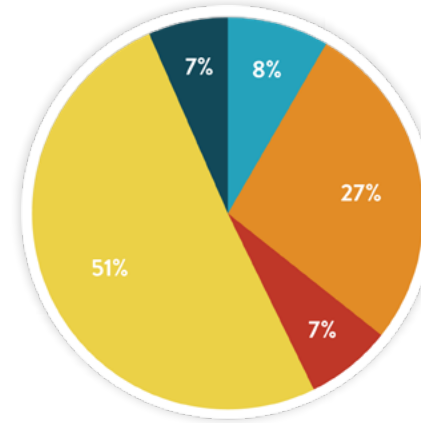


Above: A team works together to transcribe a document into braille.

Financial Overview

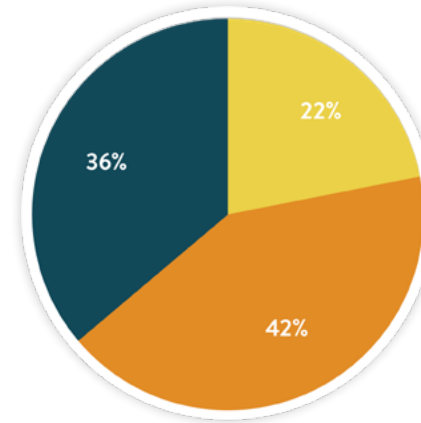
Support and Revenues

Contributed	\$ 399,281
Earned	\$ 1,320,067
Government Grants	\$ 349,110
Investment Income	\$ 2,437,991
Other Income	\$ 316,899
Total	\$ 4,823,348



Expenses

Program Services	\$ 817,665
Braille Operations	\$ 1,560,886
Administrative/General Operations	\$ 1,333,465
Total	\$ 3,712,016
Change in Net Assets	\$ 1,111,332





STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Joyce Robertson Director of Finance and Information Systems

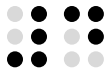
Joyce Robertson has been an ASB employee since 1993. Formerly serving as Controller, she was recently promoted to Director of Finance and Information Systems. As a key member of the ASB leadership team, Joyce is not only responsible for the day-to-day financial operations of the organization, but also a strong advocate for ASB's clients. Joyce often provides a vital historical and organizational perspective as we consider new ideas and programs.

“*Financial stability is essential for a nonprofit—making sure the nuts and bolts of the organization are stable and functioning well. This is especially important amidst the changing culture of the organization.*”

We continue to focus on finding new ways to be client-centered, and change is good. It's like a breath of fresh air.”

Joyce Robertson works closely with Human Services Director Beth Deering.





ASB would like to thank the many generous donors who have helped to make possible our programs and services over the past year.

Individual and Foundation Donors

\$50,000-\$74,999

Newlin E. Mortimer Foundation Trust

\$25,000-\$49,999

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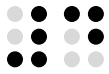
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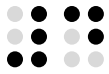
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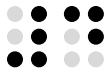


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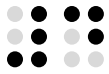
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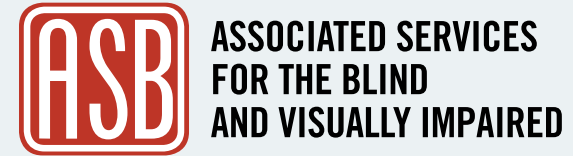


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