

[Printed on NCBVI Letterhead]

January 3, 2007

The Honorable Dave Heineman
Governor of the State of Nebraska
State Capitol, Second Floor
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Dear Governor Heineman:

In compliance with Statute 71-8316 of 2000, the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Commission) herewith transmits its annual report for the year ending December 31, 2006.

The Commission promotes employment opportunities for blind persons by assisting them to become productive and fully contributing members of society.

The Commission has completed its Federal Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2006, and, also operates under the State Fiscal Year for budgeting, accounting and related matters.

The Commission is governed by a Board of Commissioners (Board), which met throughout the year, dealing with several issues and learning more about the services that the Commission provides. The Board met in February, May, August, and November. During these meetings information about the programs was provided to the Board, including: new staff training, budget process, Counselor/VR Client relationship and how it works, and workings of the business office. The Board also established some policies, and gave advice for some programs and procedures. The Board will continue to meet at least quarterly and work to accomplish the Mission of the Commission.

The Commission web page provides information regarding its programs, as well as links to consumer organizations and information regarding blindness and blindness issues. As Executive Director, I attend statewide and local chapter meetings of consumer organizations to build a strong partnership, by both listening to concerns and explain to consumers the reasons of why the agency takes a certain direction. I also continue to use email and website postings to communicate information; keeping the Board, Leaders of Consumer Organizations, and Staff apprised of changes and developments of the Commission.

Governor Heineman
January 3, 2007
Page Two

The Commission remains deeply committed to its goal of assisting blind persons to become fully self-supporting, taxpaying members of society. This report delineates the ways in which we realize this goal, and a separate report on the blind vendors program is attached.

Respectfully,

Pearl Van Zandt, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

cc: Board of Commissioners

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2006

I INTRODUCTION

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (The Commission) is the State rehabilitation agency whose mission is “Empowering blind individuals, promoting opportunities and building belief in the blind”. Our agency provides a variety of services enabling blind people to become fully participating, contributing members of society. Blind people lead normal lives, work in a wide range of jobs, have families, raise children, and participate in community activities. The real challenge is to elevate the expectations of the capability of the blind, by educating blind people about their own potential, and to educate society about the ability of the blind to contribute to their communities as well. The following programs and services provide the means by which blind persons can regain or retain a productive role in society:

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Technology
- Independent Living-Older Blind
- Transition
- Deaf-Blind
- Business Enterprise
- Digital Voice Newspaper Delivery System (NFB-NEWSLINE®)

The Commission utilizes three types of surveys to quantify client satisfaction and to seek input for improvement. These surveys are completed at different times. The Rehabilitation Track Survey and the Independent Living Survey are completed at least six months after case closure. In order to get a better feedback from our VR clients, a more comprehensive survey instrument is being conducted over the phone. The Orientation Center Survey is conducted also over the phone, three months after training is completed. Another form of feedback is via input from consumers received at public meetings and forums, which are held four times a year with the Board and also at state conventions of consumer organizations.

On September 30, 2005, the Commission completed the fifth and last year of the Helen Keller National Center Grant, and also the Transition Grant. Furthermore, the In-Service Training Grant, a “Quality Award”, ended its fifth of five years the same date; had enabled the Commission to enhance and maximize the professional strength of the staff to serve our consumers. During this calendar year we continued to provide quality services after the end of those grants. The Older Individuals Who Are Blind Grant became formula-funded by Congress in December 1999. Two new grants are currently in place; the NFB Mentoring program, now in its second year, and a grant from the Enrichment Foundation. During our sixth Federal Fiscal Year, the Commission was able to obtain its full federal-funding match. The “Friends of the Commission”, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group, has been established in order to obtain matching funds from local sources.

II FINANCIAL REPORT

• Basic Support:		
A. Operations (Most of which are spent on direct services)	\$	2,630,457
B. Aid	\$	450,665
• Older Individuals Who Are Blind Program		
A. Operations (Most of which are spent on direct services)	\$	234,904
B. Aid	\$	35,929
• Transition Grant (ended 9/30/2005)		
A. Operations	\$	90,075
B. Aid	\$	24,924
• Supported Employment		
A. Operations	\$	67
B. Aid	\$	52,567
• Independent Living Part B		
A. Operations (Most of which are spent on direct services)	\$	7,694
B. Aid	\$	18,494
• In-Service Training Quality Grant		
A. Operations (only)	\$	34,395
• Social Security Reimbursement		
A. Operations	\$	40,612
B. Aid	\$	1,667

III VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) PROGRAM

The Vocational Rehabilitation program has a goal of assisting blind individuals in becoming fully integrated, productive members of society. In rehabilitating such individuals, the Commission provides training and placement in quality jobs that are appropriate to each individual's capabilities, abilities, potentials, and informed choice. Some of the services that may be provided are: training in the skills of blindness, blindness information to family and friends, vocational education, counseling and guidance, job training, job development, job placement and assistive technology services. During fiscal year 2005, 602 Nebraskans received services in all statuses; of which 55 consumers were competitively employed in a variety of jobs. Fourteen individuals were successfully closed as Homemakers, which allowed them full participation in their homes, eliminating the need to rely on the nursing home/assisted-living system and in other cases also allowed blind parents to continue raising their children independently. In addition, this year our staff worked with 194 multi-handicapped individuals who also happen to be blind. The Commission successfully achieved levels required by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Standards.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Commission work diligently with employers to educate them about the potential of the blind by providing Power-Point presentations informing them of reasonable accommodations that will not lower their expectations of productivity. Consumers were placed in a variety of jobs, including translators, consumer services,

bookkeepers, daycare providers, assembly workers, rehab technician, clerical workers, massage therapists, computer scientist, telephone operators, administrators, human services professionals, teachers, farmers, mechanics, caseworkers, counselors, and small business owners, among others.

Staff development continues as an important facet of improving the quality of services to our consumers. The entire staff continues to receive training on job development and job placement that enables them to provide better services to our customers. Our staff also receives ongoing training on multi-handicapped issues, as individuals in this population group continue to increase. The Commission emphasizes quality competitive employment, not just the first available job, but full-time jobs that will provide consumers good wages, benefits and the potential for upward mobility. Consequently, they will no longer need to receive social security benefits or welfare relating to blindness.

Counseling and guidance are available to families who want to better understand blindness and to support family members who are blind or visually impaired in their pursuit of personal and vocational goals. Furthermore, the Commission promotes a positive understanding to the general public of blindness and the abilities of people who are blind. We have the fundamental belief that with proper training and opportunity, blind people can be fully integrated into the social-economic mainstream. This is done through educational programs designed to reach employers, educators, health care professionals, human services agencies, and other individuals and organizations that come into contact with individuals who are blind.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services also include career exploration, interest testing, and vocational planning. Assistance with tuition, books, adaptive technology, and readers are available to those pursuing vocational training. When an individual is ready for employment, job placement and follow-up services are provided. Our counselors are constantly working with employers to encourage hiring of qualified blind job seekers.

IV TRANSITION PROGRAM

The Transition Program was funded by a federal grant through RSA from October 2000 through September 2005. However, we were running the programs described below before receiving this grant. This last calendar year we started running the programs with private funds and partnership with youth councils.

Employment experiences and independent living skills are too often not available for blind and visually impaired students and young adults as they grow up. The Transition Program is focused on creating and supporting these opportunities across the state. The Deputy Directors coordinate the transition services together with field staff. They work to develop positive relationships with schools, families, and employers in their communities. Work opportunities and other special programs for transition students are designed to provide real life work experiences, job skills, and a work history, all of which contribute significantly to eventual success in the workplace as adults.

This past summer, the WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) Program, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, provided work experiences for 10 Nebraska students. During the first week of the program, students received intensive orientation and mobility instruction to become familiar with the UNL campus where they were housed and the near downtown area. They were then able to travel to and from work independently each day. Throughout the program, students increased their self-esteem by participating in weekly seminars involving discussions regarding blindness issues. They were exposed to adult blind role models who hold competitive jobs. These role models shared their work experiences and answered the students' questions. The transition staff were in constant contact with the employers during the duration of the program to insure the success of the students in the work place. The staff also worked to educate employers, encouraging them to raise their expectations of individuals who are blind. In addition, WAGES participants had challenging activities such as hiking, horseback riding, obstacle course, high ropes, and wall climbing, among others, which were geared to developing skills and confidence for all aspects of life. The WAGES Program was a partnership with the Enrichment Foundation, Greater Nebraska Youth Council, Lincoln Workforce Development, and the Omaha Youth Council. These programs paid the salaries of the students in the program and some of the room and board.

The jobs students held included: office worker at the City Hall building, Youth Program worker at Calvert Recreation Center, Braille teacher assistant at NCBVI Orientation Center, staff assistant with the Lincoln-Workforce OneStop Center, warehouse workers at Bryan-LGH, helper at the State Office Building cafeteria, Child care assistant at UNL day care, worker in the Lincoln-Lancaster County Records Management, and receptionist at NCBVI's offices in Lincoln.

The College Workshop is a program designed to provide students transitioning from secondary school with the skills and information needed to participate fully in the academic experience and employment search. This year's workshop, with 49 participants, was held with the on-going partnership of consumer organizations in the state, in which the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska provided lunch, and The National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska provided an evening social, where useful information was shared. The keynote speaker was a blind genetics researcher from Omaha, Kristal Platte, who emphasized the importance of having a positive attitude toward blindness and also having the skills to compete in the social-economic main stream. During the session, students engaged in a discussion on various topics including how to manage readers, deal with science courses, expectations of society, scholarships, effective ways to take independent notes, social skills, self-advocacy, and workplace behaviors.

Two other programs are "Winnerfest" and Project Independence (PI). "Winnerfest" is designed for blind teenagers from across the state to participate in two semi-annual retreats. We had 20 students participate during each of these two sessions. Activities were focused on the importance of mastering the skills of blindness, personal achievement, goal setting, communication and other life skills. One of the most important aspects of these sessions was that the participants were exposed to successful blind role models. PI is a one week program designed for younger children, ages 7 to 15 where they are introduced to social skills and to work using blindness alternative techniques. This year, the seven blind and visually impaired youngsters that participated also had an excellent opportunity to observe WAGES participants and blind adults in their work environments, using alternative skills, and demonstrating success

in the workplace. During PI, the parents were involved in a seminar in which issues regarding blindness were addressed.

The Nebraska Transition Team for Students who are Blind, Deaf-Blind or Visually Impaired is a collaborative effort among the Commission, the Department of Education, school districts, the Nebraska Center for Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, the Nebraska Department of Education Deaf-Blind Project, consumer organizations and other entities. The primary purpose is to share information with each other, advice, seek to improve relations and services, and promote an understanding of the issues and critical needs of the students involved in the education and transition process.

Mentoring for Excellence, a 4-year-grant, was awarded on May 2005 from the NFB-Jernigan Institute. Mentoring is a committed, supportive, and encouraging long-term relationship between two blind participants. The older, more experienced individual (mentor) provides consistent support and guidance focused on developing the character and capabilities of the young person (mentee). Mentors have been critical to the success of many blind adults, both personally and professionally. Mentors have provided encouragement, while challenging these individuals to seek their own solutions in order to make their dreams a reality.

By participating in a mentoring program, the mentees will have the opportunity to have a personal relationship with a positive blind role model; learn firsthand how other blind people lead successful lives and achieve goals; develop friendships with blind and visually impaired peers; and have fun!! The kickoff of the second group took place November 9th, 10th, and 11th in Omaha, with 34 mentoring pairs being part of the program.

The Commission staff continues to be active in the Youth Council of the Workforce Investment System in Omaha, Lincoln, Lancaster County and Greater Nebraska.

V TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

Computer access equipment enables individuals who are blind or visually impaired to acquire skills necessary to compete effectively in vocational training and employment.

The Commission's Technology Program is the heart of adaptive technology and computer training for blind consumers in Nebraska. This program employs three full-time Technology Specialists, located in Omaha, Lincoln and North Platte. They provide assessments, training and consultation to blind consumers and employers across the state. During the past year around 300 evaluations were completed. Additionally, approximately 60 computer systems were designed, configured, and delivered to consumers. Furthermore, technology services were provided to consumers via telephone and e-mail. Consultations were also provided to the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, Nebraska Department of Corrections, Nebraska Department of Revenue, Assistive Technology Partnership, Library Commission, State Treasurer, Unemployment Insurance Division/Workforce Development, Saint Elisabeth Hospital, Hillis 66, Siouxland Mental Health, WEST Corporation, Lancaster County, Lincoln Workforce Development, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Southeast Community College, Hamilton College, Doane College, Marriott

Hotel Reservations, US Info, the Hyatt Hotel in Omaha, Social Security Administration, Red Cross, Cabela's, Workforce Investment System, Nebraska Department of Labor, and Lincoln Public Schools, among others employers. Our technology specialists also continue to work very diligently on assuring that the new Nebraska Information System (NIS) is fully accessible to blind employees and potential blind applicants who qualify for state jobs. They also continue working to ensure that the new E-Government initiative would be as accessible for blind consumers in general. As a result of our involvement with accessibility issues with the state, the Information Management Service has created a position and hired a person who addresses such situations on an ongoing basis. Another service provided by the technology program, is the capability to provide loaner equipment to consumers and employers.

Our technology specialists utilize adaptive software for consumers' on-the-job settings. Many times, only small changes are required to make the blind person's job much easier and more competitive. The focus continues to be on demonstrating speech systems for Windows 98, 2000 and XP. Windows-based applications with speech and magnification are taught. Voice recognition systems are also valuable for consumers who cannot physically use a keyboard.

The Commission's technology specialists are constantly researching in order to keep up with changes in technology and to have it available to consumers and employers.

VI ORIENTATION CENTER

The Orientation and Adjustment Center is a comprehensive 8-hour a day, 5-day a week program, located in Lincoln. It provides intensive training in the techniques used by successful blind persons in a program designed to build self-confidence. This training includes instruction in areas such as independent travel using a white cane, public transportation, community access, homemaking, apartment living, typing, adaptive technology, Braille, and woodworking. Training may last up to nine months as students learn to apply alternative techniques to solve problems facing them in everyday life. During the training, students reside in apartments provided by the Commission. These apartments are located in downtown Lincoln.

The Center also engages in an ongoing program of public education to promote the integration of blind persons into jobs, home and community. The Center invites individuals and groups to come tour the facility to view the various features of Center training and promote the potential of blind persons. Visitors have included students from public and private schools and colleges, vision teachers from educational institutions, government officials, personnel of other governmental agencies, and employers. Furthermore, an educational video was developed which demonstrates consumers receiving training and who eventually move on to an integrated life.

Attitude and technique training are fully integrated. The attitude training motivates the student to learn and excel at alternative techniques. Learning the techniques allows the student to put his or her new attitudes of confidence into practice. In addition to training in alternative techniques, the Center provides introductory course work in the following areas:

College Preparation
Vending Facility Management

Cooking and Food Service
Typing and Word Processing
Computer Operation
Power Machinery Use and Hand Tool Operation

Center students must be legally blind or have a condition that will eventually lead to legal blindness. They must also be capable of functioning in a training program that lasts eight hours a day, five days a week. Prior to the start of training, a tour of the facility is scheduled, followed by an interview with the Center's Director.

During the training, all students use sleep-shades to eliminate the desire to rely on inadequate vision, thereby building self-confidence and helping them learn how to think and function successfully as a blind person. Once the cycle of dependence on inadequate sight is broken and the students have learned the alternative techniques by reflex, they are able to make informed decisions regarding when to use their remaining sight.

Students obtain experience in traveling through airports, shopping malls, public bus transportation, shuttle services and taxicabs. They also experience traveling in more heavily populated areas. To build students' self-confidence, Center training involves activities such as camping trips, hiking trips, swimming, and horseback riding.

Students continue to take increased responsibility in the operation of the Center - a direct result of the Center's belief in the abilities of blind people. When Center students realize they can hold jobs, raise a family, and be valued members of the community, their lives change. Students then look forward to the future with a zest and willingness to meet life's challenges.

During this calendar year, the Orientation Center provided intensive training to 24 clients. Additionally, three new Commission staff members participated in the Staff Training Program. The Center also conducted 91 tours with a total of 226 individuals who were provided direct education regarding blindness from NCBVI staff. The Center continues to assist the Business Enterprise Program staff in evaluating prospective vendors.

VII INDEPENDENT LIVING-OLDER BLIND PROGRAM

The Older Blind Program serves individuals age 55 or older who are legally blind or who have a progressive eye disease leading to blindness. The Independent Living Program serves blind individuals under the age of 55. The purpose of the Independent Living-Older Blind (IL/OB) Program is to enable blind individuals to live more independently in their homes and communities. Direct services are provided to individuals in their homes and/or group settings at the Commission office. Through the Independent Living and Older Blind programs, individuals receive training and encouragement to continue living fulfilling lives with dignity and independence.

During the calendar year 2006, there were a total of 701 consumers served through the IL/OB programs. 596 individuals were 55 and over (OB program) while 105 were under 55 and in the IL program.

Individuals who are blind or visually impaired receive training in the alternative skills needed to pursue personal and vocational goals. Instruction typically begins in the home, focusing on areas of cane travel, Braille, and homemaking. Those needing more intensive instruction often move on to training in the Orientation Center.

Seven Independent Living-Older Blind teachers serve the entire state, reaching many traditionally underserved populations, especially those in rural areas. The teachers provide the training, guidance and counseling necessary to promote positive attitudes and encourage consumers to regain active and productive lives. Instruction for the newly blind person may include training in the skills of blindness, such as Braille instruction; orientation and mobility, including learning to use public transportation and orientation to the individual's neighborhood and community facilities; and personal and home management skills including meal preparation, identification of coins and currency, telling time, and other activities of daily living. Our orientation teachers also provide instruction in the use of NFB-NEWSLINE[®] (a digital voice newspaper service accessed via touch-tone telephone), Talking Book and Braille Services (Braille and audio-cassette books and magazines), Radio Talking Book (a voice newspaper service accessed via closed circuit radio and television SAP), and use of the Internet and emails. Assistive technology devices and various aids may be provided to help individuals become more self-sufficient, including a long white cane, Braille writing equipment, talking calculators, talking glucometers, Closed Circuit TVs (to read regular or large print), magnifiers, and Braille or talking watches.

Comprehensive outreach continues to provide information, consultation and training to other service providers, the general public, and agency staff. The Commission staff helps coordinate services among other providers such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, offices of the Area Agencies on Aging, Independent Living Centers, and the Veterans' Administration. Peer support groups are available statewide to provide moral support to newly blinded individuals.

A new curriculum training has been implemented to enhance clients' home living skills. Clients will come for three-day sessions, and during four sessions be trained in alternative techniques as they develop their skills in a setting away from home. Training during this program is conducted using sleep shades. Sessions include: cane travel, Braille, cooking, woodworking, problem solving, and focusing on a positive attitude toward blindness. Other training activities (such as shopping, golfing, fishing, and visiting museums) are geared to developing skills and confidence for all aspects of life.

VIII DEAF-BLIND PROGRAM

Prior to setting up the Deaf-Blind Program, services to deaf-blind consumers in the state had been limited by the constraints of time available to individual staff members who had other duties. In 2002, the program initiated a process for identifying the deaf-blind population. To date, the number of individuals identified for the Helen Keller National Center Deaf-Blind registry has increased to 247. During this fifth year of the Helen Keller grant, the Deaf-Blind Program achieved its purpose of providing full-time services to deaf-blind consumers. This includes services to enable individuals who are deaf-blind to live full and productive lives with

dignity and self-respect. More specifically, this program strives to assist individuals who are deaf-blind to achieve full participation within their home communities through awareness, use of the American Sign Language, other alternative forms of communication, and utilization of available resources.

The Deaf-Blind Program works in partnership with Nebraska agencies serving consumers who are deaf-blind as well as staff and consumers of the Commission. This program provides services and assists individuals who are deaf-blind to obtain other services related to all aspects of employment, education, and independent living. The program staff is responsible for planning and scheduling duties in a manner conducive to smooth transition for consumers, as well as efficient use of time and effort.

Other services provided include: coordination and facilitation of support groups for consumers who are deaf-blind; demonstration and assessment of the appropriateness of augmentative technology for consumers who are deaf-blind; development of inter-agency agreements or procedures to facilitate the coordination of services to individuals who are deaf-blind; development, coordination, and implementation of training programs focusing on deaf-blindness for the purpose of increasing professional awareness, community awareness, and deaf-blind advocacy; development, coordination, and implementation of training programs focusing on deaf-blindness for interpreters working for and through the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH); and locating resources and materials for Commission staff and other agencies serving or housing consumers who are deaf-blind.

The Deaf-Blind Program will continue to identify and/or develop resources and services that will help eliminate the service gaps to consumers who are deaf-blind.

IX **NFB-NEWSLINE[®] FOR THE BLIND**

NFB-NEWSLINE[®] for the Blind was established over seven years ago, and continues to grow. This program is a computer-based system that allows all blind, visually impaired and reading impaired persons to access local and national newspapers. This year, we have added a new paper, the Grand Island Independent, and we are in the midst of talks with the Kearney Daily Hub, which will be coming on board after the beginning of the year. We have added the Nebraska Associated Press, as well as the Nebraska UPI. Including the Hub, AP and UPI, this brings our total number of Nebraskan newspapers resources to six, plus another 242 national newspapers and publications which are accessible by touch-tone telephone.

Using the buttons on the telephone, the listener chooses a category within the paper, such as local news, sports, area events, editorial opinions or grocery ads. The listener immediately hears the first story of that category. They can then skip to the next story or column, replay it, jump ahead or go back in 10 second increments, raise the volume, or exit the category and choose another by pressing a single digit. Listener options also include the ability to slow down or speed up the rate of speech, a special time check key and a pause control that allows the listener to stop reading a story for a period of two minutes without losing his/her place in the story, the availability to spell a word, go forward or backward by paragraphs, go forward or backward by sentences, and/or to search for a subject throughout the paper by a chosen word. There are 1119 users currently

although this service is available to all of those who qualify. NFB-NEWSLINE[®] is free of charge, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all 93 counties.

Blind persons preparing for jobs in the year 2007 and beyond cannot afford to ignore the idea of newspaper availability. NFB-NEWSLINE[®] has made it possible for hundreds of blind and print impaired Nebraskans to address this compelling need, thus affording them the opportunity to become even more independent and productive. NFB-NEWSLINE[®] has a new speech system based on what is called Eloquence sound. This sound system is similar to a human voice and is being used by most blind people in the country. Readers now have the option of receiving their papers via Email if they have the compatible software to read it. TV listings have just become available on NEWSLINE through the cooperation of Zap2it.com. NEWSLINE now offers the most accessible TV listings for the blind. NFB-NEWSLINE[®] has indeed contributed to a more literate blind population and the ability to better understand and master the printed word through better access to daily newspapers.

NFB-NEWSLINE[®] for the Blind proudly continues to lead the way as it forges ahead in its quest to take its rightful place on the information "super highway." In the same way the Internet has created a global village, NFB-NEWSLINE[®] has opened a whole new world to its users by enabling them to achieve vocational, economic and social equality to help meet the challenges of today and the hopes and dreams of tomorrow.

X REFERRAL SERVICES

Commission Staff provides ongoing referral services to consumers. There are also a variety of services available to consumers that the agency does not provide in a direct manner. Some of those services are:

Nebraska Visually Impaired Peer Support (VIPS): This network of support groups, located throughout the state, offers an environment where individuals who are visually impaired can meet, learn from each other, and cope more effectively with blindness. At present there are 48 such groups. Local peer groups usually meet monthly at accessible, convenient locations. Transportation is provided when possible. The Nebraska VIPS is a statewide organization developed by blind persons interested in helping each other while helping themselves.

The goals of VIPS are: To create and maintain a network of mutual support and peer counseling groups for persons who experience vision loss; to inform and educate blind and visually impaired Nebraskans about available services and resources; and to educate the public and public officials about the circumstances of aging and blindness.

Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Services is the State Library Service for the Blind and Reading Impaired. Commission staff assists consumers in completing applications and teaching consumers how to use the service and the equipment.

Consumer controlled organizations allow blind people to be exposed to other blind people in order to give them invigoration and encouragement, in addition to our services. Our counselors continue to refer clients to these consumer organizations in the state; which are the National

Federation of the Blind of Nebraska and the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska. Long after the rehabilitation experience is over, mentoring will continue giving them that extra support. When a person becomes blind or even grows up blind, his or her first need is to associate with other blind people. The individual initially needs to know what is possible to do as a blind person. The family won't likely know, nor will his or her community. So first, blind people need to have exposure to other blind people, not just for the encouragement from those who have done remarkable things, but also to gain a new perspective on how societal attitudes about blindness play out.

Radio Talking Book Network (RTBN) is a statewide, closed circuit, radio reading service for those individuals who have disabilities, visual or physical, which prevent them from reading printed material. Special receivers or televisions with the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) feature are required to hear the broadcasts of RTBN. Although there are books available for the visually impaired, including the Talking Book Program of the Library of Congress, there is still a daily informational void that visually handicapped people experience. RTBN makes it possible for people to stay in touch with their community and what is going on around them. Our counselors help consumers complete applications for RTBN services and teach consumers to use the equipment.

INFORMATION REGARDING ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES OF THE VENDING FACILITY PROGRAM

Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE)

The NBE provides individuals who are legally blind the opportunity to establish their own small businesses by managing vending stand and food service operations. Commission support to NBE vendors across the state includes: two staff members, equipment, supplies, and initial stock as well as training and assistance in skill areas essential for business management, and constant follow-up.

Since its creation by the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, the NBE Program has provided competitive employment opportunities for blind individuals served by the Commission. The NBE purpose is also to demonstrate to the general public the abilities of the blind, thereby helping to improve attitudes regarding the hiring of blind persons.

There are 19 licensed vendors, of whom one is new, who run 63 sites and maintain 480 machines in Federal, State and local buildings, and rest areas on the interstate across Nebraska. This past year, two new locations were opened. For fiscal year 2006, net profit to the vendors was \$341,231.

There are currently 63 different agreements, contracts, and permits for vending food service in Nebraska that are under Business Enterprises. The locations of the NBE vending facilities are as follows.

Ground Floor, 1124 Pacific, Main Post Office Omaha
Mezzanine Floor, 1124 Pacific, Main Post Office, Omaha
1st Floor, 1124 Pacific, Main Post Office, Omaha
2nd Floor, 1124 Pacific, Main Post Office, Omaha
4th Floor, 1124 Pacific, Main Post Office, Omaha
IRS, 72nd Grover, Omaha
INS, 1717 Avenue H, Omaha
FBI, 108th Burt St, Omaha
MRD, 12500 West Center, Omaha
GSA, 106th S. 15th Street, Omaha
HUD, 10820 Old Mill, Omaha
Federal Court House, 18th and Dodge, Omaha
Parks Service, 700 Riverfront Drive, Omaha
City County Building, Farnam Level Vending at 19th Farnam, Omaha
County Courthouse vending at 18th and Farnam, Omaha
700 R Street, Lincoln, (Main Post Office) Lincoln
INS, 850 S Street, Lincoln
VA, 48th and Old Cheney, Lincoln
Library Commission at the Atrium, 12th and N Streets, Lincoln
INS, 1301 West Highland, Lincoln, NE
Department of Environmental Quality at the Atrium, 12th and N Streets, Lincoln
Banking Commission at the Atrium, 12th and N Streets, Lincoln
CDP, 501 South 14th Street, Lincoln
Executive Building, 505 S. 14th Lincoln
State Capitol, 1st Floor Vending 14th and K Street Lincoln
State Capitol, 2nd Floor Vending, 14th and K Street Lincoln
Vending Machines on 6 floors of the State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, combined with the prepared food service in the Lower Level of the State Office Building at 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln
GSA, 100 Centennial Mall North, Lincoln
GSA, West Second Street, Grand Island
Main Post Office, West 3rd Street, Grand Island
Postal Distribution Center, Highway 30 West, Grand Island
Law Enforcement School, Grand Island
Door Company, North Platte
National Guard Armory, North Platte
Nebraska Western Community College, Sidney
25 different rest areas across Nebraska from Omaha to Kimble on Interstate 80

Hall County Buildings
Bulk Vending, State Office Building
220 S. 17th Street, Lincoln, NE

The program continues to grow when possible by developing vending opportunities across the state, when new federal or state locations become available.

All new vendors are being assessed to determine what kinds of skills they need to acquire, such as math and basic accounting, techniques of blindness, and customer service.

The Commission has refined its on-the-job training for new vendors with vending machines. Additional skills are being developed by taking courses at Nebraska's Community Colleges relating to such areas as human relations, supervision, business practices, basic accounting, tax law, marketing costs and inventory control.

The NBE Vendors Committee met in March, June, September, and December. A general training session was held as well as training sessions for two new vendors.

EXPENDITURES

<u>Federal</u>	<u>Set Aside</u>	<u>Other</u>
\$184,075	\$51,141	None

It is estimated that the amounts will be similar for 2007.

The Commission's Business Enterprises, developed from Federal legislation known as the Randolph-Sheppard Act, continues to increase employment opportunities of existing managers and trainees throughout the state.