



**Blind.** A simple little word which has the capacity to generate as much fear as the word cancer

**IMAGINE** it's the best day of your life. Your daughter was just born and she is absolutely perfect. Then a few months go by and you become a little worried because her eyes do not seem to respond the way you think they should, so, you take her to the pediatrician. After endless tests they tell you she is blind. And suddenly this is the worst day of your life. Time passes and she is growing up. She is beautiful, intelligent and creative and all you want is for her to have the same quality of life and opportunities as other children. Her name is Peyton and she is 5 years old.



**IMAGINE** you're working at your desk and suddenly some liquid starts running down your face. You grab a tissue and wipe the liquid away. Then you realize your right eye no longer works, so you rush to the emergency room and you are told your cornea has melted due to Stevens-Johnson syndrome—a disease you have never heard of in your life. You make all the usual trips to the specialist but nothing can be done. A few months later, your left cornea melts, leaving you totally blind. So now what? This is the story of our member, Beverly.

#### OUR MISSION

The Purpose of the Missouri Council of the Blind is to promote the general well-being of our members and legally blind people in Missouri, and to support or participate in other programs promoting the best interests of legally blind people everywhere

**IMAGINE** you just got off work and you are ready to go home to your family. A friend stops to ask you to help him inflate a tractor tire. You have done this kind of task hundreds of times without a problem. Two weeks later you wake up in the hospital. You will live, but your eyes have been destroyed by an exploding tire. So, what will you do now? This is the story of our member, Denny.

**IMAGINE** you have worked hard all your life. You have raised your children, you are active in the community and you are respected by your peers. You are almost ready to retire and you begin making plans to do those many things you never had time for. You notice your vision is starting to give you problems so you go for a checkup. You're told you have an age-related disease called Macular Degeneration and it is likely you will become totally blind. You have heard of this but never thought it could happen to you. So now what?

Fortunately, there are people who care and who will help. Missouri Council of the Blind (MCB) is a member based organization of blind persons working hard since 1956 to get Peyton, Beverly, Denny and thousands of other blind Missourians, through the shock and disappointment of being blind and regaining their confidence and self-respect.

**Our Mission:** The purpose of Missouri Council of the Blind is to promote the general well-being of our members and legally blind people in Missouri, and to support or participate in other programs promoting the best interests of legally blind people everywhere.

**Our Vision:** To give every blind Missourian an opportunity to contribute socially and economically to society with the same expectations for success as all other Missourians.

**MCB works to fulfill our mission in two primary ways: Through education and advocacy for blind individuals and the blind community AND through our six core programs**

## Education and Advocacy

MCB helps improve education and employment for the blind. A paycheck in and of itself is vitally important but employment is far more than a paycheck. Employment is the economic and social foundation for stability in life, the linchpin for one's independence, an important component of one's self-definition and traditionally an indicator of one's entrance into adulthood.



When MCB was founded in 1956 the employment rate of blind individuals was less than 1%. Those who could find work often did so in sheltered workshops making brooms, caning chairs and other types of menial jobs.

As far as education, a blind child only had two options. Attend a special school for the blind or to be schooled at home and a higher education was almost unheard of. The good news is much has changed over the past 60 years. Parents now have many more choices for educating their blind children including main stream schools and their children can now attend the University of their Choice without the fear of discrimination. While unemployment is still much too high, main stream employment opportunities for blind persons have never been greater. However, changes do not just happen. It requires time, resources, hard work and the cooperation of many private and public organizations and government agencies, employers and educational institutions.

***Some challenges faced by the blind community can only be overcome through legislation.*** For example, in 2016, MCB supported legislation to increase the asset limits for individuals receiving Mo-Health Net (health insurance for low income Missourians). The legislation would allow an individual to have assets up to \$2,000 beginning in 2018 and would increase to \$5,000 by 2021 without affecting their Mo-Health Net eligibility. For a married couple, the asset limits would be \$4,000 in 2018 and would increase to \$10,000 by 2021 and after 2021 the raise would be based on the increase in the cost of living. This is the first such increase in 47 years.

This asset limit increase is important because it allows a person receiving MO-Health net benefits to have a safety net. We all have unexpected expenses from time to time. Having this modest safety net can reduce further demand on public resources and will support one's need for independence.

***Another example of our education and Advocacy is accessible voting.*** Voting is the most important right every American has. Until recently this fundamental right to vote independently and privately has been practically unavailable to blind individuals. Chip, one of our members, explains the difficulty in his own words.

*"I'm one of those thousands of blind Missourians who consider voting an equal rights issue but have yet to exercise my right to vote privately and independently. According to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) it's federally mandated that there is to be at least one accessible voting machine at each polling precinct. However, over the past 10 years, when I've walked into my polling precinct, the machine has either still been in the box sitting underneath the table or the polling officials do not know how to use the equipment. This has left me with my wife, who is sighted, to assist me with my voting. This experience has made me feel as though I never got to vote or that my vote really doesn't matter. I love and cherish my wife and trust her implicitly but really have no way of knowing whether she cast my vote as I had instructed her."*

Over the past several years the Missouri Council of the Blind has supported legislation that would ensure that these accessible voting machines would be made available during all federal, state, and local elections but the barriers still exist.

These are some of the reasons our Education and Advocacy programs are important. However, we understand legislation can only do so much. So, we work with local, state, and federal agencies as well as the private sector to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by the blind community.

*It is said, when little is expected, little is achieved. Working together, we strive to raise not only our own expectations, but the expectations society has for us.*

Education and Advocacy is one component of fulfilling our mission. However, Missouri Council of the Blind never forgets the blind community is comprised of individuals. Every individual has unique dreams, aspirations, goals and needs. MCB listens, mentors and assists blind persons of Missouri navigate through the often-difficult world of imagery as a blind individual.

## OUR VISION

**To give every blind Missourian an opportunity to contribute socially and economically to society with the same expectations for success as all other Missourians.**

*Through our six core programs, we financially assist individuals in several distinct ways*

## Programs

### Educational Scholarships



As the US changes from an industrial to a knowledge driven economy education has never been more important. This is creating more employment opportunities for blind and low vision persons. However, preparing visually-impaired students carries added expenses due to the nature of their disability. These types of expenses include transportation, on campus guides and the cost of having someone read materials not available in accessible formats. Our Scholarship Program in the amount of \$2000 per year is available to any legally blind Missourian pursuing a full-time course of study at the under-graduate and graduate levels and is designed to help offset just a few of these additional expenses.

### Summer Camp

Each year, the Missouri Council of the Blind sponsors' three summer camps for blind and visually impaired Missourians and their families. Participating in recreational activities, engaging socially with others and experiencing firsthand what other blind people can do are key ingredients helping a person who has recently lost their vision begin to believe in themselves once again and embark on a new, more independent life.

*"For me, MCB's summer camp gave me new hope as a blind person about what was possible in my life" says John. "Being with others who had already gone through what I was going through truly opened my eyes to what was possible for me in the future."*



Cobblestone Lodge in Steelville, MO, has provided fun, recreation, and relaxation for hundreds of people with visual impairments and their families. Floating on the Meramec River, swimming, crafts, playing sports, and participating in a talent show are a few of the possibilities.



*"When I lost my sight, my daughters were 3, 6 and 10 years of age" explains Beverly. "It was so nice that there was such an opportunity for my family to experience other families with a blind parent. The atmosphere at Camp is like a small community, and we all look out for each other."*

Since many visually impaired people live on small fixed incomes, they would never be able to gather with friends in a safe and nurturing environment were it not for this program. Participants pay only a small portion of the cost to attend a week's vacation at Cobblestone. MCB is able to subsidize the remainder through the generosity of our sponsors. Each year we help 150 to 200 people attend summer camp.

## Adaptive Technology

Our Adaptive Technology Grants Program, via a matching grant, aids individuals wishing to purchase adaptive hardware and software that connect blind and low vision persons to the main stream world maintaining their independence.



*"I lost my sight gradually due to a rare retinal disease", says Darrel. "Specialized adaptive technology, such as a CCTV, computer display magnification software and screen reading software, saved my career that I loved. I was able to support my family, help the kids through college and retire because I wanted to and not because I had to."*

Adaptive technology typically is a piece of electronic hardware and software designed to help a blind person with a specific task. For example, a closed-circuit TV (CCTV) can help a person with low vision read normal print, view photos, etc. It consists of a display and video camera and can magnify, zoom in, change the color of text and images.

Reading Machines can be used by totally blind persons to read any type of print from postal letters mail to books to magazines.

Blind and low vision persons can use any standard computer but the computer requires special software, such as magnification software for persons with low vision and the very important screen reading software for blind persons.



E-Sight Eye ware is an electronic eyewear solution that allows people with visual impairment to see again, in a way that's often very close to normal vision without a medical procedure.

Typical examples are CCTV \$1800, Reading Machine \$2,300, computer screen magnification software \$600, screen reading software \$1,200, Braille Display \$2,700 and ESight Eye ware \$15,000.

These technologies are essential for a blind person's independence, but are also a critical component for people with visual impairments to join or remain in the work force. Our Adaptive Technology Grant program helps offset part of the cost of these life changing technologies.

## Youth Services

The MCB is eager to reach legally blind youth in our state. Our Youth Services Committee works with families and educators to help children who need specialized equipment to help them succeed. The sooner this specialized equipment is available to children the sooner, and the more effectively, they learn to cope.

We also help by providing transportation for mainstreamed children to participate in activities with other legally blind youth nationally.



## Special Services

The MCB Special Services Program assists all visually impaired Missourians through a grant. Grants may be considered to aid in unexpected expenses for everyday necessities vital for survival and well-being.

## Health Services

The Health Benefits Program provides a minimal amount of assistance to members of the MCB and other legally blind Missourians who have experienced an accident or illness which prevents them from temporarily working at their current occupation.

## Program Oversight

Each year the MCB Board of Directors reviews each program and then allocates specific funds for those programs. Each of our programs and services are administered by a specific committee consisting of at least three member volunteers.

It is the responsibility of the committee to ensure every program application complies with the policies set forth by the policy committee and approved by the board and then to approve or deny the application based on those policies.

Further, each committee chair person reports all program activities to the Board and to the general assembly at our annual convention.

## Pinpoint Your Gift

Folks often ask us, “Can I CHOOSE where my gift goes?” You bet you can! By “restricting” your gift, telling us exactly where you’d like to apply it, you can know that your personal giving wishes will be upheld. Here are some restricted giving options that we hope will appeal to you!

Scholarships							
Associate Level	\$500	Bachelor Level	\$1,000	Masters Level	\$2,500	PHD Level	\$5,000

Camp Fire Club (Summer Camp)					
Cadet	\$450	Explorer	\$900	Ranger	\$1,800
Send one camper		Send one couple		Send a family of four	

## Adapt for Success (Adaptive Technology)

Although it's a myth that when a person loses their vision their other senses become so acute it seems like they may have super powers. Adaptive technology can actually give a blind person a sense that they do. You can become a super hero to a blind person by supporting our adaptive technology program in one of the following ways.

Superman/Wonder Woman		Captain America/Golden Girl		Batman/Cat Woman		Clark Kent/Lois Lane	
\$3,000	\$250 monthly	\$1,800	\$150 monthly	\$900	\$75 monthly	\$600	\$50 monthly

## Ring of Hope

Beginning in 1956 and continuing through the present, our mission has remained the same. But the success of the mission requires adequate funding. By joining the ring of hope your gift will ensure mission success

Platinum Ring		Gold Ring		Silver Ring	
\$1200	\$100 monthly	\$600	\$50 monthly	\$120	\$10 monthly

## Our Pledge to You

Missouri Council of the Blind appreciates your support. We understand there are many great causes and organizations you can choose to support. We will never take your generosity for granted.

## Organization

Missouri Council of the Blind is a 501c 3 non-profit organization registered in the state of Missouri.

MCB is committed to transparency and keeping our administrative costs low. We own our office building and have only two paid employees. An Office Manager/Bookkeeper and one part-time secretary.

## Board of Directors

Our volunteer Board is made up of MCB members who generously donate their time and expertise. The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and three Directors are elected by the general assembly. In addition, each of our 15 local affiliates has one Board seat. Our Bylaws require all Board members be legally blind except for the treasurer.

Our annual financial reports and independent audit can be found on the Missouri Council of the Blind website at [www.moblind.org](http://www.moblind.org) or may be requested by contacting our office at

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