

## Kick off 2023 with a simple new fitness routine!



The holidays are over, and with the new year comes talk of new goals. One of the most common goals of a new year involve fitness, and for good reason. Staying active can help boost your energy, lower your blood pressure, lift your mood, help manage stress, and improve sleep quality, just to name a few benefits.

To kick off the new year, why not consider upping your fitness game? Here are three simple ideas for you to try in 2023 to help you live a healthier life. Before starting a new fitness routine, it's best to discuss your options with your doctor.

### **Walking.**

Whether you walk on a treadmill or venture into the great outdoors, this low-impact exercise can reduce obesity, boost your mood, and even improve cognitive function. Try going for a 20-minute walk three times a week.

### **Running.**

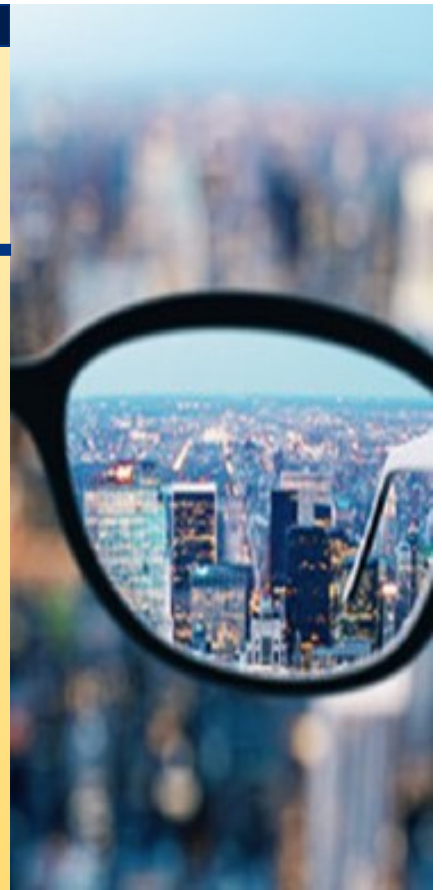
If walking has been part of your fitness routine already, consider stepping it up with running. You can search for a running group or a couch-to-5k plan for guidance. If you need a sighted guide for running, try searching social media for groups for blind runners and guides.



### **Strength training.**

Strength training helps improve balance and strengthens bones in addition to strengthening muscles. As we age, we lose muscle, so it's important to focus on building and maintaining muscle. Strength training can involve dumbbells or kettle bells, but you can also go equipment-free and use bodyweight.

Starting a new fitness routine can seem daunting, so consider strategies that can help you be successful, such as scheduling your fitness time on the calendar or finding an accountability partner.



### Inside This Issue

From the Director.....	2
Work Anniversaries.....	2
Bobby's Story.....	3
District 6 Update .....	4
Conquering Fears Pt. 2 .....	5
Vendor Spotlight .....	6
Volunteer Spotlight.....	..7
Awareness Calendar.....	8
FRCB Meeting Notice .....	8
Submitting Content .....	8

# Happy Work Anniversary!

Congratulations to the following staff celebrating milestone anniversaries with DBS in January-March!

## One Year:

Adriann Keve  
Alecia Baker  
Alexandra Diggs  
Ana Johnson  
Anita Clas-Rodriguez  
Anthony Alligood  
Artlettis Diaz-Barba  
Briana Scerenscko  
Kimberly Strain  
Linda Butler  
Margarita Arias-Urbaz  
Patricia Fernandez  
Richard Silva  
Steven Burroughs  
Travis Green

## Five Years:

Justin Mills  
Ulysses Robinson, Jr.

## Ten Years:

Jamie Payne  
Ronald Voltaire

## Fifteen Years:

Kelli Parker  
Kendrick Larry  
Mary Grant  
Megan Martin

## Twenty Years:

Linda Hernandez

## Thirty-five Years:

Roger Brown



# From the Director's Desk

## New Year, New Opportunities!

Every new year brings new hopes and new opportunities; and it's great to have the successes and hard work of the prior year to set the stage!

As we enter the new year, I want to again, offer my sincere appreciation to all the dedicated team members of DBS. We are really fortunate to work with such a capable, competent and connected team. We are also grateful to the many Community Rehabilitation Program providers who are also serving on the front lines of meeting client needs.

In 2023, we look forward to bringing in our first group of apprenticeships under the newly registered DBS Accessibility Apprenticeship program.

We are also excited to kick off our outreach initiatives as we work collaboratively with the Divisions of Career and Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida College System, DEO and CareerSource to reach more blind and visually impaired clients. Our outreach efforts will focus on reaching potential consumers for employment success, as well as highlighting the great work at the DBS Career Technology and Training Center in Daytona Beach. Finally, we look forward to helping more businesses and potential entrepreneurs to learn about the fabulous opportunities available in our Business Enterprise program.



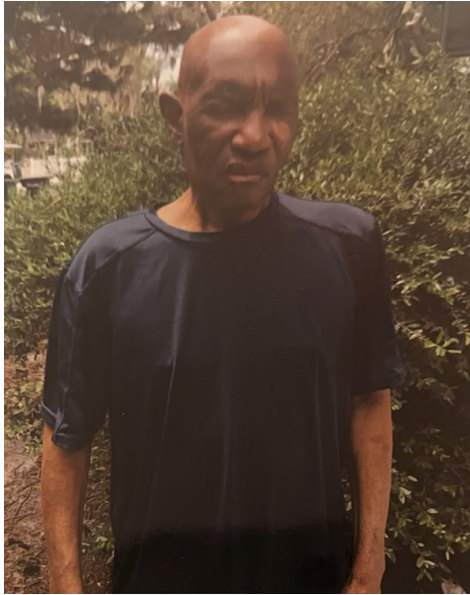
Thanks to Governor DeSantis, DBS is also looking forward to a great year working with recently appointed and reappointed members of our Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. This group provides advice and recommendations to the Division on a variety of matters, but especially related to our work with helping DBS clients prepare for, obtain, maintain and advance in employment. If you missed the list of appointees, you can read more in the [news release](#).

We also want to recognize Council member Bessie Outman who passed away in October. We are grateful for the many contributions that she made to the Blind Community in Florida as well as for her service on the Rehabilitation Council for the Blind. She is missed.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to our mission, and here's to a year filled with success!

# Independent Living: Older Blind Program

## Bobby's Story



In early 2020, Bobby went to the hospital complaining of problems with his vision. He was diagnosed with cataracts and end-stage glaucoma, leaving him with irreparable vision loss. Bobby was born deaf, so losing another one of his senses was traumatic for him. Bobby had no home or family support, so he was placed under the care of a legal guardian and the search for help began. After an online search, Bobby's guardian reached out to DBS and connected with Amanda Honingford, District 7 Rehabilitation Specialist in the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program, to find some help for Bobby.

Amanda reached out to Helen Keller National Center's DeafBlind Immersion Experience (DBIE) program. Soon, Team Bobby (DBS, DBIE, Bobby's guardian, and interpreters who helped Bobby while he was in the hospital and assisted living facility) was formed and met weekly to serve Bobby. Through the work of the Team, Bobby found a

home at Magnolia House, a group home for people who are deaf. Once he found stability, DBS was able to provide Bobby with training sessions as well as some low vision aids and tools.

Today, after a lot of hard work, patience, and advocacy Bobby is working with the Lighthouse of Pinellas to become an independent cane user and to learn to read and write in Braille. Jen Tresh, owner of Magnolia House, shared that when he first arrived, Bobby was struggling mentally and emotionally and had not had a chance to adjust to his vision loss. Though he continues to live in the group home due to health problems unrelated to his vision, Bobby is making great strides with his vision rehabilitation. Jen feels that Bobby is now ready to explore the world with more independence.

Bobby's story is just one example of how DBS's ILOB program collaborates with community partners to ensure seniors can continue living their best lives with dignity and grace. Given the complexities of having two sensory impairments, Bobby's work is not done, but he continues on the road to independence.

*Submitted by  
Amanda Honingford*





## District Spotlight: Orlando—District 6

### A District with a Passion to Help!

District 6 serves Orange, Seminole, Osceola, Sumter, and Lake counties, and includes The Villages. With an area totaling 4,012 square miles and a population of just over 2.5 million, the Orlando area is the third-largest metropolitan area in Florida. Orlando is home to the District 6 office, as well as Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, Sea World and numerous other internationally known attractions.

The mixture of new and seasoned staff members in District 6 all have one thing in common: a passion for helping people who are blind or visually impaired. Our team members consistently step up to ensure all tasks are completed despite staff vacancies. District 6 continues to meet our goals and provide excellent services to our clients.

The metropolitan area has a vast employer base, including manufacturing, construction, service industries and, of course, leisure and hospitality. The Lighthouse Works call center, located in Orlando, continues to expand its call center operations creating both in-office and work-from-home opportunities. Fourteen District 6 clients have secured employment with Lighthouse Works and find success and promotion. For example, one client currently mentors employees across the state as the employees learn the call center operations. The client coaches and troubleshoots with employees until they can work independently.

Additional employment highlights include Orange County Schools and Government, Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, Amazon, and New Vision for Independence. Two District 6 clients obtained employment with New Vision for Independence last year. New Vision for Independence, a Community Rehabilitation Provider with DBS, is an

excellent partner. New Vision for Independence has been able to adjust throughout the pandemic and find creative ways to assist the clients we collectively serve.

Again, I want to recognize the District 6 staff who continue to amaze. We have welcomed new staff this year who complement a highly productive and passionate team. We are District 6!!!

#### **About New Vision for Independence:**

The mission of New Vision for Independence is to eliminate barriers to independence for people with vision loss through rehabilitation, community education, advocacy, and support services.

They provide skills training throughout Lake and Sumter counties, as well as The Villages. New Vision for Independence is sponsored in part by the State of Florida Division of Blind Services. These support services are open to anyone with a visual impairment.



*Submitted by Ed James—District Administrator,  
District 6 Orlando*

## CONQUERING FEARS: A Guide Dog Story

*This is the second part in a four-part series. To read part one refer to the [September edition](#) of the DBS Visionary Newsletter.*

Once I decided to train with a guide dog, I took steps right away to make it happen. Since I planned to attend graduate school, I wanted to train with a dog before starting that new adventure.

My family members had mixed reactions, though they ultimately supported my decision. I submitted my application to The Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey in the summer of 2006. An instructor came to observe my routes and my orientation and mobility (O&M) skills. He took me to an unfamiliar part of my neighborhood and asked me to take him home, but I was unable to complete the route. He decided I was not ready for a guide dog, but that I might be a good candidate after additional O&M training.

I worked diligently with an O&M instructor for several months until I felt ready to reapply. A field representative came to complete the home interview.

We discussed my needs in a dog, and my plan to attend graduate school. We then walked to a pharmacy in my area that I was very familiar with. On the return route, the instructor did the Juno walk, which means the instructor played the part of the guide dog.

I received my acceptance letter from The Seeing Eye about a week after the home interview, and I was partnered with my first guide dog, Julia, about four months later.

Julia and I trained for four weeks. Julia accompanied me through graduate school and my first job in Rochester, New York. Julia retired after only four years of working due to several health issues. Friends of a colleague of mine adopted Julia and gave her a loving home.

After Julia retired, I decided I no longer needed a guide dog because I had had orthopedic surgery that improved my gait. Hearing a mobility instructor tell me that my gait was better made me question my need for a guide dog. It wasn't until getting hit by cars three times in 2013 that I reconsidered my need for a guide dog.

*Submitted by Alexis Read*



Alexis Read and her  
guide dog, Julia

# VENDOR SPOTLIGHT:

## Justin Davis

This is a story of overcoming. This is a story of persistence. This is a story of success and gratitude. This is a story about Justin Davis.

Justin was born in Baltimore and moved to Tampa at age 11. He attended the University of Florida and spent most of his professional career in sales. In 2003 he started a legal tech company that he ran until 2009.

**Overcoming:** Around 2005 he began having issues with his eyes, which required more than twenty eye procedures and surgeries, all within a three-year span. It took nearly six years for Justin to accept his blindness.



**Persistence:** "I didn't like being a hamster in a wheel," Justin said, so he left his business and sales work behind and moved to Bradenton to simplify his life. He found it difficult to land a new job and reached out to the Division of Blind Services, where he learned about the Business Enterprise Program. "Fortunately, there was a Roadshow coming to the area in two weeks," Justin said. The Business Enterprise Roadshow presentation inspired Justin to apply for training at the DBS Residential Training Center in Daytona Beach.

**Success:** After completing the training program, Justin was awarded the snack bar at the Duval County Courthouse in Jacksonville where he is "living his best life," working at a facility he proudly calls the best facility in the program. His outlook on where he finds himself now is: "If this is as good as it gets, that's awesome, and if this is as bad as it gets, that's awesome!" Justin enjoys fishing the St. Johns River just three short blocks from his house with his constant companion and guide dog, RC. "Life is about balance now," Justin said.



**Gratitude:** At the DBS Residential Training Center he was immersed in the blind community for the first time. He quickly realized he could help others transition through their blindness. Grateful for the opportunity he has been afforded, he gives back by providing work experience and on-the-job training to new Business Enterprise Program applicants and trainees and provides internships for youth from the Vision Education and Rehabilitation Center, helping them to gain confidence in themselves.

This is Justin's story. A man with an attitude of gratitude which has made him a true blessing to everyone he encounters.

*Submitted by MaryEllen Harding*



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## A Dynamic Duo

Did you know? It takes two people to record a new Talking Book!



**Palma Luppi** and **Patrick Forestell** work together at the Recording Studio to create new digital books. Palma monitors for Patrick, who narrates. It's up to the narrator to bring the text to life, while the monitor follows along in the book or magazine, catching any discrepancy or extraneous noise so it can be corrected on the spot. They are both well-suited to their roles.

Patrick, a native of New Brunswick, has been involved in radio since 1970 as DJ, producer, and on the air. When he was drafted, he was at New England Broadcasting and Television. In the Air Force he served in the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, managing radio and television stations in MacDill, Tampa, and South Korea.

"I make my living with my mouth," he said with a smile. "I love to read, always have." Other loves include photography, music, and the beach. And, of course, volunteering at various organizations – including Talking Books at the Maine Center for the Blind in Portland, Maine, where he began reading and recording in 1976!

But that's not all: Patrick trained as a medical technician while stationed in Alaska before switching to radio, and has worked extensively in healthcare, in marketing, sales and community and public relations. He is now "re-retiring" from his own business in senior services.

Palma's background in management is invaluable when she monitors for Patrick, acting as "traffic control tower" so Patrick can focus on reading. She worked her way from secretary to manager of the International Division of Customer Service in her 20 years with Spalding Sporting Goods, a job that had her "traveling all over the world – and with no college degree!"

Palma eventually earned an MBA and became a field consultant for Subway, covering the Southeast Massachusetts territory, including Cape Cod.

In the 1980s, she began reading for the blind at the Pioneer Valley Radio Reading Services in western Massachusetts. After she and her husband retired to Florida, Palma saw an ad for Library volunteers in the Hometown News and called us. We sure are glad she did!

In addition to monitoring, Palma turns her hand to anything else needing doing, from shelving books to stickering mail-outs, and she also helps organize the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. Palma is very talented in making things happen, and at making it fun.

Like Patrick, Palma loves the beach. She also loves dogs and trailer traveling with her husband. She enjoys volunteering at the Library because she appreciates the opportunity to share her skills, make new friends, and gain insight through the "peek into the blind world" the Library affords her.

Palma and Patrick have been volunteering at the Library since 2015 and 2018, respectively, and we hope to keep this dynamic duo for many years to come!

*Submitted by  
Kathy Searle Acevedo*



## We are Hiring!

The Division of Blind Services is looking for positive, productive, accountable "people people." Ideal candidates demonstrate the principles of flexibility, adaptability, approachability, communication, collaboration and coordination. If this is you, we invite you to look at the opportunities we have available at:

[DBS.FLDOE.ORG/  
INFORMATION/  
JOBS.HTML](https://dbs.fl DOE.ORG/INFORMATION/JOBS.HTML)

If you believe you are the right fit for us, we look forward to connecting with you.

## Vision and Eye Health Awareness

### January

Braille Literacy Month  
Glaucoma Awareness Month  
World Braille Day: January 4

### February

AMD/Low Vision Month

### March

Save Your Vision Month  
Workplace Eye Awareness Month  
World Optometry Day: March 23



**Do you have news from your District, an employee you'd like to spotlight, blind services information or events to share, or a favorite recipe you'd like to feature in the DBS Visionary? Please share it with us at [Communications@dbs.fl DOE.ORG](mailto:Communications@dbs.fl DOE.ORG)**

### Florida Division of Blind Services

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**Content Submission Deadline:** Due by the 20th of each publication month.

### MISSION STATEMENT

*To ensure blind and visually-impaired Floridians have the tools, support and opportunity to achieve success*

## MEETING NOTICE

### Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

The Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind will conduct its Quarterly Meeting and Public Forum

**Date:** February 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Location:** Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

**Call in:** 850-583-5063 Conference ID # 582 394 835#

**Business Meeting:** 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Public Forum:** 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.



**DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES**



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