

C.B.R.C. TORCH



Mission

The mission of the Hines VA Blind Rehabilitation Center is to provide High-Quality Blind Rehabilitation Service through the provision of a broad range of programs.

“A Blind Center is where faith is strongest that blind people deserve hope, respect and freedom. These are accorded first, followed by the means of achieving them. Our civilization permits wholesome living when blind and here one learns how.”

Russell C. Williams

WWII Veteran

First Chief of the Hines VA
Blind Rehabilitation Center

1948



“Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored.”



Winter 2019



PROUDLY SERVING THE CENTRAL AREA REGION

A publication of the
Central Blind Rehabilitation Center
Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital

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In our efforts to improve the accessibility of the TORCH visually impaired friendly features have been incorporated.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- It is with a heavy heart that we inform our readers of the passing of Loyal “Gene” Apple, retired Chief of the Blind Center 1960-1967. See page 5 for a historical perspective on the career of this leader in the field of Blind Rehabilitation.
- Congratulations to the Hines Central Blind Center on receiving the BVA Award of Excellence August 2018. See page 7 for details.

Chief's Message



Greetings to all our Veterans, stakeholders, and friends! Another year is upon us and we welcome all the new opportunities that await to serve our nation's heroes. We continue to bring the CBRC TORCH newsletter to you in an effort to maintain communications with our patient population and sister agencies in an effort to remain current with all things Blind Rehabilitation.

As always, with a new year, we have new goals. Some are ongoing with new targets, and some are new. Check out what will be driving us this year on page 3. Hint, Clinical Video Telehealth is alive and strong, and working its way into Blind Rehabilitation more and more. We hope to expand on this option in the coming year and that our Veterans will be open to this new idea.

Staff updates have been abundant and tend to keep new and fresh ideas flowing. You can find the run down on page 3. In addition to inter department transfers, we are once again, fortunate to have a full-time Recreation Therapist back in the saddle after almost a year of vacancy. Melissa Winter, RT, has returned to continue to drive and promote our Recreation Program, along with our

Orientation and Mobility department. Together, this combination works well and we are thankful to have this team working together again.

Did you know, the Central Area Region Visual Impairment Services Team Coordinator (VIST) Program is 36 staff strong? Most are full time, a few are part time, but all work diligently to reach Veterans in need of Blind Rehabilitation Services and assist in case management on many levels. A good resource to say the least. If you haven't talked to your VIST in a while, or have a question that is blind rehabilitation related, give them a call. You can find a current VIST Roster on the last two pages of this newsletter. You should be hearing from your VIST at least annually. This issue of the CBRC TORCH *Get to Know Your VIST* article features Matt Page from Ohio.

Lastly, we want to offer condolences to the family of Loyal "Gene" Apple on the passing of Gene this past November. We are grateful to be the recipients of Gene's efforts while he served as the Chief of the Center, (1960 -1967). On behalf of the Staff of the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center, our deepest sympathies to the Apple family. May memories comfort you in the days ahead.

Performance Improvement



The Blind Rehabilitation Center continues its Performance Improvement (PI) initiatives in 2019 with returning measures and the addition of some new initiatives. Each of our goals are outlined below.

ACCESS

Goal 1: Improve Access to Inpatient Blind Rehabilitation; Decrease Wait Time for Admission. This is in response to a National Mandate to strive to admit Veterans for Blind Rehabilitation within 60 days of a referral submission.

Goal 2: Improve Access To Care Utilizing Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT). Video Telehealth is on the rise, and blind rehabilitation is no exception from utilizing this method of treatment.

Goal 3: Implement CVT teaching curriculum for Video on Demand.

As technology reaches its way into many aspects of health-care, blind rehabilitation is exploring new ways to use this method of connecting providers and patients.

SATISFACTION

Goal 4: Increase Veteran Satisfaction in Community Resources. This is a carryover goal from 2018.

SAFETY

Goal 5: Patient Safety- Fall Prevention. Patient safety is and always has been a priority. We continue to explore new ways to keep our patients safe, despite their disability.

Staff Updates

The Blind Rehabilitation Center Staff Roster has experienced lots of changes in the past six months. To help you keep track of all the changes, we're going to lay them all out for you here:

- Anthony Cleveland, (AKA: Tony) formerly the Living Skills department Supervisor, moved his leadership skills to the O&M department where he supervises the largest department. Former supervisor, and long-time staff member Scott Smith, retired in September 2018.
- Lauren McCarthy, former Living Skills Instructor, now supervises the Living Skills department, following Tony's transition to the O&M department.
- Dan Smith, formerly the Computer Access Training (CATS) Department Supervisor, accepted a new position as a Blind Rehabilitation Center Technology Specialist; the first of its kind.
- Margaret Elgersma, (AKA: Maggie) now supervises two departments, (Visual Skills and CATS) following Dan Smith's new appointment.
- Cedrix Walker, former Living Skills Instructor, accepted the Polytrauma Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) position, that was vacated by Maggie when she assumed the additional department supervision.

Recreation at the Hines BRC

By M. Winter and
A. Cleveland



The winter months aren't keeping the Veterans at the Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC) inside this season. This year, the BRC is excited to have 4 different dates to ski at Wilmot Mountain Ski Resort, Wilmot, WI, with Adaptive Adventures.

Adaptive Adventures assists the Blind Rehabilitation Center with providing trained ski instructors and adaptive ski equipment. While most of our blinded Veterans will ski in a traditional fashion, some of our Veterans have been able to explore adaptive equipment to use, to enable them to continue to enjoy this activity.



Example of the Ski Walker

Adaptive equipment options include:

Sit Ski

This enables individuals to sit in a bucket seat mounted to a ski. They will then have out riggers which aid in balance and turning when skiing. This equipment has been used by some of our Veterans who are paraplegic's or amputee's.

Ski Walker

The ski walker is an upright frame with skis on it to assist in stabilizing the skier. This piece of equipment was used with one of our Veterans who was then able to safely ski for the first time.

Ski Bike

The ski bike looks like the frame of a bicycle and has a bigger seat on it than a standard bike. Instead of wheels, the ski bike has skis



under it and the rider on the bike also has boots and mini ski's on their feet as well. The rider is able to steer to the left and to the right to help them navigate down the hill.

Don't forget to look into the National Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and other adaptive sport organizations to ski with in your local area.

Loyal Eugene Apple
Retired Chief,
Hines Blind
Rehabilitation
Center



“By his example, he has instilled within all people he has met, a confidence in the abilities of blind individuals.”

Gene Apple passed away on November 5, 2018. He was recognized internationally as a leader in rehabilitation of the blind and visually impaired.

Born in McCurtain, Oklahoma in 1932, he was drafted into the Army in 1955. The trajectory of Gene’s life changed when he was blinded in an army training accident. After a prolonged hospitalization, followed by blind rehabilitation training at the Hines VA Blind Rehabilitation Center, Gene launched a leadership career of service, research and education.

Career milestones included, but are not limited to, serving as a Midwest Region Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) Field Service Representative, followed by a position as a National Field Service Director, supervising a National Field Program in Washington, DC.

In 1960, Gene was selected as Chief of the Blind Rehabilitation Center at Hines VA Hospital, where he had

been a patient just four years earlier. During this time, he helped establish a clinical training program that was later adopted as the National Standard for Orientation & Mobility Specialists at the Master’s Degree Level.

In 1967, Gene transferred to VA Hospital, Menlo Park, California, to establish the new Western Blind Rehabilitation Center, that still exists today. He served as an adjunct professor at Western Michigan University, taught workshops in the U.S. and Japan, and served on the executive committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, and led the first delegation of blindness agencies to the Soviet Union in the Mid-1970s. He was recruited in 1975 to direct the American Foundation for the Blind in New York City, where he sat at the desk once occupied by Helen Keller.

The field of blind rehabilitation is forever grateful for all of Gene’s contributions.

The following source was used for this article; The Tryon Daily Bulletin, Tryon, NC
www.tryondailybulletin.com/2018/11/10/loyal-eugene-apple/

RESOURCES

MUSIC

Music technology and training for people who are blind.



DANCING DOTS

1754 Quarry Lane
P.O. Box 927
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0927
610 783-6692

www.dancingdots.com

Dancing Dots Braille Music Technology, L.P., Offers **Lime Lighter** so low vision performers can read magnified print music up to 10 times standard size hands-free.

GUITARS FOR VETS

1-855-448-4376 - Toll Free
www.guitars4vets.org

Guitars for Vets, Inc. (G4V) is a federally registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that enhances the lives of injured military veterans by providing them with guitars and music instruction. Guitars for Vets provides weekly one-to-one and monthly group lessons, and a new acoustic guitar and guitar accessory kit to military Veterans at VA medical and community-based Vet centers. All Veterans are referred to guitars for Vets by the VA medical team in order to integrate the Guitars for Vets program into their treatment regimen. There are over 80 chapters in 40 states with the assistance of over 200 volunteers nationwide.

EDUCATION

SECOND SENSE

65 East Wacker Place, Suite 1010
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 236-8569

www.second-sense.org

Second Sense offers technology training, adaptive sewing skills, counseling/ support groups, community education, career counseling and many other services to blind and low vision consumers. They also offer several newsletters on topics like technology, personal success stories, and available services in an accessible format.

HADLEY INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

700 Elm Street
Winnetka, IL 60093-2554
(800) 323-4238
(847) 446-8111

www.hadley.edu

The Hadley School for the Blind offers over 90 courses in six curriculum areas. Classes are offered free of charge to all legally blind individuals and are completed through the mail or online. Information is available in large print, Braille, and online.

Hadley offers excellent instructional videos for iPhone and how to utilize beneficial Apps. Other course material is available for technology, and everyday tasks.

www.hadley.edu/InstructionalVideos.asp

BVA 2018 Award of Excellence

The Blind Rehabilitation Center at Hines VA Hospital is traditionally known for providing excellent care and quality blind rehabilitation. This past August 2018, at the National BVA Convention, the Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center was awarded the **2018 Award of Excellence for Blind Rehabilitation Services** by the Blinded Veterans Association.

The award stated the following:

‘For exemplifying the words of the first BRC Chief, Russell C. Williams: “A Blind Center is where faith is strongest, that blind people deserve hope, respect and freedom. These are accorded first, followed by the means of achieving them. Our civilization permits wholesome living when blind, and here one learns how.”

We are honored to receive this award, and grateful that we continue to live up to the original credo spoken by our first founding Chief.



Center Chief, Denise Van Koeving, accepting the award from BVA Representative.

Tales from Andy



Brought to you by our virtual guide dog, “Andy.” Hope the following Jokes and Quotes bring a smile to your face or a chuckle to your day. Enjoy!



JOKES

- How do you play Air Force Bingo? B-52...F-16....A-10.
- How do you confuse a drummer? Put sheet music in front of them.
- Teacher: “Johnny, what are the last words of, ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’?”
Student: “Play Ball.”



Quotes

- Stop being afraid of what could go wrong, and start being excited about what could go right.
Tony Robbins
- Time is free; but it is priceless. You can’t own it, but you can use it. You can’t keep it, but you can spend it. Once you’ve lost it, you can never get it back.

Harvey Mackay

GET TO KNOW YOUR



In this edition, Columbus, Ohio Visual Impairment Services Team Coordinator (VIST), Matt Page, shares with us his unique 25-year journey through VA Blind Rehabilitation Services (BRS).

Matt Page is a California native, but his career drew him to the Midwest. Just as he was completing his Social Work degree at Western Michigan University (WMU), a conversation with a classmate altered the trajectory of his career. “A classmate told me about a Master’s Degree program in Rehabilitation Teaching, (now Vision Rehabilitation Therapy) and I decided to look into it.” Page went on to earn Masters degrees in Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation & Mobility.

The 1990’s found Matt working at the West Haven, Augusta, Hines, and Birmingham VA Blind Rehabilitation Centers (BRCs). Even when job opportunities were not promising, Page was not deterred. For six months, he worked factory jobs at night to keep his young family afloat until he landed his next job with VA BRS.

In 2002, he returned to the Midwest to assume his current role as the Columbus, Ohio VIST, stating, “We have a staff of 1200 and we’re

building on, but we’re still one of the major VA systems without inpatient beds.” Page learned to navigate outpatient care by building strong relationships with patients, providers, and stakeholders. “*All of the Eye Clinic staff have interactions with me. They’ve incorporated me as part of the team rather than just this guy that deals with vision loss.*” Providers often send referrals directly to Page before he has the chance to search for them.

The best part of the job? Page stated, “*the Veterans, hands-down!*” He went on to say, “*when Veterans see the work Blind Rehab Specialists do, they see their providers almost like close friends or family members who want them to succeed.*” Page’s priority is, “*To get them inspired to be active on their own. That’s what I get real joy out of. To see Veterans living a better life.*”

Matt participates in Veteran-centric events, and escorts Veterans to the annual Tee Tournament, and partners with the Columbus Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) for monthly adaptive bowling outings.

If you think Matt Page is on his way out any time soon, not so fast. When asked about where he sees himself in the next several years, Page stated, “*I’ve been part of VA BRS for 25 years and I don’t see myself stopping anytime soon.*”

Know your VIST (Visual Impairment Services Team Coordinators)

The Visual Impairment Services Team Coordinators, better known as (VIST) are your case managers for Blind Rehabilitation care and services and your first contact when you need to enroll or apply for a program. Whether it be your first admission to the Blind Rehabilitation Center, a special program to meet unique needs, or a refresher program, these representatives are key. The following is a current updated list for the Central area Region who refer Veterans to the Hines Central Blind Rehabilitation Center.

<u>VIST Coordinator</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
Gregory Manuel	Lexington, KY	(859) 281-3916
Julie Kennedy	Louisville, KY	(502) 287-4000 x55049
Brian Joos	Cincinnati, OH	(513) 559-3567
Karla Riste	Dayton, OH	(937) 268-6511 X3514
Natalie Duarte-DeEscalante	Chillicothe, OH	(740) 773-1141 x7855
Matthew Page	Columbus OPC	(614) 257-5325
Beth Levine	Youngstown OPC	(330) 740-9200 X1580
Marianne Ryan	Cleveland, OH	(216) 791-3800 X2108
Jennifer Troyer	Detroit, MI	(313) 576-4888
Bill Bernhard	Battle Creek, MI	(269) 223-6607
Richard Alden	Ann Arbor, MI	(734) 845-3064
Deanna Austin	Indianapolis, IN	(317) 988-2576
Jeff Stroud	Danville, IL	(217) 554-5406
NovaLea Welch	FT Wayne, IN	(260) 426-5431 x72650
Leland Lewis	Saginaw, MI	(989) 497-2500 X11852
Helen Witt	North Chicago, IL	(224) 610-7168
Pat Zeinstra	Hines, IL	(708) 202-2351
Melinda Dunlap	Jesse Brown (Chicago, IL)	(312) 569-7531
Daniel Snyder	Milwaukee, WI	(414) 384-2000 X41832
Kurt Brunner	Madison, WI	(608) 256-1901x11960
Debora Pate (Acting)	Iron Mountain, MI	(906) 774-3300 X31378
Kari Arch	Tomah, WI	(608) 372-3971 x61831
Jennifer Bach (Acting)	St. Louis, MO	(314) 652-4100

Paul Clary-Archuleta	Kansas City, MO	(816) 861-4700 x56924
Erin Shaw	Poplar Bluff, MO	(573) 686-9784
Dawn M. Clouse	Leavenworth, KS	(913) 682-2000 x53825
Betty Howerton	Marion, IL	(618) 997-5311 X54815
Bob Hamilton	Wichita, KS	(316) 651-3682
Lauren Swift	Columbia, MO	(573) 814-6458
Anna Perry	Sioux Falls, MI	(605) 333-6891
Jennifer Points Meghan Michelotti	Minneapolis, MN	(612) 467-1814 (612) 629-7009
Lois Thesing	St Cloud, MN	(320) 255-6480 X7802
Wesley Hodgson	Des Moines, IA	(515) 699-5410
Ronita Bland	Omaha, NE	(402) 995-3188
Keith Queen	Iowa City, IA	(319) 338-0581 x6889
Jody Schommer	Fargo, ND	(701) 232-3241 X3056
Paul T. Cotton	Black Hills, SD	(605) 745-2000 x2727

Contact Us:

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http://www.hines.va.gov/services/blind_rehab.asp

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**FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND
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