

**Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
December 2019 Newsletter**

From Mark Michael, Board President

2020 marks our 30th anniversary of providing services for the Blind and low vision populations of the counties of Benton, Franklin, Columbia, Walla Walla, Yakima and Klickitat. As we head into the joyous holiday season, it makes me reflect upon the work done at the EBC. Globally there is an estimated 285 million people who are visually impaired, 39 million of which are blind. For comparison, the entire population in the state of Washington is 7.53 million people. Approximately 10% of the population of the United States of America is classified as blind or low vision. Approximately 90% of the Blind and low vision population live in poverty. Approximately 74% are unemployed (this represents three times the number of Americans who were unemployed during the great depression). 4 million blind people have not graduated from High School, 5.1 million have a high school diploma or GED, 5.8 million have some college and 4.1 million have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. In Washington State, there are 161,900 people who are blind or low vision. In our service area, there are 8,793 people who are blind and low vision. We currently have the economic resources to serve only 2% of the population that needs our help and that population is growing exponentially daily. Seniors are currently driving the economy and expansion of the Tri-Cities area and are at most risk for vision challenges.

The end of another year is rapidly closing in and I must ask myself, are we doing enough for our blind and low vision

population? Are you? Every day for the last twenty-nine years, we have literally struggled to keep our doors open and lights on and enough is enough. Starting with the recruitment and selection of our new Executive Director in May of 2019, we have taken proactive steps to break this “survival” mentality and are attempting to achieve long-term sustainability while expanding services to reach the people who most need us. We have conducted a comprehensive organizational assessment and held a Board retreat where we adopted an reorganizational plan. We also applied for and received our first AmeriCorps grant which allowed us to double our staffing for the first time in the history of the organization. In addition, we have begun the process to conduct our first financial audit. To be sure, these are impressive and necessary steps to get us from where we are to where we need to be. However, these are not enough. Even now the struggle to keep doors open and lights on is very real and our financial reserve is rapidly shrinking. We need your help. If you have ever asked yourself if you should donate to sustain the efforts of the EBC, now is the time. If you have ever thought about adding us to your estate planning, now is the time. If you have ever thought about volunteering, now is also the time.

From the Executive Director

Greetings Friends and Supporters:

As we approach the holiday season, we are excited about our popular November Bingo and Pie Social and the upcoming December Christmas party.

November’s Social marks the first zero budget event held at the EBC and could not have been accomplished without the generous support of Yoke’s Fresh Markets; Shari’s Café & Pies; COSTCO

Wholesale Warehouse, and Starbucks. Lots of friends, food, fun and prizes. Great time for all! A special thanks goes out to Jania, Ana and River for their hard work in securing the donations and facilitating the event.

Our next event is our annual Christmas party and we could use your help. We could use volunteers to help plan this year's event and to help to secure donations. Please give me a call if you interested in helping out.

Exciting things on the horizon include: strategic and operational planning; the completion of our first financial audit, and our next exciting fundraising event on February 15, 2019 a Dating in the Dark style event focused on singles.

Thank you all for everything that you have done, are doing and will do in the future in support of the EBC. It gives me great pleasure to wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year.

Yours in Service, Paul *D. Shane*

FROM SHEILA'S DESK

Hey everyone! I hope you are all enjoying a warm and wonderful holiday season! I hope everyone got all of their shopping done. I know I haven't! Maybe if you're like me, you are procrastinator? Or maybe there is just some hard to shop for people in your life? If so, why not try stopping by the Edith Bishel Center during our client Christmas party? We will be enjoying some refreshments, fellowship and having a sale in our store. We have a wide variety of different items to help people with blindness and vision loss around the home, office, while traveling, or just sitting down to do a crossword puzzle. Our 2020 calendars are now in. We will also be offering discounts from 20-50% off selected items. Do you have a blind friend you would like to send a Christmas card? I will be more than happy to put one in Braille for you! Just

contact me at the email address below. You supply the card and tell me what you want to say.

If we don't have what you want, chances are we can help you find it, order it or give you some ideas on what to get that hard-to-buy-for person in your life!

This will be a fun day and I am really looking forward to seeing everyone!

Sheila Turner

Sheila@edithbishelcenter.org

Story from Sarah

We are all just millimeters and milliseconds away from a life changing disaster.

I remember the day changed my life forever like it was yesterday. Was the day that I became blind and the light literally went out of my life.

It was an amazingly beautiful crisp fall day in November with a sunset that can only be described as perfection. The kind that people on the East Coast dream about. The kind that gently paints your cheek with warmth and brings an involuntary smile to your face. I remember thinking how lucky I was and that I would always remember this spectacular sunset. Life was good that day. At 22 years old, I was a lot of things, a college student, a grocery store clerk and a newlywed, to name a few. In my youthful exuberance, I still viewed the world with "rose colored glasses", believed that anything was possible and was confident in my ability to take on the world and accomplish anything.

My car was a half block away from home and I was joyfully singing my heart out to the radio and anticipating what fun the night would bring.

Then...**BANG!!!!** There was a crash. Sound was loud that I will never forget it. Glass and debris filled my eyes and I choked on fumes as the airbag

deployed seconds after my driver's side window exploded in pieces all over me. And then the light went out of my life. Every day I experience complete and utter darkness. All there is darkness. As a child, I grew up being scared of the dark and now my life was filled with darkness.

Thoughts raced constantly through my head...How would I continue to be a good wife to my husband? How would I finish college? How could I ever become a mother? Through it all, one ugly word kept repeating itself and blocking out all other thoughts, "BLIND!" How could I be blind, me? Like most sighted people, I knew little to nothing about blindness. Only frame of reference was a guy who occasionally came through my line at the grocery store who was blind and always needed some sort of assistance. I can't be this guy I thought. I am not very good at asking for help and I cannot be completely dependent on my family? How can I be blind?

Soon I would learn that being blind was not the end of the world. My fear of dependence was just that, a fear. A fear that I would quickly overcome., I learned to survive and then to thrive. I learned to use a cane for mobility, embraced alternative methods of cooking (other than the stove that totally terrified me), placed bump dots on items in my house with flat surfaces, cleaned with using my sense of touch, and learned enough braille to be able to label items so I could identify them. Those are just the basics.

A year later I became a mother when my husband and I welcomed our beautiful baby girl into the world. Sadly, this magical experience was tainted by a Social Worker who asked me early in my pregnancy if I planned to keep my baby girl. I was shocked speechless. Kind of person assumes that I would give up my child just because I was blind. Time pregnancy and motherhood was challenging, but it is challenging for all of us first timers. Blindness only added another challenging layer to the experience. I excelled at this challenge and raised a very intelligent and mature young lady who remains the center of my world to this day.

There were many times where giving up dominated my every thought. During those times, I would reach out to the EBC and they would walk hand-in-hand with me through my darkness and they continue to do so today. I honestly do not know what I would have done without the EBC or, even if I would be alive today without them. They helped me through the roughest part of my life and helped make me the person that I am today, and I will be forever grateful for their efforts and support.

December Social

Client Christmas Party RSVP by December 10th!

509-735-0699

December 13, 2019! Join us for some fun at the Edith Bishel Center from 12:00 to 1:30 PM

Dial-a-Ride Tickets Sold at the Center

10 tickets for \$12.00 or
monthly passes for \$25.00

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED ITEM

Reizen Wonderful Slice Knife

Perfect holiday gift for your loved one. Wonderful Slicing Knife comes with an ergonomic handle for right-handed people that have dexterity issues. This dexterity aid features a serrated stainless steel blade, with adjustable guide that makes it easier and safer to use and measures 13 inches from blade tip to handle end. Serrated blade is 7-1/2 inches long. It is a safer, easier way to cut food for blind & low vision.

Holiday Sale!!!

20-50% off

Used Equipment Clearance

**Video Magnifiers, Text Readers,
and much more. Sale is for the
entire month of December.**

**Come early to get the best
selection!**

*****We also have Gift Certificates
Available*****

EBC Hours

Business hours are

Monday-Thursday 9 am– 5 pm

P: 509-735-0699

F: 509-735-4074

Toll free: 1-855-665-8547

Visit us online at

edithbishelcenter.org

***** Please contact us if you were on our email list and did not receive an email*****

EBC Events

12/5 Thurs. & 12/18 Wed.	9:30 am - 1:30 pm	Low Vision Clinic
12/13	12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	Client Christmas Party

United Blind of the Tri-Cities Everyone Welcome-
For more info call Karyn Vandecar @509-521-2971

12, 4, 11, 18,25 Wed.	Walking (every week)	9:00 - 10:30 am	Northwest entrance of Colum Center Mall
12/7 Sat	Luncheon	12:00-3:00 pm	Crow's Nest @ Clover Island 435 N. Clover Island, Kennev
12/10 Tues.	Annual Pizza Party Card Group	12:00 - 1:00 pm 1:00 - 2:30 pm	At the Edith Bishel Center/ Please bring a side dish
12/14 Sat.	Chapter Meeting	9:30 - 11:30 am	Crow's Nest @ Clover Island 435 N. Clover Island, Kennev
12/17 Tues.	Book Club	1:00 - 2:30 pm	At the Edith Bishel Center
12/24	No technology group	No technology group	No technology group

Yakima Valley Council of the Blind
Everyone Welcome - For more Information call Darla @
509-949-7077

Every Friday	Bowling/ call to verify	11:00 am	Nob Hill Bowling- 3807 W Nob Hill Blvd.
12/14	Christmas Party	11:00am - 2:00 pm	Cornerstone Apts office

United Blind of Walla Walla

Everyone Welcome - For more info call Heather Meares @
720-519-9104

12/17 Tues	Christmas Party	4:00- 6:00 pm Cost \$15	Pottery Painting Studio 109 S. Palouse
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Edith Bishel Center Hours:

Monday-Thursday 9 am– 5 pm

Phone: 509-735-0699

Fax: 509-735-4074

Toll Free: 1-855-665-8547

Visit us online at www.edithbishelcenter.org

Email: info@edithbishelcenter.org

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