Dear Friends and Benefactors,

This year has presented both challenges and great opportunity. Throughout we have continued our century old tradition of weathering the tough spots while staying the course of excellence, innovation and sustainability.

While the number of clients served in our community-based Vision Rehabilitation Services program dropped by 8%, we anticipate this to change with the advent of our campus-based vocational rehabilitation program in 2015. Our Low Vision Clinic has seen a 25% increase, the result of a streamlining in operations and an increase in clinic days from eight to twelve each month. Access Technology and Employment Services implemented several original outreach programs which resulted in a 30% increase in the number of clients seen. The most successful of these programs has been the Apple Social where our access technology experts travel to communities and deliver workshops in a comfortable, familiar environment. This format has taken much of the anxiety out of technology learning for the participants!

While we have seen growth in our services, our operating budget does show a deficit. This deficit is the result of strategic planning costs for our future. In 2015, we will open a campus-based intensive training program on our Portland campus. The ten week program will provide accelerated adjustment to blindness and immersion training in compensatory skills. Participants will graduate with a greater sense of independence and the ability to be involved in family, work and community. Gone are the days of the boarding house and workshop! The Iris Network is keeping step with the 21st century and is showing the way.

Without your support we could not deliver the services that we do. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Katharine Newbury Ray          James E. Phipps
Chair of the Board of Directors President and Executive Director

189 Park Avenue, Portland, Maine 04102  |  1-800-715-0097  |  www.theiris.org
Our Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION
Helping people who are visually impaired or blind attain independence and community integration.

VISION
Building a world where no person is limited by visual impairment or blindness and everyone is an advocate for eye health and the needs of people who are visually impaired or blind.

VALUES
The Iris Network recognizes the diverse aspirations and abilities of people who are visually impaired or blind. Our services are based on respect for each individual’s right to self-direction through informed choices. We believe that the education and integration of all individuals will result in a stronger society.

“To me talking to someone with answers was a new lease on life.”
Fraternity brothers from the Sigma Nu chapters at the University of Southern Maine and the University of New Hampshire were invaluable in making the 2013 White Cane Walk a huge success!

“The Iris Network is the best thing that happened to me. Thank you.”

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Vision Rehabilitation Services

Mrs. Lichtman is the very definition of life! “I feel lucky to be living independently, at my age,” she said. She lives with her Yorkie, Peanuts. “He’s my constant companion. We get out a lot, and we’re well-known around town.”

Mrs. Lichtman has no vision in one eye, and diminishing vision in the other. But thanks to a video magnifier she got from The Iris Network, raised markings on her stove dials, and added lighting under her cabinets, she’s able to live independently.

She recently contacted The Iris Network with a special request—to start knitting again. One of our vision rehabilitation therapists appeared on Mrs. Lichtman’s doorstep and worked with her on a number of things: a new way to knit, how to maintain financial records, and reading and answering mail.

It is that ability to build trust and respect with clients that enables us to do what we do best – help individuals to maintain and sometimes gain additional independence when learning to adjust to vision loss or blindness.

Mrs. Lichtman is the perfect role model for an independent life. Between non-stop phone calls, she pursues her hobbies, hosts a Mah Jong table, and volunteers in her community. Mrs. Lichtman volunteers at the food bank with the Lions food drive.

Twice a week, she volunteers with the Head Start program, arriving just as the children are finishing up breakfast. She washes down the tables and plays with the children until it’s time to clean and set the tables for lunch. Typically the morning activities are Play-Doh or puzzles. Mrs. Lichtman noted, “I can’t see the puzzles to know where a piece might go, but I do know that I can encourage them to keep trying!”

“The vision rehabilitation therapist went above and beyond everything within her power and capacity to be helpful to me.”
Vision Rehabilitation Services

Vision rehabilitation and allied services in the State of Maine for individuals experiencing low vision or blindness are delivered by a team. The Iris Network collaborates with many organizations. Maine’s Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) is our government partner and the source of many of our referrals. While the number of clients served in our community-based vision rehabilitation services program declined by 8 per cent this past year, this anomaly is expected to reverse as more baby boomers deal with age-related eye diseases that cause vision loss.

“I was impressed with the professionalism of this program.”

Demographic projections indicate that over the next 10-20 years, the number of people needing vision rehabilitation and allied services will increase four-fold over current levels. We have partnered with DBVI and our donors to redesign the way we deliver services by renovating our 100-plus year old Ryan Building so we can provide campus-based vocational rehabilitation services in the future.

Our capital campaign donors have provided matching funds for $1.4 million in federal funds accessed through DBVI so we can renovate the Ryan Building to support campus-based programing starting in the fall of 2015. This will enable us to serve many more clients without proportionately increasing staffing costs in the future.
John Michael “Mike” Grondin, is a Rockland parks commissioner who lost much of his vision 10 years ago due to diabetes. Mike enjoys giving back to the community and does this by securing donations from local businesses through church auctions. In the past three years, he’s helped raise $36,000 from water rafting, cruises, and tickets to NASCAR.

Mike was recently asked to take on a new role on St. Peter’s vestry. “I told them it will be a challenge since I won’t be able to read any of the agendas, notes or meeting minutes. Everything would have to be read to me or recorded.”

A fellow vestry member referred him to the Access Technology and Employment Services (ATES) Program. Bonnie Gouzie, Director of ATES immediately went to work. “We recommended the Eye Pal Ace+, a scan and read device and gave Mike the necessary training.” Mike proved to be a fast, motivated learner. According to Bonnie, “The reader is a handy, portable device that Mike can use for a variety of reading needs. When a document is placed in front of the screen, the device snaps a photo and translates the text into audio.” Mike independently uses it for email, his calendar and his address book. His goal is to be able to use it to run the church auction.

"I am thankful your people are here to help people like me. Thanks for everything that you have all done for me."

“There are a lot of good people at The Iris Network," he said. “I've encouraged others to go there so they can get the help they need. It's a wonderful place."
Access Technology & Employment Services

The Access Technology and Employment Services, ATES (pronounced: “At Ease”), program continues to grow as it enters its third year. The number of clients served has jumped to 98 this year from 75 last year due to intensive focused outreach.

Business outreach brought new companies such as Prudential, TD Bank and Volk Packaging.

Programs such as the Apple Social, You Can Do It, Tools for Schools, and a Lunch and Learn series for Southern Maine insurance companies have helped to get the word out. These programs have brought in new clients and the ATES professionals are working with them both one-on-one and in groups.

This year has also seen an increase in the number of veterans The Iris Network serves. ATES reached out to the Veterans Administration which now refers clients for services throughout Maine.

“*The Iris Network showed me that ‘things have changed’ which is important. Having people with knowledge of up to date versions of things is the best type of help I could have received. Thanks!*”
After retiring from a career as a psychotherapist at 85, Betty has learned the importance of having a positive attitude about life. “I focus on living,” she said, “and that attitude has helped me deal with any problems that come my way.”

When macular degeneration and glaucoma started slowing her down, she looked to The Iris Network for answers. “When I told Dr. Berlin at The Iris Network that I’d bought a computer tablet, he was thrilled.” He said, “Betty, that’s the treatment of choice. We don’t have any medication that’s going to make your life easier, but if you can use a tablet, you’re way ahead of the game.” Betty uses it to stay in touch with her two daughters, two granddaughters, and her great-granddaughter who live in Italy.

Dr. Berlin and the staff at The Iris Network pride themselves on being abreast of the latest developments in the fields of low vision and blindness.

In Betty’s independent living community, twenty percent of the residents are 90 or older, and she is happy to be among them. She believes every day is to be lived to the fullest, and she feels very lucky to have the support of The Iris Network to help make her life easier.

“I focus on living.”
The restructuring of the Low Vision Clinic this past year resulted in an increase in the number of individuals who will benefit from our Low Vision Clinic’s services and a more sustainable future.

A 25% increase over last year in the number of patients served has also demonstrated a shift in the majority number of clients from the 85 and over age group to the 75-84 year old age bracket. This is a positive sign as people are coming in to have their eyes evaluated sooner.

We are also starting to see an increase in the number of patients between 13 and 54 years of age. With eye care, it is always helpful to diagnose earlier! Sight cannot be restored; however in some instances deterioration can be slowed.

“I was impressed with the professionalism of this program.”

Many devices are available to assist those with low vision and or visual impairment.
Residents are at the heart of the services provided at the Iris Park Apartments.

Our staff have completed the State of Maine certified residential medication aides (CRMA) course and they provide medication administration in the residential setting. Additional services include assistance with light housekeeping, reading mail, arranging transportation, a daily meal and recreational activities. MaineCare covers the majority of the services we offer.

Residence eligibility at Iris Park Apartments is determined by AVESTA housing. The 30 units are low income housing and the building is the first in the State of Maine to be designed for residents who are visually impaired or blind.

One of the most popular recreational activities is candlestick bowling—no bumpers used! Each year residents challenge the staff at the Colonial Center bowling alley for the Michael Abbott Tournament. Staff wear blindfolds. For the fourth year running, the Iris Park Apartments swept to victory! Michael Abbott was a resident and avid bowler. His friends started the tournament in his memory.
The heart of a home is its kitchen and the heart of the Iris Park Apartments’ kitchen is Roger Plourde, Dietary Manager and CRMA.

Roger was floored when he learned he had been nominated, in his 14th year of service, for the Excellence in Long-Term Care Award from the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. He received the award from Maine’s First Lady Ann LePage at the Blaine House.

Roger is responsible for ensuring healthy and nutritional menus. With input from residents, Roger plans on a three week cycle. A certified State nutritionist reviews the menus.

Residents are able to sign up for one meal a day, dinner. Independence is the underpinning of The Iris Network’s mission, and our vision rehabilitation therapists teach residents how to make breakfast and lunch.

Special occasions, holidays, and happy hours with live music also have their own special, personal chef touches. We are extremely fortunate to have Roger on board!
**Connect With Us**

**The Perfect Role Model for an Independent Life**

Ellie and her husband Dennis live in Blue Hill, Maine with their two children. They have been blind since young adulthood and are active in the community, serving on local boards and volunteering at local organizations.

Ellie: "I feel lucky to be living independently in my own home with my family. It's important to me to be able to live a fulfilling life even though I am blind."

**Community Connections**

*February 2014*

*In This Edition:*

- What's Going On
- Future Plans

*Information of Interest:*

- You can reserve the newsletter:
  - In print
  - Large Print
  - Electronically through Constant Contact
- Email

*Do you need AFFORDABLE Health Coverage?* Want to learn more about the AFFORDABLE CARE ACT? The new health insurance law, also known as Obamacare, has many options for those with pre-existing conditions. For more information, visit The Iris Network's website for a guide on how to navigate the new marketplace.

*Nearby Events:*

- A local children's book event featuring local authors and illustrators.
- A workshop on using assistive technology for the blind.
- A group discussion on the future of technology in the blind community.

**Facebook**

Interact with us on social media. Pop in to see fun posts, interesting articles, and awareness-raising information.

Our page is called The Iris Network. It can be accessed through our website, home page, click on (top right), or head right to our Facebook page!

**Insight**

*Insight* is our free quarterly publication, available electronically, in braille, in large print or in print, with news about The Iris Network programs, events, and clients! To subscribe contact: Serena at (207) 774-6273.

**Community Connections**

*Insight* is a free monthly newsletter that provides information about events going on in Maine communities and the peer community of people who are blind or visually impaired. To subscribe, for electronic or print, contact: Cassie at (207) 774-6273.
Connect With Us

**Apple Socials**, launched this year, put technology into the hands of people who thought they couldn’t use it because of visual impairment or blindness. Apple Socials are held in the community in familiar spaces such as the town library and grange hall. ATES professionals will introduce you to the Apple iPad, a tablet computer popular for technology needs at school, work and home. With features called Voice Over and Zoom, the iPad is accessible to individuals with low vision or blindness, right out of the box. It does not matter how well you can see the screen or whether you can see the screen at all. No special hardware or software is required to use this state of the art technology. To continue the Apple theme, we even serve an apple dessert! If you’d like to host an Apple Social in your community please contact John Allen at (207) 774-6273.

**Living with Grace** continues to provide the opportunity to learn something new, independent living skill, or simply enjoy a known activity in the company of others.
The Iris Network cannot do the work that needs to be done without support from its many, generous donors. Every donation, regardless of amount, is essential to our work and we greatly appreciate all who give. You make a difference!

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Bruce Albiston
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Michael Barndollar
Phil and Janet Bruen
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Sherman Family Foundation
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IDEXX Laboratories, Inc.
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Estate of Franklin Talbot
Estate of Louis Fineberg
Estate of Margaret P. Stewart
Estate of Patricia Casey Trust & Casey Family Trust
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H. Fred Murray Irrevocable Trust
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Alvin, Barbara and Brenda Myers

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William Howe

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Mary Mills and Allen Family  
Norma Simpson

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Steve Thompson

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Mary Mills and Allen Family  
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Steve Thompson

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The raised beds at the Iris Park Apartments are ready for spring planting.
Financials FY 2014

With the award to the State of Maine from the federal government for the training center, The Iris Network had to ensure that appropriate planning and sound decision-making would be our foundation for the center. To this end, unanticipated expenses in the form of consultants and additional staff time for the capital campaign were incurred. The Iris Network, as part of this planning process has put an emphasis on fiscal health and anticipates a solid fiscal year 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support and Revenue</th>
<th>FY'13</th>
<th>FY'14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive equipment sale</td>
<td>$56,627</td>
<td>$66,999</td>
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<td>Grants and foundations</td>
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<td>Event income</td>
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<td>General contributions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other revenue (expense)</td>
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<td>Fees for service</td>
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<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$2,557,273</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>FY'13</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program expenses</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Management and general</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,551,294</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,696,086</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$9,149</td>
<td>($138,813)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FY 2014 Board of Directors

“We think you guys rock! Thanks for your support!”

Senator Angus King and Reynaldo helped us to get the word out about the White Cane Walk for Independence. Reynaldo is a puppet from the Kids on the Block troupe at the Children’s Museum and Theatre of Maine. This is a still from the public service announcement they made with a puppeteer from the Museum and Theatre.

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Well behaved dogs are always welcome to join the White Cane Walk for Independence.
Step 1
Call us.

1-800-715-0097
1-207-774-6273

Step 2
Get connected to services tailored to your individual vision needs and your goals.

The Iris Network is a state-wide, public-benefit, community-based, nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization with a mission of helping people who are visually impaired or blind attain independence and community integration.

www.theiris.org