

IMPACT

A leader in building life-changing opportunities for people who are blind in Arkansas, North Carolina, and beyond



SPRING 2020

We Will Get Through This as a Family

Dear Friend,

Thank you for being part of our IFB Solutions family, and for remaining by our side during these difficult times. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and yours.

The coronavirus pandemic offers our community an opportunity to find new ways to help, connect, and support one another. It calls on all of us to rise to the occasion and assist those most vulnerable.

Here at IFB Solutions, we are responding to the crisis the way we respond to all problems – by coming together and finding different ways to do what needs to be done. Our Coronavirus Response Team is working to meet the needs of our employees and clients.



“The CLVC has always promoted accessibility, and that hasn’t changed. I’m still available to support our vulnerable seniors, making sure they are able to stay safe and connected.”

– Grant Weathers, assisting low vision clients from his home office.

Although our Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) After School Programs are closed, our work continues. Our instructors have mailed craft kits to students’ homes so they can continue to develop their fine motor skills. We are sponsoring online chats so they can work on social skills by interacting with peers. We’ve created online classes to teach assistive technology, so they can keep up with their

sighted classmates. When schools re-open, they will be prepared.

To help counter feelings of isolation, we are sponsoring online conference calls so that guide dog users, diabetics, and other groups can offer each other peer support without fear of spreading the virus.

Some employees’ spouses have been furloughed or lost jobs, and we are finding ways to offer them support. Our medical staff is assisting our employees at no charge to them.

You can help ensure that SEE after school and summer camps, as well as our Community Low Vision Centers in North Carolina and Arkansas will be able to reopen once it is safe to do so. With your help, we will continue to serve thousands of people who live with blindness. Our actions now will enable us to look back on this crisis knowing that we did the right thing.

Stay safe and healthy,

David Horton, President and CEO



Eli proudly shows off his marble run, one of the many activities our SEE Charlotte Program participants have created together via Zoom while schools are closed.



IFB Solutions People First Fund assists our employees and the people we serve in the community. Please help us build on this investment by giving generously.





A Message from Our Director of Programs and Community Low Vision Centers

It is in times like these that we are even more grateful to be a part of a caring and supportive community. If you've ever wondered whether your efforts or your donations to IFB Solutions make a lasting difference in someone's life, I'm here to assure you it does. You are planting a seed and helping us grow our impact on the lives of students who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

You can trace this growth by looking at the history of our Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) Camps and After School programs. Back in 2005, a grant and a donation of 300 audiobooks gave us an opportunity to add a lending library and computer classes to our youth program. Donations to our capital campaign enabled us to build a multipurpose room, computer lab, and small kitchen.

Donor support meant we could leverage the partnerships



Carly, our SEE After School student, is completing a STEM activity while under stay-at-home order.

we'd established between our Community Low Vision Centers and local schools to start the Focus on Literacy program. This program provides adaptive equipment for students to use at home to do homework and keep up with their sighted classmates. We invited parents to come to the multipurpose room to learn braille and independent living skills so they could more fully engage in their children's development. Adding childcare deepened our ability to support these families.

In the summer of 2007, we held our first week-long donor funded SEE Day Camp in Winston-Salem. The following year, we extended it to two weeks and added a day camp in Asheville. In 2009, our camps were three weeks long.

In 2012, thanks to gracious donors and sponsors, we opened Tracy's Little Red Schoolhouse in Winston-Salem. Our Charlotte SEE After School Program is now going into its third year. And students from Arkansas now attend our summer camps.

IFB Solutions is proud to offer meaningful and engaging after school programs. After school programs allow students who are blind or visually impaired to participate in accessible, guided group learning and enrichment activities. We help students with homework and braille. There is a lot more social interaction than many children who are blind or visually impaired experience in



"I am giving to the People First Fund, because IFB Solutions has always taken care of me. It's time to give back."

– Cole DeLuca, a former SEE camper, who has been using our low vision equipment since he was 6, makes Air Force masks to keep our troops safe during the pandemic.

school. We also have begun to offer transportation from neighboring counties to the after school programs.

In 2016, we started our first residential overnight camps in North Carolina for older students, grades 8-12: SEE Adventure Camp at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City and SEE Camp H2O at Camp Dogwood in Sherrills Ford. The guided activities are adapted to give students the same thrills and challenges their sighted siblings and classmates experience at camp.

We are now serving more than 200 young students each year! It is a joy to see what they learn from their SEE summer camp and after school experiences from year to year. And it's all because of your generosity. On behalf of IFB Solutions and all our SEE campers, we thank you!

Sincerely,

Chris Flynt, Director of Programs and Community Low Vision Centers

Why I Give: Joel Schanker

There is no community representative who enters the doors of IFB Solutions more often than Joel Schanker. Joel, a former bank manager, now enjoys retirement. He spends his time traveling the world with Barbara, his wife of 51 years, and volunteering for IFB Solutions.

Joel first heard about IFB nearly 15 years ago. He was so impressed with what he learned about the IFB manufacturing plant, that he hosted a presentation at the Clemmons Kiwanis Club. This led to a tour of IFB, where he would meet with Chris Flynt, now Director of Programs and Community Low Vision, starting 14 years of friendship and participation.

Barbara and Joel have since been involved every step of the way. They have led a Toastmasters Club for people who are blind or vision impaired, volunteered for summer camps and other activities for children, and became major donors. Through the Schankers, the Clemmons Kiwanis Club has also been involved in many projects, including granting playground equipment to the Little Red Schoolhouse and participating in the annual Field Day for children with visual impairments.

Joel is often behind the scenes ready to lend a hand. For him, philanthropic support is indivisibly connected to personal involvement. "The more time I spent with employees and the kids, the more I learned about the community served by IFB.

It was natural to get involved philanthropically," Joel shares. Helping people with vision impairments develop their communication skills so they can be independent has also allowed Joel to connect with them on a more personal level. He enjoys watching how they overcome life's challenges. Joel goes on to say, "I grew to admire the people I was working with, and that inevitably made me want to help financially."

When SEE summer camps were created, Barbara and Joel were more than ready to go through training. "We saw a need that existed at IFB around children's programs, and we knew immediately we had the time and skills to be volunteers during summer camps," says Joel. Whether children were zip lining or feeding safari animals they could not see, Joel was equally inspired. He continues, "Working with children who are blind is one of the most rewarding things I've done in my life. I marvel at the tenacity with which these children tackle challenges presented to



"Volunteering at IFB Solutions gives me the chance to witness life-changing opportunities for people who are blind. Being a part of that mission is why I keep coming back." Joel Schanker, Programs and Services Committee Member, IFB Solutions

them. I admire their bravery in navigating through life."

Just as IFB has impacted Joel's life, Joel has also greatly impacted IFB. Our deep gratitude is best expressed by Chris' words, "Joel is a wonderful and generous person who has enriched the lives of so many individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Thank you, Joel!"

**Text PeopleFirst to
41444 to donate to
IFB Solutions!**

For most recent information about our fundraising events in 2020, visit our website: ifbsolutions.org/events

Navigating Life's Challenges



Jordan and Campbell, two SEE Asheville participants, walk around UNCA's campus during a SEE Saturday event in 2017. The participants were conducting multisensory chemistry experiments in addition to learning the layout of the campus.

IFB Solutions' Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) camps and after school programs offer opportunities for students who are blind or visually impaired to develop skills, gain confidence, and make new friends, while participating in guided group activities.

Jordan Scheffer remembers attending cooking days at the SEE Camp Asheville when she was 9. "You got to think about what it would be like living on your own and having to cook for yourself," she said, "because you're not always going to be able to go out to eat." Today, the 20-year-old

freshman at UNC Asheville is putting her early cooking experiences into practice.

Residential SEE Adventure Camp at Nantahala Gorge gave teenage Jordan a chance to try something new. "It was very rustic. I thought it was cool, because I like the outdoors," she said. "I'm used to swimming in lakes and in the ocean, where I can walk to shore. But I'd never gone water rafting before. It was thrilling; because I knew the water was deep, and I could feel that the current was strong, pulling against my oars."

Looking back on those experiences now, as an adult, Jordan



Jordan enjoying a gem mining activity in 2010 with her longtime Orientation & Mobility instructor Jay Hardwig, who also leads SEE programs in Asheville.

appreciates the "soft skills" that she learned at SEE Camps. "Understanding how to handle yourself around people with diverse behaviors and perspectives is really important in work and social situations," she said. The camps helped her physical, mental, and personal development.

In addition to going to college, Jordan is continuing to develop her talents as a singer. She took first place in the 2017 National Blind Singing Competition sponsored by IFB Solutions, and her sultry voice is a delight to listeners' ears. In a few months, she plans to release her first album.

But singing isn't the only way Jordan wants her voice to be heard. She wants to see improved access to information and services for people who are blind or visually impaired around the globe. As an advocate, she hopes to increase awareness and understanding of issues related to blindness. She's putting her voice, her skills, and confidence to good use.



Jordan and her friend Shianne are cooking during the SEE Camp in 2015. Teaching life skills in a supportive environment is an important element of SEE programming.