

# **Akron Blind Center, Incorporated 2019 Annual Report**

Mission: To promote quality of life enrichment for the blind and visually challenged as a member-centered organization

Principles: to provide unique services, programs, resources and classes for the blind and visually impaired in Summit and surrounding counties, otherwise not available

Vision Statement: Our vision is to become the fastest growing human services organization serving the blind and vision impaired through membership, volunteers, and outreach

Our objective is to reach and serve as many of the thousands of people in Summit and Medina Counties that suffer from vision loss and low vision

Values: Dignity, purpose, pride, camaraderie, rights and self-worth define the members and organization

Method: Purpose, worth and accomplishment will be elevated through greater independence, education, training, socialization, recreation and support.

Philosophy: At every opportunity, a sense of confidence and competence will be instilled in a respectful, secure, welcoming and positive environment.

Who We Serve: We serve the blind and low vision as well as diminishing vision persons and care givers thereof primarily in Summit and Medina counties, as well as surrounding regions

Motto: We can and we will!

## **Background**

The organization began in 1913 as the Summit County Society for the Blind. In 1948, it was incorporated as the Summit County Society for the Blind and Workshop and was CARF accredited. We are now DBA the Akron Blind Center, Inc., previously DBA Akron Blind Center and Workshop and Vision Support Services.

We are nationally recognized by governmental agencies, the IRS and charitable registries as a non-profit under our EIN 34-0742708.

## **Financial Report**

**(The following are unaudited figures presented for the sake of sincerely reporting raw data. It is openly and earnestly presented with every effort of transparency)**

### **Akron Blind Center and Workshop, Inc. Profit & Loss**

**January to December, 2019**

**Total Income/ Gross Profit: \$130,392.89**

**Total Expenses: \$116,230.22**

**Net Income: \$14,162.67**

## **Programs and Services**

### **Programs**

We sponsor many kids to attend a summer camp for the blind and visually impaired which has therapists and programs specific for their needs. We also offer a youth and young adult social program so they can be with like-aged and challenged individuals and parents can network to know they are not alone.

We offer a braille bridge program for students to take over the summer to stay sharp with skills. We teach both traditional and UEB versions of braille.

A backpack program provides materials and resources for visually impaired primary school children. A backpack with special vision challenged items is provided.

A scholarship program is available for higher education students who qualify according to impairment need.

Mentorship- Our mentorship program involves a youth or recently sight impaired individual being paired with a long-standing non-sighted member to learn various practical and resource identifications.

Adult Classes- Our classes provide education, skills training, job preparation, wellness and cultural enrichment. Classes include Braille, computer, keyboard and braille training, academic coursework with a screen reader, wellness, exercise, focus group, crafting, events, esteem and solutions training and resources.

Hats- The blind and visually impaired crochet hats, which are then donated to school children and the at-need. We also donate hats to cancer victims.

Computer Classes- We have a computer lab where keyboarding, beginner and advanced classes are taught. Screen reader software allows a non-sighted individual to have a screen automatically read for them. We also have a unique (although antiquated) Braille printer.

Transportation- Transportation represents the single-most limiting physical factor facing the vision impaired. Members must pay for each transport, each way, which is a cost strain for the financially challenged. There is a rather large expense for this service yearly, especially for those at poverty level (which most are).

We offer activity and event participation for members and program attendees, including recreational, entertainment, competitive, educational, social and cultural experiences.

We have a store in-house with items and aids for low vision and the blind.

We have a social media presence and multi-application website.

### **Organization Competencies**

Serving the blind age 18 to 90 in Summit County, Ohio

Offering classes and programs for the blind and low vision

Being a place of socialization and fraternal gathering

A smaller scale place for uncommon resources for the blind

Serves existing and long-standing members

Historically a passive community partner

Having an annual appeal (i.e. White Cane Experience) and outreach campaign (i.e. hat program)

Outreach and awareness is regularly provided to the communities served

Offers a wide variety of opportunities for a great diversity

### **Collaborations**

There are many non-financial partnerships we collaborate with, mostly by benefitting from either referrals, volunteers, networking and/or community contacts. Connections many times involve providing programs, services, resources, education for participants, clients, patients or patrons. There are greater than 50 agencies and organizations involved.

### **Director's Report**

2019 has been another very enlightening, elevating and productive year for the organization, in which our organization's importance, prominence, stature and notoriety continues to rise. We still have much to accomplish to further elevate our organization to the summit of non-profit excellence serving the blind and low vision, yet are constantly gaining traction with our efforts.

We have increased membership and community offerings and benefits, which is our primary responsibility. We have added and expanded youth programming, independence training, career acquisition skills training, senior programming, blind veteran presence and classes. Our activities and presence in the community increased, as was opportunities in general for members.

We are having a voluntary audit performed to disclose, examine, certify, improve and accurately report all financial elements of the organization. This is critical for responsible use of funds, transparency and oversight as a non-profit and to give confidence as a steward of funds to grantors and donors.

In a day of undeniable reliance on the internet, our social media presence soared with phenomenal website and Facebook responses, usually reserved for larger organizations. We completely revitalized our website at no cost, making it not only screen readable, but also with readability options for low vision viewers, educational, cell phone, donation, and communication friendly, and presentable for the sighted (and caregivers), even winning an award in the process.

Grant writing was extensive, and highly successful by fiscal standards. We worked hard to make our organization compliant, collaborative and responsible, which will aid in future applications.

In a tighter financial environment locally, we experienced reduced sponsorship and donations from last year, yet with ideas and plans which hold promise for the future. We can take comfort in knowing that with a healthy attendance (over 400) our primary goal of promoting Center awareness and marketing was considered successful.

We have continued an upward journey of opportunity and access improvement, networking and marketing, reputation and respect building, and awareness and outreach to increase deserved attention to our members and the inspiration they demonstrate.

Scott Reisberg, MBA, Executive Director Akron Blind Center, Inc.