



2010 Annual Report
**Michigan Commission
for the Blind**

*Changing Lives
Changing Attitudes
for more than 30 years*

With help from the Michigan Commission for the Blind, Steve Scott, owner of Something for All Seasons in Portage, expanded his successful lawn mower and snow blower sales and repair business. Read more about him in this report.

More Than 30 Years of Serving with Excellence

The Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) is the state government agency that provides training, services, and other opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, so that each person can achieve his or her own goals for employment and/or independence. Michigan Commission for the Blind services are available to blind and visually impaired residents of all 83 counties of the state. Services may be provided in a person's home, at Mini Adjustment Programs held at various locations around the state, at the residential MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo, and/or other locations.

MCB was created under Public Act 260 of 1978. Federal guidance is provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the United States Department of Education.

MCB programs are funded under various federal grants with matching state or local revenues, with a budget of \$28.8 million during fiscal year 2010. Specific programs and services include the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for individuals age 14 and over, Business Services for employers, the Independent Living Program for individuals age 55 and over, DeafBlind Services, Youth Services, the Business Enterprise Program for training in food service entrepreneurship, and the Braille and Talking Book Library. MCB has offices in Lansing, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Flint, Escanaba, Gaylord, and Kalamazoo, as well as the residential MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo and the Braille and Talking Book Library in Lansing. A staff of approximately 115 serves the state's estimated 45,000 persons who are blind.

During 2010, the agency continued in the spirit of its mission and vision statements:

Mission Statement: The mission of the Michigan Commission for the Blind is to provide opportunity to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve employability and/or function independently in society.

Vision Statement: Someday it will be said that Michigan is a great place for blind people to live, learn, work, raise a family, and enjoy life because:

1. An excellent array of rehabilitation and education services are fully accessible to blind people,
2. Blind people in Michigan believe in themselves and their capacity to achieve excellence,
3. The state's general population believes in the abilities of blind people and understands what blindness is and what it is not, and
4. Michigan employers understand, believe in, and hire people who are blind.

MCB Commission Board

Commission Chair Jo Ann Pilarski

Commissioner Velma P. Allen (through March 2010)

Commissioner Michael Geno (through September 2010)

Commissioner John C. Scott (beginning May 2010)

Commissioner Geraldine G. Taeckens

Commissioner Margaret Wolfe (through September 2010)

MCB State Director

Patrick Cannon

Return on Investment

Dollars used for rehabilitation services are an excellent investment in Michigan's future. In FY 2010, the Michigan Commission for the Blind successfully closed 167 blind Michigan residents' cases. Of these, 125 people found jobs in competitive employment, with an average starting wage of \$15.87 an hour. The state and federal income tax paid by these individuals is projected to be \$722,267 in FY 2011. The total investment made by MCB to assist these individuals with employment (\$1,452,970) will be "repaid" in approximately 24 months.

During fiscal year 2010, the Michigan Commission for the Blind served approximately 3,235 individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist them in becoming employed and independent. In addition to the 125 employed individuals mentioned above, nearly 1,200 older individuals facing sight loss received independent living services from the commission so they could remain in their homes and communities, and 290 blind youth in the K-12 system received low vision evaluations and aids to help them succeed in school and beyond.

MCB consumer Hope Springstead, who has just graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in journalism, had her TV broadcast debut in Lansing in 2010. She wants to become the first blind news anchor in the U.S.

Photo used with permission
MATTHEW DAE SMITH/LANSING STATE JOURNAL



How New Clients Are Referred to MCB for Services

Self-referrals.	51%
Medical agencies, physicians	14%
Public education	10%
Community rehab programs.	4%
Social service agencies	2%
Postsecondary schools.	1%
Michigan Works!	less than 1%
Social Security Administration.	less than 1%
Other.	17%

Of the telephone calls received by MCB during FY 2010 from or regarding new clients, these were the sources of information that prompted the call:

Doctor/other health care professional	39.1%
Family member.	29.2%
Partner organizations	10.7%
MCB Website	8%
Media (TV, radio, print, online)	4%
Other.	19.8%

For the telephone calls above, 50.8 percent received Vocational Rehabilitation Program services, 48.8 percent of new clients received Independent Living Program services, and .4 percent received other types of services.

Highlights of 2010 Accomplishments

Training for Employment and Independence

- ❖ MCB conducted four week-long Mini Adjustment Programs in Grand Rapids, Detroit, Bay City, and Muskegon as an introduction to skills of blindness training for 102 MCB consumers.
- ❖ During four day-long Employment Readiness Seminars held in conjunction with the Mini Adjustment Programs, a total of 59 consumers participated in mock interviews and learned about conducting a job search, Michigan Works!, the Michigan Talent Bank, interview preparation, resume development, Social Security benefits and work incentives, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as it relates to employment.
- ❖ The MCB Training Center is enhancing services in the areas of vocational exploration and career planning. Improvements will include new, expanded and updated assessment; testing and exploration instruments including the World of Work Inventory, career research, exploration, and job shadowing based on assessment results; and in-depth career planning that assists with understanding the job market, networking, resume and cover letter development, interviewing techniques, and the soft skills needed to succeed in the world of work.
- ❖ To expand technology training at the MCB Training Center, renovations include additional state-of-the-art classrooms and a technology area that will allow for day and/or specialized training seminars for specific software programs and new and upgraded hardware adaptive devices.
- ❖ Through continuing collaboration with the Area Agencies on Aging, MCB has established four sites to begin providing technology training for seniors through the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.
- ❖ Three Business Enterprise Program (BEP) students successfully completed their training at the MCB Training Center to become independent BEP entrepreneurs in the food service industry. (As of December 2010, two of the three are at work operating BEP facilities.) Additionally, one person has come to Michigan's BEP from Montana's program, has successfully completed training according to the reciprocity agreement, and is now operating a BEP cafeteria.

Providing Opportunities for Blind Youth

- ❖ MCB provided eight summer programs through intermediate school districts to approximately 125 blind and visually impaired youth to help them transition from high school to postsecondary education or training and careers. The training included skills of blindness, career preparation skills, and actual work experience. One such program was the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Summer Work Opportunity Program, in which 11 BEP entrepreneurs across the state offered to provide paid work experience in the food service industry.
- ❖ MCB, in collaboration with the Michigan Works! Summer Youth Program, provided work experiences for 25 youth, including 18 who participated in other work opportunities.

Serving Michigan Veterans

- ❖ MCB's agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns continues to increase the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for veterans with combat-related disabilities.

Developing Employment Opportunities for Consumers

- ❖ MCB's Client Internship Program continues to provide opportunities for individuals to gain valuable work experience. Currently, 21 consumers are participating in the program with 19 in government agencies and two receiving on-the-job training in the private sector. Those in their second year are continuing to gain practical work experience that will enhance their resumes with the goal of obtaining permanent positions.
- ❖ A collaboration by MCB and CVS pharmacies provided work experience for 28 consumers. This initiative continues with the intent to finalize employment for approximately 15 consumers who successfully completed the program.

Working with Michigan's Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Entrepreneurs

- ❖ BEP vending machines have been installed in three new highway rest areas, improving the incomes of two blind licensees and expanding services for Michigan travelers.
- ❖ Michigan's BEP entered into its second contract to provide food service at a military dining facility. The Ft. Custer Educational Center in Augusta is a full-food-service cafeteria and a prime employment opportunity for a BEP licensee.
- ❖ Renovation and reconstruction of the Lewis Cass Cafeteria was completed to update the cafeteria to a modern facility able to provide a full menu while reducing costs. This facility now includes state-of-the-art equipment, soft seating couches, and an attached conference room. A return to natural lighting has improved ambiance while saving energy.
- ❖ Construction and the opening of a new snack bar facility at the Michigan State Police Headquarters has led to another entrepreneurial opportunity.
- ❖ The BEP has used its reciprocity policy to successfully place its first licensee at the Ft. Custer Educational Center cafeteria. The policy, advanced by the Elected Operators Committee and adopted by the MCB Commission Board, permits well-qualified BEP licensees from other states, after an abbreviated MCB training, to bid on available Michigan facilities.
- ❖ The BEP continues with the quarterly *Snack Bites* e-newsletter for BEP licensees. Distributed by e-mail and in hard copy and archived on the MCB website, the newsletter provides information such as food safety reminders, recipes, customer service tips, cost-saving ideas, and more.
- ❖ The BEP's 81 blind entrepreneurs hired and paid employees, paid sales tax, purchased products from Michigan producers and suppliers, paid personal income taxes, and purchased goods and services for their families, all supporting the state's economy during FY 2010.

Promoting Accessible Technology for Today and Tomorrow

- ❖ MCB's Futuristic Team, in collaboration with the Technology Team, established procedures to evaluate technology vendors who provide technology training to MCB consumers. The groups were successful in recommending four additional vendors.
- ❖ The Futuristic Team, in conjunction with the Technology Team, continued to advocate to industry to encourage accessible design in everyday home and workplace products.

Providing Services of the MCB Braille and Talking Book Library

- ❖ The MCB Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped worked with staff and consumer groups throughout FY 2010 to select a new name that better describes the library's services, and officially became the MCB Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) on October 1, 2010.
- ❖ Library staff issued new digital players to more than 60 percent of Michigan's registered patrons. With the help of two ARRA-funded interns, all patrons should have new players in 2011.
- ❖ During 2010, the library circulated 4,025 Braille volumes, 37,333 digital books, and 196,448 cassette books. The number circulated on cassette is expected to drop as the digital collection grows. About 375 library patrons are taking advantage of the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website to download digital books to their computers and read them from a thumb drive on the new digital player. In 2010, approximately 19,000 digital titles were available.
- ❖ At the close of 2010, the library was serving 4,139 registered patrons residing in 53 Michigan counties, including former patrons of the Upper Peninsula Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which closed due to financial issues.

Improving Services for MCB Consumers & Outreach to New Consumers

- ❖ The MCB Training Center has begun a large expansion and renovation project expected to be completed in 2011. The project includes installing a new geo-thermal HVAC system, backup generator, and other energy-saving replacement equipment; creating a state-of-the-art, upgraded and expanded technology center; replacing major plumbing and electrical systems; and converting all dorm rooms to single occupancy.
- ❖ MCB staff participation in professional rehabilitation conferences and training included 15 attending the October 2009 Michigan Rehabilitation Conference and 15 attending the April 2010 Michigan Chapter, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MAER) Annual Conference. In June 2010, the Region V Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center provided training in case management to 20 participants and motivational interviewing to 30 participants.
- ❖ On June 16-17, MCB held its first all-staff meeting in several years. Staff re-introduced and reviewed the Vision 2020 principles, to continuously improve agency effectiveness.
- ❖ MCB is continuing its efforts to increase awareness of its services among unserved and underserved populations, including continuing to develop relationships with several Native American tribes. One example is the Hannahville Indian Community Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Project Visions), outlining specific services to be provided.
- ❖ MCB continues to partner with individual eye care professionals, the Michigan Optometric Association (MOA), and the Michigan Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (MiSEPS), to ensure that their patients facing vision loss are aware of MCB services.

Michigan Commission for the Blind (Central Administrative Office)

P.O. Box 30652, 201 N. Washington Square, Lansing, MI 48909; Fax: 517-335-5140

Toll free: 1-800-292-4200; TTY: 1-888-864-1212; www.michigan.gov/mcb

Cover photo used with permission, DAVID PERK/KEEPSAKE MEDIA, KALAMAZOO

This publication is available on the MCB website in PDF and Microsoft Word formats at www.michigan.gov/mcb. MCB/DELEG is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids, services, alternative formats, and other reasonable accommodations are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Printed by authority of DELEG, 02/2011.

Quantity: 4,000; Total Cost: \$1,994.25; Unit cost: \$0.50