

insights

Fall 2021

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*

PUTTING YOUR GENEROSITY TO WORK

VisionCorps puts your generosity to work, giving people who have lost their sight the tools and training they need to rebuild their lives and gain a renewed sense of independence. You are helping people right here in Southeast Pennsylvania: people like Jeff Hostetter of Kirkwood.

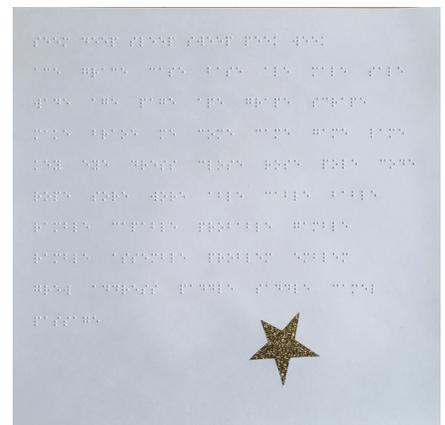
“I loved my job as a school security guard,” Jeff said. “My passion has always been to keep people safe.” But five years ago, with no warning, his vision and health began to fail. He ended up in the hospital, on a feeding tube, and in pain. His vision deteriorated rapidly, and soon, he was totally and permanently blind. He wondered how he would live or work again. “I didn’t go out of the house,” he said. “I had no motivation to do anything.”

When he recovered enough strength to walk, VisionCorps helped him learn to use a white cane, and he found new hope. “I told my mobility instructor, Jennifer: ‘I want to learn this stuff because, God forbid, my wife gets sick or whatever, I’ll be there for her. She’s been here for me through all of this.’”

Now, there’s no stopping him. “Erika, my braille instructor, calls me her prize pupil,” Jeff boasted. “I got an iPhone and I’m using built-in accessibility features like special tapping commands, audible commands, and dictation through Siri. I use apps that identify money.”

Today, Jeff has a new job, and he’s thrilled. He works in VisionCorps’ manufacturing facility packing Kevlar pads that go into military helmets. “With this job, I feel that I’m still doing security work, just in a different way. I’m helping to protect our military. It’s a good fit for me.”

“I am so grateful for VisionCorps,” Jeff said. “I would never have known all this stuff if it hadn’t been for them.” People helping people is what VisionCorps is all about.



“That first paycheck – boy, did that make me feel good! Getting a paycheck and putting it in the bank feels good, because I wasn’t able to work for the longest time.” – Jeff Hostetter



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Greetings, friends of VisionCorps!

I hope everyone reading this had a great summer, and stayed healthy. At VisionCorps, our summer flew by as we continued to provide services to your friends and neighbors living with vision loss. Thanks to all of you who support these services and contributed to a nice summer of activities and training for our clients.



One change that happened this summer was VisionCorps and VisionCorps Foundation merged. For donors, the only thing that directly affects you is to whom your donation checks are written; they now may be written to VisionCorps, not VisionCorps Foundation. When the Foundation was formed in 2008, it was done so in order to create a focus on fundraising and management of our investment funds. In the past year, we analyzed the efficiency of operating two separate 501c3 organizations, and if the same level of focus on fundraising and fund management could be done if the Foundation was rolled back into the agency. It was determined efficiencies would be improved with a merger – without negatively affecting fundraising and support of our mission -- and so it became effective on July 1, 2021. All former Foundation staff members remain employed, and a special committee has been established by the Board of Directors to continue monitoring our investments funds to ensure VisionCorps is fiscally secure. Foundation Trustees were offered seats on the agency board and were elected to continue to serve. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns by dialing my direct number 717-205-4115 or via email, Megan@visioncorps.net

Looking ahead, we are excited to share that our golf tournament is back after taking a year off due to the pandemic! On Monday, October 4, Lisa Shirk will again host Ray Shirk's Big Swing Golf Tournament in memory of her late husband Ray. Lisa and Ray were generous supporters and advocates for VisionCorps, and Lisa continues his legacy of giving. The tournament will be held at Conestoga Country Club. For more information, scan the QR code below with your smart phone (turn on your camera, and hover over the code until a link pops up on the screen – tap the link and read all about it!), visit Visioncorps.net and click on the banner at the top, or call Lisa by dialing 717-875-1516. We are also looking for sponsorships and silent auction items if your business would be interesting in supporting in that way!

VisionCorps wishes you and your family a happy, healthy autumn as we cruise into the holiday season. And as always, if you or someone you know is experiencing vision loss please do not hesitate to contact us to see how we can help!

Thank you for your ongoing support,

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

Megan Sofilka Tomsheck
Vice President and
Chief Development Officer



WHY I GIVE: CHERYL GERHART

KEEPING HER UNCLE'S MEMORY ALIVE

There are many ways to give to VisionCorps, but why people choose to give is personal. For Cheryl G., it is a way to honor the memory of her uncle: his life and his military service.

Curtis William Sechrist was a young soldier serving in WWII when an explosion took his eyes, nose, and part of his face. Despite losing his vision and enduring many facial reconstruction surgeries, he led a full life.

“My uncle was always upbeat. He felt blessed to be alive, and always stayed in contact with his buddies from the War,” Cheryl said. “We had a special relationship because I was born on his birthday. As a young girl, I used to walk through my house with my eyes closed counting my steps, trying to get an idea of what he was going through.”

With the help of his wife, Mary, and VisionCorps (then known as The York County Blind Center,) Curtis was able to get back on his feet. “He and my aunt raised a son and three daughters,” Cheryl said. “He worked as a drill press operator until he retired at 70. He was amazing! He even taught his son how to tune a car and change the oil.”

Curtis learned braille, and enjoyed playing cribbage with a deck of cards marked with braille. “There was always a card game at his kitchen table on Sundays when we’d come for a visit,” Cheryl remembered. “He would mentally keep track of all the cards that everyone played.”

Cheryl commemorates her uncle’s life and service by donating to VisionCorps on their shared birthday,



Curtis (center) along with his parents and four sisters

Christmas, and the anniversary of his passing. “I always felt that if I could afford it, I would give. My uncle sacrificed his sight in WWII. My dad, brother, and son also served in the military. It’s important to me not to forget those people who fought to give us the freedoms we take for granted.”

VisionCorps was founded to create employment opportunities for blind veterans of WWI, and this mission continues today. “I took a tour of the manufacturing facilities and I was so impressed,” Cheryl said. “They are giving work to people who might otherwise have a hard time finding a job.”

Looking over her own life, Cheryl feels grateful. She tugs a squeaky toy with her puppy, Reggie, a spirited cockapoo-bichon rescue who makes her laugh. “My life has been good. I just feel that I need to reach out and help others. VisionCorps is a cause I care about. It’s one way to show thanks for the help they gave to my uncle.”

His Summer Vacation is an Internship at VisionCorps

Toby Harnish, a teen from Lebanon, is spending his summer vacation at VisionCorps.

The 17-year-old, who lives in Cornwall, is participating in a six-week long STEP internship to learn more about work opportunities at VisionCorps and mainstream employment. The internship is full-time, five days a week.

“What I’ve learned is all new to me,” said Toby. “I haven’t done anything like this before. Sometimes I’m packing stuff, working on taking pads off the cutting machine, loading bottles into the chemical machines, or folding papers.”

Toby has met a lot of people during his work, and he said other employees often share information about skills they have learned, and other things they are doing.

He is happy about being paid during his internship.

“VisionCorps is able to pay me for my work, and I’m thinking of using it to buy a computer,” said Toby.

Toby is hoping to buy a new computer that he will use to for his home schooling. He plans to continue home schooling in the next year, and then is likely to return to the Cornwall-Lebanon School District for his senior year.

He uses a braille display, Focus 40, which he won recently in a contest, and Braille Note Touch (BNT) to read, write and work on online learning. He recently finished a book about Martin Luther titled *Here I Stand*, a biography of Luther and his work to establish Christianity.

His future plans include exploring accounting as a possible career. He likes math and working with numbers and plans to continue taking math classes including Algebra 1 and 2, Calculus, and business math. Toby said he learns most of his math by reading books and completing online problems that he then sends to his parents to check.

In his spare time, Toby enjoys playing chess and he likes to build websites.

“I like to do work,” he says, “and I would like to do more planting and gardening. I’d like to mow the grass but my parents don’t think that my vision will allow me to do it.”

“I like to think first,” said Toby. “I think of the consequences and what I need to learn so that I can be more independent. I’d like to live on my own.”



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Insights is a publication of VisionCorps Foundation
Dennis Steiner, President

Questions?

Please contact **Megan Tomscheck**, VP & Chief Development Officer at **717-205-4115** or email megan@visioncorps.net

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