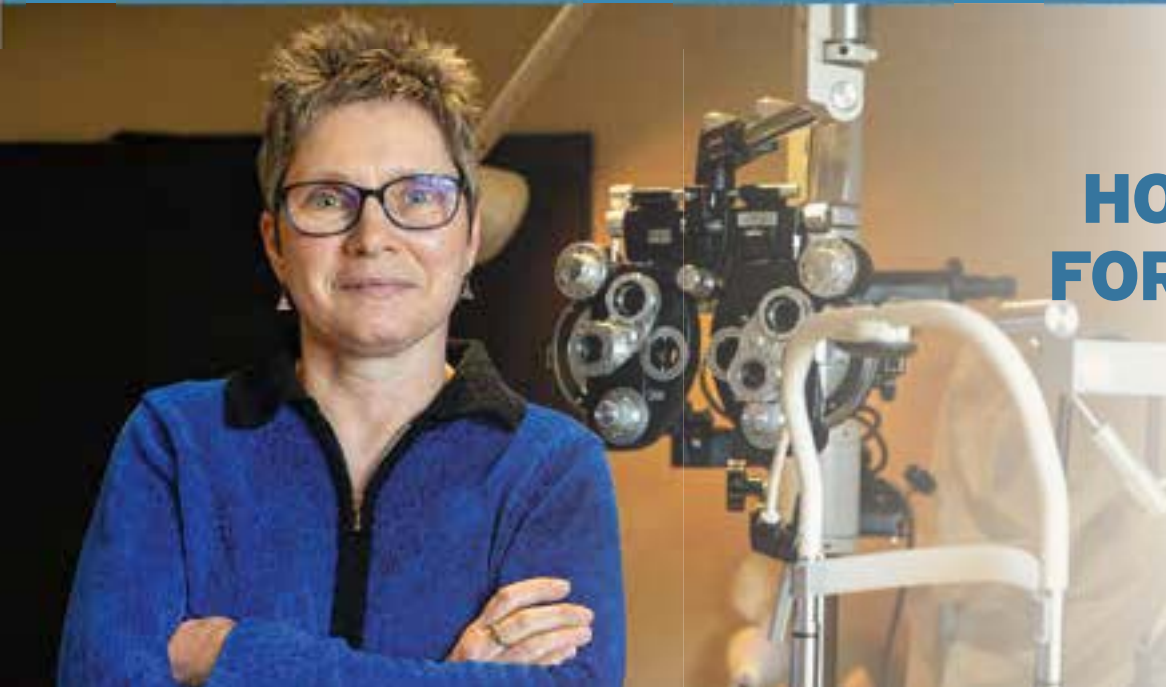




SPRING 2022

IMPACT

Building life-changing opportunities for people who are blind.



HOPE AND HELP FOR VISION LOSS

Perspectives from Dr. Susan Wise

Dr. Susan Wise was studying optometry when her grandmother developed diabetic retinopathy, resulting in significant loss of vision.

“I saw what it did to her life and what a detriment it was, and, as a student of optometry, I also saw all that was possible to help,” Wise said. “It started my fascination with low vision — with looking at how much functional vision a patient has and then helping them maximize their remaining vision for daily activities.”

Now an independent optometrist specializing in low vision at Asheville’s Community Low Vision Center*, Wise has noticed that many of her patients arrive at the facility having been referred by other eyecare providers.

“Most doctors are trained to diagnose the disease and then check on the disease’s

progression and may not be trained to provide comprehensive low vision consultations,” she explained. “Patients often feel doctors cannot help them any further. At IFB, I have the freedom to talk with the patient and hear about their needs and frustrations.” Dr. Wise then works with the patient on how to address their vision challenges going forward. “At the end of the exam, some patients tell me, ‘You’ve just given me so much hope.’ And that’s always so rewarding,” she shares.

As part of National Low Vision Awareness Month, celebrated each February, Dr. Wise offered some **general wisdom on vision health**: protect the eyes from UV rays by wearing sunglasses outdoors, maintain proper nutrition, and don’t smoke — or try to give it up. “There’s a known association with smoking and almost every eye disease, particularly macular degeneration,” she said.

When should a person see a doctor for his or her eyesight? “Any sudden changes to a person’s vision or sudden distortion of the vision — especially if it’s more pronounced in one eye,” Wise said. Additionally, prolonged or recurring headaches might be a clue to check your vision. “And, of course, anyone who is diabetic needs an annual eye exam.”

The Community Low Vision Center exists to connect patients, including young children, who need special vision accommodations

with specialty treatment and tools. Once Dr. Wise pinpoints the patient’s low vision problem, Grant Weathers at the Asheville Community Low Vision Center is on-site and ready to help, whether with innovative low vision products or through referral to local resources.

“Grant will show them how to use certain devices based on my recommendations, or we can make a referral to an occupational therapist, who can help them maximize use of their home or workspace,” Wise said. “While there’s no magic pair of glasses that can fully restore a person’s vision, we can find a way for them to do most anything.”

**Our Community Low Vision Centers in Asheville and Winston-Salem, NC and Little Rock, AR create a path to independence for individuals with low vision of all ages. Our low vision associates are trained to help anyone find the right tool to address a vision challenge or lack of sight. The Centers work in partnership with independent optometrists specializing in low vision.*

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Scan QR code for more about Community Low Vision Centers

**“My life just keeps moving.
I don’t have time to stop.”**

**BETTYE JOHNSON,
Community Low Vision
Center customer**



In October 2018, Bettye Johnson's world suddenly went dark. Diagnosed with glaucoma at an early age, she had always been visually impaired — her left eye damaged early on by the disease. But, after a severe infection took the remaining sight in her right eye, she’s spent the last three years completely blind.

Prior to fully losing her vision, Bettye worked in higher education, helping students receive federal financial aid. “I had been doing everything online, navigating the computer and online systems,” she said.

But losing her eyesight “was pretty much the end of everything,” she continued. “It all came to a screeching halt. At that point, you have to learn new skills. There’s a lot of technology in blindness, but you have to learn to use it,” — and that takes time.

That’s when she was referred to IFB Solutions for employment, and, in March 2019, she joined the team in Little Rock. “I live independently, I own my own home, and I really did need to work,” she said.

But what she found at IFB was more than just a job. “It’s a community,” she said. “It allows people who are blind or visually impaired to work in a community of their peers — to learn new skills or just connect with other people who are in similar

**“It’s a community.
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situations. Navigating loss of vision on your own can be a challenge, but working in an environment where you’re able to socialize with and relate to others gives you a real sense of connection.”

While employed at IFB, Bettye became a customer of the Little Rock Community Low Vision Center, which, among other things, keeps her up to date on products helpful in her daily life. “I’ve bought so many things — a new cane, a grill, a talking measuring cup, which is so cool,” she said. “Toni Frazier, the Little Rock CLVC Low Vision Associate, is great about putting things out there for us and explaining what the item is, the purpose of it and how to use it.”

IFB and its Community Low Vision Center have helped Bettye maintain her independence, and “it’s really important for me to also exhibit my independence,” she continued. “I’m really very active in the community and in my church. I think the more we’re out there and the more we show our independence, the more people will recognize us — not just as someone to feel sorry for, but as someone you’d want to be friends with.”



Our own Jay Hardwig, S.E.E. Program Manager in Asheville, has just published his first book, *Just Maria*! Congratulations, Jay! *Just Maria* is the story of Maria Romero, a blind sixth-grader who is trying her hardest to be normal. Her task is complicated by glass eyes, rutabagas, rubber chickens, and a child gone missing on the streets of Marble City. As you might guess, the spirit of our S.E.E. kids is strong in this book. Learn more, order a copy, or read Jay’s blog at jayhardwig.com.

Jay will donate a portion of proceeds from all sales of *Just Maria* during our Steps to S.E.E. fundraiser this spring to support our summer camps this summer. So support S.E.E. students going to camp by ordering your copy now!





DANIEL DEATON AND FAMILY

Daniel Deaton has always had a strong will to help others.

“I’ve been blessed,” said the Dallas-based mortgage banker. “And when you’ve been blessed by God and your cup runneth over, you have two opportunities: you can either share what you have with others or you can get a bigger cup. As a Christian, I’m not reaching for another cup. I feel it’s my obligation to be a blessing back to others.”

In 2021, Deaton made a significant contribution to IFB Solutions, generously donating to Charlotte’s S.E.E. After School Program for K-12 students who are blind or visually impaired. The program connects children with a wide range of curriculum-focused programs that combine crafts, music, cooking, assistive technology, and independent living skills to foster independence.

“Quite honestly, kids are my passion,” said Deaton, a father of two and grandfather of five. “My wife and I often look for opportunities to support anything to do with kids — especially if it has to do with equipping them for the future. What IFB

Solutions is doing for these kids is admirable and commendable. I want everyone to have the opportunity to be independent and to pursue a passion and career, whatever their challenge may be.”

Though he’s lived in Texas for nearly two decades, Deaton grew up in Winston-Salem, where he met lifelong friends and golf buddies Ged and Mark Doughton, who work on IFB’s staff and board, respectively.

“Last year, Mark shared a bit with us about what IFB was doing, and it interested and intrigued me even then,” Deaton explained. “Then, once we decided to donate, Ged gave me some options for what the money could be used for, and the S.E.E. Program was right up our alley.”

As a first-time donor to IFB Solutions but a supporter of many causes, Deaton often encourages others to seek out new opportunities to make meaningful contributions to charitable organizations.

“If you’ve been blessed, you have a key obligation to give back,” he said. “Whatever your passion is, find a way to give back, be involved, and be part of the solution.”

As a first-time donor to IFB Solutions but a supporter of many causes, Deaton often encourages others to seek out new opportunities to make meaningful contributions to charitable organizations.



Ken Mullins,
Optical Production Manager



“The reason I love the IFB program is because I’m surrounded by people that also don’t see well. I can relate to some of the problems they have because of their vision.”

– Enrique Sanchez, 9th grade at Asheville High (on left)

“I love all of the S.E.E. activities we do and all the people we get to become friends with. Once I am older, I would like the chance to come back and help other people in need.”

– Anthony Lamar Foster, 10th grade at Asheville High (on right)

“I love IFB Solutions because it helped my mom who was visually impaired find the tools, support, and care she needed just at the right time. IFB is a hidden treasure for those who see with their heart and mind.”

– Doris Snyder, retired special education teacher, IFB Solutions donor

