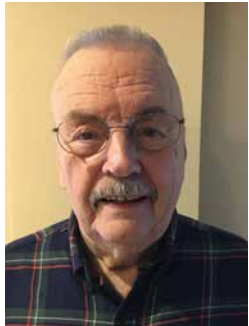




“I Felt Like a Kid in a Candy Store!”



Claude Stewart once again finds solace reading his Bible.

Donor support for IFB Solutions® helps people find real solutions to the challenges of living with vision loss. Experts at IFB Solutions’ Community Low Vision Centers (CLVC)

in Winston-Salem and Asheville, NC and in Little Rock, AR help people maintain or regain their independence. Just ask Claude Stewart, 84, of Anderson, SC.

Claude likes to start each day reading his Bible. He’s always had poor vision and gets regular

eye checkups because of a family history of glaucoma. A couple of years ago, he noticed his vision was getting worse.

“When I close one eye, it’s as though I’m looking at the world through cracked glass,” Claude told his ophthalmologist. He was surprised to learn he had macular degeneration. Treatments slowed the disease, but his vision and depth perception continued to worsen. Six months ago, he had to stop driving altogether.

Claude asked his doctor about other services, and she referred him to the Community Low Vision Center in Asheville. “We made our visit a family affair,” Claude said. “My daughter and son-in-law and my wife came with me. It was a fantastic experience, because they now have a much better understanding of what I am going through.”

Grant Weathers, CVLVC low vision specialist, demonstrated magnifiers, computer keyboards with large letters, and other devices to Claude. “I felt like a kid in a candy store!” Claude said. “I had no way of knowing there were so many tools available! I was amazed!”

Using his handheld magnifier, Claude can now read his Bible

again. Grant also connected him with a free talking book service. The service allowed Claude to keep an audio version of the Bible. “My church is challenging us to read through the Bible in a year. Now, I can commit to doing this,” Claude said.

Claude is counting his blessings: “I’m grateful that I still have peripheral vision.” With the help of donor-supported CLVC services, Claude can continue to do the things that bring him joy.



The Community Low Vision Center has a wide selection of low vision aids to keep you as independent as possible. Contact your local CLVC to set up an assessment today! CommunityLowVision.org/locations

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SEE THE DIFFERENCE – DONATIONS FOSTER INDEPENDENCE

Dear Friend,

When you donate to IFB Solutions, your gift makes an impact. I have the pleasure of serving as the Vice Chair of IFB Solutions' Board of Directors, so thank you for letting me share my experience about how I know.

Years ago, as a member of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust board, I participated in the unanimous support of a grant to Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind now doing business as IFB Solutions. A part of the Trust's due diligence was for the Board to do a site visit. I was absolutely awestruck when I witnessed the incredible work happening at IFB!

What we saw during the site visit were employees contributing to the economic health and welfare of our city while achieving their own personal independence. Watching people who were blind at work was inspiring. Inspiring not because of the different job accommodations, but because it opened my eyes as to how people who are blind **perform the same jobs as people who are sighted working in any manufacturing and service business across this country.** That was my first a-ha moment.

Something else struck me: sewing uniforms and assembling other products for our nation's military, employees who were blind were performing vital work. I felt this work shouldn't be a secret in our community any longer. I was touched by so many personal stories that day.

I am very selective about the service that I render across the community. It is important for me to believe in the mission and vision of the organization I serve and to make a positive difference for someone else. But there's an additional reason I believe in IFB Solutions – a more personal one.

My husband developed a degenerative eye condition that caused his sight to diminish. Even though his employer was very considerate and accommodated his needs, my husband chose to retire because of the vision loss. I was suddenly thrust into the role of a caregiver – or so I thought. We felt the full power of a caring community, we were not alone.

With the right tools and support, challenges can turn into opportunities. My husband took a computer course at IFB Solutions. He purchased a CCTV, a machine that enlarges text on a printed page, and software to enlarge the text on his computer screen. In fact, using voice commands, he can find something on the internet faster than I can! He is now teaching classes to deacons in our church using Zoom! His life once again has meaning and purpose. He's contributing his talents and expertise doing something he loves. **When I see his regained independence and determination, I am reminded of the employees at IFB Solutions.**



On behalf of the Board and everyone here, thank you for helping us tell the world about IFB Solutions' work to support employment, training, and services for people who are blind. Thank you for helping build life changing opportunities for people with vision loss.

Warm regards,

Brenda B. Diggs
Vice Chair
IFB Solutions Board of Directors

About 4 million Americans live with low vision, a chronic visual impairment that cannot be corrected with glasses, contact lenses or medical treatments.

Monthly recurring gifts to IFB Solutions help people with vision loss regain their independence.

MY RECURRING GIVING ENSURES NO MISSED OPPORTUNITIES - JOHN SWEATT



John Sweatt recently decided to become a monthly donor to IFB Solutions. “I have attended IFB golf tournament fundraisers for the past couple of years,” he said, “I already was donating to IFB, but I wanted to do more. After I made my decision to set up automatic monthly donations, I got a nice ‘thank you’ call, and I realized: I should have done this a long time ago!”

As Director of Sales for Epoca International, John has managed a business relationship with IFB Solutions. Epoca provides SKILCRAFT brand bakeware and other impulse products that IFB then packages and supplies to military commissary stores. The more John learned about IFB Solutions, the more impressed he became.

John remembered reading a story about Scott Smith, an IFB employee who had suddenly lost his vision, in IFB’s Impact newsletter. Within months, Scott could no longer drive or work. He didn’t know how he would continue supporting his family. “But thanks to IFB, Scott was able to get back to work,” John shares inspiringly. “Losing your sight has got to be terrifying to go through. **IFB brings hope and joy back into people’s lives** through employing and training people who are blind and giving them back their independence.”

John shared that his father-in-law was coping with sight loss. “Jim does not have central vision,” John said, “He can’t drive, but he’s been known to drive a golf cart. He has a set of little magnifiers that come in a leather pouch that he uses when he’s out of the office.” With the help of large magnifiers connected to his computer monitor as well as magnification software, Jim continues his 40-year career as an accountant. “He’s still able to support his family,” John said. “He even does our taxes!” John is encouraged his recurring gifts assist people like Jim through IFB’s Community Low Vision Center by helping find tools that maximize people’s remaining vision.

John, his wife Kate, and their children care deeply about family. Their monthly donation to IFB opens a door for people who are blind to earn a paycheck and support their loved ones.

IFB Solutions is grateful for John’s generosity. **By making a recurring monthly donation to IFB Solutions, he is promoting independence all year long.**



Walking Track Comes to Little Rock in 2021!

- *For people who are blind, it is a challenge to find a safe space to walk and become more physically active. An accessible walking track will provide such a space for our employees to get out and get moving.*
- *This project will include creation of a walking path, benches, sensory garden, and a shaded picnic area. The track will also be both white cane and guide dog friendly.*
- *For information on sponsorship and donation opportunities, please contact*

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For most recent information about our fundraising events in 2021, visit our website: ifbsolutions.org/events

Understanding Age-Related Macular Degeneration



Dr. Dexter Street has had a successful optometric practice in Mount Airy, NC for more than 36 years. He partnered with IFB Solutions and has been examining low vision patients at the Winston-Salem CLVC monthly for 15 years. Once the pandemic is under control, he will resume traveling on the CLVC Mobile Vision Care providing low vision exams to school students throughout North Carolina.

February is National Low Vision Awareness Month.

One of the leading causes of adult sight loss is age-related macular degeneration (AMD.) In fact, more than 10 million Americans have AMD – more than cataracts and glaucoma combined. To share with our readers about the work we do through our Community Low Vision Center (CLVC,) we interviewed the person who's been with us every step of the way since CLVC was open – Optometrist and Low Vision Specialist, Dr. Dexter Street.

Dr. Street has practiced optometry for over 36 years. IFB Solutions partnered with him at onset of its CLVC to help bring access to low vision eye exams to IFB Solutions' employees and the local community. "I would undoubtedly say that Dr. Street is one of the best eye doctors I have ever seen, and many of his patients would say the same about him," said Chris Flynt, Director of IFB Solutions Programs and Community Low Vision, who has been Dr. Street's patient since those early days.

Dr. Street shared, "Most of the patients with low vision who I treat through my partnership with IFB's Community Low Vision Center have AMD." The two types of AMD are referred to as "dry" and "wet." Dry AMD is deterioration beneath the macula due to vessel sclerosis and other factors. With wet AMD, the macula tries to grow its own blood vessels. These vessels often leak profusely causing swelling.

"There are four main reasons people develop AMD," Dr. Street explained. "One is simply aging. Our bodies age and our eyes do too. That typically happens to folks in their 80s. A small percentage inherit the disease. But most often, it is due to poor nutrition or smoking." Dr. Street further explained that quitting smoking and improving nutrition can help reduce the speed and severity of the degeneration.

"With macular degeneration, you might wear glasses, but you still have a dot in the center of your visual field," Dr. Street explained. "You can see around it, but you can't see through it. Whereas, with glaucoma, it's the opposite. It's like looking straight through a funnel, but you can't see around the outside of the funnel."

The good news is that for most, AMD doesn't mean a person will lose all of their sight. There are medical interventions such as VEGF injections, steroid injections, and AREDS 2 vitamins that can stabilize or slow the progression of the disease. And there are promising oral medications on the immediate horizon. But in the meantime, it's important for

people to protect their sight, and get help if they need to address the challenges of living safely and independently with vision loss. **The American Optometric Association says: "See clearly. Check yearly."** Regular check-ups are important. Dr. Street says, "You may just need a quick fix like new glasses that can be life-changing."



Macular degeneration may reduce a person's ability to see detail, text, and faces. Vision may appear dimmed and include spots, distortion, blurriness, and waviness.

Are you at risk of developing age-related macular degeneration?

If you have **at least two** risk factors below, see your eye doctor:

- Smoking or vaping (current smokers are 2-3X more likely to develop AMD. Quitting helps reduce risk)
- Obesity (2X more likely to develop advanced macular degeneration)
- Age 55+
- Family history of AMD (2.5X higher risk)

Reduce your risk:

- Exercise and eat healthy: dark, leafy greens; fatty fish; avoid processed foods and artificial fats
- If you smoke or vape - stop!
- Get regular eye exams