

IMPACT

SPRING 2025

understanding
low vision

**empowering
independence**

THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY
LOW VISION CENTER

meet
GRANT WEATHERS 



letter from the editor

Dear Readers,

Did you know National Health Interview Survey data reports that approximately 50.18 million Americans live with low vision, representing around 8% of the US population? Each February, we take a moment to spotlight the significance of low vision during Low Vision Awareness Month. But at IFB Solutions, supporting those with low vision isn't limited to one month—it's a mission we embrace every day.

Through meaningful employment and specialized training and services, IFB creates opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired to flourish. With nearly 300 employees who are blind

and services that reach even more within the community, IFB is dedicated to fostering independence and empowerment.

In this Low Vision Awareness Month edition of Impact, we focus on celebrating the resilience and determination of the community that define IFB Solutions and highlight the transformative work of our Community Low Vision Centers.

Warm regards,

Anastasia Powell

**THIS LOW VISION AWARENESS MONTH,
LET'S CELEBRATE OUR SHARED HUMANITY
BY LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER.**

meet grant spotlight

Empowering Independence Through Our Community Low Vision Center

What truly sets our centers apart is the team behind them. Every staff member has experienced vision loss, bringing firsthand understanding and compassion to their work.

Grant Weathers oversees the centers while managing daily operations in Asheville. With over a decade at IFB, he's dedicated to empowering individuals with low vision through access to specialized doctors, visual aids, adaptive tools, and programs like Focus on Literacy. This initiative provides school-aged children with specialty low-vision exams and adaptive equipment at no cost.

Imagine not being able to read the mail, see a loved one's face clearly, or complete a homework assignment. Now, imagine the relief of finding tools and support that bring these moments back to life. Thanks to donor generosity, IFB Solutions serves all 100 counties in North Carolina, transforming lives one individual at a time.

Grant teaches a customer how to use a CCTV, which is a stand-mounted video camera that projects a magnifiable image onto a video monitor.



When we offer guidance, it's not just professional—it's personal.

We know the struggles, and we know the triumphs.

GRANT WEATHERS
Low Vision Services Manager

CUSTOMER *to* SENIOR DIRECTOR



When Ken Mullins began losing his vision, he felt like his world was shrinking. Once confident and independent, Ken found himself battling depression and isolation, believing he was alone in his struggle. But everything changed when his retina and glaucoma specialist referred him to the Ronald G. Sherrill Community Low Vision Center on IFB Solutions' Winston-Salem campus.

“It was the best thing that ever happened to me,” Ken recalls. “I thought I was the only person dealing with vision loss. At IFB, I met people like me—some completely blind, living full and fulfilling lives. It gave me hope. I found where I belong.”

Now thriving in his role as IFB's Senior Director of Merchandising, Ken uses tools like a CCTV magnifier to complete his tasks with precision. He credits the Community Low Vision Center for providing not just adaptive technologies, but also a supportive community that restored his confidence and independence.

Ken's story is one of many that showcase the transformative power of IFB Solutions' Community Low Vision Centers in Asheville and Winston-Salem. These centers serve as lifelines for individuals with low vision, offering tailored solutions that empower them to rediscover independence. From tactile markers for keyboards to advanced screen filters, the centers provide tools that make everyday tasks possible again.



supporting students

*Thank you for
the Focus 40
braille display. I
use it every day.
I would not be
able to complete
my schoolwork
without it.*

love, Kyleigh

Your support helps children like Kyleigh, who received a refreshable Braille display through the Focus on Literacy Program. With your help, we can continue providing life-changing resources to people like Ken and Kyleigh. Together, we can ensure no one faces vision loss alone.

Low Vision Awareness Month reminds us how critical resources like the Community Low Vision Centers are. Your generosity enables IFB Solutions to provide tools, training, and hope to individuals with low vision, promoting independence and enhancing their quality of life.

If you or someone you know is experiencing vision loss, visit our centers today to discover how we can support you or your loved ones. Let's continue to empower independence—one story at a time.

UNDERSTANDING

low vision

— *What is Low Vision?*

Low vision isn't just blurry eyesight—it's a way of seeing the world differently, one that glasses, contact lenses, or standard medical treatments can't fix. People with low vision often retain some usable sight but face challenges with everyday tasks. Like reading a menu in a restaurant, recognizing friend's faces in a crowd, and struggling to see landmarks that help a person with sight navigate their surroundings every day.

Unlike total blindness, low vision exists on a spectrum, ranging from mild to severe sight loss.

Thanks to advancements in adaptive technology and the work of our associates at IFB Solutions' low vision centers, individuals with low vision are regaining independence and rediscovering joy in the small victories of everyday life.

mild

low vision is



hello

I'm Toni Fraser, one of the faces of the Ronald G. Sherrill Community Low Vision Center in Winston-Salem, NC. For years, I've lived with low vision due to Congenital Glaucoma and micro-ophthalmia. While my sight is limited, my determination is boundless. Every February, during Low Vision Awareness Month, I reflect on how far I've come—thanks to the tools, technology, and community that empower me every day. But the journey doesn't stop with me. Together, we can ensure more people with low vision get the resources they need to lead full, independent lives.

IFB has changed my life. Having gone through everything that I have been through helps me to relate to my customers.

TONI FRASER
Low Vision Services Coordinator

s a spectrum

severe

Did You Know?

Each February shines a spotlight on early detection, adaptive technology, and the support services that empower people to thrive. Awareness encourages individuals to seek resources that improve their quality of life and foster independence.

Understanding these conditions emphasizes the importance of regular eye exams and proactive care.

Thank you for being part of this life-changing journey. Your support ensures that no one in our community has to face these challenges alone. You're giving people like Toni the tools to help individuals regain independence—whether it's reading a favorite novel again or walking confidently through a crowded street.

PROACTIVE CARE



The top three most common causes of low vision or blindness in working-age adults according to the National Eye Institute.



Diabetic Retinopathy



Normal

A complication of diabetes, this condition damages the retina's blood vessels and is the leading cause of blindness in adults aged 20–74.



Glaucoma



Normal

Known as the "sneak thief of sight," it damages the optic nerve without symptoms until significant vision loss occurs.



Cataracts



Normal

Often age-related, cataracts cloud the eye's lens, though risk factors like diabetes or UV exposure can accelerate their development.

Understanding and Connecting

Low Vision Awareness Month provides an opportunity to celebrate the strength and resilience of individuals who are blind or have low vision, while also developing understanding and inclusion. Many people are unsure of how to interact with someone who is blind or has low vision. To help, we've gathered personal insights and practical tips from individuals who navigate the world differently but continue to thrive and inspire.

Interaction Tips



Grant Weathers

Lebers Hereditary Optic Neuropathy

Be specific when giving directions to someone who is low vision or blind. For example: "Walk about 30 feet in the direction you're facing, then turn right before the crosswalk," rather than "Go that way and turn at the blue building."

Toni Fraser

Congenital Glaucoma and Micro-Ophthalmia

If you feel we may be in danger, yelling "Look out!" or "Watch out!" is not helpful. We can't see what to look out for. Be specific: "Hey, stop! There's a bike approaching on your right."

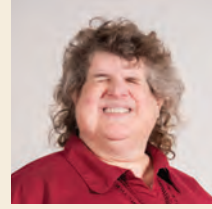


Naomi Venable

Myopia

Announce yourself when entering or leaving a room. For example: "Hey Naomi, it's Grant," or "Naomi, I'm stepping out." This helps us know who is present.

Kim Shoffner
Retinoblastoma



The words “see,” “look,” or “watch” are totally okay when speaking to those of us who are blind or have low vision. These words do not make us uncomfortable because we do see, look, and watch—just differently than someone with full vision.



Easter McCall
Retinopathy of Prematurity

Please do not try jumping over our cane, grabbing our mobility device, or guide dog harness. We may not see your intentions, and it can be terrifying, triggering, or even cause injury.

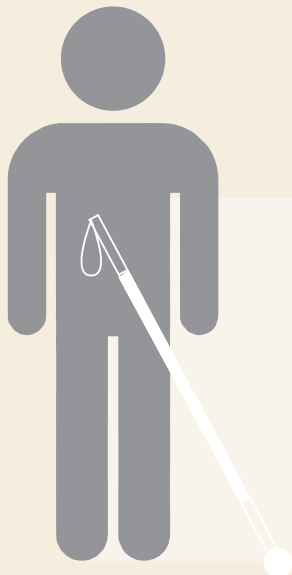
Ken Mullins
Macular Degeneration & Glaucoma



Say “Hello.” A simple verbal greeting lets us know you’re there. It’s the equivalent of a nod or smile, and it also opens the door for us to ask for help if we need it. Plus, it treats us like everyone else—which is all anyone wants.

UNSURE WHAT TO DO OR SAY ... *just ask*

No two people experience vision loss in the same way. Not all of us need or require help, and we’re all unique individuals. If you’re curious about how someone experiences the world, just ask. Losing sight has changed how we interact with the world, but it hasn’t changed who we are.



White canes signify that the people using them have low to no vision. Only 15% of people who use a white cane, or a guide dog are totally blind; the rest of us have varying degrees of vision, but our vision isn’t reliable.

DiverseAbilities.ca

Scan to learn more.



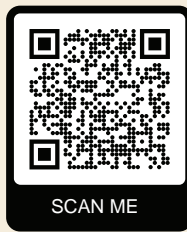
SHARED
COMMUNITY
HUMANITY

LET'S CONNECT

Anastasia Powell
Editor | Communications Manager

336-245-5698
apowell@ifbsolutions.org

7730 North Point Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27106



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