

# The Visionary

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

October has always been an eventful and exciting month for the Division of Blind Services (DBS). October gave us the opportunity to amplify our every day celebrations as we combined the recognition of Disability Employment and Awareness Weeks and White Cane Awareness activities with our community partners, team members, and clients. All across the state of Florida, our district offices participated in a wide range of activities and events in their communities to observe these important holidays. (Check out [last month's edition of the newsletter](#) to see all of the posted events!)





I always look forward to being a part of the annual Exceptional Employer Awards Ceremony held during Disability Awareness month in October. I had the pleasure of speaking and co-hosting the event with Barbara Palmer (Director of Agency for Persons with Disabilities) and Allison Flanagan (Director of Vocational Rehabilitation). Together we presented awards to 12 Florida employers who make it their mission to offer equal opportunities to persons with disabilities.

We also had the honor of hearing from three exceptional employees with disabilities, Jeremy Richard, Torey Roberts and Connor Yeatts. These individuals shared their experiences and the fulfillment they receive working in jobs that contribute to the economy of Florida every day!



Guests at the event also had the opportunity to learn and speak with some of our community partners who hosted tables, including [CareerSource Florida](#), [Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology \(FAAST\)](#) and the [Lighthouse of the Big Bend](#), to name just a few. They provided information about their organizations and how they serve and

support individuals with disabilities all across the great state of Florida.

I hope that you also enjoyed the amazing month of October and were able to observe some of these important holidays. If you would like to share your experiences with us, please email [communications@dbs.fldoe.org](mailto:communications@dbs.fldoe.org) with details and pictures of your celebration!

Sincerely,

Robert L. Doyle III





From the entire Division of Blind Services family, we wish you a **Happy Thanksgiving** as you remember and express gratitude for all of the blessings of the last year with the people that you treasure the most. The following Thanksgiving poem entitled "Giving Thanks" is by an unknown author and appeared in the [November 1915 edition of \*School Education\*](#).

### Giving Thanks

For the hay and the corn and the wheat that is reaped,  
For the labor well done, and the barns that are heaped,  
For the sun and the dew and the sweet honeycomb,  
For the rose and the song and the harvest brought home --  
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

For the trade and the skill and the wealth in our land,  
For the cunning and strength of the workingman's hand,  
For the good that our artists and poets have taught,  
For the friendship that hope and affection have brought --  
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

For the homes that with purest affection are blest,  
For the season of plenty and well-deserved rest,  
For our country extending from sea unto sea;  
The land that is known as the "Land of the Free" --  
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!



### Fun Thanksgiving Facts

- 🍁 Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the national bird, not the eagle.
- 🍁 There were no forks at the first Thanksgiving (only spoons and knives were used) and turkey was not on the menu!
- 🍁 Jingle Bells was originally a Thanksgiving song!
- 🍁 Cranberries were once used for more than just sauce. Native Americans used them to treat wounds and dye arrows.
- 🍁 Wild turkeys can run 20 miles per hour when they are scared; domesticated turkeys (which are heavier) can't run quite that fast.

## November is Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month

Currently, there are [30 million Americans living with diabetes](#), [a serious disease](#) which can lead to visual impairment or blindness. About [68% of Americans with diabetes have been diagnosed with eye complications](#) and diabetes is the leading cause of blindness among adults, according to the [National Institutes of Health](#). In addition, as many as one in three U.S. adults could have diabetes by 2050 according to [the Center for Disease Control](#). In addition, nearly half of Americans don't know that diabetic eye diseases have visible symptoms, according to a [2018 American Optometric Association survey](#). More than one-third of respondents didn't know a **comprehensive eye exam is the only way to determine if a person's diabetes will cause blindness**. As we get older, there is a much higher risk of becoming diabetic and potentially developing a diabetic eye disease – especially if you have one or more of the other risk factors.

### Types of Diabetic Eye Diseases

**Diabetic Retinopathy** is caused by damage to the small blood vessels of the retina. It is the most common cause of diabetic vision loss and the leading cause of vision loss for adults in the U.S. This disease is harder to detect, which is why doctors recommend annual eye exams if you've been diagnosed with diabetes. Some treatments for this disease include laser surgery, vitrectomy or chemical injections.

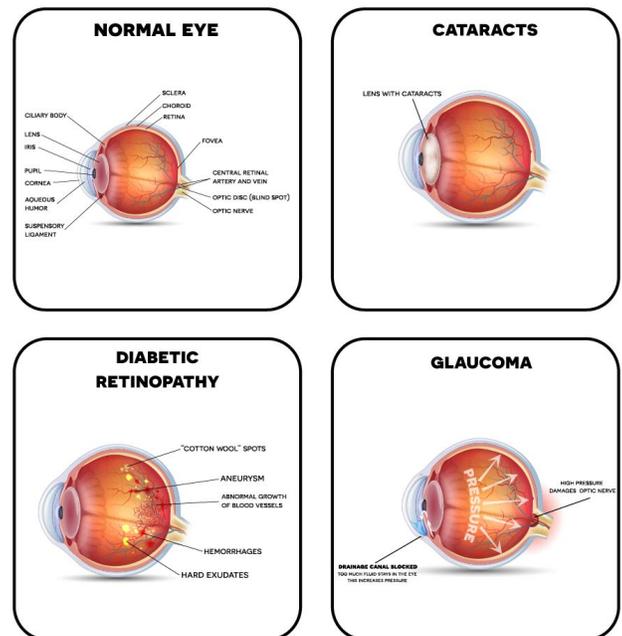
**Diabetic Macular Edema** is when fluid leaks into the center of the macula (the fovea), making it swell and blurring vision. It can occur at any stage of diabetic retinopathy. Possible treatments include laser surgery, drugs, and corticosteroid injections; however, glucose levels must be able to be maintained in the long-term.

**Cataracts** is a form of eye disease that typically develops slowly from protein build up inside of the eye, keeping light from passing through it. In most cases, it can be treated by an eye doctor with prescription glasses, contacts or cataract surgery.

**Glaucoma** is caused by damage to the optic nerve from an increase in pressure around the eye. This disease is typically passed down through genes and depending on severity, can be treated with eye drops, prescription medication, and/or laser treatments.

Here's the good news! There are preventative measures you can take to reduce your chances of becoming diabetic and effective medicines and treatments for those already living with diabetes to prevent or treat diabetic eye diseases. If you are diabetic, or at a higher risk of becoming diabetic, schedule an appointment with an eye specialist today to see how you can become aware and prepared.

### CHRONIC COMPLICATIONS OF DIABETES EYE DISEASES



## Tallahassee's White Cane Day Walk a Success



White Cane Awareness Day is October 15<sup>th</sup>; across the state various events were held to help bring awareness to local communities about the white cane and the white cane safety law as well as celebrate the contributions of those who are blind and visually impaired. In Tallahassee, the Division of Blind Services partnered with Leon County Schools, the Tallahassee Council of the Blind, the National

Federation of the Blind, the Lighthouse of the Big Bend, Florida State University, and Tallahassee Community College to come together and organize a White Cane Day Walk on Saturday, October 11.

Staff members from the Tallahassee District Office and the State Office joined the event along with members of the visually impaired community and other supporters. The event was a great success and participants enjoyed walking for the cause and the chance to network and connect with one another!



## Business Enterprise Program Licenses One and Two More Complete Training

The Business Enterprise Program has two new graduates and one more licensee! Congratulations are due to Eddie Cornelius, Stefan Mitchell, and Ted Griffin! Cornelius and Mitchell completed the 18-week training program and Griffin became a licensed vendor in the month of October. Eddie Cornelius has a strong background in management prior to entering the Business Enterprise Program while Stefan Mitchell is a Navy Veteran with a food service background. Ted Griffin is also a Navy veteran who worked in vending for a large beverage company prior to losing his sight. Training continues at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Daytona Beach for Steven Myers, Keith Banta, and Justin Davis who began the training program in August.



*From left to right: Rachel Boltz (instructor), Steven Myers, Eddie Cornelius, Keith Banta, Stefan Mitchell, Justin Davis, and Steve Moss (instructor). Angela Elgaard (instructor) is in the front of the group.*

Those who are a part of the Business Enterprise Program receive hands-on training from professional trainers and support staff whom teach you food service safety, vending and business management, and the ins and outs of the food service industry. The program has a diverse group of people with a variety of backgrounds from across the state of Florida. However, they all have something in common – the drive to be independent and support themselves and their families! If you believe that describes you, the [next training class begins in January](#) and the application deadline of December 9<sup>th</sup> is quickly approaching. You may contact [Janet Chernoff with the Business Enterprise Program](#) at (850) 245-9406 if you're interested in applying for the Business Enterprise Program or to receive more information.

## **The Future is Bright for this Superstar**

Meet Hailey Skoglund. Hailey was born with diminishing vision due to a genetic eye disease. The loss of her vision has only further motivated her to pursue her passions in music, science, and business. We caught up with Hailey to get to know her a little better and to see how she's been adjusting to her new college journey away from home.



### **Q: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

**A:** I am a student currently attending Florida Polytechnic University in Lakeland. I am studying business analytics. I actually plan to go to law school after this to become a patent attorney for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) innovation and intellectual property law. I just graduated in December from Pasco-Hernando state college with my Associates of Arts degree when I was 17. I graduated from Pasco-Hernando as the valedictorian and then I just graduated in May from high school as the salutatorian.

### **Q: Where do you see yourself in the next 5 to 10 years and can you paint a picture of what you want your life to look like?**

**A:** In 5 to 10 years I will be just graduating law school or just in my final semester or so of law school at Harvard Law – that's where I'm trying to go. I want to focus on STEM innovation and help STEM engineers patent their new ideas. Further down in my life I would really be interested in working as an attorney for the United States Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, DC.

### **Q: One of life's challenges for all of us is learning to overcome obstacles. Some people believe that overcoming obstacles in life is even more challenging as someone who is blind or visually impaired. Do you agree with that sentiment and why or why not? How have you learned to overcome obstacles in life?**

**A:** Honestly, I do think that losing my vision has posed an extra obstacle that not a lot of people have to go through at such a young age. But it really developed me as a person and it taught me to be strong and that I can overcome anything. After losing my vision, it didn't change what I loved to do, it just changed how I do it. So I still loved learning in school and I still love – you know – hanging out with my friends and doing everything like a normal student – like a normal college student my age (laugh). But I just have to do everything a little bit differently now that I have to use a cane and now that I have Marley. My math class, my teacher actually brought in clay and they drew in the clay so that I could feel the graph of the equations – tactile. And I learned how to do math in my head all the way up to calculus III just so I could prove that I could do it (laughs).

And I would say that I've had a lot of family support, my mom has been such an important person in my life, helping me achieve all of my goals. And my sister – Rayne – who has always been by my side throughout every year of my schooling. This is our first semester apart actually. It's been very different. I have more confidence now knowing that I have Marley and that I'm not completely alone.

**Q: What are some things you've already learned being at a new school and having to adjust in a new environment?**

**A:** So I think time management was the biggest thing for me to learn coming to a bigger university. Of course I had 3 years of experience at a local college, but it is very different living on my own for the first time and trying to manage everything and having to have very good memory skills because – you know – when I can't see to remember something and I'm having to remember where everything is and what I have to do. So it's kind of like learning that balance between studying, work, and having that time to relax.

And it's hard for everybody, you know, it's not just because I'm visually impaired and I try to push through that. I feel like I am seeking the same things as everybody else just in a little bit of a different light.



**Q: Have you joined any clubs or organizations that you'd like to share?**

**A:** I actually have. I applied to be a student Supreme Court justice with Marley. (Laughs) My slogan is actually pretty neat – Justice is Blind. Yeah, that was a fun little thing so now there are posters all around the school actually written in Braille that say Justice is Blind. And I'm also getting involved in the music association. I'm actually a professional violinist. I typically work at weddings and community events and stuff like that. So violin-ing is a huge part of my life so I just wanted to get into a club to be able to kind of – you know – work with like-minded people and have that kind of fun, creative outlet.

**Q: What advice would you give someone with a visual impairment that has aspirations to pursue higher education opportunities, but is hesitant to do so because of their disability?**

**A:** So, this is a big one because a lot of visually impaired and blind people actually choose not to pursue an undergraduate degree. But the saying that has actually gotten me through a lot of my obstacles in life, was taught to me by my statistics professor at my other college, she taught me the concept of GRIT: **G**ive it your all. **R**edo if necessary. **I**gnore giving up. **T**ake the time to do it right. So that saying has given me like the power and the strength and the persistence to be able to make it through whatever – whatever obstacles I face because, you know, if it's not the best work I can produce, then I'm going to go back and try it again. I think that is one of the biggest keys for when you are trying to seek higher education, especially people with visual impairments: You can't give up. You have got to just work 10 times harder. I mean, you've got to defy the odds. Do something that no one ever thought you could.

I have one quote that I actually really, really like and I refer to a lot. It's a quote by Hellen Keller and it said, "The only thing worse than being blind, is having sight but no vision". So I always say, I may have lost my sight but I haven't lost the vision that I have for my future and this vision for success that I'm trying to pursue.

## Is the Web About to Become More Accessible?

A recent report by Deque Systems found that 70% of e-commerce, news and information, and government websites are inaccessible to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. However, there are some recent court decisions which may have a significant impact on the accessibility of the online world for those who are blind and visually impaired.

In 2016, Guillermo Robles sued Domino's pizza after he was unable to use either the company's website or app with a screen reader to place an order. Robles argued that the inaccessibility of the



website and app violated rights granted to him under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title III stipulates that one can't discriminate on the basis of disability "in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases, or operates a place of public accommodation." Restaurants are public accommodations under federal law.

The ADA does not explicitly mention websites and mobile apps in its language. This can be attributed to the fact that when the ADA was signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1990, online technology was not as prominent and necessary as it is today.

After Robles' case was dismissed by the district court, he appealed to the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals which ruled that the ADA does apply to the app and website of a public accommodation. In its opinion the court wrote, "The alleged inaccessibility of Domino's website and app impedes access to the goods and services of its physical pizza franchises—which are places of public accommodation... This nexus between Domino's website and app and physical restaurants—which Domino's does not contest—is critical to our analysis."

Unhappy with the ruling, Domino's appealed the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit's ruling to the US Supreme Court. In October, the high court declined to hear the case meaning the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals decision is left intact. The lower courts still must determine whether Domino's website and app are inaccessible as the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit did not address whether the site was, in fact, inaccessible in their decision.

Ultimately, this case is much bigger than pizza; it's about determining whether or not the blind and visually impaired community will have the ability to fully participate in life in the 21st century. This case sets a precedence for ALL big businesses and companies that serve the public, holding them responsible for making their websites and mobile applications accessible for **EVERYONE**. It also emphasizes the importance of having a public conversation on ensuring that the blind and visually impaired community is included in the digital-age. You may learn more about this case and accessibility by reading "[Accessibility, the Future, and Why Domino's Matters](#)".

## Palm Beach CareerSource's Newest Tool: The Virtual Career System (VCS)

Are you searching for the perfect job or looking to change careers? Finding a new job can feel like a job in itself. CareerSource of Palm Beach County understands and has created a way to make your treasure hunt a little less frustrating! The Virtual Career System (VCS) was developed to be a one stop shop for graduates, those seeking to change their career path, and job hunters alike.

The VCS portal is an extension of the CareerSource System and their initiative to make it easier for job and employee seekers to find exactly what they're looking for in the state of Florida. The system is integrated with Employ Florida to ensure accurate, up-to-date statistics and information is provided to customers. Whether you know exactly what you are looking for or whether you need a little guidance, the portal is designed to accommodate you! This newly designed system allows you to search for jobs based on a specific occupation, salary, its popularity, your personal interests, and more.

### Special Features

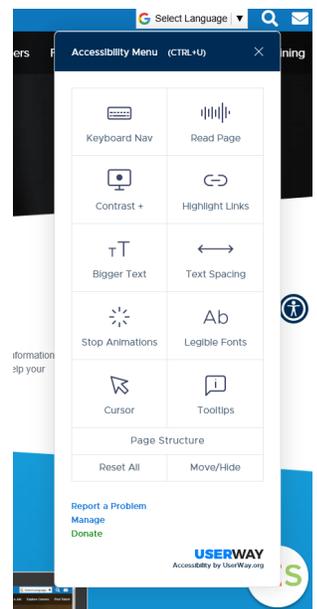
The developers of VCS knew there was a need for more than just another regular job searching tool. Check out some of the portals' additional special features:

- *Interest Profiler* – You can choose between taking a 6 or 30 question assessment that uses your answers to calculate and generate top careers that match your interests. You then click on each job link to learn more and find opportunities.
- *High Demand Job Search* – This feature gives you a quick synopsis of high-demand jobs in the area. It includes a general job description, video about the occupation, typical wage, wage comparison (state vs national wages), job outlook forecast, and the typical education required.
- *Career Clips* – If you are looking for quick and comprehensible videos to help you develop professionally and personally, this feature is perfect for you. Some of the categories include, career exploration, life skills, networking and professional development.
- *Grow Your Brand* – This corner of the website reminds us that we are our own brand and gives tips and tools to help define and strengthen our professional image through social media presence and resumes.

### Accessibility Features

Use a screen reader? No problem! VCS is fully accessible to use and even allows individuals that don't have access to screen reading software to comfortably navigate through the system and find exactly what they need. Here are some ways the system checks off on the accessibility meter:

- Every image and graphic has an alt-text
- Videos are included and equipped with closed captioning
- Website pages include a special navigation bar on the side that allows the viewer to adjust the accessibility features if they don't have a screen reader



Learn more and experience the [Virtual Career System](#) of Palm Beach County and [CareerSource Florida](#).



# TECHNOLOGY TODAY

## Adaptive Technology Improvements in Mainstream Operating Systems

Adaptive technology is a necessary component of success for most visually impaired persons; however, it can be quite expensive. It is often smaller companies that create and support these types of technologies and they cater to a smaller market and have to charge high prices in order to stay in business. So, why don't the big technology companies create and support some of this adaptive technology? Several companies have attempted to do so and improvements are being made in their products.

Microsoft introduced Narrator in the Windows operating system (OS) around the year 2000, but it was very basic and was only useful in getting a screen reader, such as JAWS, installed. Many users would only use it as a last resort. Several years later, Apple incorporated the Voiceover screen reader in most Apple products. Voiceover had many more features than Narrator and allowed users to utilize the most basic applications on the Mac OS. Many blind and visually impaired users switched to using a Mac because of their level of support.

However, during the past year, Microsoft has made many improvements to its Narrator screen reader in updated versions of Windows 10. Users who are already familiar with keystrokes in JAWS will be happy to learn that most of these keystrokes are the same in Narrator. This makes learning and using both Narrator and JAWS much easier. Narrator also now works in Microsoft Office and with several web browsers. Most users will still want a full-featured screen reader such as JAWS for optimal productivity, but both Voiceover on the Mac and Narrator for Windows are free solutions that can easily be used in situations where it is not practical to install additional software (e.g. a friend or family member's computer or perhaps a computer in a library or other public place). Both of these operating systems have several other free, built-in accessibility features including: [Zoom for the Mac](#) and [Magnifier for Windows](#).

To start Voiceover in Mac OS, press "Command + F5". [Learn more about the keystrokes and features of Voiceover.](#)

To start Narrator in Windows 10, press "Windows Key + Control + Enter". [Learn more about the keystrokes and features of Narrator.](#)

*Want to share with us any other assistive technology that works well for you? Tell us about your experience by emailing [communications@dbs.fldoe.org](mailto:communications@dbs.fldoe.org).*

# In The Headlines



Here are some articles that caught our attention this month and we thought we'd share them in case you missed them!

## Smart Cities and Why We Need 'Em



Smart technology is continuing to revolutionize our home life and now the development of smart cities is forecasted to grow steadily (and presumably transform our lives even more) in the coming years. [Smart Cities Could Give the Visually Impaired a New Outlook on Urban Life](#) is a great read which outlines some things to look forward to and how smart cities can really benefit Americans – especially those that are blind and visually impaired.

## Travel and Adventure Is Not Just For the Sighted

The travel industry is beginning to make adventure and travel accessible for people with a variety of disabilities, including those who are blind and visually impaired. Operators are working on creating tactile experiences for the blind – have you tried surfing lately? To find out more, check out National Geographic's [Accessible Adventure: How Travel Is Becoming More Inclusive](#).



## Will Memes Finally Be Accessible for the Blind?

Memes are a large part of the digital world and our culture today but are largely inaccessible to those who can't see the images – those who are legally blind. However, researchers at Carnegie Mellon have had some success in creating artificial intelligence (AI) which can accurately describe the images in alt-text. To learn more, check out [Researchers Are Making Memes Accessible to the Blind](#).

*If you see an article that caught your attention and you think individuals who are blind or visually impaired or those who work with them might be interested in seeing, send it to us at [communications@dbs.fldoe.org](mailto:communications@dbs.fldoe.org)! (While space is limited and we can't promise what you send us will appear in The Visionary, we may be able to share it on DBS' [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts. If you aren't already, make sure to follow us on social media!*

# Quick Tips on...

## DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

We live in a visual world and that includes the digital one. So, how do we make that world easier for those who are blind or visually impaired to navigate? Each month we'll give you some tips on making the online world better for those who can't always see it so clearly.

### An Introduction to Alt-Text

Alt-text (or alternate text) is text which is added to an image that allows screen readers to describe the image that is within a document, webpage, etc. In a world where images are used all over the place, alt-text assists those who are blind or visually impaired to understand what is being depicted in an image. *As a side note, alt-text is also a key component of search engine optimization (SEO).*

Alt-text should accurately describe the content of an image with enough detail to accurately describe the image but without the details which don't increase the reader's understanding of the image. You should make sure to include any text that is within the image. If you are providing a link (or an image is a link), make sure to describe what is being linked to in the hyperlink.

### How Do I Create Alt-Text?

There is not one single way that alt-text is created. How you add alt-text to an image will depend on the platform you are using. We've included a few guides for the most popular platforms. If the one you're wanting to use isn't included, try a Google search with the platform name and "alt text".

[Microsoft: Everything you need to know to write effective alt text](#)

[Adobe PDF: Add Alternate Text and Supplementary Information to Tags](#)

[HTML: Alt-Text](#)

[WordPress: Image Alt Text vs Image Title in WordPress – What's the Difference?](#)

[Social Media \(Twitter, Facebook, Instagram\): Considerations When Writing Alt Text](#)

[Adobe InDesign: Adding Alternate Text to Images](#)

### Mattel Releases a Braille Uno Deck

The makers of Uno just made playing your next game with your friends and family who are blind or visually impaired easier – and more fun! In collaboration with the National Federation for the Blind, Mattel introduced Uno – Braille edition playing cards in October. Each card in the deck has braille on the corner and the company envisions players calling out the card as it is played. In addition, Braille instructions are included with the



packaging or the company has given users the option of having Alexa or Google Home read the instructions aloud.

“We are proud to have UNO Braille on-shelves and to be making UNO more accessible and inclusive to even more families,” Ray Adler, global lead of Mattel games, said in the news release about the new accessible deck.

A graphic with a blue brick background. It features two overlapping speech bubbles. The top bubble is black with the word 'UPCOMING' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The bottom bubble is white with the word 'EVENTS' in blue, bold, sans-serif font. The bubbles have a slight drop shadow.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **South Florida Job Fair**

If you are in the south Florida area and looking for employment, plan to attend the South Florida Job Fair on November 13<sup>th</sup>! The event is being held from 10 AM to 2 PM at the BB&T Center (1 Panther Parkway, Sunrise, 33323). You may register at [JobNewsUSA.com](http://JobNewsUSA.com).

### **Miami Career Fair**

If you're ready to CONNECT with the right employers, attend the Miami Career Fair with top local and Fortune 500 employers. The Career Fair is being held on December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the Hilton Miami Downtown Hotel (1601 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, 33132). You may [register to attend online](#).

### **Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) Meeting**

The FRCB will conduct its quarterly meeting in Tallahassee on February 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will begin at 8:30 AM on February 6<sup>th</sup> and at 9:00 AM on February 7<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn (2003 Apalachee Parkway). The FRCB will also conduct a public forum from 5 to 6 PM on February 6<sup>th</sup>. For more information, email Selena Sickler at [Selena.Sickler@dbs.fl DOE.org](mailto:Selena.Sickler@dbs.fl DOE.org).

### **2020 Vision Awareness Day Open House**

On February 22, 2020, join the VA North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) and the Villages Visually Impaired Persons (VIP) Group for their 26th Annual Visual Awareness Day event. The open house will have agencies and companies that work with and provide equipment for the legally blind and visually impaired. For more information, contact Bruce Davis at (352) 271-6001.

**“Vision is the Art of  
Seeing What is  
Invisible to Others”**  
**- Johnathan Swift**



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