



## Future Home of the VisABILITY Center Campus



# 2019 Annual Report

# Dear Friends of Beyond Vision,

The year of progress for Beyond Vision can be summed up this way...#MissionFirst. More than a decade ago, our leadership team embraced the philosophy that putting the mission first should drive every decision we make. We continually ask ourselves if we are making the best decision for the mission, ahead of personal or departmental priorities. If so, we are making the right decision. Years later that simple yet powerful philosophy is now reaping rewards in the form of growth. We are seeing growth in our jobs, our culture, computer accessibility, competitive salaries, the Board of Directors, and our fiscal health. This is no accident. Additionally, a dedicated Board and a strong, persistent leadership team lays the foundation for this growth. I am blessed to have both.

The most important measure of success is growing our mission. We're reaching record levels of employment within all sectors of the company: from the Commercial Manufacturing shop floor, to the Customer Care Center, to our Government Products business unit, and to our eight remote distribution Base Supply Centers. Having successfully launched a new fully accessible ERP system in our Milwaukee operation, we now have 100% computer software accessibility for every position. This change in technology allows us to hire and promote any deserving sighted or mission employee to any role.

Our culture continues to grow healthier. Employees in all areas of the company have a strong emotional engagement to growing the mission. We center ourselves around Servant Leadership principles which are baked into the corporate Values and part of every employee's annual review. The concept that leaders are focused on serving their staff to help them achieve their best now permeates the entire culture. Our employees and customers can feel it when they walk through the building.

Our leadership team also continues to rally around a simple yet powerful metaphor we call the "Runway." Beyond Vision is a "Runway...a place to land and a place to take off in your career." A person may 'take off' inside Beyond Vision or they

may choose to "take off" elsewhere in another company. Either way, we assist our employees to achieve their career aspirations. We call it a "win" when someone achieves upward mobility inside or outside the company. This #MissionFirst focus separates and defines us.

In July we instituted a formal job definition system. Most of our hourly employees received a pay increase adjustment to insure our pay is market competitive throughout the entire company. A similar analysis is about to get underway for our salaried positions. We've done this to support our assertion that, as I like to say, "This is not your grandfather's sheltered workshop." Said another way, "Beyond Vision is a competitive and integrated employer with the mission of providing career opportunities for people with vision loss."

The good news is we are experiencing this growth. The opportunity is we have run out of physical space. As a result, we've leased additional manufacturing space as a short-term solution to support the continued expansion of our newly formed Government Products group. The long-term solution is to create the VisABILITY Center campus. In June, with our Board's full support, we successfully purchased a former regional Sam's Club facility with plans to renovate it and move our entire Milwaukee operations there. The new campus will provide Beyond Vision space to continue growing its mission for the foreseeable future.

We also plan to invite all other non-profit service providers within the vision loss community to join us at the new VisABILITY Center campus. This co-location model will broaden our shared mission by creating a one-stop-shop for people experiencing vision loss. Together, we can give them the support they need to live a full life; so their vision loss does not prevent them from pursuing their dreams.

Heavily dependent on fundraising, our sister non-profit service providers experience a tremendous and continuous financial struggle, which causes them to not be able to offer the programming and services they like to. They all have hopes of adding more to their existing services and training, however, their budget sometimes won't allow such expansion. The result is a continuous struggle to optimize

services offered within budget constraints. The VisAbility Center co-location concept will benefit the larger mission through significant operational cost savings across shared resources such as facilities maintenance, security, and perhaps computer systems. It makes no sense for these resources to be duplicated across the different non-profit entities. There's little doubt co-location will lead to much better collaboration and mutual success while providing more value to the community we serve.

We are engaged in discussions with eye health providers about co-location. I've shared our dream with ophthalmologist and optometrist eye health professionals in the region at length. They absolutely love the concept. They see the value in being able to refer their patients to a single location for help and resources based on their individual needs.

Exciting times for Beyond Vision without a doubt! It's all made possible by holding on tight to that modest yet potent philosophy. #MissionFirst



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Kerlin".

**Jim Kerlin,**  
President &  
Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William E. Hughes".

**William Hughes,**  
Chairman of the Board  
of Directors



Tony Creapeau, IT Technician, and Israel Cazares-Zurita, Accessibility Coordinator, perform accessibility testing using a variety of technology.

## Volunteer Board of Directors

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# A Future Built on Blind Ambition Becomes a Reality

## The Blind Ambition Capital Campaign

Beyond Vision's current facilities limit the growth of its mission to provide meaningful and sustainable employment for people with vision loss.

Beyond Vision is choked for space as it continues to market its manufacturing, assembly and packaging, customer care center and business products services to a broad base of local, state and national customers.

Current facilities have limited storage, no loading docks and most critical, a lack of fire protection. The cost of necessary renovations and expansion far outweigh the value of the current properties.

It is time to expand Beyond Vision facilities.

Beyond Vision will build a state-of-the-art manufacturing and administrative campus in West Allis, Wisconsin to broaden its own capabilities and mission as well as invite co-location of other organizations serving people with vision loss.

Beyond Vision is forming unique partnerships to create one of the first co-located vision loss advocacy, education and employment centers in the country.



The new Beyond Vision campus will be one of the first in the nation to provide comprehensive services to individuals and families impacted by vision loss. We will use a proven, collaborative model, which combines co-located service providers in one easily accessible location.



*The welcoming and totally accessible lobby features an historical timeline of employment and services for people with vision loss.*

The entire facility will be completely low vision friendly with aids such as:

- Universal design throughout interior spaces
- Textured flooring for easy navigation
- Ambient lighting for those with low vision
- Braille signage and audio navigation aids throughout the building
- Landscaping will feature a public space for neighborhood inclusion and a scent garden
- Wisconsin Lions Dog Park for guide dogs on the campus
- A wellness center featuring adapted workout machines tailored for people with vision loss or blindness

The Beyond Vision Campus will offer co-location opportunities to other organizations serving people with vision loss, organizations such as the Blinded Veterans of Wisconsin, the state of Wisconsin Office of Blind Vocational Instruction as well as providers of eye health, literacy and rehabilitation and advocacy groups.



*The large capacity meeting/lunchroom will be a place for employees and co-location visitors to mix and mingle. When possible, the room will be available to organizations serving the vision loss community for special events and meetings.*

The \$19 million project will be centrally located with convenient access to public transportation.

Financial support for the campus will utilize a combination of public and private funding with major foundations and individuals already committed to the project goal.

**You can help.  
To learn more, contact  
Barbara Velez,  
[barbara.velez@yahoo.com](mailto:barbara.velez@yahoo.com)**



## 50% Mission Ratio:

105 Employees

53 Employees who are blind

52 Employees who are sighted

**All working side-by-side.**



## 91,481

Blind Paid

Working Hours



## 90%

Percentage Blind

Direct Labor



## \$26,904,688

Revenues

## Our Mission:

Grow by being a valued partner to customers, suppliers, and the community while operating as a fiscally responsible enterprise.



*"This promotion is a huge accomplishment for me and I'm very thankful."*

-Ericka Silas, Team Lead



- 934th Airlift Wing - Minneapolis, MN
- Coast Guard Island - Alameda, CA
- Defense Supply Center - Columbus, OH
- Fort McCoy - Fort McCoy, WI
- Naval Station Great Lakes - Great Lakes, IL
- NASA Ames Research Center - Moffett Field, CA
- Scott Air Force Base - Scott AFB, IL
- TACOM - Detroit Arsenal - Warren, MI

Our mission extends outside the state of Wisconsin. We provide employment opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired across the USA by operating Base Supply Centers on Federal installations to serve our military with supplies and SKILCRAFT® products. These products include the privacy filters, floor mats, socket sets and sit-stand desks we produce at Beyond Vision.

# SHOT *in the* DARK

Golfers at our signature fundraising event gathered at Silver Spring Golf Club in September to support our job training programs. This event is a one-of-a-kind experience with half the course played in the dark.

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Another great year with the best attendance on record and a wonderful time.  
All in support of our mission.

# Hard Work Pays Off



Finding and maintaining meaningful employment can be difficult for people living with vision loss. One person who understands this is Jedidiah Moss.

Jed was born with a rare degenerative eye condition, making him legally blind. While living in Marinette, WI, Jed struggled to find a consistent job. He had bounced around trying to get by on disability insurance and working for various restaurants and hotels in the Marinette area. Although Jed possesses an incredible attitude and work ethic, he says finding a steady job was a struggle.

***“Living with a vision impairment, it is difficult to find a good job. I think people often take those opportunities for granted.”***

Jed heard about Beyond Vision from his friend and fellow alumni of the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Ruben Rodriguez, a current Beyond Vision employee. Upon learning about the job opportunity at Beyond Vision, Jed made the difficult decision to move from Marinette to Milwaukee and began working with us in January of 2019.

Jed has very quickly established himself as a valuable member of the Beyond Vision team. Starting in the Assembly & Packaging business unit, it was clear Jed took pride in his work and was ready to assume a higher level of responsibility. In less than a year's time, Jed has been promoted to Product Champion working on our new Sit-Stand Desk and Urban Operations Tool-Kit product lines.

***“There is opportunity to advance here if you work hard; I appreciate that. I look at every job as a challenge. I always try to beat what I had done the day before.”***



# Mission First

In addition to our powerful vision and mission statements, Beyond Vision also has seven core values. We use these values to ensure that our operations, strategy, and culture are aligned to develop an organization that attracts and retains the best people. We use these values during our recruitment process and within our performance management processes. To be successful at Beyond Vision, it is not enough to have the right resume. Employee values need to align with Beyond Vision's values.

Our first and most important value is #MissionFirst. Our goal is for employees to consistently put the mission first. This does not mean sacrificing family time or individual accomplishments or recognition. We don't want a team of individuals with poor work-life balance. It means, that in our day-to-day operations and interactions, we put the

#MissionFirst. For example, when there are successes, are we using "I" or "me" language or are we using "us" language? When there are failures, are we pointing fingers or are we working to resolve the issue? Are we willing to put our ego in our pocket and own up when we make a mistake? Are we willing to take on any task that moves our Mission forward? Or do we put our convenience ahead of the Mission?

Many organizations will develop vision and mission statements during a strategic planning process. They then put them on a wall or on their website, and forget them until the next strategic planning session. We work hard at Beyond Vision to make the Mission a part of our day-to-day conversation and operations. Our fidelity to this #MissionFirst value has led to our growth and success. It will also continue to be our beacon as we look to an exciting future.



## Beyond Vision named Social Enterprise of the Year

The BizTimes Nonprofit Excellence Awards honor nonprofits making an impact in Wisconsin. This award recognizes a nonprofit organization that demonstrates creative application of the principles of social enterprise in their operation and funding.

# Events and Tours

To increase awareness and understanding of our mission within the community, we participate in activities and host many opportunities to visit Beyond Vision



# Thank You

# 2018-2019 Donors

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To Donate - Contact Nick Czaplowski - [nczaplowski@beyond-vision.org](mailto:nczaplowski@beyond-vision.org)