

insights

Spring/Summer 2021

VisionCorps

News for donors and friends of VisionCorps

For more information on services for you or someone you know, please call 866-876-6550.

*Serving Adams, Chester, Lancaster,
Lebanon, and York Counties*

YOUR GENEROSITY IS HELPING SOMEONE WHO IS NEW TO BLINDNESS

It's hard to imagine what it would be like to suddenly lose your sight. How would you do daily tasks or get around safely? And yet, on some level, we know that it could happen to any one of us. It happened to Eric Harris, and that's why he is so grateful to be part of a caring community like ours.

Adjusting to losing one's vision can be a complex process. It can involve deep emotions such as fear, grief and even anger. Many who have gone through it describe it as a "journey," and the journey is different for each individual. Learning to live without sight requires developing a new set of skills in order to stay safe and be independent.

"When things get hard for me, I think about Katarina," Eric said. Katarina Eller teaches orientation and mobility at VisionCorps. "She is vision impaired, uses a white cane and travels everywhere by herself – even on buses and trains." By following her example, as well as her instruction, Eric is motivated to take the next step in learning to use a white cane.

Eric also enjoys VisionCorps' book club. As a precaution against COVID, the group is currently meeting virtually. They are reading and discussing the inspirational story of Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind person to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Adjusting to vision loss is Eric's personal Mount Everest right now, and VisionCorps' support group discussions are making the journey easier. Many participants have been blind since birth, and he welcomes their tips and encouragement.

Thanks to your generosity, VisionCorps training, the support of his peers and a new job, Eric is on the path toward leading a full and active life.



Eric Harris is excited about starting his new job in manufacturing at VisionCorps. "When they offered me the job, they asked: 'When can you be available to work?' I said: 'YESTERDAY!'"

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Your support over the last year+ has meant that VisionCorps clients have been able to continue receiving services during a very challenging time for the community! VisionCorps is thankful for the generous, ongoing support of donors like yourself who are making independence possible for your friends and neighbors living with vision loss!



Things are starting to return to “normal,” with some changes made to adapt to the pandemic continuing through. This includes new virtual support groups that were created to respond to the need during the pandemic. They were received so well and attended by so many clients that we plan to continue hosting them, including new groups for Dog Guide Users, White Cane Users, Young Women, Spanish Speaking Clients, and more! By hosting virtual meetings for specific segments of our client base, it allows clients from all over our five-county region to come together. This turned out to be a great benefit to those we serve.

Also, our annual signature rappelling event, the Eye Drop Rappelling Event, has been rescheduled from the fall to take place on Friday July 9, 2021. There is still time to get involved by participating in the event or making a donation to help us reach our lofty goal of \$200,000! Funds raised all go into VisionCorps services in supporting our mission of empowering individuals with vision loss to attain independence.

You also can support the event by mailing in cash or checks, and indicating in the memo or a note that it's for Eye Drop, and you may list a rappellers or team name if you have someone you'd like to support. Otherwise, your donation will support the overall event!

Lastly – while we continue to rely more and more on technology – VisionCorps just launched a new website! Visit www.visioncorps.net to check out many new and improved features and content.

- Two unique “microsites,” one for Rehabilitation Services and Community Support, and the other for the Business and Industry Group
- A Resource Library for individuals with vision loss and their families
- Improved information on how to support VisionCorps

Be sure to follow us on social media to stay updated on what's happening at VisionCorps and what your support is doing to change the lives of people who are blind!

Thank you for your unwavering support – we hope to see you in person soon... maybe on the roof of the Holiday Inn if you choose to rappel!

Have a great summer!

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

Megan Sofilka Tomscheck
Vice President and
Chief Development Officer

WHY WE GIVE:

JOSE RIZO-PATRON AND TEAM WENDY

As a corporate partner and sponsor of VisionCorps, Team Wendy demonstrates the true beauty of teamwork. The company manufactures head protection systems used nationally and internationally by military, law enforcement, search and rescue, and adventure community professionals such as skiers and mountaineers. For 15 years, Team Wendy has been helping VisionCorps fulfill its government contract to produce 75% of the helmet pads used by the United States military forces.

Team Wendy supplies its patented Zorbium® Action Pad (ZAP™) helmet pad systems in sheets for VisionCorps employees to process at the Lancaster manufacturing facility. The pads are cut, screen printed with tracking information, packaged and distributed. To date, VisionCorps has completed millions of helmet pads for the United States military.

Jose Rizo-Patron, president of Team Wendy, believes the collaboration with VisionCorps goes above and beyond a business relationship.

“Our partnership is more of a kinship,” he said.

“I’ve made personal friendships that I value. I’ve always been happy, willing and proud to support VisionCorps initiatives.”

Years ago, when Jose first toured the Lancaster facility, any doubts he may have initially had about maintaining quality standards were immediately dashed. “VisionCorps motivates people with impaired vision to focus on what they can do, rather than what they believe they can’t,” he said. “It’s something everyone can learn from. By pushing past your fears and testing your limits, you’ll gain confidence and do more than you think you can do.”

He’s impressed with the employment opportunities, training and support the organization provides. “To be among a community of people with similar challenges



is no small thing,” he said. “It helps someone realize they’re not in this alone. That esprit de corps is invaluable.”

Jose tested his own limits by rappelling down the side of a high-rise hotel at the 2019 VisionCorps Eye Drop event. The campaign raises support and awareness for VisionCorps’ mission and services. He looks forward to supporting this year’s event on July 9th.

“It’s such a unique event. And it’s what both of our organizations are all about. To be part of a team means having confidence and trust in your colleagues and teammates, and being able to push yourself. It’s easy to get caught up in what we can’t do. But in reality, we can all do something well, and they’re not the same things. That diversity is of tremendous value to any organization.”

“Doing the work both of our organizations do – it’s a higher purpose than just making a widget or performing a service,” Jose said. “It’s impacting lives. It’s saving lives! It’s an honor to be supporting our military, people with vision loss, and our community.”

MEET BENJAMIN BRENYA

Access Technology Specialist

Benjamin Brenya, VisionCorps' new access technology specialist, is ready to teach clients and employees the best way to use technology to help them work and live independently.

"We can learn to use the same devices and apps as sighted people," said Benjamin, who is legally blind. "Microsoft programs and software are accessible, and there is assistive and adaptive technology to make documents and most technology accessible to employees and clients who are vision-impaired."

"I want to help employees who are vision-impaired adopt and use technology to work efficiently and become very productive, and I want sighted employees to understand how important it is to use and make all things accessible to the employees who are vision-impaired."

Benjamin can help with technology needs including: accessibility features, useful low vision apps, using screen readers or magnification software, talking scanners, Braille devices, and smart home devices.

His favorite apps are: **Be My Eyes**, a free app that connects a person with a vision impairment with a sighted volunteer for help with surroundings or reading; **Supersense**, a subscription app that scans your surroundings and is able to read text, photos,



and music; **Lazarillo GPS**, which provides guidance through cities with help in transportation, businesses, restaurants, and health care facilities; and **Cash Reader**, identifying world currencies.

Benjamin moved to Lancaster from New York City, where he has lived since 2019, when he moved to join his wife from Ghana, who was already living in the U.S. He previously worked as an access technology specialist for the Ghana Blind Union.

"My first visit to Lancaster was for my interview," said Benjamin. "I like it here, it's not as crowded as New York and it's quieter."

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Questions?

Please contact **Megan Tomscheck**, VP & Chief Development Officer at **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