

THANKS TO YOU, CHASE IS READY TO LEARN!

Your generous support of VisionCorps' Youth Services means youngsters who are blind or visually impaired can develop a solid foundation for a lifetime of learning. Young Chase Musser of Lititz, PA, is one such success story in the making.

When the school bus drops Chase off for kindergarten, he knows that once he gets through the front door, he must go straight and then take a right. The route is shaped like the letter L. When he hears the fish tank, a landmark, he knows he is near the front desk. He makes his way down the hall to his classroom, running his fingers along the wall, while holding a



Chase practices his white cane skills on a walk outside.

white cane in his right hand. The ball at the cane's tip glides smoothly along the floor where it meets the wall.

Until it doesn't.

Any change means he has reached a doorway, corner, obstacle or step. He stops to explore before moving on.

Chase walks with confidence because, thanks to donors like you, he's spent the past five years training for this moment. When his blindness was diagnosed at 6 months, his parents reached out to VisionCorps for help. Since then, VisionCorps' Jennifer Eaton has been working with him one-on-one, twice-a-week, for five and a half years. She put a cane in his hand at 18 months, and now, she's watching him take the next big step – to kindergarten. Jennifer manages VisionCorps' Youth Services, and is a teacher of the visually impaired, as well as an orientation and mobility specialist. Chase holds a special place in her heart.

“He has a natural curiosity, and that's crucial for learning. He's such an explorer, and is eager to know how things work,” she said. When they come across a water fountain, or even a janitor's floor sweeper, he insists they take the time to figure out how it works. He got an idea of how tall a tree is by reaching up to touch the lowest branch with his cane. “We did



Chase acclimates to his new cafeteria prior to school starting in 2020.

a lot of incidental learning,” Jennifer said. “He'd ask questions and we'd figure out the answers together.”

Jennifer is positive about Chase's future. “He has an amazing knack for mapping routes. He's got cognitive ability, determination and perseverance. As long as he's given the tools he needs, nothing's going to stand in his way!”

Thanks to donors like you, these crucial tools and foundational skills are opening doors for Chase and youngsters throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania.

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

We are nearing the end of 2020 and it's been a memorable year for sure! While it presented many challenges, we are thankful for the positives that happened at VisionCorps as a result of the pandemic:



- More support groups: VisionCorps' rehabilitation department changed their support groups to virtual instead of in-person, as they had traditionally been. When groups were held in-person, because of the large footprint of our service, they were often duplicated in several locations. With clients calling in to participate, we were able to condense to one support group for each county since travel was not necessary. This enabled rehab to offer more groups for more clients – the list includes the traditional low vision support group, a book club, orientation and mobility (safe travel) discussion group and a Let's Chat social group. Clients now have more opportunities to connect.
- Technology advantages: Thankfully, just prior to the pandemic, VisionCorps' Information Technology (IT) team put into place new programs to connect our employees through the use of technology. Because of these recent upgrades, departments were able to get through the challenging pandemic without skipping a beat. Non-essential employees were and are able to work remotely. This keeps our essential employees in the Enterprise Group safer from falling ill when they are exposed to less people.
- VisionCorps' Enterprise Group, which provides people who are blind with meaningful employment, continued to run all essential product lines including cleaning supplies for federal entities and helmet pads for the U.S. military. Production continued in spite of the pandemic, with protocols and safety measures installed quickly to keep our employees safe and productive.
- VisionCorps as a whole learned and continues to every day grow from this experience. Like our clients, we never know what hurdle may creep up next, but we maintain a positive attitude and rely on support available to conquer and exceed our challenges.

I especially want to thank all of you for both the encouraging words and financial contributions over the last several months. Your support has made all of the above possible, and will continue to help support us and our clients in the coming months.

As we head into the holiday season, our supporters are in our thoughts. May you find some positives in your own circumstances and be able to enjoy and celebrate safely in the days ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Megan".

Megan Sofilka Tomscheck
Vice President and Chief Development Officer

YOU CAN BE A PARTNER TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

The VisionCorps rehabilitation team is busy year-round, providing vital services to our friends and neighbors living with vision loss. **Mobility, daily living skills, and a support system can be challenging for any of us – but especially those with vision loss. That's why we are looking for Vision Partners.** Become a **Vision Partner**, someone who commits to give monthly, and you'll provide the gift of independence to those who are blind or vision impaired.

Signing up is easy, and you can cancel at any time, or quickly change the amount you give.

Join at VisionCorps.net/Donate

VisionCorps
Foundation
— VISION PARTNER —



WHY WE GIVE: DEBBIE AND KEITH MINK



Debbie and Keith demonstrate how Keith uses his phone to maintain his independence.

Adjusting to vision loss is a family affair; just ask Keith and Debbie Mink. They donate to VisionCorps so that others can learn to adapt as successfully as they have.

Although he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa 40 years ago, Keith's vision loss has been gradual. That means he often has to adapt to a "new normal." Ten years later, he quit driving at night, and finally hung up his car keys 12 years ago. In 2001, he retired from teaching shop classes. "I had to give up woodworking and metalworking because I like having fingers," he joked. These days, he sticks to carefully chopping vegetables for dinner.

The couple has learned to roll with the punches and seek out new ways to live life fully. When it got too difficult for Keith to bicycle safely, they bought a tandem bicycle. Traveling to Florida and Texas with the tandem in their minivan, they sought destinations with at least 10 miles of paved bike trails.

After they moved to a 50+ community, VisionCorps helped orient Keith so it would be easier for him to get around independently. VisionCorps added

white and red tape to the walking poles he uses on his walks around the neighborhood, so others know he has a visual impairment.

"Keith began to have difficulty dialing a regular telephone," Debbie said. "He purchased an iPhone, but returned it after nine days due to frustration in using it." VisionCorps worked with Keith at home so he could learn to use the accessibility features on his iPad, and later, a second iPhone.

The voiceover function on the iPhone announces a caller's identity, and reads texts and messages aloud. Keith uses it to set calendar reminders and alarms. Debbie put all his contacts into the phone so he can call friends on his own. And he enjoys listening to historical audiobooks from the Library of Congress on his iPhone, as well.

Debbie has written a book about their journey titled: *Adapting to Vision Challenges — Together* (available on Amazon). At a VisionCorps fundraiser, she met a woman whose husband also has retinitis pigmentosa, and told her about the book. After the woman and her husband read it, they told Debbie that it changed his attitude about using his white cane. "He now understands the importance of signaling that you have a vision impairment," Debbie said. "When people know, they are kinder. They open doors for you and move out of your way."

Grateful for the help they personally received, the Minks donate to VisionCorps to pay it forward. By giving generously, they are helping to ensure that VisionCorps will continue to be there with support and expertise in the future.



Debbie and Keith on a tandem bike ride in their community.

SPEAKERS CIRCUIT GOES VIRTUAL!

WE MISS SEEING YOU!

VisionCorps misses speaking to groups, as much as you miss gathering with your groups! Social clubs, service organizations, church groups, community organizations ... many of you have been able to pivot and continue hosting meetings virtually due to restrictions in place during the pandemic.

VisionCorps can come to you! We are available to speak to your group virtually! We would love to provide an update of our services and how we are continuing to serve your friends and neighbors living with vision loss during the pandemic.

Our presentation includes a brief history of the organization, statistics on clients served, types of vision loss, and who qualifies for services and how they can start the process to become a client. All presentations can be personalized to meet the needs of your organization.

We also can provide a virtual tour of our industrial operations which includes our helmet pad line for the U.S. Military, cleaning products for federal facilities, and rice packaging for the Military. We are now making face masks, one way that VisionCorps has pivoted to help out during the pandemic (and you can purchase them from us).

In addition, VisionCorps employees are able to provide in-service training for professionals who serve people living with vision loss and how to work with someone who has a vision impairment. This includes eye doctors, retirement community staff and medical facility employees. With the number of people who experience vision loss expected to rapidly rise in the coming years, it is likely more people will interact with someone who is blind or living with low vision. We can assist with etiquette and helpful information.

Ready to schedule a VisionCorps presentation? Please contact Linda Conyers at 866-876-6550.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING VISION LOSS?



YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT ALONE.

Providing comprehensive services to enable you to maintain your independence.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

- Daily living skills instruction (cooking, cleaning, adaptive techniques, etc.)
- Orientation & mobility instruction (including safe travel & white cane instruction)
- Access technology instruction
- Comprehensive case management
- Educational & support groups
- Low vision aid assessment & instruction

Also providing preventative services, vision screenings & community education opportunities.

SERVING SOUTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

866.876.6550

insights

News for donors and friends of VisionCorps

Insights is a publication of VisionCorps Foundation
Dennis Steiner, President

Questions, please contact Megan Tomsheck, VP & Chief Development Officer
717-393-5894 ext. 4115 or email megan@visioncorps.net

Please notify us if your contact information has changed.
717-393-5894 or email linda@visioncorps.net

 [FACEBOOK.COM/VISIONCORPSPA](https://www.facebook.com/visioncorpspa)

 [TWITTER.COM/VISIONCORPS](https://twitter.com/visioncorps)

 [YOUTUBE.COM/USER/SABVIPA](https://www.youtube.com/user/sabvipa)