

Northwest PA BBVS Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting Notes – April 27, 2023

Call to order 10:06 by Casandra Falkenhagen

Roll Call

- Casandra Falkenhagen, Acting DA, BBVS 814-871-4401 cfalkenhag@pa.gov
- Alecia Beam, VR Supervisor, BBVS 814-871-4401 albeam@pa.gov
- Krysta Carson, Venango County Blind Association 814-676-1876 kcarson@venangoblind.org
- Mara Foster, Venango County Blind Association 814-676-1876
- Priscilla Earhart, Keystone Blind Association 724-347-5011 PEarhart@KeystoneBlind.org
- Liz Ginter, Keystone Blind Association 724-347-5501 eginter@keystoneblind.org
- Jenn Lilly, Keystone Blind Association 724-347-5011 JennLilly@keystonblind.org
- James Whitonis, Community Action Committee, BCO

Approval of Minutes

- Casandra asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Priscilla made a motion to approve and Krysta seconded the motion.

BBVS Report – Presented by Casandra Falkenhagen

Staffing

- Chris has accepted a position as Acting Regional Manager. Casandra Falkenhagen has accepted the position of Acting District Administrator. Casandra will be managing the Erie BBVS District office. Alecia has returned from maternity leave and will supervise VR and VRT. Karly Twaroski is acting VR Supervisor and will supervise SW and OM.
- Erie continues to search for an OM Instructor. We did conduct interviews a week ago. We currently contract with 3 individuals who cover part of our northern territory, Clearfield county and part of our southern territory. We have had interest from 2 additional contractors to provide OM services.

Envision Success Program

- The program this year will be held in Erie County again at the BBVS office June 27-29th from 9:00 – 2:00 pm. We have accepted 6 students into the program.

Summer Academy

- Will be held again June 24-June 30, 2023. It will be at Penn State University. The program is limited to 20 students. Erie BBVS has 1 student who applied and was accepted.

MY Work

- Erie BBVS, the City of Erie and Opportunities Unlimited have partnered to run the MY Work program. We are working on providing 2 students the opportunity for an internship, paid employment. The program will run 4-8 weeks and 16-24 hours per week.

Venango County Association of the Blind (VCAB) – Presented by Krysta Carson

Staffing changes

- recently hired 2 new people and they have been training for 1 month. They are doing well.

Diabetes Prevention

- We started another 1 year program for diabetic prevention as of 4-26-23.

Staffing

- Mara has been going to school at Salas University since January to become certified as a VRT.
- Mara reported that so far she has taken Foundations of rehab, Psychological and Social Dynamics, Research and Principles of VRT classes. Classes are going well and she reports that she is familiar with a lot of it.

- Mara reported that she has had the opportunity to use the skills she is learning in support groups. She did a literature review on the importance of Social Support of older adults with VI.
- The plan is that Mara will take over the VRT position at Venango County Blind Association and continue on as case manager for the organization as well.

Oil Valley Chapter for the Blind – Presented by Krysta Carson

Working with local libraries trying to get CCTVs in libraries

- Working on putting together program to donate CCTVs to a couple libraires.
- They will create a learning day with constituents who can use the CCTV where they will have a welcome party and show the attendees how to use the devices.

Fundraiser

- They are gong to be selling 2 ft. long pepperoni sticks from Hormel.

Keystone Blind Association – Presented by Priscilla Earhart and Jenn Lilly

Golf Outing

- KBA is having a golf outing on June 5th at Tam O'shanter Golf Course...there are still a few team slots available.

Staffing

- Liz Ginter is the new AT specialist at KBA. She has trained on the side of the state and continues to receive on the job training virtually and has tandem visits where she observes and where she is observed. She has been back from training for a month and is getting all the equipment set up to provide class and demo equipment.
- Liz reported that she is familiar with Keystone because she completed her internship with Jenn Lilly when she attended Salas University for the VRT/Low Vision Certification. She has started Tech Talks and is available for contract work – all authorizations go to KBA.

OM

- Luanne can start taking referrals soon – she will be available to begin training in June.

Keystone Kids

- Jenn Lilly reports that Keystone Kids continues to serve students ages 6 and up from Mercer and Crawford Counties in social skills, community learning and Independent living.
- Jenn reported that they just had an event this last Sat where they made their own sandwiches and went to learn about trash and littering and what to do on Earth Day. The students made bird feeders and learned about the life cycle of a caterpillar.
- June 19th – 22nd will be the Transitional Program for high school students where they will work on OM, AT, Independent living, Resume writing and goals after school. Jenn will send out more info when it is available. KBA is taking referrals for this program and for all of Keystone Kids programs.
- Young Explorers will have a program in August where they will focus on exploration and understanding of the world around them. They will focus on plants this year and give them experiences they haven't had before.

IDEAL

- Jenn reported that this program is a huge part of what KBA is doing. The mini weekend is next weekend and there are 8 participants, 4 girls and 4 boys. IDEAL is accepting applications until next Monday for the mini weekend program. It is a good intro to the summer time program because 4 weeks is a long time – this gives them a chance to try it out to see if they can do it.
- The mini weekend is also a refresher for students who came the previous summer and they are mentors for new students. 2 students are returning this year. Most of the open slots are held for new students but can take returning students.
- IDEAL is July 9th – August 14th will a lot of activities. Applications can be accepted through June 15th. This deadline is set so AT can do an assessment prior to the program and the students can get the equipment they need to use during the program.

Low Vision

- Low vision has been busy. Even more so in Beaver Falls. Dr. Freeman is seeing patients at KBA or Bever falls every Wed. Jenn has gotten a lot of inquires for bioptic driving. She is one of the only providers in Western part of state. Dr. Freeman is still accepting new patients.

Lawrence county KBA

- They have located a building with a lot of room for Group classes, technology and cooking classes.

Crawford County KBA

- They are still looking for building in Crawford County.

The Sight Center of Northwest PA

- Not present

PaRC Report - Presented by Heidi Tuszynski

- Not present

Advisory Committee for the Blind of Pennsylvania (ACBP)

- Not present

Governor's Committee on Disabilities

- Not present

Old Business

None

New Business

Jim Whitonis Updates

- It is a challenge to get customers involved – if you want, you can use OVR's facebook page to increase attendance – if interested, contact Connie Moonen. There are Do's and Don'ts to posting on the website like Don't post customers names, Don't put time/place of meeting - just give a contact name, Don't advertise speakers in case it changes but Connie can walk you through all of that.
- The chairperson of Reading CAC may be contacting Linda to put together a meeting.
- Jim has reviewed all minutes of all CAC meetings and noticed that CAP is not listed as invited – Andrew Pennington from CAP would like to be invited and asked to be added to the invitation list. Will send info to Casandra.
- PaRC Website does not have BBVS CAC meeting notices or contact info listed, only BVRS. If you would like it added, you can send info to Jim to have it added.

Priscilla asked who the CAC for BVRS was. Casandra answered that it is Jack Hewitt.

Priscilla asked who Jim was so he introduced himself – he works for Bureau of CO as a VR Specialist. He works on the state plan and is also the liaison to the PA Rehab Council and CACs.

Next Meetings

- Priscilla asked to move the meetings back to the second Thursday of the quarter.
- The next meeting was moved to July 13th at 10:00 and all in attendance agreed to the change.
- The October meeting had been moved to the first week of November because of a conference but the conference was moved to November so it needs moved back to October.

- The October meeting was moved to October 19th at 10:00 and all in attendance agreed to the change.
- Casandra will get the TEAMS meetings with the new dates sent out.
- 2024 dates will be chosen at the October meeting.

Motion to Adjourn: Casandra asked for a motion to adjourn. Priscilla made the motion and Krista seconded it. Meeting adjourned at 10:53.