The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired South Carolina (ABVI) is pleased to announce the opening of a second location in Ladson increasing access to critical vision rehabilitation services. For the first time in the organization’s 83-year history, ABVI now has two, fully functional vision rehabilitation centers serving adults in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties who are blind or visually impaired. The Ladson facility opened to clients in early March.

The new 4,300-square-foot building is located at 9565 Highway 78, Building 800, Ladson, SC 29456 in Yale Plaza.

This location is ideal for our Association because Yale Plaza is home to more than 17 vision care professionals, including low vision doctors, who regularly refer patients to ABVI. In addition, since Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties all meet in Ladson, public transportation options from all 3 counties provide routes that serve Yale Plaza.

Our Charleston facility will continue providing a full range of vision rehabilitation services at 1 Carriage Lane, Building A, Charleston, SC 29407.

Adults with blindness and visual impairments can enroll in ABVI’s Own Your Life program at both locations to learn new approaches to daily life. Our Own Your Life program offers two tracks. Personal Independence is for clients who want help learning to live independently and safely with vision loss. Vocational Rehabilitation is for clients who are ready to learn the adaptive skills needed to enter or re-enter the workforce.

As the only nonprofit in the area providing dedicated vision rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired adults in the Tri-County, the expansion is timely. Recent studies suggest that the number of people living with a visual impairment is expected to double over the next 10 years.

“Since the inception of our Own Your Life program in 2015, ABVI has reached approximately 400 blind and visually impaired adults through classes, therapy sessions, social opportunities and trainings,” said Courtney Plotner, President & CEO of ABVI. “However, there are over 15,000 adults living in the Tri-County with a visual impairment, and we knew we had to do more to serve this growing segment of our population. We are grateful to our Board, donors and grantors who helped make this new location a reality.”
Longtime ABVI Supporter Karl Jantzen Honored as Donor of the Year

In October 2019, ABVI hosted our first Lifetime Visionary Circle Induction Ceremony honoring 32 inductees. As part of the ceremony, we introduced the Dorothy Wenberg Donor of the Year Award. The award goes to a donor who has made a transformational impact on the organization through their gifts.

The award is named for Dorothy Wenberg, a donor who bequeathed $6,000,000 to ABVI in 2003. Mrs. Wenberg’s endowment made a transformational impact on our Association and continues to provide opportunities for growth today.

We are pleased to share the first Dorothy Wenberg Donor of the Year Award was given to Colonel Bernhard Karl Jantzen.

Karl has always had a passion for helping people with disabilities, and with a family history of vision loss, the thought of living without sight resonated with him. He made his first donation over 40 years ago and has since become one of our most devoted advocates, serving as a Board member, volunteer and transformational donor.

When asked about his experience with ABVI he said, “If you are going to help someone, don’t put it off. Do it today.”

Karl truly ticks every box of what we hope an ABVI donor will be and was the clear choice for our first Dorothy Wenberg Donor of the Year Award in 2019. Thank you Karl for all that you have done and continue to do for ABVI!

To learn more about our Lifetime Visionary Circle or transformational giving, please contact Bryson Young at byoung@abvisc.org or 843.203.6037.

$111,427 in Grant Funding Received

To date, ABVI has been awarded $111,427 in grant funding to support our vision rehabilitation services for the July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020 fiscal year. Support from our generous grantors helps provide access to the critical services our clients need to live, learn and earn with vision loss.

Pictured below is ABVI client Nia. She is a client who has benefited from the grant funding ABVI has received this year. Thanks to our grantors, Nia has participated in Typing, Braille and Client Connections.

50% Increase in Registered Clients

ABVI’s current client base just surpassed 400! This means over 400 Tri-County adults who are blind or visually impaired are eligible for services promoting personal independence and job-readiness.

This number has grown over 50% since July 1, 2019. With the opening of our second location in Ladson, and with your continued support, we are excited to reach even more of the 15,000 adults living in the Tri-County with a visual impairment.

Pictured above is ABVI client Pat (center) with ABVI instructors Amy Harris (left) and Kimberly Taylor (right). Pat graduated from Activities of Daily Living and Assistive Technology training and is now enrolled in Typing. We are proud to help Pat master new skills!
Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is a training that helps individuals who are blind or visually impaired learn how to safely and efficiently navigate their environments. Taught by a Certified O&M Specialist, the training is individualized to address the unique needs of each person.

In the fall of 2019, ABVI hired Samantha McGovern as a full-time Certified O&M Specialist to better serve our growing client base.

With the addition of a full-time O&M Specialist, ABVI has provided 132 hours of 1:1 Orientation and Mobility instruction to 24 individuals since July 1, 2019.

One of the individuals who has benefited from O&M training is Rosalyn. Rosalyn lost her vision a year ago due to glaucoma. However, she was determined to maintain her independence so she could continue working and living on her own.

“The training I received from Samantha has really changed my life,” said Rosalyn. “After losing my vision, I was scared to go anywhere alone. I have re-learned how to get around my neighborhood, and I am using the bus to get to work, the store or other places I want to go. I really love everything Samantha has taught me.”

While long white cane training is the most recognized form of O&M training, it is much more than that. O&M can include human guide training, hand trailing, street crossing skills, route planning, learning how to orient in different environments (home, work, church or a neighborhood), spatial relation skills and skills related to riding public transportation.

Thanks to your continued support, ABVI can provide O&M services to clients like Rosalyn. To learn more about O&M and all ABVI’s services, please visit www.abvisc.org/services.

ABVI Clients Gain Independence and Confidence through Orientation and Mobility Training

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Meet ABVI Client and Volunteer Michael

We would like to thank Michael for volunteering more than 25 hours with ABVI since July 2019. Michael initially came to ABVI as a client for Assistive Technology tutoring. However, since he was already proficient in braille, Michael offered to volunteer in our beginning braille classes. It has been so helpful to have a volunteer in the classroom who knows braille. When asked what he likes best about volunteering at ABVI, he said “I like being able to spend time with people who are learning to live with a visual impairment.” Pictured below, Michael recently brought in some braille alphabet tiles to help our clients review what they are learning.

Trident United Way Day of Caring

ABVI was thrilled to partner with First Citizens Bank for the 2019 Trident United Way Day of Caring. Pictured above, staff members from First Citizens Bank volunteered during our annual Friendsgiving client luncheon.
Thank you to everyone who attended Noir 2020!

You helped us raise a record-breaking $246,000.

Save-the-Date for Noir 2021!
Friday, January 22, 2021
Memminger Auditorium

www.abvisc.org/noir