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SEPTEMBER 30, 2005



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Thank you for joining  
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of its 100th Anniversary!

The Iris Network is a statewide  
not-for-profit organization of  
professionals working to bring  
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**for 100 Years!**

***Congratulations to  
The Iris Network on  
100 Years of Service!***

***From all the staff at  
The Iris Network***

# AGENDA

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- 6:00 RECEPTION AND SILENT AUCTION  
*with music by Neal Shephard*
- 7:00 DINNER AND OPENING REMARKS  
*Masters of Ceremony Sharon and Chris Rose of WCSH TV Channel 6*
- 7:40 SILENT AUCTION BIDDING CLOSSES
- 7:45 PROGRAM AND ANNUAL MEETING
- Call to Order and Opening Remarks:  
*Cynthia Lamberton, Chairwoman, Iris Network Board of Directors  
Jeremiah D. Newbury, Chairman, The Iris Network Advisory Board*
  - Proclamation by *Mayor Jill C. Duson, City of Portland*
  - Proclamation by *Governor John E. Baldacci, State of Maine*
  - Presentation of "A Century of Vision" Video
  - Keynote Address:  
*William J. Ryan, President and CEO, TD Banknorth*
  - Awards and Recognitions:  
*Frank C. Long Volunteer of the Year Award  
Steven Obremski, President and CEO, The Iris Network  
Employee of the Century Award - Steven Obremski  
Recognition of Board Member accomplishments  
Cynthia Lamberton and Steven Obremski  
William J. Ryan Visionary Award*
  - A Consumer Perspective:  
*Pat Hart, Chairwoman, Iris Network Consumer Advisory  
Committee and Member, Iris Network Board of Directors*
- 8:40 LIVE AUCTION
- 9:00–10:30 DANCING AND ENTERTAINMENT  
*Rockin' George Leh and his band*

# *President's MESSAGE*

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Welcome to the Iris Network's 100th Anniversary Celebration. We are delighted to have you with us on this special night. The Iris Network has achieved a milestone that few organizations can boast — one hundred years of creative, dedicated service to an important and sometimes overlooked population — people who are blind and visually impaired across Maine. Our founder, William J. Ryan, a pioneer in vision rehabilitation in the early 1900s, made a momentous decision to improve the quality of life for people experiencing vision loss. His powerful sense of mission gave birth to the Iris Network and continues to inspire us to renew our commitment, develop and strengthen our services, and build even stronger connections between people who are visually impaired and blind and the larger community.

Throughout the years, many individuals and groups have contributed to our noble cause. Joshua Chamberlain and Helen Keller worked to get the Iris Network on its feet. In the decades since, many have made our mission a reality and supported our work year after year to provide leadership and service on the Consumer Advisory Committee, Board of Directors, and Advisory Board. In addition, the Maine community has provided donations, foundation and corporate grants, and volunteer time. We have also benefited from a wonderful staff who bring energy, enthusiasm, and great skill to their efforts. We need to thank people who are visually impaired and blind for their example, advice, and companionship along the road. Finally, we extend much appreciation and gratitude to the individuals, corporations, and foundations who have stepped forward to make our mission a reality and to support our work year after year.

This is truly a night for recognition and gratitude. On behalf of the entire Iris Network, thank you for all you have done for our constituents and, even more importantly, for all that you will do in the next 100 years. The Iris Network is an organization on the move. We have a growing population to serve and new goals to reach. We also have a wonderful opportunity to become the premier organization on behalf of people who are blind and visually impaired in Maine. I am so glad you are with us.



Steven Obremski  
*President/CEO*

# *Chairwoman of the Board's MESSAGE*

Let me join with others to welcome you here this evening. A 100th Anniversary is such a momentous occasion. It lets one look at the past history and reflect on all that has gone before and brought us to this day. For the Iris Network that is truly a proud and glorious past. Few non-profits have the ability to sustain their work for 100 years. The Iris Network struck me as different from the numerous non-profits I have worked with because it has such heart and soul. This has sustained us during difficult times and propelled us into the future with innovation and vision.

As we embark upon the next 100 years I believe we are very well positioned to continue the work of serving Maine's blind and visually impaired. We will however need all of your help to keep alive the generous spirit and dedication that has so defined the first 100 years. I hope you will join me tonight in celebration and then in the hard but joyous work of growing into the next century.

I am pleased and honored to be serving as Chair for the Iris Network Board of Directors and look forward to a year of even greater growth.



Cynthia Lambertson  
*Chairwoman of the Board*

## The Iris Network BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Althea Bennett McGirr  
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Steven Obremski  
James E. Phipps  
Keith R. Potts  
Samuel P. Solish, M. D.

# MASTERS *of* CEREMONY

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SHARON *and* CHRIS ROSE

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**SHARON ROSE** has held several positions with NEWS CENTER, both in Portland and in Bangor. She joined WCSH 6 in 1989 as a producer and reporter. In 1993, Sharon became an anchor at WLBZ 2. Then in 1994, Sharon started as an anchor on WCSH 6. She became the co-anchor of NEWS CENTER's Morning Report in October 1996.

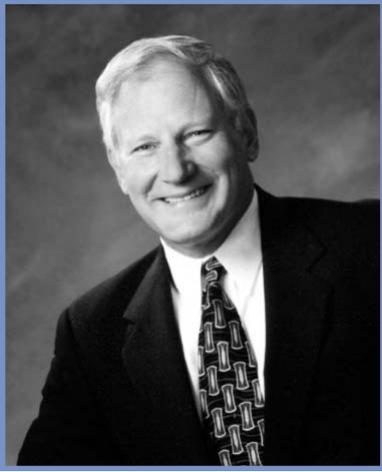
Sharon grew up in a small town in Vermont. She was awarded a bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism from Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. She and NEWS CENTER reporter Chris Rose are married, and have two daughters, Miranda and Duffy Anne. Sharon has two rabbits, Pepper and MacDuff.

**CHRIS ROSE** came to News Center in 1986, to work behind the scenes as a producer. He quickly moved in front of the camera, working as a reporter and anchor. These days he is one of the newsroom's veterans, who is particularly well-versed on the inner workings of Maine's court system.

Chris' television career began in Worcester, Mass., where he worked as a reporter at WSMW for two years. He moved on to WBZ in Boston, where he gained experience as a writer and producer before moving to Maine.

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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WILLIAM J. RYAN, *TD Banknorth*

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**WILLIAM J. RYAN** is Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of TD Banknorth Inc. TD Banknorth, a majority-owned subsidiary of TD Bank Financial Group, is a \$40 billion holding company. TD Banknorth conducts business from its headquarters in Portland, Maine, and more than 400 banking offices in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and upstate New York. The company is one of the 30 largest commercial banking organizations in the United States.

Mr. Ryan has a quarter-century of banking experience, joining Banknorth in 1989. Prior to joining Banknorth, he served as President of the Bank of New England North in Lowell, Massachusetts, and as Executive Vice President of Community Banking for the Bank of New England in Boston. Earlier in his career, he was President of BNE Baystate, a commercial bank subsidiary of the Bank of New England, and a Vice President of the Bank of New England. He began his banking career with Essexbank in Peabody, Massachusetts, where he held numerous senior management positions of increasing responsibility.

Mr. Ryan serves as a Director and Vice Chairman of TD Bank Financial Group, as well as a Director of WellPoint, Inc. and UnumProvident Corporation. He also serves as a Trustee of Colby College and the Libra Foundation. He is on the Board of Advisors at the University of New England, and participates in various other civic and professional activities.

Mr. Ryan is a graduate of St. Francis College in New York and the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University.

# Outgoing Chairman of the Board's MESSAGE

The Iris Network has been an important part of my life for a number of years. It is the only agency in Maine that provides comprehensive services on a statewide basis to people who are blind or visually impaired. Our organization has a great track record of identifying and meeting the needs of people affected by vision loss. For example, at the new low-vision clinic, individuals can be assessed and referred to critical services. Across the state, Maine AIRS brings local and regional news to people who are blind and visually impaired. And in Portland, new housing designed for those who are blind or visually impaired will fill a vital need and make a huge difference in the quality of life of residents.

All this work is truly necessary. A program piloted by the Agency today may serve as a model for others tomorrow. It is wonderful to be part of the progress, and I hope that my involvement has been beneficial.

Most of all, the Iris Network is distinguished by its people. They are truly wonderful. I have never worked with an agency that has such a dedicated staff and volunteer leadership. Many staff members have been with the agency for more than 20 years, and several members of the Board of Directors have also been involved for more than a decade. Perhaps most impressive of all are the organization's constituents. They are a true inspiration. Across the organization, the level of commitment is unbelievable, and I'm proud to be part of it. I thank you for being here tonight.



Merrill Barter  
*Outgoing Chairman of the Board*

## The Iris Network ADVISORY BOARD

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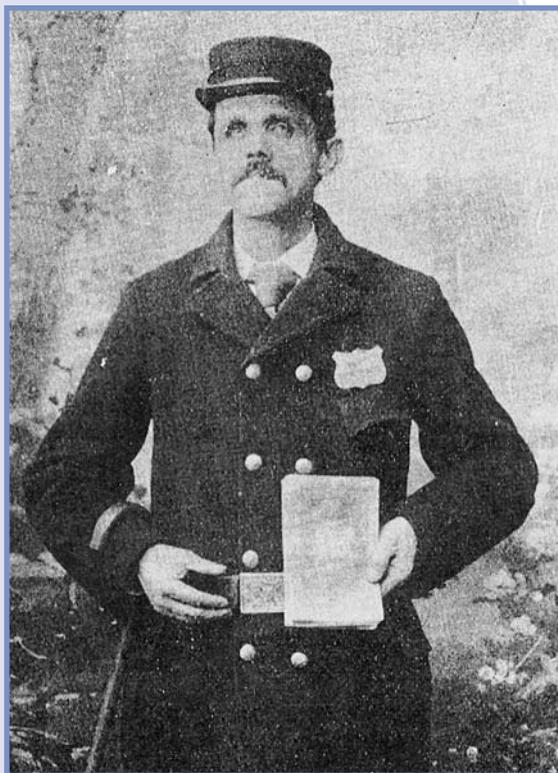
# HISTORY: A Century of Service!

The Iris Network, formerly the Maine Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, was originally incorporated as the Maine Institution for the Blind and was founded in June of 1905.

The founding of the organization was largely due to the efforts of the late William J. Ryan. Mr. Ryan, known as the Old Farmers Almanac Man, was visually impaired and traveled throughout the state selling almanacs. In his travels, he took every opportunity to promote the need for a facility that would teach a trade to individuals who were blind or visually impaired.

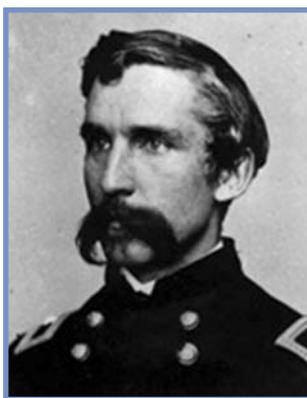
As a result of William J. Ryan's determination and persistence and a newly constructed building, The Maine

Institution for the Blind officially opened for business October 18th, 1909. The industrial plant was equipped for the manufacture of corn brooms, chair caning and mattress making.



*William J. Ryan*

The State legislature partially supported the Iris Network from 1907 to 1967, and the Governor appointed a set number of members to the Board of Directors.



*Joshua Chamberlain*

Joshua Chamberlain, Maine's great Civil War hero, assisted with its founding and served on its Board of Directors.

In 1907, Helen Keller held a fundraiser for the Maine Institution for the Blind, which raised over \$1,000 for the organization.



*Helen Keller*

The residence building was purchased in 1909 through the efforts of the Gorham Dames and the generosity of Virginia Jordan in memory of Mrs. Jordan's mother, sister and brother, and is known as the Barker House. It was used as an administrative building and women's dormitory. Its value at the time was \$12,000.

A small brick bungalow was built in 1919 as a residence for the superintendent of the agency. This site is now occupied by Hamilton's Service Station.



During the early years, the broom (paying \$3 a week), mattress (paying \$2 a week), and caning (paying \$1 a week) departments were run under the direction of foremen who were

blind or visually impaired. In 1936, the agency employed 29 individuals, all of whom lived at the agency and worked in the various departments. Men and women were kept separate both at work and in their dorms. – a reflection on the morality of the times, as well as their blindness.



In 1920, with an appropriation of \$35,000 from the legislature and contributions of an equal amount from friends, a men's residence was purchased at Deering and Park Avenues. This was sold in 1942 to the City of Portland and is now the site of the King Middle School.

In September of 1948, Portland's first pedestrian operated traffic light went into operation at Park and Deering Avenues with an added safety feature for the blind of the area—a bell.

# Highlights .....



- 1905 The Maine Institution for the Blind, now The Iris Network, was established
- 1909 Maine Institution for the Blind in active operation
- 1925 Maine Institute for the Blind affords many educational advantages to sightless of state
- 1934 Governor Brann attends Open House
- 1949 New dormitory for state blind opens
- 1950s Production of mattress stops with the introduction of inner springs
- '60s-70s Long-term residential service and short-term rehab services added
- 1972 Textile industries launched
- 1978 Maine Institution for the Blind (MIB) shuts workshop, cuts staff
- 1978 Workshop reopens
- 1979 The rebirth of the Maine Institution for the Blind – new ideas revitalize Institute
- 1980 New Rehab Center Program opens
- 1980 Blind Center marks big day, 75th Anniversary
- 1982 Maine Center for Blind expands downeast - Aroostook office takes Rehabilitation Services into homes

1983 Broom making becomes past history

1983 New contracts boost Center's employment  
Blind workers meet demand for skills

1988-89 Government contracts keeps workers busy

1989 Computer Access Program gets underway

1998 Maine Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired's (MCBVI) Industries Program closes its doors



1999 MCBVI held its first Vision Symposium, "Vision Loss; It's Everyone's Business"

1999 Governor Angus King signed into law the White Cane Bill, requiring motorists to yield the right-of-way to persons using a white cane or guide dog

2000 Maine Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired celebrates grand opening of Maine AIRS (Maine Audio Information and Reading Service) for Visually Impaired

2002 Grand Opening of new Resource Center provides greater opportunities for blind and visually impaired; The Iris Network unveils new service, InfoChat, a voice communication chatroom for the visually impaired

2005 Low Vision Clinic is launched, and Iris Network breaks ground for Maine's First Housing for Blind and Visually Impaired



# Our MISSION



The mission of the Iris Network is to empower persons who are blind or visually impaired to attain their self-determined level of independence and integration into the community; to provide rehabilitation, training, education and other related services for individuals, their families, and other support systems; and to be a resource regarding issues related to blindness and visual impairment within the state of Maine.

*“In my anxiety about my loss of peripheral vision and diminishing central vision, I temporarily lost confidence in my ability to be an effective art teacher. I found it awkward to be continuing my lifelong career when I was developing limitations with my sight. I was also experiencing new levels of difficulty in simply getting around. I give a great deal of credit to the Iris Network, which enabled me to keep working. I am forever grateful for that. The Iris Network is a remarkable organization.”*

– Mary Levine

*The Iris Network is accredited by the National Accreditation Council of Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired. It is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors that includes community leaders from a variety of professions, as well as consumers of its services.*

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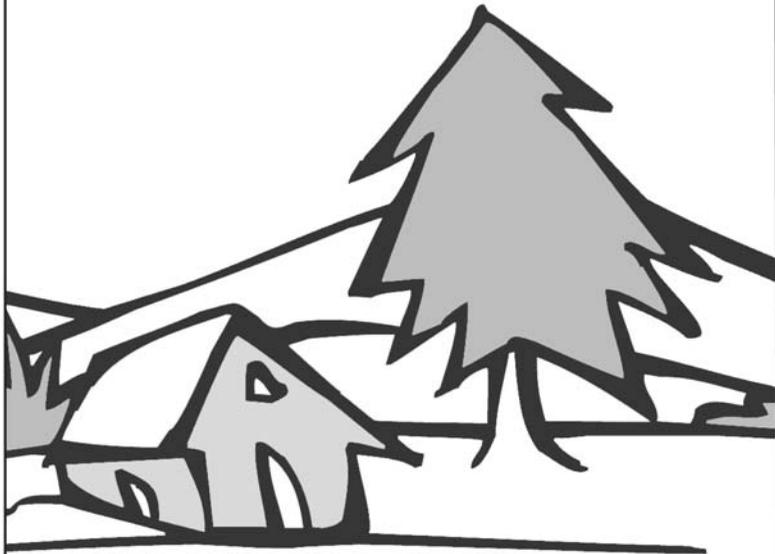


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