



American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults

Federally Registered Operating Name of the American Brotherhood for the Blind

Annual Report 2009

Background and Purpose

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the state of Maryland. It was established in 1919 to assist blind persons in securing reading matter, to educate the public about blindness, to give aid to the deaf-blind, to provide specialized

aids and appliances to the blind, to give consultation to governmental and private agencies serving the blind, to offer assistance to older blind persons, to offer services to blind children and their parents, and to do any other lawful thing which it can to improve the quality of life for blind persons.

Structure of Governing Board

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults has offices in Baltimore, Maryland, and Tarzana, California. The Tarzana office houses a large Braille lending library of great documents in American history and a collection of many thousands of Twin Vision® (Braille and print) books for children. The Tarzana office utilizes a large number of volunteers who assist staff members to operate the library, distribute Twin Vision® books, and produce and distribute Braille calendars and a Braille news magazine for the deaf-blind.

From the Baltimore office the Action Fund carries on a widespread campaign of public

education, administers a program of scholarships and financial assistance to blind persons, conducts seminars about blindness, and carries on its other activities.

The governing body of the Action Fund is a nine-member Board of Directors, all of whom are blind and receive no financial compensation for their services. Travel expenses in connection with the performance of their duties may be reimbursed. The members of the Board have succeeded in a variety of occupations and activities and have learned to deal with blindness and its problems.

Board of Directors

BARBARA LOOS, President
Chairman, Nebraska Commission for the Blind
Lincoln, Nebraska

RAMONA WALHOF, First Vice President
Businesswoman
Boise, Idaho

SANDRA HALVERSON, Second Vice President
Medical Transcriptionist
Arlington, Virginia

GARY MACKENSTADT, Secretary
Special Projects Coordinator,
Office for Civil Rights
Edmonds, Washington

JAMES OMVIG, Treasurer
Attorney
Baltimore, Maryland

Board of Directors, *continued*

ADRIENNE ASCH, Ph.D., Board Member
Edward and Robin Milstein Professor of Bioethics,
Yeshiva University
New York, New York

MARY ELLEN GABIAS, Board Member
Community Organizer for Blindness Organizations
Kelowna, B.C., Canada

JAMES GASHEL, Board Member
Vice-President of Marketing
K-NFB Reading Technologies, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

JOHN PARÉ, Board Member
National Consumer Representative
Baltimore, Maryland

American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults Statement of Program Service Activities

BRAILLE PUBLICATIONS AND LIBRARY

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults produces and distributes, for small children, books that contain identical print and Braille text side by side—Twin Vision® books. Young blind children can learn about books as toddlers reading with parents and friends. They do not need to wait until school age to begin to learn about Braille. Blind children are as eager to learn as sighted children. Braille is as exciting and as challenging to a toddler who is blind as print is to one who can see. Blind parents and blind teachers who use Twin Vision® books with sighted children are extremely enthusiastic about these books.

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults Lending Library distributes Twin Vision® books free of charge throughout the United States to state schools for the blind, regional Braille libraries, blind children and blind parents, institutions serving the blind, and schools and libraries in many foreign countries. The Library contains more than 35,000 volumes.

For a person who is both deaf and blind, communication is very difficult. Even keeping up with the daily news is a problem, since a deaf-blind person can neither read the newspaper nor listen to the news on radio or television. The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults produces

weekly in Braille a summary of the news, *Hot-Line to Deaf-Blind*. *Hot-Line to Deaf-Blind* is sent free of charge to deaf-blind individuals and to libraries that serve them. The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults has received numerous letters from individuals who read *Hot-Line to Deaf-Blind* saying that this magazine is the principal means they have to keep themselves informed and up-to-date on what is in the news.

Each year the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults produces tens of thousands of Braille calendars and sends them to blind individuals free of charge. You receive calendars for Christmas presents. You could walk into dozens of stores to buy a print calendar. A blind person cannot get Braille calendars from stores and is not likely to receive one for Christmas. The convenience of a calendar may seem a little thing, but it is important. Many thousands of blind Americans depend upon the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults for Braille calendars.

Young sighted children learn a great deal from pictures. Young blind children explore with their fingers and learn a great deal from this exploration. The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults has developed a series of books, "The Shape of Things," so that blind children can enjoy pictures

BRILLE PUBLICATIONS AND LIBRARY, *continued*

they can touch, just as sighted children enjoy pictures they can see. Also, in an effort to help blind persons become more aware of American tradition, Braille copies of great American documents are published

and distributed free to schools and libraries by the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults.

ADVOCACY AND PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults provides advice, counsel, resource, and advocacy services relating to protection of rights under federal and state labor, civil rights, and rehabilitation laws, and enforcement of anti-discrimination provisions of such laws. The organization works to eliminate employment discrimination, discrimination in educational opportunities, and discrimination in use of public accommodations and transportation. The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults works to strengthen state and local self-help and self-care

organizations of blind people and participates in developing and conducting seminars to assist the blind in understanding methods and techniques of organizing local groups of blind people for self-help, methods and techniques available to individual blind persons for self-advocacy, relationships between consumer groups and governmental and private agencies, and the provisions of federal and state laws affecting the blind. Several hundred blind individuals receive such assistance each year. All blind persons (approximately one million in this country) are potentially benefited by civil rights and other anti-discrimination activities.

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults provides scholarships to blind individuals, provides specialized aids and devices, provides assistance in developing specialized programs and services for the blind, and provides information and direct assistance to blind persons to help meet specific needs—educationally, vocationally, or culturally; produces and distributes educational materials which seek to stimulate interest in blindness, inquiries about blindness, and actions to reduce the problems faced by blind people; answers written and telephone requests for information; and makes individual referrals to appropriate governmental and private service resources. Through a mass communication program the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults seeks to make systemic and permanent changes in the way the average American thinks about blindness, thereby changing the actions he or she takes with respect to blind persons encountered in daily living. Attempts are made to insure that blind persons and potential

blind persons, their families and friends know that help is available and how to acquire it. The expected result is improved lives for blind people. The organization produces and distributes monthly in Braille a popular series of books geared towards children. It makes an ongoing effort through its **BRILLE BOOKS FOR BLIND CHILDREN** program to get current popular Braille books into the hands of blind children and young adults so that they are reading what their sighted peers are reading. The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults participated in the establishment of and assists with the ongoing activities of the International Braille and Technology Center for the Blind which has one of every Braille printer on the market today as well as other technology of significance to blind people. This Center makes it possible for people to visit one facility and gain hands-on acquaintance with dozens of devices from numerous manufacturers and distributors from throughout the world. These activities are targeted to reach in excess of two million individuals.

PROGRAM SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

For years the blind have demonstrated that with effective training and equal opportunity they can succeed in the everyday pursuits of the sighted in education, employment, and community life. In 2009 the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults continued to promote full lives for the blind through a wide range of services to stimulate effective education and information on blindness and the positive and realistic view that it is respectable to be blind. By helping communicate to the public the view that the blind and deaf-blind can be capable parents, workers, and contributors to community life and by assisting the blind to acquire the resources, training, opportunity, and self-confidence to excel in home life and careers, the American Action Fund helped clear the way for blind individuals to contribute their share to the collective strength of our nation.

Whether through outreach to parents of blind children and professionals who work with them, provision of things that so many of us take for granted in daily life like AAF Braille calendars and reading material, or active support of programs exposing blind youth to possible careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, the Action Fund is visible and effective. Indicative was the recognition in July of 2009 of the Action Fund's work with a prestigious Dr. Jacob Bolotin Award. Behind that recognition was a wealth of activity to improve the lives of the nation's blind of all ages.

For example, the American Action Fund in 2009 advanced opportunities for the blind in several areas, especially:

- participated in conducting a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academy at the University of Maryland providing 175 blind high school-age youth experiences related to careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics;
- assumed the important work of editing and publishing *Future Reflections* magazine, the leading publication in the nation devoted to the education and training of blind children and an invaluable quarterly resource for their parents and teachers;
- maintained contact with lawyers who provide pro bono advice and assistance to blind people from throughout the country through the Volunteer Lawyers for the Blind pro bono legal outreach project;
- sponsored the 2009 Kenneth Jernigan \$12,000 scholarship, presented to a deserving blind scholar;
- coordinated a nationwide network of volunteers donating hours of service to organizations serving the blind;
- assisted with conducting a number of 2009 leadership development seminars for promising leaders of the blind, presenting them at state meetings of the blind and conducting leadership seminars for promising leaders of the blind at the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore;
- advocated for the rights of blind people across the nation through counseling on civil rights issues involving denial of opportunity;
- circulated to deaf-blind persons copies of a Braille newsletter, *Hot Line to Deaf-Blind*, containing current events and interesting articles that appear in the news to enable deaf-blind people to keep up to date on what is happening in the world;
- through its 2009 support, continued to help blind and deaf-blind students meet the increasing costs of higher learning and gain access to the latest technology and training necessary to prepare for productive careers, funding grants to support blind persons in their pursuit of training and opportunity;
- promoted the production and use of Braille through the 2009 "Braille Readers Are Leaders" Program for over 600 participants;
- participated in the Braille Reading Pals Club for parents of pre-readers to encourage interest in learning Braille;

PROGRAM SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, *continued*

- supported the 2009 national Braille Readers Are Leaders contest through funding of Twin Vision® Awards for Dual Print-and-Braille Readers or Print-to-Braille Readers;
- provided monthly mailings through the 2009 AAF Free Braille Books for Blind Children Program (the only program of its kind providing at least one new Braille book a month free of charge to every blind and deaf-blind youngster who requested one) to blind children, teachers, and libraries so that blind children can have books at the same time that sighted children can buy them in the bookstore, at the end of the year serving 1692 patrons who received a total of 21,776 books;
- through the Kenneth Jernigan Library for Blind Children, enabled parents and children to read together when one or the other is blind through its Twin Vision® Books program, producing books and circulating unique titles combining identical print text and Braille on pages facing each other;
- continued to purchase and distribute free to blind children and adults long white canes for independent travel;
- participated in conducting a Braille book flea market to provide opportunity to purchase Braille at reasonable prices;
- produced and distributed thousands of compact and useful Braille calendars to blind and deaf-blind individuals and agencies serving them;
- through mass communications to hundreds of thousands of individuals again in 2009 continued to change the way the average American thinks about blindness and ensure that those who are blind or may become blind, along with their families and friends, know that help and support are available and are informed about how to obtain it;
- through its Braille Lending Library circulated Braille to blind and deaf-blind subscribers.

Truly, as these accomplishments in 2009 indicate, the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults remains one of the leading forces in efforts of the blind to realize their full potential and to contribute their talents, energy, and skills to our society.



If you, your family, or friends need our assistance with problems of blindness or can help provide service on a volunteer basis, please write or call us.

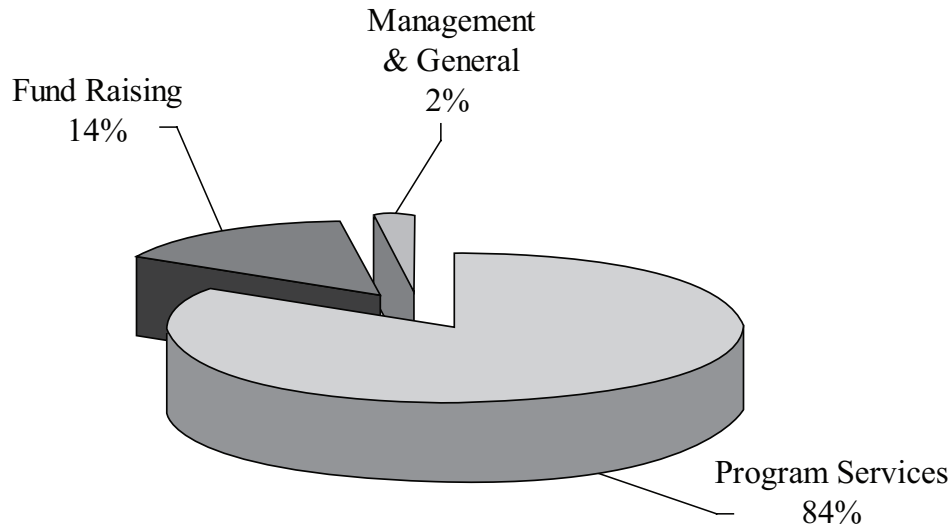
**AMERICAN ACTION FUND FOR BLIND CHILDREN AND ADULTS
1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230 (410) 659-9315**

If you or a friend would like to remember the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults in your will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230, a Maryland nonprofit corporation, the sum of \$ _____ (or " _____ percent of my net estate" or "the following stocks and bonds: _____") to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

Statement of Activities

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Federal Internal Revenue Code, and contributions to it are tax-deductible. Upon request the Action Fund will supply a complete certified audit of its activities.



Program Service, Fundraising, and Management and General expense as a Percent of Total Expenses

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2009

Revenues and Gains and Other Support

Public Support:

Contributions	\$4,180,252
Donated Services	1,683,379
Total Public Support	5,863,631

Revenue:

Investment Income.....	3,809,744
Total Revenue	3,809,744

Total Revenues and Gains and Other Support..... \$9,673,375

Expenses

Program Services:

Braille Publications and Library....	\$528,283
Advocacy and Protection of Civil Rights.....	985,639
Specialized Programs and Services.....	2,766,623
Total Program Services	4,280,545

Supporting Services:

Management and General.....	119,775
Fund Raising.....	699,276
Total Supporting Services	819,051

Total Expenses \$5,099,596

Changes In Net Assets.....	\$4,573,779
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$18,674,703
Net Assets - End of Year.....	\$23,248,482