



## Introduction

Welcome to HireGround! Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) produces this newsletter expressly for our Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) professional audience. We hope that this publication will be of value to you, as we continue our relationship and work with participants. OOD's mission is to help individuals achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes through our integrated services, partnerships and innovation.

## Disability Community Opportunities and Announcements

### Program for Low-Cost Hearing Aids

The Starkey Hearing Foundation provides a program called Hear Now. This program serves low income U.S. residents who have no other resources to acquire hearing aids. The foundation works with local hearing healthcare providers who volunteer to test, fit and follow up with patients. There is an application processing fee of \$125. Interested parties are welcome to call Hear Now to discuss eligibility before completing an application. When an application is approved, aids are given to the applicant at no additional cost. The hearing aids provided are new and behind the ear models. Custom hearing aids are not provided. To learn more or to request materials, call 800-328-8602 and ask for Hear Now or email [hearnow@starkey.com](mailto:hearnow@starkey.com). Additional information is available at [www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org](http://www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org).

### National Center for College Students with Disabilities Holds Video Competition

The National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) was established to improve the college experiences of students with disabilities by providing information, training and referrals. NCCSD wants to add live-action or animated videos on its websites as a way for disabled students to share their own perspectives, experiences and lessons learned in college. They also hope to show the diversity and contributions of college students with disabilities, as well as ongoing needs or barriers that still exist. NCCSD announced its first-ever video

competition. They are interested in examples of best practices for students, classrooms or access issues. Videos are due by April 17 and the top winners will be awarded cash prizes. For more details, visit <http://www.nccsonline.org/video-competition.html>.

### **STEM-Related Youth Camp Applications Open for Teens and Volunteers**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) announced the 2017 NFB Youth Slam, which is a week-long learning opportunity for students, grades 9 through 12, in a wide-variety of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines. One hundred blind and low vision students from across the country will be selected to attend this week-long adventure at Towson University in Maryland from July 23-29. Applications are due May 7. For more information about the NFB Youth Slam and to learn about volunteer opportunities, visit <http://blindscience.org/nfb-youth-slam>. For additional questions, call 410-659-9314, extension 2418, or email [STEM@nfb.org](mailto:STEM@nfb.org).

### **Update Available on BSVI Resources**

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) has updated and posted its annual compilation of vision loss and hearing loss resources. The document primarily contains internet links and other information on general resources, advocacy groups, media and communications access, hearing aid assistance, learning resources and other information. Resources are categorized in areas of greatest use for deaf, blind and deaf/blind community members. This is a downloadable Word document accessible to screen reader users. To download the document, visit <http://ood.ohio.gov/Core-Services/BSVI/Vision-and-Hearing-Resources>.

### **DOT and Southwest Airlines Reach Historic Agreement**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has reached an agreement with Southwest Airlines that will ensure that at least 50% of their kiosks at U.S. airports are accessible to passengers with disabilities by September 30, 2017. Additionally, any automated kiosks that Southwest installs after that date will be accessible. Kiosks installed at U.S. airports are used for a variety of functions, such as printing boarding passes and baggage tags, scanning passports to check-in, and canceling or rebooking tickets. The agreement is available at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), docket DOT-OST-2016-0202.

### **Artist Spotlight: OOD's Graphic Artist Lindsay Blusiewicz**

Ever since she can remember, former consumer and OOD Graphic Artist Lindsay Blusiewicz has enjoyed delving into various forms of art. Lindsay and her identical twin sister Cassandra were born with Treacher Collins Syndrome, a rare genetic condition that affects the development of the bones and tissues of the face.

The Blusiewicz sisters enter street painting competitions as a team. Street painting in layman's terms is chalk art. Chalk art is one area where the Blusiewicz sisters excel. Lindsay pursued art studies in high school and continued at Otterbein University. She began an internship at OOD, which led to a full-time position in OOD's Office of Communications. "OOD has helped me grow in my field and has given me an outlet to link my imaginative side with the business needs of state government," said Blusiewicz.

## **Are You Aware of AWARE Help?**

*By Rebecca Halstead, OOD, AWARE Business Coordinator*

Have you ever found yourself somewhere amidst AWARE and wondering, "Where do I enter this information?" AWARE Help can be accessed in two ways. On the main screen, it is located to the right of Preferences in the upper right hand corner. Additionally, you can bring it up from the Actions menu available on any screen. A new window will open after you select AWARE Help.

In AWARE Help, you will find Overview Topics, Help Topics and Field Information. Overview Topics explains the purpose of a module and may list pages and reports available in that module. Help Topics provide information about how to complete a specific page or process. Field Information offers information about system rules for fields appearing on various pages.

When creating a ServiceNow Request, make sure you have included as much information as possible. These details will help bring a more efficient resolution to your issue.

## **NFB-Newsline Expanding with New Magazines**

Newspaper and magazine reading ranks high among the things people miss when experiencing vision loss. Several new periodicals have been added in recent months on NFB-Newsline, including a free telephone reading service sponsored by OOD. New periodicals that are now available include:

**Athlon Sports & Life** (magazine) is the sports fan's better living playbook. Athlon Sports & Life reaches engaged people looking for must-have tools to better their busy lives.

**Bon Appetit** (magazine) focuses on what's current and stylish while still giving readers valuable cooking tools and tips. Bon Appetit offers a look at life through the lens of food by discussing cooking in, dining out, culture, travel, entertainment, shopping and design.

**Car and Driver** (magazine) targets the automotive enthusiast. The magazine is notable for its irreverent tone and its habit of telling it like it is.

**Consumer Reports** (magazine) is dedicated to unbiased product testing, consumer-oriented research, public education and advocacy. The magazine accepts no advertising and pays for all the products it tests.

**Discover** (magazine) presents the latest news, theories and developments in the world of science; compelling stories on breakthroughs in health, medicine and the mind; environmental issues and their relevance to daily life; cutting-edge technology and its impact on our future; and thought-provoking articles from award-winning editors, opinion makers, Nobel laureates and renegade scientists.

**MIT Tech Review** (magazine) is the first to report on important new technologies that will affect your organization, your career and your life, providing an intelligent, lucid and authoritative filter for the overwhelming flood of information about technology. The publication is known for the TR35, an annual list of the top 35 innovators in the world under the age of 35.

**Prevention** (magazine) is a healthy lifestyle magazine started in 1950 and one of the largest circulating magazines in the country. The range of subjects includes food, nutrition, workouts, beauty and cooking.

**Spry Living** (magazine) is a resource for common-sense health, wellness and lifestyle advice, as well as inspiring real-life success stories.

For more information or to register for NFB-Newsline, visit <http://www.nfbnewsline.org> or, if you need help, call 866-504-7300.

## **Social Security Spotlights: Checking Applications Online and Prescription Assistance**

### **Check Your Application or Appeal Status Service**

*By Doug Walker, Social Security Administration, Deputy Commissioner*

In December, the Social Security Administration (SSA) launched a new service for My Social Security account holders, allowing the public to check the status of an application for benefits or a filed appeal. The service provides detailed information about retirement, disability, survivors, Medicare and Supplemental Security Income claims and appeals, whether these are filed online at [socialsecurity.gov](http://socialsecurity.gov) or in any field office with a Social Security employee.

The ability to check application status is available online to everyone who has or opens a secure my Social Security account. You can open a secure account at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

The service provides important information about an individual's claim or appeal, including:

- Date of filing
- Current claim location
- Scheduled hearing date and time
- Re-entry numbers for incomplete applications
- Servicing office location
- Claim or appeal decision

The option remains to call 800-772-1213 to check claim status through SSA's automated system using the confirmation number received when filing a claim.

*VR professionals can share this article with individuals with disabilities.*

## **Get Extra Help with Your Prescription Costs**

*By Jim Borland, Social Security Administration, Assistant Deputy Commissioner*

In times like these, every dollar counts. Some people qualify for big savings on their Medicare prescription drug costs and don't even realize it. In fact, if you're eligible, you could save about \$4,000 per year on monthly premiums, annual deductibles and prescription co-payments.

To qualify, you must be receiving Medicare and have limited resources and income. The Social Security Administration (SSA) will need to know the value of your savings, investments, real estate (other than your home) and your income. SSA will also need information about you and your spouse, if you are married and living together.

To apply for *Extra Help*, just complete the Social Security's [Application for Extra Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs](#). Our secure online application has self-help screens that guide you through a series of questions. You can start and stop the application by computer at any time and go back later to finish it.

You have the option to apply for *Extra Help* over the phone by calling one of these two phone numbers, 800-772-1213 or 800-325-0778. You can also visit your local Social Security office.

SSA will review your application and send you a letter letting you know if you qualify for *Extra Help*. Once you qualify, you can choose a Medicare prescription drug plan.

When you file your application for *Extra Help*, you can also start an application for a Medicare Savings Program — state programs that provide help to people with limited resources and income with Medicare expenses.

Make sure you aren't missing out on these easy savings. The sooner you [apply](#), the sooner your savings begin.

## Best Practice Spotlight: Working with Interpreters

*By Elizabeth L. Sammons, OOD, Program Administrator*

Ohio's foreign-born citizenry nearly doubled from 2.4% in 1990 to 4.1% in 2013. This comprises about half a million Ohioans, of whom only one in five are undocumented. Nearly 7% of business owners in Ohio are also foreign born.

Chances are that sooner than later, you will have the opportunity to serve a new American on your caseload. Here are some tips that will make communication a bit easier when working with an interpreter.

**Offer it:** Don't assume that consumers know that having an interpreter is an option. If you notice that your consumer is not responding appropriately to questions, ask if having an interpreter would make things easier. While the consumer might expect a family member or friend to interpret, make sure that the option of an outside interpreter free to the consumer is offered to avoid issues of confidentiality or sensitivity. Make sure the consumer understands that this interpreter will not discuss anything about the case outside the meeting.

**Time it:** When scheduling an interpreter, allow at least 1.5 times the normal session time, such as 90 minutes for a 60-minute interview. If possible, try to keep the same interpreter for an ongoing consumer and ask for this interpreter to work with other consumers if you establish good rapport.

**Build the groundwork:** If possible, especially with interpreters new to you, talk with the interpreter prior to the meeting and cover terms related to the disability or our agency that might be new to this person. Remember that even a professional interpreter does not know the inside language that we often use.

**Avoid jargon:** We love abbreviations. Avoid initials and highly technical terms in your conversation. Using phrases like "our agency," "job assistance for you" or "our agreement" serves equally well.

**Package it:** Most interpreters cannot interpret simultaneously. A good rule of thumb is that if you speak one sentence and pause, then wait until the interpreter has spoken, you will develop a rhythm and not strain the interpreter to keep up with you or miss a whole string of thought.

**Word it:** Remember that in many non-U.S. cultures, discussion of a disability is rare. Many languages lack words that we often use like "disability" to express entire concepts. On the other hand, some languages encapsulate many of our words into one phrase or expression. The result is that what you say may result in much longer or shorter interpretations than expected. Many people with disabilities have experienced shame and even shunning that are important to understand in the VR context. The interpreter may be able to shed some light on this before or after a meeting.

**Clear it:** Stay friendly, but avoid jokes or cultural references such as sports, films or anything that Americans know, but that someone coming from the outside might not understand without extensive life experience here. “How about those Buckeyes?” is a great example of this.

**Flex it:** Expect questions and behaviors that may be different from the born-American norm. Families may want to give you gifts or have a closer or more distant physical nearness than what you are used to. Some people may avoid eye contact in keeping with their cultural learning.

**Say thank you:** Always thank the interpreter at the end of the meeting. Take a few minutes to discuss any problems or suggestions to follow through such as filling out forms, understanding times of next meetings, and the best way to communicate with the consumer in a follow up meeting.

For more interesting statistics on new Americans in Ohio and their economic, educational and work profiles, see <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/new-americans-ohio>.

For tips on working with interpreters, go to <http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/issues/interpret.htm> or <http://umtia.org/resources/how-to-work-with-an-interpreter/>.

## **International and Cross-Cultural Disability Resources**

If you or an individual with a disability are interested in the basics of going abroad, or finding, funding and preparing for an international exchange, here are some resources for things to think about: <http://www.miusa.org/plan/americans-abroad>.

See this nationwide Spanish language list of federal and nonprofit disability resources from the National Rehabilitation Information Center <http://www.naric.com/?q=en/content/spanish-language-resources>.

MiNDbank from the World Health Organization is the only single point globally to access all comprehensive information related to national policies and practices in mental health, substance abuse, disability, general health, human rights and development. The online platform currently includes nearly 4,000 documents and resources for over 160 countries. Access the WHO MiNDbank at [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/mindbank/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/mindbank/en/).

The Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange (CIRRIE) has published Buddhism and Responses to Disability, Mental Disorders and Deafness in Asia. The

bibliography includes citations for written works reflecting the Buddhist understanding of and response to physical disabilities such as blindness, deafness and mental disorders. This extensive bibliography identifies references to disability in Buddhism's most ancient works as well as in modern literature. <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/bibliography/buddhism/>.

Additional bibliographies are available at the CIRRIE Annotated Bibliographies page, including disability perspectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Middle East and African countries. <http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=93195286&msgid=734327&act=1OQJ&c=654309&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fcirrie.buffalo.edu%2Fbibliography%2F>

## **Disability Trivia: We've Come a Long Way!**

*Note: Facts adapted with permission from THE WAY WE WERE: Are Blind Politicians History? By Peggy Chong, Copyright Blindskills, Inc., 2016 and published in the fall 2016 issue of DIALOGUE Magazine.*

Ohio, along with the USA overall, has a rich, varied and interesting group of blind ancestors who have served in public office. They have represented various parties focused on ideas important to their home area and their constituents.

Some of these men were blind since birth, while some went blind as young adults. A few went blind while in office. Some were older, others very young. Most read Braille and all used secretaries and readers. Some traveled with canes and some with dogs. They all used a sighted guide from time-to-time. While many were lawyers, others were insurance agents, piano tuners, business owners, teachers or salesmen before entering politics.

Walter Leslie Campbell was the popular mayor of Youngstown, Ohio from 1882 to 1886. Educated at the Ohio Institute for the Blind, he developed a writing system scratching print letters into heavy paper to keep records and notes. Campbell was a college graduate and an attorney in Youngstown.

In the 1880s, Ohio also elected a blind state representative, and later state senator, J. Dwight Palmer.

Ohio nominated William H. West for governor in 1877, but he was not elected. Opponents noted that having gone blind five years previously, the lawyer could barely write his name anymore.

In the 1910s, blind men won four different national elections for the Congress and Senate, as well as four seats in state legislatures. These included Thomas David Schall, a Republican from Minnesota who began his first of many terms in the U.S. Congress in 1914. Later elected to the

Senate, Schall died after being hit by a car in 1935, bringing an end to his colorful 25-year national career.

Blindness was not the only distinguishing trait of some of our elected officials. In 1965, the blind Gilbert Ramirez also became the first Puerto Rican elected to the New York Assembly. In Texas, Anita E. Blair became the first blind woman ever elected to a state legislator position in the USA. Today, however, we have only two blind legislators in statehouses.

## Scholarships Corner: Tips and Upcoming Due Dates

Here are some disability-related financial opportunities by due date on a quarterly basis.

### **Deadline Rolling:**

The Academy of Special Dreams Scholarships for artists with disabilities. The College Scholarships Fund targets traditional college-aged students with a disability pursuing either a full or part-time course of study in any medium of art.

The Working Artists Fund focuses on adult artists who actively pursue a career or vocation in any artistic field and need financial support to further that career.

<http://www.specialacademy.org/scholarship/>

**Deadline March 31:** The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) offers blind U.S. college students scholarships from \$3,000 to \$12,000. These are based on academic excellence, community service and leadership. <https://nfb.org/scholarships>.

**Deadline March 31:** [The Ability Center of Greater Toledo](#) lists scholarships up to \$2,000. Applicants must have a disability and reside in Lucas, Wood, Fulton, Henry, Ottawa, Defiance or Williams counties.

**Deadline March 31:** [The Kim and Harold Louie Family Foundation Scholarship Program](#) is for high school seniors with disabilities planning to attend a U.S. college, university or vocational school. Requirements: personal achievements, academic merit, leadership qualities and/or community service. Special consideration is given for applicants with demonstrated financial need, with parents who did not attend college, who have parents that are U.S. veterans or currently in the military. <http://www.louiefamilyfoundation.org/scholarship-application>

**Deadline March 31:** The Sertoma Hard of Hearing or Deaf Scholarship is for students with clinically significant bilateral hearing loss, that are graduating from high school or undergraduate students pursuing four-year college degrees. <http://sertoma.org/what-we-do/scholarships/>.

**Deadline April 1:** [Incight Scholarship](#). Applicants must have a disability and attend college full time. Trade schools, community colleges and universities are included, as well as graduate programs. Note: This is a renewable scholarship and 80 are available.

**Deadline April 1:** Scholarships of \$2,000-\$3,500 are available from the American Foundation for the Blind, with various fields and requirements. <https://www.afb.org/info/afb-2017-scholarship-application/5#content>.

**Deadline April 15:** The Diabetes Foundation's scholarship program invites applications from incoming college freshmen with type 1 diabetes at an accredited four-year university, college, technical or trade school. Those targeted are students with high academic performance with involvement in the diabetes community or in community and/or extra-curricular activities and demonstrated successfully managing living with diabetes. These scholarships are not based on financial need. <http://diabetesscholars.org/college-scholarship/>.

**Deadline April 21:** Scholarships for spouses, dependent children and grandchildren of blinded veterans. <http://bva.org/BVA/Programs/Scholarships and Awards/Scholarships Awards.aspx>.

**Deadline April 30:** Little People of America Scholarships primarily target those with dwarfism, in college or technical school. <http://www.lpaonline.org/college-scholarship-applications>.

**Deadline May 5:** For those whose colleges have an ASL Honor Society, the American Sign Language Teachers Association offers scholarships for students majoring or minoring in ASL, Deaf Studies, Deaf Education or Interpreting. [http://www.aslhonorsociety.org/Honor\\_Society\\_scholarship.html](http://www.aslhonorsociety.org/Honor_Society_scholarship.html).

**Deadline May 5:** The Organization for Autism Research offers numerous scholarships including life skills, as well as college support. <http://researchautism.org/how-we-help/scholarships/>.

**Deadline May 15:** An annual \$1,500 scholarship is available from Friends-in-Art (FIA), for college students who are legally blind in North America. These opportunities target high school seniors or college students planning on or currently majoring in music, art, drama or creative writing. <http://friendsinart.com/drupal/scholarship-application>.

**Deadline May 26:** The Louise Tumarkin Zazove Foundation Scholarship is open to any U.S. citizen or permanent resident with significant bilateral hearing loss who is currently or becoming a college undergraduate. Note: With appropriate conditions, the scholarship may be renewable. <http://www.ltzfoundation.org/scholarships.php>.

**Deadline June 1:** The 180 Medical Scholarship Program targets those pursuing higher education that have [spinal cord injuries](#), spina bifida, transverse myelitis, neurogenic bladder, or ostomy (ileostomy, colostomy or urostomy). <http://www.180medical.com/Scholarships>.

## Thanks and So Long

Thank you to each person who wrote or was interviewed for these articles. If you have article suggestions, a success story or best practice from your work, email Elizabeth L. Sammons, HireGround coordinator at [elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:elizabeth.sammons@ood.ohio.gov).

## Interviewees, Artists and Authors

Jim Borland  
Peggy Chong  
Rebecca Halstead  
Diane Koren  
Brigid Krane, logo design  
Doug Walker  
NFB-Newsline Team

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