



2018-2019

# ANNUAL REPORT

BLIND SERVICES FOUNDATION OF FLORIDA, INC.

BLIND SERVICES FOUNDATION OF FLORIDA, INC.  
STATE OF FLORIDA DIRECT SUPPORT ORGANIZATION ANNUAL REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019

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[www.blindservicesfoundation.org](http://www.blindservicesfoundation.org)

The Blind Services Foundation of Florida, Inc. is an independent 501c3 Not-for-Profit organization created by the Florida Legislature in 2004 to serve as the Division of Blind Services Direct Support Organization.

Its mission is to support the Florida Division of Blind Services by raising funds and bringing public awareness for outreach programs and educational opportunities. The Board of Directors includes leaders in Florida's blind and visually impaired community who serve as unpaid volunteers. Most of the members of the Board are blind and bring their personal passions for the mission to their work.

The majority of the Blind Services Foundation's funds come from proceeds from the sale of the Bikers Care specialty motorcycle tag. This foundation is one of five non-profits who benefit from the sale of the Bikers care tag, each of which helps people with disabilities live independently, become self-sufficient, find employment and maintain their quality of life. The foundation also receives private donations from individuals, families and corporate donors. During Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Foundation took in approximately \$71,143.02.

The primary value of the Foundation lies with the projects it supports each year that the Division of Blind Services cannot sponsor due to funding restrictions. The Foundation allocates approximately \$50,000.00 each year to support a specific project that the Board agrees is appropriate. The Board has the opportunity to examine the needs of people who are blind in Florida and explore areas where there are unmet needs. Over the last five years, the Foundation has supported initiatives that provided additional funding for children's programs, educational

projects, public education/awareness and the establishment of an endowment for blind students at Miami-Dade College.

### Funds Distribution

During this year the Division of Blind Services Foundation met regularly by telephone. Our major project for this year represented the second year of funding for our effort to develop, field test and validate a vocational evaluation tool specifically designed for use by people who are blind or have low vision.

During the second year we finalized the instrument itself. We had five national experts evaluate our instrument and made changes based on their suggestions. We began the process of field testing the instrument and, by the end of the year, we will come close to our goal of having fifty completed vocational evaluations. We have revised the scoring system to make it easier to use and have begun the process of gathering qualitative analysis on the effectiveness of the instrument by conducting interviews with consumers and evaluators.

### Additional Funds Distributions

Two previously approved elements have failed to be operative. We allocated funds for a student at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind during the previous year. Despite repeated efforts on our part to establish connections with her counselors at school, we were unable to provide a device because we could not be certain that training would be available for her.

We also were unable to distribute the \$1,500 dollar appropriation that was made available for the preparation of a funding proposal for people who are deaf/blind. They chose not to submit a proposal when the Division of Blind Services made funding available last August.

Those funds were utilized to create a fund that will provide incentives for consumers and evaluators who complete interviews about our new vocational evaluation tool.

This year our Board has provided funding to support a breakfast that supports the employment of people who are blind as well as others with disabilities. We began to explore potential cooperation with the Friends of the Talking Book Library to see if cooperation between our two groups can optimize what both entities can accomplish.

## Marketing Initiatives

Our Foundation brochure is now ready for printing and distribution and we expect to begin its distribution during the next year. Our poster is still under development but we expect to develop and implement a marketing strategy during the next year. We have entered into a contract with a web site developer to update our web site. It is expected that the new site will be ready by the end of this calendar year. It is our hope that it will enable us to be better known and more widely visited than our current site is.

The membership of our Board remains primarily by people who are blind. Attendance at our meetings has remained high. Ted Hull, a long-time member of our Board, has retired since he has moved to Michigan.

We have continued to meet all our benchmarks and are looking at the possibility of other funding options. We have developed a framework we can use to encourage and evaluate projects which we expect to use during the coming year.

We are convinced that we are finding ways to substantially forward the interests of people who are blind in Florida by our efforts and appreciate the opportunity to serve!

## Conclusion

The Foundation is committed to making a difference to the lives of blind people in Florida and appreciates the opportunity to continue to forward the betterment of this under-served and under-employed population. We expect to continue our work for many years to come and appreciate the chance to serve people who are blind in the Sunshine State!