A Message from Peggy

Why is the Educational Center for the Visually Impaired promoting a Tandem Bike Project? Why would a blind or visually impaired person want to try cycling? Why does anyone want to ride a bike?

In early 2022, one of our student’s, Jim, expressed his disappointment that he could no longer ride his racing bike because of the loss of his eyesight. This realization caused me to explore what it would take to provide a Tandem Bike experience in Springfield for people who are blind or visually impaired. I explained this idea to our fundraising committee who was very supportive and decided to move forward with this project. First step was to create a strategic plan. Our goal was not only to provide a bike riding experience for people with visual impairments, but to also raise awareness of the importance of an inclusive community.

We experienced many challenges. Where would we store a 9 foot bike? Where would we get the funds to purchase a bike and equipment? What organization would manage the tandem bikes? Who would be willing to become captains and ride with someone who is visually impaired?

I would like to thank the following project partners who came along side us to achieve this successful outcome.

Gus & Flora Kerasotas YMCA – Location of the bike shed and management of the Tandem Bike Program.
Capital Area Career Center – Agreed to build a bike shed with their students and place it.
Germeread Family Fund – Provided funding for the project.
SB Insurance – Hosted a golf outing and provided additional funding for the project.
Capitol Radio Group – Provided a platform to promote the project.
Bike Tek – Agreed to provide bike maintenance for the bikes we purchased for one year.
Illinois Assistive Technology Program – Produced a tactile map of the bike trails.

Tandem cycling can build friendships, provide immense fun, and provide good exercise for everyone. Giving people who are visually challenged an opportunity to ride a bike and experience the sounds, smells and the wind on their face is why ECVI took on this challenge. The tandem bikes are for everyone in our community and for those visiting Springfield. Contact the YMCA to ensure the bike(s) are available to ride at springfieldymca.org or call: 217-679-1625. Enjoy riding every trail together!
Thank You 2nd Quarter Donors!

Jack Schoonover
Rochester Lions Club
Sondra Connor
Edwards Group, LLC
King's Daughters Organization
Daniel Yuhas
Warren Boynton State Bank

Springfield Noon Lions Club
Evelyn Thomas
Don Aches
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Thompson
Mr. & Mrs. Dave Newton
Springfield Rotary Foundation
Mark Schonhoff

Glen's Story

Glen is an ECVI student who always goes above and beyond. While working out of state, Glen was having a hard time reading the road signs, which made getting home incredibly difficult. Once home, a visit to the ophthalmologist confirmed he has macular degeneration. ECVI helped him adapt to a new world with vision loss with aids including a Victor Stream and through specialized iPad training.

Glen would not let his vision loss keep him down. He put his skills to use making a set of steps for ECVI to use in teaching the visually impaired how to manage stairs. He also made a cane stand complete with braille, so students would be able to determine which cane is theirs when it came time to leave. Glen's contribution to others who are visually impaired is truly inspiring!

It's difficult to adapt, but ECVI teaches you to be independent
--Glen, ECVI student

Cooking with Confidence

The new Cooking with Confidence program teaches ECVI students tips and techniques for being self-sufficient while working with kitchen appliances, tools, and utensils. The program also features various items designed specifically for the visually impaired. Thank you to the Rotary Club of Springfield (Downtown) for a $2,500 donation to the Cooking with Confidence program!
In the Community

King's Daughters Organization
Thank you to the King’s Daughters Organization for sponsoring our Health and Wellness Workshops. The organization’s generous donation of $5,750 provided talking devices in the participant’s Health and Wellness Kits. Thanks for supporting our students and enriching their lives.

Friendship Fridays
The Friendship Friday group made a visit to the Illinois Assistive Technology Program in April to learn about amazing smart devices that can be used in the kitchen and living room! The students learned how to make smoothies using adaptive equipment. In June, students ventured out to enjoy the Henson Robinson Zoo.

The Blind Bowman
John Hill found a new love in Archery, and it became a very important part of his life! Hill will compete on the USA Archery Team as a visually impaired archer in the 2023 World Archery Para Championships in Pilsen, Czech Republic in July.

By the Numbers!

58 Students served in 2023

324.5 Student learning hours in 2023

353 Mission hours in 2023