Akron Blind Center, Incorporated 2022 Annual Report

We have a new mission statement which defines our actions. We have a mission to be a beacon for the visually challenged through resources, programs, and classes, and to enrich educational, life and independence skills training, volunteerism, employment, equality, and outreach opportunities.



2022 has been another stellar year for our Akron Blind Center family members. In the face of many challenges, like always, the visually challenged have overcome adversity.

COVID-19, transportation issues, challenges unique to the visually challenged with distancing and cross contamination, and similar service restrictions facing Centers across the state (country) have hampered our ability to safely and securely allow in-person functioning. Like life in general, we soon will overcome all obstacles and again be together.

We continue to offer virtual classes on a phone conference line, and lovingly reach our members through seasonal "We Care" deliveries. We offer outreach opportunities to schools, clubs and corporate entities (e.g., trust building and verbal skills training).

Our Board, which by our Code of Regulations must be comprised of majority visually challenged, continues to do a legendary job of supporting, providing for, and humbly leading our organization.

We have greatly expanded programming, and will continue to do so, with generous support from donors, sponsors, grantors, fundraising and endowments.

We endeavor to increase braille education regionally. Braille education equals literacy for the visually challenged, even with technological and educational advancements for the visually challenged.

Soon, we will resume in-house classes and options for the the sighted, including volunteer opportunities. Our store provides devices and products which assist those with sight challenges.

Collaborations with Northeast Ohio Eye Surgeons, Molina Healthcare, Summa Health Systems, Akron Children's Hospital, GoJo Industries, Goodyear, Akron Metro and others have made many opportunities possible. We can mutually serve and benefit our communities in so many ways, and are role models/mentors for others to strive toward. Our motto is We Can and We Will!

We continue to increase membership as we expand our "family". We would like to further reach those that are visually challenged to give them a sense of purpose, meaning and accomplishment.

There are those in our organization that know what you are going through, and are here to help. We challenge you to in the future pay it forward and help someone who is scared, lonely and without direction, like you may have been.

We are fiscally stable, continue to receive grants from those that really get what we are about and will accomplish, and will show the sighted communities how impressive we are in serving and being role models. A sign in the entry hallway sums up our philosophy:

Through these halls pass CHAMPIONS that overcome adversity every day. We warmly welcome sighted visitors, and further encourage them to "look" inward and discover who in life is really "blind". The visually challenged see with their heart and judge based on the content of character and values, rather than on appearance. Help provide opportunities for us, but do not dare pity the visually challenged, for chances are they have more "vision" than “sighted” people!

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

Vision Statement: Our vision is to become the fastest growing human services organization serving the visually challenged 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 our 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 visually challenged 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)

January to December, 2022

Total Income/ Gross Profit: $141,820.75

Total Expenses: $135,303.08

Net Income: $6517.67

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 challenge needs.

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 brailler 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, homeless, hospice centers, and battered women and children.

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 challenged. 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.

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 10 to 105 in Summit and surrounding Counties

Offering classes and programs for the visually challenged 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

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

Outreach and awareness are 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.

Visions Don't Require Vision,

Scott Reisberg

Inspired Executive Director

Akron Blind Center