

The Future at Work



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The President's Report

“We must raise awareness of our organization and the good work it does.”

Albert L. Pizzica, D.O., President



The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia had a fine year. Thanks to generous benefactors and the superlative efforts of our staff, our volunteers, and our Board of Directors, we were able to help more clients in more ways than ever before. Our financial condition is sound. And our plans for the future are on a firm footing.

This year marks my first as president of The Blind Relief Fund. In my role, I owe much to my predecessor, Nelson Harris and the tradition of service that marked his 32-year tenure as president. Nelson made this organization vibrant and healthy. Equally important, he provided a foundation for the future.

For my part, I believe that future should include three key goals:

- *The first is an increase in the number of clients we serve.* The aging of the baby boom population will certainly increase the number of people in Philadelphia who are blind or have significantly impaired vision. It's my hope and expectation that we can be a primary resource for those people going forward.
- *Second, The Blind Relief Fund must increase the number of grants we receive.* Major donations, whether from wealthy individuals or from foundations, are essential to our ability to serve the blind poor. The grant we received from the Patricia Kind Family Foundation last year illustrates the point. This \$34,000 grant allowed us to purchase a van that we are using to provide transportation services for the blind. Without this grant, there would have been no van. Without additional grants we will not be able to fulfill our role properly or fully, much less undertake vital new services.

- *Third, The Blind Relief Fund must have greater visibility within the community.* We must make more Philadelphians aware of our organization and the good work it does. Our ability to accomplish goals one and two – more clients and more grants – rests at least in part on our achieving broader recognition within the community.

To achieve all three goals, and indeed the broader mission of The Blind Relief Fund, it is my hope that we will be able to make greater use of the resources of Philadelphia's corporate community.

Such corporate sponsorship can be a source of direct funding, of course. But it can also be a rich source of in-kind services that can be of immense value in fund-raising programs, special events, publicity campaigns, and other crucial tasks. Corporate outreach may take time to bear fruit, but it is important to the future of The Blind Relief Fund, and, as such, is worthy of continuing, concerted effort.

There is no doubt that the future will create new demands on The Blind Relief Fund. Changing demographics alone will see to that. Given the foreseeable increase in the demands on our resources – both money and staff time, we have little choice but to prepare the organization to meet those challenges. I am sure that we can and I will do my best to see that we do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Pizzica". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Albert L. Pizzica, D.O.
President



2 Larry Goldberg, M.D., J.D.

Larry Goldberg is a physician. He is an attorney. He is also unemployed.

Normally, such credentials mean a fulfilling career. For those who are blind or whose vision is severely impaired more is needed, including adaptive

training and low vision aids. Even then, the challenges of finding work are daunting as Dr. Goldberg can attest.

Faced with the realities of failing vision, Dr. Goldberg pursued and received a degree from Rutgers Law.

His hope was that limited sight would be less of a hindrance in the legal profession. He was forced to test that hypothesis when, in the mid-90's, he had to close his medical office. His hopes for new opportunities as an attorney have not yet been realized,

but hope and perseverance are two commodities that Dr. Goldberg has in abundance. Together with friends like The Blind Relief Fund, Larry Goldberg pursues a quest for meaningful work that can use his ample talents.

The Future Face of Blindness

The baby boom phenomenon is an oft-told story. One aspect of that story that has yet to unfold, however, is the changing face of blindness.

With early boomers now nearing 55, the ills of aging – including impaired vision – are becoming apparent even in a demographic group that practically invented the youth culture. Every generation ages, of course, but boomers are so numerous they change every phenomena they touch. They will change the face of blindness and they will change The Blind Relief Fund.

Their sheer numbers will reduce the average age of our client base while at the same time, they swell our clients base and our pool of potential clients.

As an example, the increase in the number of diabetics being reported today is almost certainly

a precursor to an increase in the number of Americans with diabetes-related vision problems.

For The Blind Relief Fund, the implications could be profound. The numbers of clients could strain our resources, both in terms of staff time and finances. Moreover, as our client base becomes younger, the demands we face will not only grow, they'll change as well. More clients will want help with job training and job placement. And, for a generation that grew up with television and ushered in the computer age, a big increase in the demand for technology-based low-vision aids seems all but certain.

The nature of our work – our mission, if you will – hasn't changed and won't. But needs do change and, with the help of those who open their hearts to us, we will be ready as they do.

A Work of Charity

Thank you, Rotary International!
It started some 20 years ago when we re-instituted social outings for The Blind Relief Fund clients. The first annual event – one that we’ve held every year since – was a boat ride on the Delaware. Trouble was, our small staff couldn’t possibly handle physical logistics involving more than 200 people.

We needed help and got it simply by placing one phone call to a Rotarian. The only questions from the Rotary Club were simple: How many people, where, and when? The Rotarian volunteers have been showing up faithfully ever since.

When we expanded our social calendar to include a client Christmas party, the Rotarians came to help. When financial needs arose, the Rotarian

foundation gave and, annual budget permitting, continues to.

Ask Al Arminio, President, Rotary Club of Philadelphia, about Rotary’s involvement and he’ll tell you what they do isn’t a job, it’s a pleasure... that they welcome the opportunity to help, that’s what Rotarians do.

Indeed they do. You can as well. Our clients often need directly personal hands-on help. The needs are modest: a ride to the doctor or to the supermarket. Help filling out health care forms and writing checks. Help repairing a doorknob or a windowpane. Little things and not much work, but oh so meaningful for those who cannot pay others for help and who cannot do these things for themselves.



Al Arminio, President, Rotary Club of Philadelphia

As a financial adviser with First Union Securities, it would seem Al Arminio would be eminently capable of keeping score on who owes who how much. Yet this skill fails him and his 120 fellow Rotarians in Philadelphia when it comes to what is owed them for the many services they perform

for others, including The Blind Relief Fund. And while they don't want anything, even recognition, in return for what they do, they have earned our thanks. It is our duty to acknowledge that debt.

The Rotary has been involved with helping The Blind Relief Fund for two

decades, about as long as Al Arminio has been a Rotarian. The relationship began thanks to another Philadelphia institution, Tasty Baking Company.

A Tasty employee of the day asked his company to support a Rotary activity. Nelson Harris, then president of Tasty

Baking Company as well as president of The Blind Relief Fund, lost no time in asking a reciprocal favor. The Rotary Club of Philadelphia has been saying yes to The Blind Relief Fund ever since.



6 Janet Steinberg, O.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry

Dr. Janet Steinberg has a unique perspective on the challenges facing the vision impaired. It is also a uniquely well-informed perspective, given her role as Director of the Center of Low Vision Research and

Rehabilitation at the Scheie Eye Institute, an arm of the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

While some patients referred to Dr. Steinberg are awaiting future eye surgery that may improve or restore

vision, others, perhaps most others, can no longer be helped by medical treatment. For them, low vision aids are the only route to increased functionality. Her mission is to see that each patient retains or regains

that functionality to the degree feasible. Dr. Steinberg uses The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia as an ally for her patients and an adjunct to her practice.

The Work of the Optometrist

Macular degeneration. Glaucoma. Diabetic retinopathy. High blood pressure. Strokes. Genetic diseases. The ailments that cause loss of vision vary, but patients who seek out Janet Steinberg, O.D., have a common goal: to make the most of the vision they have so they can remain as functional as possible.

In her role as a low-vision rehabilitation specialist with the University of Pennsylvania health care system, Dr. Steinberg uses a variety of optical systems to help patients see again. Those tools range from magnifiers and tele-microscopes to complex electronic camera systems and closed circuit television systems. Another tool that Dr. Steinberg finds indispensable in her medical practice is the telephone number of The Blind Relief Fund.

She gives that number to her patients because she views The Blind Relief Fund as a partner in her efforts to keep her patients independent. She describes that relationship as “flat out fabulous.” The Blind Relief Fund, she notes, fills an important need for patients with low vision, visiting them, counseling them, and helping guide them through the maze of bureaucratic procedures that lead to other support programs. And, of course, helping them buy the low vision aids they need to remain independent.

Dr. Steinberg expects the growth in the elderly population to expand demand for low vision services dramatically. So, apparently, does the University of Pennsylvania, which is constructing a new low-vision center. We suspect that when Dr. Steinberg and her colleagues move into the new facility, the telephone number of The Blind Relief Fund will make that move right along with them.

The Future at Work

Technology. We're awash in it, yet the blind and those with limited vision do not benefit from technology as much as one might think.

The tools themselves are good. Closed circuit television setups can magnify images so that people with low vision can perform functions they otherwise couldn't. Special software allows computers to speak to the computer users, instructing them to make this keystroke or that mouse click. All in all, this wonderful stuff can make the blind more productive, even employable.

Unfortunately, for the blind, that equipment is often out of reach. Poverty makes individual purchase impossible and – as welcome as it is – help from governmental agencies and programs

can be inconsistent or incomplete. Some offer training for the blind, but few will buy the actual equipment for the user. Those few who do, may buy computer hardware but not the \$400-a-copy software the blind need to make that computer functional for them.

For them, the answer is The Blind Relief Fund. We help fill these hardware and software gaps by purchasing this gear for our clients. Admittedly, so far our efforts in this regard have been limited largely because available funds have been limited. Even so, where we've been able to help, that help has changed lives. People have been employed. With more funds donated for low vision aids, more people can be helped, which is to say more people can be put to work. For us and for them, that is a joyous outcome.



Earl Wilkie, Renaissance man

Earl Wilkie, at age 71, has no plans to retire. Previously the executive director of Elwyn Institute in Vineland, Earl Wilkie is now a full-time sculptor and painter. A victim of glaucoma and legally blind for almost 20 years, Earl Wilkie feels he will do his best work in the years ahead.

His unique home is his canvas, a work in progress that he's been shaping with heart and soul for the past 30 years. Outside his home, he has committed that heart and soul to working with the urban poor.

He is aided in his pursuit of wide-ranging interests by a number of

factors. Being a veteran of the Korean War, Earle Wilkie was eligible for two, six-week adaptive education courses in New Haven, CT, courtesy of the VA. Being Earl Wilkie, he took them.

One course was on day-to-day living skills for the visually impaired. The second course taught computer skills

and adaptive tools for the blind. An example: a software program that can scan a written page and read it out loud. He's putting both to good use now and needs only occasional assistance from family members and The Blind Relief Fund to lead a very full and very fulfilling life.

You Can Bring Life to the Future

Here is an opportunity to do a good thing for people who really need your help: the blind poor of Philadelphia.

Your contribution, large or small, is especially meaningful because it will go, in toto, to the people you want to help. Not one penny of your contribution will be used for overhead expenses or administrative costs. Instead, your money will help buy groceries, or pay a utility bill, or rent, or one of the scores of everyday expenses that the blind, too, must face.

If you are responsible for foundation giving, we welcome your consideration for a grant. Our needs never end and your support may well make a big difference in our ability to help the blind poor in ways no other organization does.

In return for your support, we offer only the feeling of fulfillment that comes from making a difference in the struggle for good. But for many people, and we hope you are one of them, that feeling is priceless.

Here are three ways you can contribute to The Blind Relief Fund:

- Directly, by check to our offices
- By bequest of money, stocks, bonds, or residuary estates
- Through donor choice, as part of your United Way pledge or the City of Philadelphia Employee's Campaign

To make a donation or bequest, write to:
The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia
551 Walnut Lane
Philadelphia PA 19128-1742

Your donation is tax deductible because The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia is a 501(c)3 corporation. A copy of the official registration and financial information of The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll-free, within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply an endorsement.

Done: one beautiful van

Last year, the Patricia Kind Family Foundation gave The Blind Relief Fund a grant of \$34,000 to buy a van. That van has arrived and is helping take our clients to doctors' appointments, to stores, and the whole range of errands that would otherwise be extraordinarily difficult.

Our van is specially suited to the needs of our clients with dual sliding doors, a wheelchair lift, and a removable front seat in order to accommodate a second wheelchair. With this van we are able to provide our clients with transportation for up to two trips each month. **Thank you, Patricia Kind Family Foundation!**



To Do: a list that can change lives

We need an endowment to pay for a full-time driver for our van. The part-time drivers we've used so far have been wonderful, but for various reasons their employment has been temporary. We need a lasting solution. **An endowment of \$30,000 annually would be that solution.**

Low vision aids make a world of difference to the visually impaired. With ample funds, we could provide special glasses and lighting, closed-circuit television set-ups, software programs for converting computers, and more. **A grant of \$20,000 would be a good start – and for some of our clients, a good start on a new life.**

Our blind clients live in modest circumstances. Even those who own their own homes live on little, so little they may not have the money for the simplest repair: a door that won't lock, a broken stair step, a hole in the front porch, a crumbling chimney. **A grant of \$20,000 would let us step in, tools in hand, to do good work.**

Utilities, utilities, utilities. For the blind poor, the increased cost of fuel has been a nightmare. Over the past year, the cost of natural gas and heating oil has been a burden to many Americans. The resulting jump in the cost of electricity hasn't been any picnic either. But for our clients, many of whom live on less than \$600 a month, the rising cost of fuel and utilities is a crisis. Some choose to pay utilities bills but then have no money for food. **A grant of \$20,000 for utility bills would help keep many of our blind clients warm and, in some cases, fed.**

S T A T E M E N T S O F R E V E N U E A N D E X P E N S E S

Years ended March 31	2001	2000	Increase (Decrease)
Support and revenue:			
Contributions	\$ 86,739	\$ 99,251	\$ (12,512)
Annual contributions from estates, bequests, grants and trusts	127,860	40,763	87,097
Dividend income	46,911	50,410	(3,499)
Interest income	70,973	63,730	7,243
Rental income	8,037	7,655	382
Net realized investment gains used in operations	72,000	75,000	(3,000)
Total support and revenue	412,520	336,809	75,711
Operating expenses:			
Program services	259,029	228,092	30,937
Management and general	111,919	98,334	13,585
Fund raising	27,745	26,873	872
Total operating expenses	398,693	353,299	45,394
Deficiency of support and revenues over expenses before investment gains (losses)	13,827	(16,490)	30,317
Investment gains (losses):			
Net gains on sales of investments	19,452	447,731	(428,279)
Less: net realized investment gains used in operations	(72,000)	(75,000)	3,000
Unrealized investment gains (losses)	36,831	(646,088)	682,919
Total investment gains (losses)	(15,717)	(273,357)	257,640
Increase (decrease) in net assets	(1,890)	(289,847)	287,957
Net assets, unrestricted:			
Balance at beginning of year	3,084,413	3,374,260	(289,847)
Balance at end of year	\$3,082,523	\$3,084,413	\$ (1,890)

12 The financial statements of The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia as of and for the year ended March 31, 2001 have been audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards by the certified public accounting firm of Hege Kramer Connell Murphy & Goldkamp, P.C., who issued their unqualified opinion thereon dated May 14, 2001.

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The W.W. Smith Charitable Trust
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\$5,000 - \$9,999.99

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Isabel W. Kennedy
 Founder and President, 1909-1952

The origins of The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia can be traced to 1905, when Isabel Kennedy began working with The Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society and Free Circulating Library for the Blind.

Her work took her into the homes of blind Philadelphians, where she became aware of their struggle for basic necessities. Mrs. Kennedy was so moved by the people she met and the conditions in which they lived, she began concentrating her efforts on finding financial relief for them. Although there were agencies devoted to educating the blind, she soon learned that there were no funds available and no organizations to help with their basic needs. So she took it upon herself to become a fund-raiser for the needy blind.

Mrs. Kennedy was able to secure a number of small donations, and in 1909, with a \$50 gift from a friend, she founded The Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia. During that first winter, the Fund distributed coal, groceries, clothing and small amounts of money to 75 needy blind persons. To help with their social and emotional needs, Mrs. Kennedy organized various recreational activities and an annual summer outing. In 1920, her dream was realized when, through an anonymous gift of \$10,000 in securities, a Blind Relief Endowment Fund was established.



Frank W. Harris, Jr.
 President, 1952-1968



Nelson G. Harris
 President, 1968-2000

In 1952, Frank Harris, took the reins of leadership. Under his guidance, The Blind Relief Fund grew in scope and resources. Without the guidance and perseverance of Frank Harris, there would be no Blind Relief Fund, much less the vibrant organization that exists now. Indeed, The Blind Relief Fund owes much to the Harris family. Nelson Harris, who succeeded his father Frank Harris as president of The Blind Relief Fund in 1968, served in that capacity for 32 years. As was his father before him, Nelson Harris was the oak that sheltered the organization.

Today, The Blind Relief Fund is fortunate to have as its president Dr. Albert L. Pizzica who has been an active member of the Board of Managers. Under the guidance of Dr. Pizzica, The Blind Relief Fund continues its vital and unique mission. It remains the only agency of its kind in Philadelphia, a private, non-profit, independent agency serving more than 500 members of Philadelphia's needy blind community.

Some things have changed with time, however. The Blind Relief Fund still supplies food, clothing, and other basics but its role has expanded in today's more complex society. For example, The Blind Relief Fund works closely with other agencies to intervene on behalf of blind clients whose health or safety is threatened. Further, there is a deeper awareness that the blind are confronted with a host of interconnected financial, emotional, and social issues. Resolving that tangle of problems and bringing hope and comfort to the city's most disadvantaged people remains our mission and our moral obligation.

S P E C I A L T H A N K S

The Board of Directors of The Blind Relief Fund wish to offer their thanks to the following individuals and organizations:

Tasty Baking Company
The Nelson Foundation
The William D. and Marie Steuber Fund
of the Board of Directors of City Trust
The Joseph B. and Bertha Wurts Godwin Memorial
Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation
The Rittenhouse Trust Company
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The W.W. Smith Charitable Trust
McMaster-Carr Supply Co.
The Quaker Chemical Foundation
The Rotary Foundation

In addition, the Board of Directors of The Blind Relief Fund wish to offer special thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their contribution in the preparation and publication of the Annual Report:

PhotoColor, Inc.
Pearl Pressman Liberty
Gerry Reimel
Ed Eckstein Photography
The Creative Department, Inc.
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RIS Paper Company, Inc.

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OF PHILADELPHIA
SERVING THE NEEDY BLIND SINCE 1909

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