

OCT. 2021 - SEPT. 2022

ANNUAL REPORT

FY'22



the
Iris
network

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We are extremely grateful for your commitment to making a difference. It is truly a privilege to work each and every day knowing that our mission is making a direct and life-changing impact on the lives of individuals with blindness or vision Impairment (B/VI).

Your dedication has enabled us to achieve amazing successes, despite the pandemic's continued challenge. Through our second year of Life Camp, our students gained job site experience and acquired vital skills in transportation, budgeting, cooking, cleaning, and shopping. Additionally, two of our CVRT's attended the University of Massachusetts, Boston to become Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialists enhancing our expert staff dedicated to empowering clients all over Maine. We believe that no person should be limited by their B/VI. That is why we strive to provide tailored programs and services individualized for each client to best meet their needs and help them achieve their goals for education, employment, avocation, and independence with the use of adaptive and assistive technology.

Your support is the catalyst that propels our mission. It has not only allowed us to continue providing essential programs and services but also look to the future and how we address new opportunities for those we serve, ranging from new service provisions to employment.

With your help, we are building a world where every individual is given an equal chance at achieving success. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for believing in us and our mission. Together, we can continue to make a positive impact on countless lives, whether it be vision rehabilitation, pre-employment training, or supportive housing.

We look forward to what we can accomplish in the coming year!

Gratefully yours,



David Barnwell, DBS, MBA
President & Executive Director





PROGRAM FEATURE

LIFE CAMP

Life Camp was another success in 2022! Students returning from Life Camp 2021 participated in a two-week summer experience at our main campus. Students had the chance to build upon skills previously learned as well as learn new ones. From exploring mobility options such as walking and public transportation with Orientation and Mobility Specialists, to participating in sessions related to job interests with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, students had access to a wide range of resources aimed to equip them for life.

Teachers and staff offered guidance on important aspects of life like dressing for success and interview tactics, home management, shopping for clothing and food, meal preparation, and recreational pursuits including audio descriptive movies and adaptive games. For a truly immersive experience, students even got the chance to explore work site opportunities by visiting a Business Enterprise Program site, sessions with The Iris Network Human Resources Director, volunteering at Maine Needs, and touring Sunflower Farm Creamery – giving them the opportunity to learn what it would be like to work on a goat farm.

We are excited for Life Camp 2023 returning next summer! This program is a great way for students to prepare for success in their future careers. Life Camp is a collaboration between The Iris Network, DBVI, and Catholic Charities of Maine - all three organizations coming together to ensure the best possible outcomes for students. We look forward to welcoming participants for another successful Life Camp experience in Summer 2023!

“I am looking forward to another great year of preparing students for the work force, and all of the fun and friendship building that happens.”

~ Aisha, Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



MARDI, CRMA IRIS PARK APARTMENTS

Mardi has been with The Iris Network for seven years. As a Resident Care Worker, she ensures residents live full, independent lives. She supports them by providing them with assistance with personal care, housekeeping, cooking, reading mail, and shopping. Her favorite part of working at The Iris Network is organizing activities for residents.

During Spring and Summer months, she often takes residents on walks with a visit to the garden along the way. Other times she reads books to them and plays games such as UNO! A fun experience that stands out to her was last Halloween when two residents asked her to help make matching costumes. That was a great moment because she helped create something unique that brought joy to these two individuals.

At The Iris Network, Mardi loves being part of a community and helping people with vision impairment. Her work is inspired by growing up with nine adopted siblings who were all visually impaired. One of the most rewarding aspects of her work is providing clients with the necessary tools to build confidence to help them go beyond their disability. Creating an empowering atmosphere encourages growth, creativity, and acceptance regardless of a person's physical limitations.

When Mardi is not working, she enjoys photography and creating art. Individuals with vision impairment need to have the same opportunity to enjoy art, Mardi's art is tactile so people can feel it. Not many artists make their work accessible in this way. Mardi has had her tactile art displayed at the Library in the Town of Ellsworth.

Overall, what Mardi enjoys most about working at The Iris Network, is being part of a supportive, accepting community dedicated to making a difference in the lives of people with blindness or vision impairment.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

MARILYN

Marilyn has volunteered at The Iris Network for 30 years. Initially attracted by a newspaper advertisement calling for a recreation assistant for the Maine Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, she applied and found a perfect fit.

“It seemed like a good fit for me. I like to do a lot of activities, and I lived nearby.”

For the past three decades, Marilyn has helped organize all kinds of activities, from bowling and going to local sports matches to visiting Peaks Island, having lunch at a restaurant, going on walks along the boulevard, and snowshoeing.

“I enjoy the conversations with the residents. It is a win, win situation. I get to do something I like with people I like.”

Despite the pandemic, she continued to provide support and solace for residents by simply picking up the phone to have a conversation or read residents the paper.

Marilyn admits that at first, she was rather nervous about how she'd fit in. She was worried about saying the wrong things. But, soon realized that people with vision impairment have many of the same interests as sighted people. They just use different methods to get around or engage in activities, such as using adaptive and assistive technology.

“Volunteering is a wonderful way to spend time – it's so rewarding. The residents I know at The Iris Network are so appreciative, positive, and smart. I enjoy my time with them.”

With such commitment, determination, and passion for helping her community, Marilyn is an inspirational volunteer adored by residents and staff.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please visit:
www.theiris.org/join-us/volunteering

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

 **542**
total people served

 **6,050**
meals served

14 
students explored
career options and
prepared for their future

THANK YOU!

774
total volunteer hours in
support of our mission



510 
served through Vision
Rehabilitation Services

35 
residents provided housing
with 24/7 support services

CONNECT WITH US!





Helping people with vision impairment or blindness attain independence and community integration.

Special thanks to the following funders:

Libra Foundation

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Sarah De Coizart

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The Gibney Family Foundation

Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust

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