

The Recipe for Independence



Diana is able to stay active in the kitchen thanks to items from IFB's Community Low Vision Center.

Like many people with low vision, Diana Baker finds that people aren't always aware that she has a vision problem, but she doesn't let it bother her. "I focus on the big picture," she said. She can see across a room, but has problems reading text. For Diana, focusing on "the big picture" also means finding ways to be independent, and IFB Solutions has been there to help her.

When Diana was just a toddler, her parents suspected she might have a problem. "Mama said I used to reach out to feel things," she said. "When you're a child, you don't

really know what you're missing." Her teachers at school tried to get her textbooks in large print. Her parents encouraged her to succeed. "My mom said, 'Wherever you get planted, blossom! You can do anything if you put your mind to it. Don't let your vision stop you.'"

After working as a baker in a cafeteria for many years, Diana joined the staff at IFB Solutions. She worked in our Community Low Vision Center, and today, she is a production worker. She still enjoys cooking and baking and often brings delicious dishes to share with

her co-workers. On behalf of IFB Solutions, she's been featured on a local TV station cooking show.

Diana uses magnifiers and video magnifiers to read recipes. She has measuring cups marked with large print, high-contrast cutting boards, and raised bump dots to mark settings on her oven and appliances. All of these items can be purchased at IFB's CLVC. Slow cookers make it easier for her to stay safe. She uses a Kindle to read her Bible and has Zoom Text magnifying software on her computer. IFB's CLVC staff assists customers with technology to make it easy.

In addition to her vision problems, Diana has had other health challenges affecting her mobility. She and her husband of 43 years stay active by walking a mile daily through the mall and doing water aerobics. "You just gotta be disciplined and find ways to do the things you need to do," Diana said. "My recipe for independence is two parts faith, one part discipline, a strong family, and the support of organizations like IFB Solutions and their Community Low Vision Centers."



Message from the Executive Vice President of Strategy and Programs

Dear Friend,

February is Low Vision Awareness Month. In this issue of our newsletter, we are focusing on showing you how people overcome the challenges of living with low vision thanks to your support of IFB Solutions' low vision programs.

I have a lot of personal experience with low vision. I have retinitis pigmentosa (RP). So does my grandfather, father, and now my young son. There is a 50% chance of passing it on from parent to child. My brother doesn't have it, and neither does my daughter.

RP affects each of us differently, and I probably drew the shortest stick: I could see large print and colors up until age nine, and then the color drained out of my world. By 13, I was down to only light perception. I used a tabletop video magnifier

(CCTV) through the third grade, but when it got to the point that a single letter took up the entire screen, I started learning braille.

Like most kids, my son Jack doesn't like being different; he wants to be like everybody else. Five years ago, when he started kindergarten, it was 4-5 months before his school could get him a CCTV. The first time they pointed its camera at the chalkboard, he said, "Mommy, there are words on the wall!" He didn't even know there were words on the wall.

Thanks to IFB Solutions' programs, Jack is able to use the same technology at home so he can do his homework independently. He sees better out of the side of his eye than he does looking straight ahead, and IFB's Community Low Vision Center specialists are helping him make the best use of

his vision. Jack has also enjoyed going to IFB summer camps, where he is around other children with vision impairments.

IFB Solutions' programs help people of all ages maintain their independence. Your support transforms someone's life by giving them a path through their grief and fear to confidence and independence. Vision loss is expected to double in the next 10-15 years as the Boomer generation ages. Macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and other age-related conditions will become more common. And for seniors, losing vision may be only one of the health challenges they are facing.

Your thoughtful gift has a high impact, because it is one person helping another; it's personal. And that's what IFB Solutions is really all about: people helping people.

Thank you for your vital support.

Sincerely,

Danny Kelly
Executive Vice President of
Strategy and Programs

FUNDRAISING EVENTS IN 2020

Dining in the Dark (Little Rock, AR) – May 21, 2020

Golf Tournament (Asheville, NC) – June 10 & 11, 2020

Dining in the Dark (Charlotte, NC) – August 13, 2020

Bingo for Bags (Little Rock, AR) – September 10, 2020

Fireside Fundraiser Gala (Winston-Salem, NC)
November TBD

Santa's Showdown 5K Race (Asheville, NC)
December 5, 2020

When many people think of blindness, they often think of blackness. The truth is more people experience a partial loss of vision. Low vision can be "invisible" to others, and it affects each person differently. They may use a cane or guide dog or walk unassisted. They may even be able to maintain eye contact when conversing. IFB Solutions' low vision programs help people make the best use of their remaining vision so they can retain and regain their confidence and independence. As we commemorate **Low Vision Awareness Month**, thank you for being supportive and understanding.

Why I Give: Pat Smith

Dr. Patricia B. Smith, known to many walking the halls of IFB as “Ms. Pat,” has dedicated much of her life to serving the low vision community.

After moving to Little Rock in 1984, Pat began teaching Vision Rehabilitation Therapy at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She felt it was important for those studying or working in the field to know of the different resources that are available. During her Introduction to Independent Living for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired class, she would take students on tours of these different facilities. It was while teaching there that she came into contact with Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, a local organization that offered employment to individuals who are blind. That organization is now known as IFB Solutions.



Dr. Patricia Smith, an active member on IFB's Board of Directors, tours the production lines at IFB Solutions' Little Rock facility.



IFB Solutions employee, Wesley Hillman, and Dr. Patricia Smith discuss how IFB Solutions has impacted their lives.

Although now retired, Pat continues to serve the community of people with low vision as an active member of the IFB Solutions' Board of Directors, Public Relations and Events Committees, and the local Arkansas Advisory Council.

Developing and keeping one's independence is very important to Pat. “One of the biggest challenges is to educate the medical community about rehabilitation services.” She goes on to say, “Once everything has been done to save the vision a person has, they need to be informed of the other resources that are available.” Pat knows that by providing the needed training on low vision aids as well as access to them, IFB's CLVC will be able to help those living with low vision make the next steps in order to continue living independently.

“When I retired and was frequently asked what I was going to do, I replied that I planned to volunteer at worthy organizations, where I enjoyed the people and the activities in which I would be involved.” Because Pat is dedicated to IFB Solutions, she sees first-hand the impact that the agency has on the lives of employees. Pat goes on to say, “There have been times, when I designated a donation to a specific purpose, such as helping send a student to SEE Camp. I would later enjoy hearing the student tell about his or her camp experience.”

Looking for an easy way to support IFB's work? Text [NWL20](text:NWL20) to [41444](text:41444) to donate now!

Community Low Vision Center Programs are for the Community

IFB Solutions' Community Low Vision Centers (CLVC) in Winston-Salem, Asheville, and Little Rock foster greater independence for children, adults, and seniors who are facing the challenges of living with vision loss.

Grant Weathers is the low vision services and outreach coordinator at the CLVC in Asheville. After losing his central vision years ago, he has turned his challenges into an asset and is passionate about his work. "It feels good being able to help improve people's lives," he said.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, **IFB Solutions' Focus on Literacy Program** offers vision exams to school-age children with visual impairments free of charge. CLVC specialists recommend appropriate low vision devices to the school systems for each child.

"Through the Focus on Literacy Program, the same devices the

school purchases are gifted to the student's family at no charge," Grant said. "Our donors are helping to ensure that these students will be able to do their homework independently and get a good start in life."

The Focus on Literacy Program is close to Grant's heart. "We were demonstrating an Acrobat video magnifier at our mobile clinic once. The camera was pointed toward the chalkboard, and a young student was able to see the board on her screen. As we were talking to her family, one of us noticed that she

was writing: 'I am smart. I can learn.' It's moments like these that are so memorable."

Shonn Redmond shares the same role, but at our Winston-Salem CLVC. He grew up with low vision due to glaucoma, and speaks from personal experience. "Students struggle with the fear of being seen as different. It can

be a real barrier to their accepting help. I motivate them by telling them they'll be able to do the things they love to do faster, easier, and with less eye strain using these devices. They won't have to work so hard to keep up with their classmates."

CLVC programs also offer training free of charge to people of all ages. People with vision loss can be trained to use magnification computer software or special devices such as video magnifiers. They can also learn to use the accessibility features built in on their smartphones and computers. The **Recycle for Sight** program offers previously used devices to people with vision loss who are in need.

Being able to do things independently brings a renewed quality to life for people with low vision. Thanks to IFB Solutions' low vision programs and community support, people of all ages can find the help they need.



Grant participating in IFB's annual fundraising golf tournament with his coach and coworker, Jay Hardwig.



Shonn demonstrates assistive technology to a Focus on Literacy program participant.