



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 4, 2020

Chairman Neylon and Jobs and Economy Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on AB 837 relating to purchase and renovation of a center for the employment of blind and visually impaired individuals, sale of the existing center, granting bonding authority, and making an appropriation.

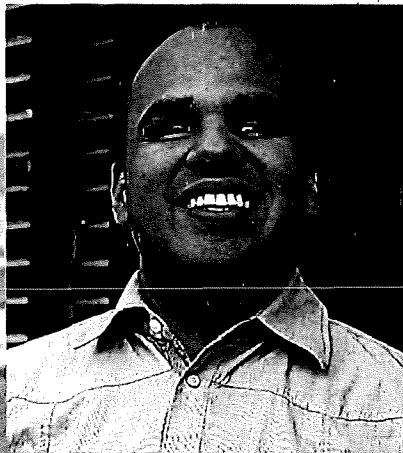
Beyond Vision is a non-profit that provides employment for blind and visually impaired individuals. Currently the employees do light assembly and run a call center. Their contracts are often with major Wisconsin firms like Harley Davidson, Briggs and Stratton, and Oshkosh Corp. Beyond Vision has a statewide impact for people who are blind, and their families.

This bill amends the 2019-21 Authorized State Building Program to add a grant to Wiscraft, Inc., doing business as Beyond Vision, to assist in the purchase and renovation of a new facility in Milwaukee County for the employment of blind and visually impaired individuals and the provision of related services to those individuals. Under the bill, the Department of Administration is required to sell the existing land and facilities occupied by Wiscraft, Inc., to the highest bidder and deposit the proceeds of the sale in the budget stabilization fund.

Although Beyond Vision is located in Southeast Wisconsin, statewide remote employment will be one of the goals of the Beyond Vision Ability Center when their new facility is fully operational.

I appreciate your consideration of this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Announcing
**A Future
Built on**



**Blind
Ambition**

Employment - Co-location - Universal Design
Empowering people with vision loss or blindness throughout Wisconsin

Introducing The VisABILITY Center

Beyond Vision, a Wisconsin organization with the sole mission of employing people who have vision loss, or blindness, is creating the first facility of its kind in Wisconsin.

Beyond Vision's VisABILITY Center will be located at 1540 South 108 Street, West Allis, WI. (Beyond Vision is repurposing the former Sam's Club to become an inclusive and adaptive facility for people with vision loss or blindness.)

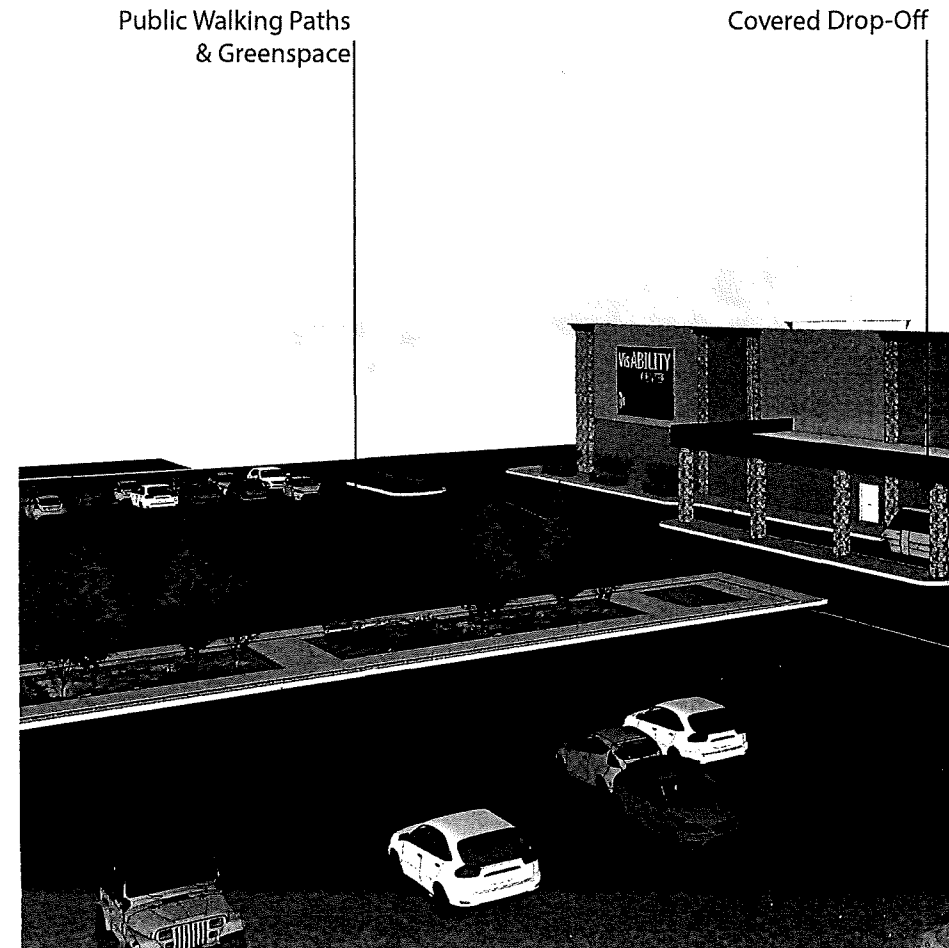
This facility will support the future growth of Beyond Vision's mission, as well as provide co-location space for several key organizations serving Wisconsin residents with vision loss or blindness.

In Wisconsin, one in seven adult people coping with low or changing vision is unemployed. Beyond Vision is one of just two Wisconsin organizations with the sole mission of providing meaningful and sustainable employment for people with vision loss or blindness. However, our current facilities limit the growth of our mission. As we strive to reduce the 70% unemployment rate for people with vision loss or blindness, Beyond Vision is constricted by its current buildings.

Beyond Vision is choked for space. Current facilities have little growth space, no loading docks and most critical, no fire protection. Two 1930s-era buildings currently house Beyond Vision's four business units - assembly & packaging, full service customer care center (call center), CNC machine shop and business supplies. The current buildings have out of date construction materials and design, thus precluding renovation as those costs will far outweigh the value.

It is time to expand Beyond Vision facilities and potentially triple its blind workforce.

We will not stand alone. Beyond Vision aims to establish Wisconsin's first inclusive VisABILITY Center to provide oversight services and employment opportunities with the goal of creating 100 jobs.



The VisABILITY Center - More Than a Building

- More than triple the job opportunities for people with vision loss or blindness.
- Providing hundreds of jobs for people with vision loss or blindness throughout Wisconsin.

Integrated
Wayfinding

Ambient Light

Safe Pick-up/Drop Off

Dog Park

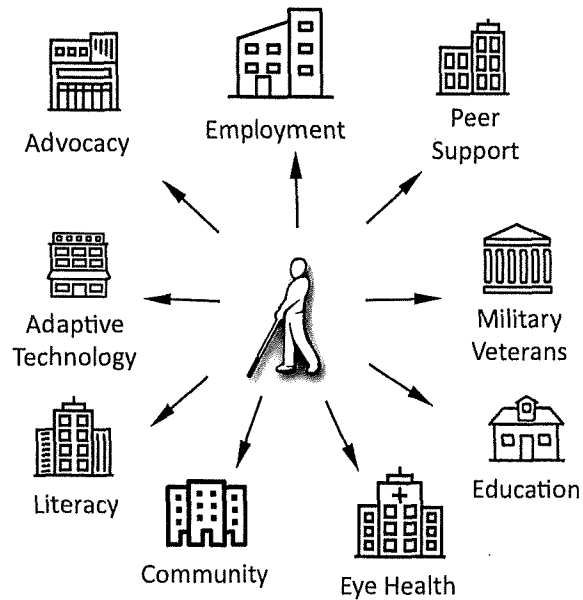
Dedicated Truck
Lanes



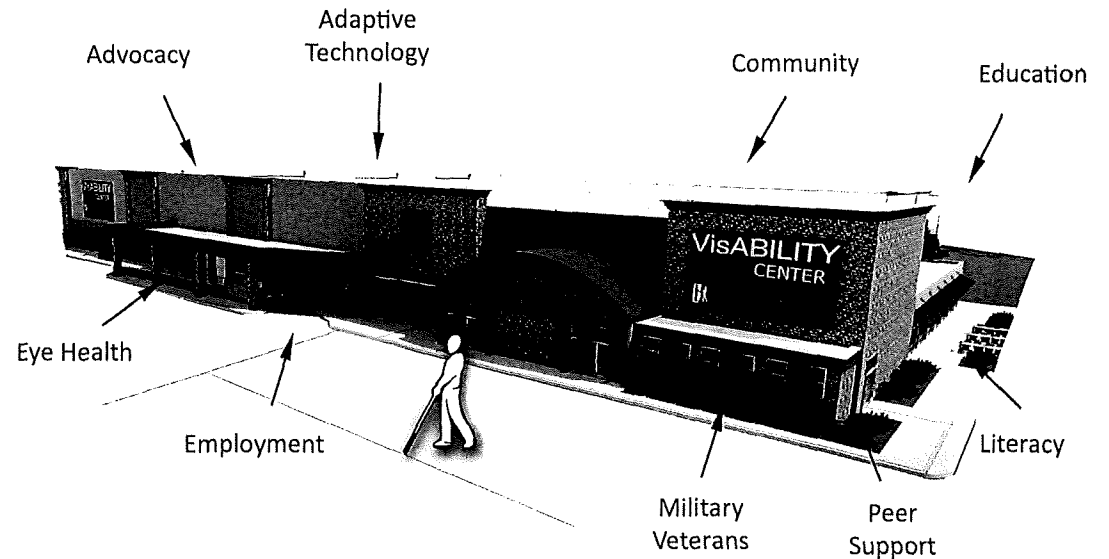
Our Vision for an Integrated VisABILITY Center

The Beyond Vision vision is to have one door for a person with vision loss or blindness (and their families) to walk through to receive help with all their unique needs, be it eye related health care, skills training or a *job*.

TODAY



OUR BLIND AMBITION



Universal Design

The VisABILITY Center will be a state-of-the-art universal design, tailored for people with vision loss or blindness as well as other disabilities.

For example, textured walkways will aid in wayfinding and improved natural lighting throughout the campus will optimize the environment for people with limited vision.

Plans include a central meeting/lunchroom with ambient light and inviting décor to feed the senses. The welcoming, and totally accessible, lobby features an historical timeline of employment for people with severe vision loss.

The entire facility will optimize accessibility with aids such as:

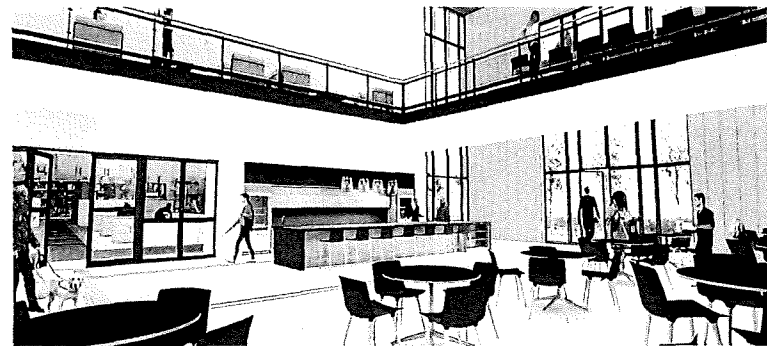
- Universal design throughout interior spaces,
- Audio navigation aids throughout the building,
- Textured flooring for easy navigation,
- Ambient lighting for those with low vision,
- Braille signage,
- Accessible computer systems,
- Landscaping features a public space for neighborhood inclusion and a scent garden,
- The VisABILITY Center hopes to include a wellness center featuring adapted workout machines and treadmills tailored for people with vision loss or blindness.

The VisABILITY Center - a unique blend of manufacturing and services

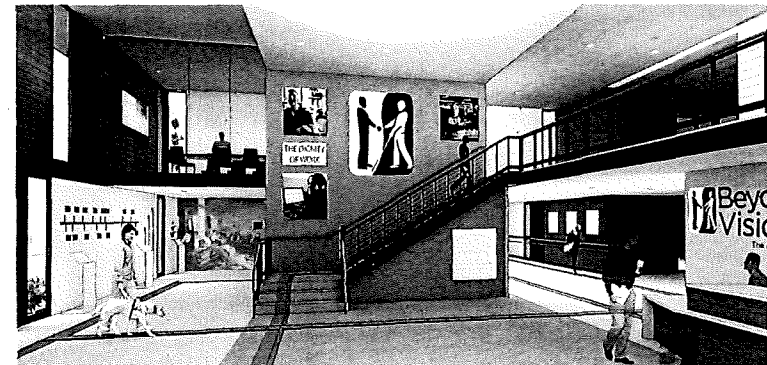
Wisconsin Lions Dog Park

In 1925, Helen Keller addressed the Lions Clubs International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, she challenged the Lions to become "knights of the blind." We are working with the Lions Clubs throughout Wisconsin to create the Wisconsin Lions Dog Park for assist dogs on the campus.

Meeting/Lunchroom



Lobby/Main Entrance



Your Blind Ambition Impact

Details

Totally Blind-Friendly & Handicap Accessible

Projected All-In Costs

\$19 million

Site Requirements

8 acres, Parking 60 cars, greenspace,
major bus line, loading docks

Projected All-In Square Footage

140,000 – 60% manufacturing; 40% administrative
100,000 square feet – Beyond Vision
40,000 square feet – Co-Locators

Center-wide Employees

210+ Statewide
75-80% low income
75% people with vision loss or blindness

Timeline

Fund raising is projected to take 18-24 months,
with the "quiet" phase launched in mid-2019.
Construction is targeted to start in 2020.

You can help make the VisABILITY Center a reality. Donations in any amount are gratefully accepted. There is ample opportunity for your generosity to be acknowledged on the permanent Wall of Appreciation in the campus lobby, or naming rights for several features.

Blind Ambition Cabinet

Our Blind Ambition Cabinet includes:

Thomas Arenberg, Chairman Emeritus, Beyond Vision
Clifford M. Asmuth, Financial Advisor, Robert W. Baird - Retired
Jeff Brigman, Partner, Legacy Capital Partners, Inc.
Dan Dzidon, Partner, Wipfli LLP
John Emanuel, Senior Counsel, Husch Blackwell LLP (Retired)
William Hughes, Chairman, Partner, Husch Blackwell LLP
Patrick Hutchinson, Principal, KLIKusa.com
Paul Muzzey, President, Capital Investment Services of America, Inc.
Robert E. Norton II, Vice President & General Counsel, Hillsdale College, Michigan
Richard Pieper, Chairman, PPC Partners, Inc.
Tom Peralta, Field Officer, Blinded Veterans of Wisconsin
Eric Schumann, Potala Company (Retired)
John F. Stibal, President, First Ring Industrial Redevelopment Enterprises; Director,
Department of Development, City of West Allis
Dave Werner, President, Park Bank

Beyond Vision Board of Directors

Thomas Arenberg, Chairman Emeritus, Accenture (Retired)
Shawn Duffy, C.P.A., Controller, WTC Machinery
John Emanuel, Senior Counsel, Husch Blackwell LLP (Retired)
William Hughes, Chairman, Partner, Husch Blackwell LLP
Eric Isbister, CEO, GenMet
Danita Jackson, Intake Specialist, Disability Rights Wisconsin
Paul E. Lima, Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)
James Kerlin, President/CEO, Beyond Vision
Burton Metz, Wangard Partners
Tom O'Connell, CEO, Tank Holding Corp./Snyder Industries
Jeffrey Alan Peil, Solutions Development Lead, Ascension Information Services
Eric Schumann, Potala Company (Retired)
Art Wasserman, J.D., Ph.D., M.B.A., Attorney (Retired)

Beyond Vision Background

Since 1903, Beyond Vision has been empowering people with vision loss and blindness. The mission of Beyond Vision is to provide sustainable and meaningful employment for Wisconsin people who have vision loss or blindness with an impressive breadth of capabilities:

- An ISO 9001 Certified machine shop offering a full spectrum of services with a strong on-time delivery record and competitive pricing.
- Assembly and packaging serving a variety of needs and corporations with bench assembly, kitting, bagging, packaging and labeling services.
- A full-service Customer Care Center (call center), providing a local solution to incoming and outgoing call center needs with the highest level quality and professionalism.
- Base Supply Centers located in seven states at federal and military installations offering business and janitorial, break room supplies and special request orders.

Employment creates and enhances opportunities for independence and self-sufficiency for people with vision loss or blindness; individuals who are looking for a hand-up, not a hand-out.

Staggering Statistics

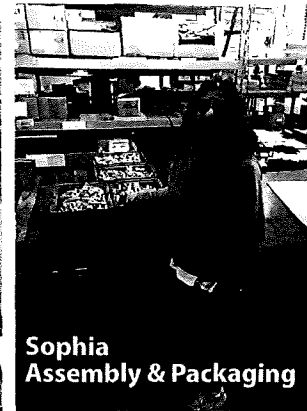
- 70% unemployment rate for working age Wisconsinites with low and changing vision
- Nearly 100,000 people in Wisconsin are blind or visually impaired
- 47% of Americans consider blindness the most devastating health problem



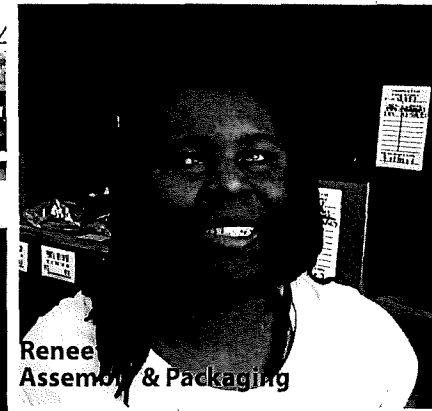
Gene
Training



Kris
BSC Assistant
Manager



Sophia
Assembly & Packaging



Renee
Assembly & Packaging

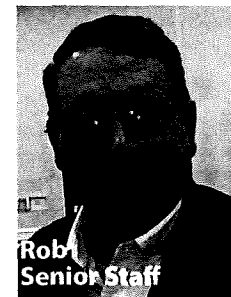
Our VisABILITY
Center
will provide
more jobs and
services for
people like us!



Julius
Assembly & Packaging



Sarah
Talent Coordinator



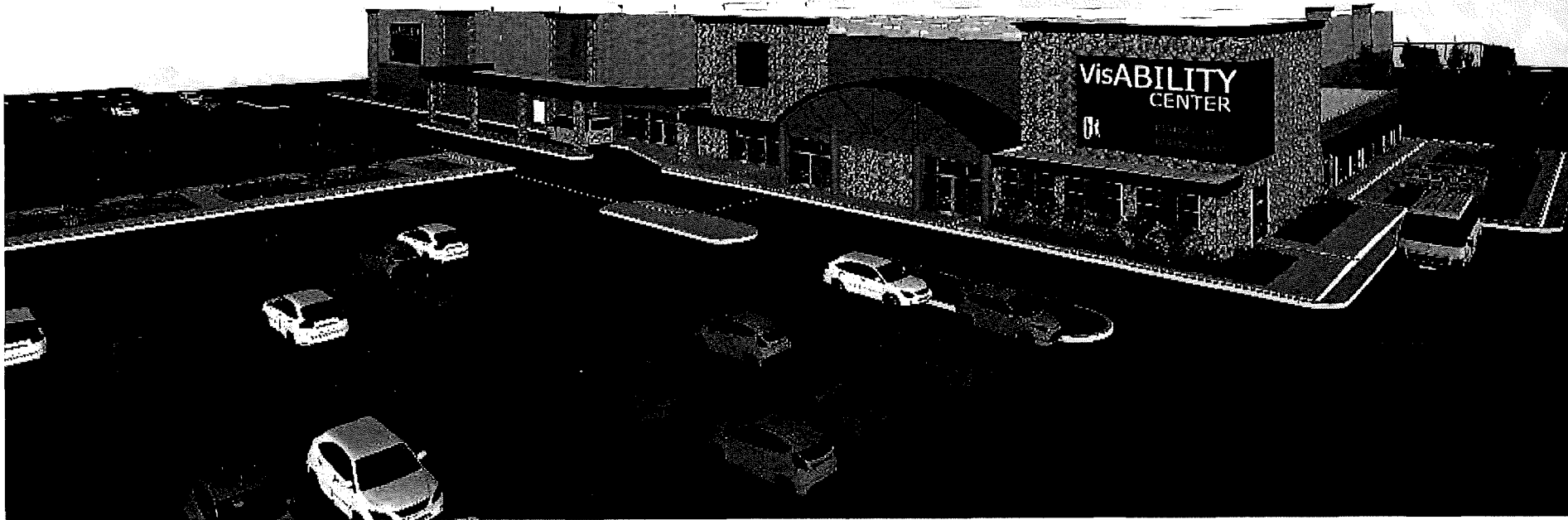
Rob
Senior Staff



Megan
BSC Representative

Michelle
Customer Care

You can make this VisABILITY Center a reality.



The Right Choice

Beyond Vision

5316 W. State Street

Milwaukee, WI 53208

www.BeyondVision.com

For more information, please contact:

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414-223-4494

barbara.velez@yahoo.com

Beyond Vision is a 501(c)3 social enterprise with the sole mission of providing meaningful and sustainable employment for people with vision loss or blindness.