

CONSULTANTS' O R N E R



SD School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

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SCHOOLS OUT! (Almost!!)

As another school year is fast coming to a close, we want to wish all of you a summer filled with sunshine and laughter. Relax and enjoy time with your family and friends. And we'll be in touch again in the fall.

Amy / Indi / Riki / Julie

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Healthy Vision Month 2008
Gear Up! There's more to lose than the game.
Use protective eyewear.



Every 13 minutes a sports-related eye injury is treated in an emergency room in the United States. The majority of these eye injuries occur in children under the age of 15. Most can be prevented with the use of protective eyewear.

Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards specially designed to provide the correct protection for a certain activity. Ordinary prescription glasses, contact lenses, and sunglasses do not provide adequate protection in eye-hazardous situations. Safety goggles should be worn over them.

The National Eye Institute invites you to help raise awareness about the importance of using protective eyewear this May during Healthy Vision Month. Visit the Healthy Vision Month Website (<http://www.healthyvision2010.org/hvm/>) for more information and to download resources you can use to inform parents, coaches, teachers, and children about sports-related eye injuries and protective eyewear. Join us during Healthy Vision Month to encourage children in your community to gear up for the game!

Statewide Study of Education of Students with Vision Loss Update

Dr. Phil Hatlen, our consultant for this statewide study, presented his final report to the SD Board of Regents at their meeting in Pierre the end of March. Dr. Hatlen worked with a Task Force of about 30 parents, teachers, special education directors, and other professionals who are interested in improving services to children with vision loss.

Dr. Hatlen told the Regents the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is the natural hub for all specialized vision services and should explore additional ways to be a statewide resource to all students who have a vision loss. He commended SD on the early intervention services and the production of Braille and large print materials. He described the development of the Braille Instructor program as a unique means of providing Braille Instruction. He also noted the expertise of our staff, the quality of our assessments and summer programs, and the efforts to serve children who are not on the campus in Aberdeen.

Dr. Hatlen recommended the following:

- Expand the Outreach Staff of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired by four additional consultants.
- Expand the Assessment Team at the SDSBVI so that needs can be met.
- Ensure that the large number of visually impaired students who are not receiving direct services from a qualified teacher of the visually impaired are being appropriately served.
- Ensure that all visually impaired students are assessed in the areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum and receive instruction in those areas of need.
- Explore additional ways in which the SDSBVI can serve as a statewide resource for all blind and visually impaired students. SDSBVI is the natural hub of educational services in the state.

All of these recommendations are in line with our school's Strategic Plan "Access to Quality." The Board of Regents will expect the school to develop a plan for addressing these recommendations by their June meeting.

Dr. Marje Kaiser, SDSBVI Superintendent

SUMMER PROGRAMS 2008

Dates for the Summer Programs offered at SDSBVI in June and July 2008 are:

<u>Session I</u>		<u>Session II</u>	
Week 1:	June 9-13	Week 4:	July 7-11
Week 2:	June 16-20	Week 5:	July 14-18
Week 3:	June 23-27	Week 6:	July 21-25

SDSBVI Summer Programs specifically address and provide opportunities for students to focus on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for Students with Visual Impairments. Areas addressed include:

- Compensatory Academic Skills, including Communication Modes
- Orientation and Mobility
- Social Interaction Skills
- Independent Living Skills
- Recreation and Leisure Skills
- Career Education
- Assistive Technology
- Sensory Efficiency Skills (auditory/tactile/visual)
- Self-Determination



For more information, please contact SDSBVI at 1-888-275-3814.

SEE YOU THIS SUMMER!



Families Networking

Aberdeen Area Family Support Group / SD NAPVI Chapter

"Language and Early Intervention" was the topic for the February meeting of the Family Support Group for Families in Aberdeen and surrounding areas. This was presented by Candice Lee, SDSBVI Speech Language Pathologist. Parents were treated to 5-minute Chair Massages and lunch was catered by the Meister Family.

The program for the March meeting focused on "Quality Physical Education—A Necessity, Not a Luxury for the Well Being of Every Child." Dessert was provided by the Zahm Family.

The April meeting, scheduled for the 25th, will feature Elaine Fritz, a parent from the Sioux Falls area with a child who is deaf-blind. Elaine will be presenting on her experience as a parent developing friendships and support and the importance of finding people you connect with and understand. We look forward to hearing about Elaine's experiences.

A picnic at the SDSBVI playground area is planned for May—date to be determined. June's program and date are still to be determined also, but July's meeting is scheduled for July 25th (last day of summer school at the SDSBVI). Keith Bundy, who is blind and who is the Director of Student Development and ADA Academic Coordinator at Dakota State University, will be our presenter.

In our last newsletter, it was mentioned that SD NAPVI, a newly formed Chapter of NAPVI, was organized. As a result of this, a mini-grant was submitted to the SD Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired to help and encourage parents to join NAPVI. Anyone can join the Chapter by simply becoming a member of NAPVI. The cost to become a member of NAPVI is \$40.00. The Foundation has agreed to "match" any interested parent by paying half of their membership for the first year. Look for more information coming to parents very soon!



Playing Goalball

If you would like more information about joining this group of parents, its activities, or possible steps in the development of a similar group in your area, contact Amy Scepaniak at 626-2580 or email her at scepania@sdsbvi.northern.edu.

For more information on NAPVI, go to www.spedex.com/napvi/.

SD NAPVI BOARD MEMBERS

Co-Presidents:

Karla Schlosser
1424 N Arch
Aberdeen SD 57401
605-225-5482
dschlossr@msn.com

and

Elaine Fritz
500 Kyle Ave
Baltic SD 57003
605-529-6052
efritz@siouxfalls.org

Co-Vice Presidents:

Kelli Meister
511 N High
Aberdeen SD 57401
605-225-3432
rkmeister@nvc.net

and

Krystal Stuwe
202 4th Ave
Ipswich SD 57451
605-426-6224
lkstuwe@valleytel.net

Secretary:

Joleen Schaffer
1803 S Lincoln St
Aberdeen SD 57401
605-380-3332
yortwork@yahoo.com

Treasurer:

Rhiannon Zahm
36755 162nd St
Cresbard SD 57435
605-380-9375
rizzzahm@yahoo.com

Even though the distance between you and your goal
may be great, it is never too far to the next step.

Books Featuring Characters with Blindness and Visual Impairment

Naomi Knows It's Springtime by Virginia L. Kroll

Grades K-3

A young girl who is blind experiences the first day of spring.

Sound of Sunshine, Sound of Rain by Florence Parry Heide

Grades 3-6

A young boy listens carefully to the world around him as he makes his way through his day.

The World of Ben Lighthart by Jaap ter Haar

Grades 5-8

A teenaged boy loses his vision in an accident and must make decisions about his education and his future.

Parent Tips for Reading to Your Child

- Use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice, especially when reading dialogue.
- Occasionally, read above your child's intellectual level to challenge his/her mind.
- Allow time for discussion after reading the story. Be careful not to turn discussions into quizzes.
- The most common mistake in reading aloud is reading too fast. Read slowly enough for your child to build mental pictures of what you are reading.
- Encourage your child to read out loud to you. Listen carefully and praise your child's reading.
- Take turns reading—you read a section, then have your child read the next section.
- Lead by example. Make sure your child sees you reading for pleasure other than at read-aloud time.

(Prepared by Miss Mehlhaff, 1st grade teacher, May Overby Elementary School, Aberdeen Public Schools)

Seedlings Braille Books for Children is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the opportunity for literacy by providing high quality, low cost children's literature in braille.

Seedlings has just added 30 new braille books to their catalog of over 860 titles for children ages 0-14. The new books range from *Butterfly Kisses* by Sandra Magsamen, a Print-Braille-and-Picture Book for toddlers that comes with a finger puppet, to *The Million Dollar Putt* by Dan Gutman, a book for 8-12 year olds about Bogie, who is blind, and who is competing for a million dollar prize in a golf tournament!

For more information and a complete listing, visit www.seedlings.org or call 800-777-8552 to request a catalog (available in print or in braille).

And don't forget—you can also enter to win one free braille book per year from Seedlings through the "Anna's Book Angel Project." To be eligible to win, you do need to register each year. For more information on this and to register online, visit www.seedlings.org/bkangel.php.

* "Placing a book in a child's hand is like planting a seed." *

STUDENT CORNER

Understanding Hutterite Culture

By Michaela Kleinsasser



Have you ever been to a Hutterite Colony
Do you know any Hutterites?

Communal Living: They live together as a community because of their religious beliefs. They worship and work together to support the colony.

Church and Religion: Hutterites go to church every day in the evening from 6:00 to 6:30, but on Sundays and holidays they go to morning services from 9:30 to 10:45 and in the evening from 5:30 to 6:00. Their religion is based on the Word of God and the teachings of Christ. They do not believe in infant baptism, but baptize when they fully understand the promise they will make with God. Seven weeks before they get baptized, they go home to the leaders of the colony and they talk to them and get good advice. The day before baptism the colony meets, and the ones baptized have to say some verses and then the next day at church the ministers baptize them.

In order to get married, they have to be baptized. The bride makes four dresses for herself and four shirts for the groom: one for each of the engagement parties, one for the farewell party, and one for the wedding. The bride's wedding dress is always blue and the groom's shirt is white.

When a person dies, they have a "wocht" (wake) the day after he/she dies, and the family of the person who dies sits around the casket. The next day is the funeral and then after the funeral they bury them in their cemetery.

Economy: Hutterites raise turkeys, hogs, cows, horses, ducks, geese, and chickens. They grow corn, soybeans, and wheat. Other ways they raise money is selling garden produce.

The women and girls, from ages 15-45, go to the garden. During the summer, the women take care of the garden and pick all the vegetables. They sell them fresh or canned. Another way they raise money is the women and girls of the colony started a "Country Store" that has all kinds of home-made items and crafts like mittens, blankets, slippers, quilrows, mantle clocks, and all kinds of "COOL" things.

Job Responsibilities: The 15th birthday is a big thing to the Hutterites because they have more responsibilities such as working in the garden and kitchen and they get to be with the adults more. The way they celebrate is the colony people go home to his/her home to have a piece of cake and slush and they all bring a gift.

The men are responsible for the crops, shops, livestock, and poultry. The women are responsible for the cooking, gardening, and taking care of the children.

Language: The Hutterites speak four languages: Russian, German, English, and Hutterish. The language they speak the most is Hutterish, which is a combination of German, English, and Russian. Hutterites learn Russian at home, German in the German School, English in the English School, and Hutterish from their parents.

School: At two and a half, the young children go to Preschool. They learn to sing and pray. Five ladies of the colony take turns taking care of the children, and they all have a girl to help them. When Preschool is done, they all get a bag of candy. In German school, they go until age 15. In English School, they go until 8th Grade and some schools are starting High School classes over the Internet.

Conclusion: This information should help answer your questions about the Hutterite people and their culture.

Michaela is an 8th Grade student at Glendale Colony Elementary School near Frankfurt, SD.

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STUDENT CORNER (Continued from Page 6)

Poem

By LeAnne Wurtz

**The Winter is long.
The winds blow so strong.
I know it won't be long
Till the Birdies sing a song.**

LeAnne is a 3rd Grade student at Brentwood Colony School near Faulkton, SD.

The following article, written (and updated) by the mother of a son with albinism, was published in the Autumn 2007 issue of *Albinism InSight*—quarterly magazine of the National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation. Ryker and his family live in Aberdeen, SD.

Raising Ryker

The birth of a son with albinism brings a family new connections with the albinism community

By Kelli Meister

On November 28, 2006, Ryker, at ten weeks old, was diagnosed with albinism. After weeks of not knowing what was wrong with our child's vision, we were relieved to have an answer. It's not exactly the answer we were looking for. There is no cure, surgery, corrective lenses, and he won't outgrow it. But it was an answer, and now we can move forward with open hearts and minds and learn how to help him.

At first, my mind was flooded with things he wouldn't be able to do and everything he would miss out on. There's a possibility that he won't be able to drive; we live in a small town in South Dakota—how will he get around? Sports may be difficult for him; he has two older brothers to keep up with—how will he feel when he can't do what they will be doing? And school, how will he keep up with his peers when he has trouble reading the board and even books? I felt so sad for him and I just wanted to make it all go away.

Through my research and connections with the National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation (NOAH), I now realize that Ryker will grow up perfectly fine and be able to do most anything he sets his mind to do. He is now 18 months old, full of expression and has already shown us that he is capable of doing anything he wants to do and of going anywhere he wants to go.

It's amazing what such young children can teach us about life; my family and I have learned so much from Ryker. People with albinism are special and wonderful and I am proud to be a part of the NOAH community. It's comforting to feel so connected with people I haven't met and to be able to share so many of the feelings and struggles that we have in common. And my family and I are glad to be a part of the SDSBVI and the Aberdeen Area Family Support Group, as they have also helped us so much. We appreciate everyone who has helped Ryker.

My hope is that Ryker will grow to be a strong person, feel the connections we do with NOAH and overcome the challenges that life may give him. I would not change a thing about my beautiful baby boy and now when he looks at me with those big blue eyes, I melt every single time because it is exactly what I was waiting for in those first weeks of his precious life.

And, as for driving, that's what big brothers are for, right?!



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STUDENT CORNER (Continued from Page 7)

ACRYLIC SELF-PORTRAIT COLLAGE

During the month of March, the Dakota Discovery Museum in Mitchell displayed 110 art pieces created by 74 South Dakota students for the 2008 Youth Art Show. One of these SD students was **Ray Johnson**, a freshman student at Mitchell High. Ray, who is legally blind, submitted two art pieces, including an acrylic self-portrait. A picture of this self-portrait was featured in Mitchell's newspaper, The Daily Republic, on March 1, 2008.

WAY TO GO, RAY!!

Sam Horstmeyer—National Star!

Six-year old Sam Horstmeyer of Sioux Falls and his parents Jeff and Erin have become national stars! They have an inspiring video clip on a new website for parents of children with visual impairment, sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI). Jeff is heard in the background reading a story to Sam while Sam excitedly listens. Erin gives some personal information that is encouraging for other families who have a child with a disability.

To view this video clip, go to familyconnect.org and click on "videos" in the first section titled "Helping Your Child Live with Vision Loss." Under Video Profiles, click on Horstmeyer Family.

We welcome any and all special presentations, awards, writings, etc. achieved by our outreach students. If your student/child has such a contribution and would like to be featured in our Student Corner, please contact your area Outreach Vision Consultant or email the contribution directly to Riki Nitz, Editor, at riki.nitz@sdsbvi.northern.edu.

DAKOTAS CHAPTER AER CONFERENCE

In commemoration of the Centennial of the North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind, the Dakotas AER/Vision Conference will be held May 7-9, 2008, at the Holiday Inn in Grand Forks, ND. Agenda and registration information is available online at www.ndvisionservices.com.

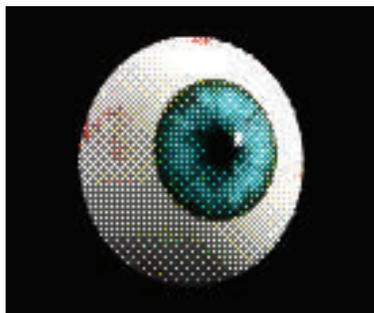
Featured speakers will be Jim Gandorf, Executive Director of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and Kevin O'Connor, Former President of the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI).

We welcome and encourage Parents, Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Occupational Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Rehabilitation Therapists, and anyone working or interested in the field of vision to attend this conference. For additional information or questions, please contact Carmen Grove Suminski, Superintendent NDVS/School for the Blind at 701-795-2708 or email her at csuminsk@nd.gov.

Answers to Eyeglasses "Eye-Q" Quiz
1. b
2. c
3. a

FOCUS ON THE EYE

ACHROMATOPSIA



Description

Achromatopsia is a non-progressive visual disorder which is characterized by decreased vision, light sensitivity, nystagmus, and the absence of color vision. Achromatopsia is an inherited condition that affects approximately 1 in every 33,000 Americans. It is a condition found throughout the world with varying incidence.

There are two primary forms—complete achromatopsia and incomplete achromatopsia. Complete achromatopsia means “without color” and is defined as little or no function of the cone cells. Persons with complete achromatopsia are only able to perceive black, white, and shades of gray. Incomplete achromatopsia patients will have profound color impairment, but do have a small residual amount of color vision. They will also have slightly better visual acuity due to the presence of some functioning cone cells in the retina.

Achromatopsia is a recessive inherited condition. It requires both parents to contribute a gene in order for the condition to occur. This gives a family with one affected child a 25% (1 in 4) risk of each pregnancy carrying an affected offspring. All the offspring of an achromat may carry one gene for achromatopsia. In order to pass the condition onto their children, it would require having children with someone else carrying the same gene.

Signs/Symptoms

The first signs may be the presence of nystagmus and light sensitivity with squinting in bright light. In persons with achromatopsia, the cone cells, which are light sensitive cells used during the day and which provide sharp visual acuity and color discrimination, are not functioning. Thus the only cells left are the rod cells. Rod cells are specialized low light cells which help with night vision. When the achromat goes into bright light, the visual system meant to be used only at night is suddenly overwhelmed. Achromats describe being “dazzled” and “blinded” by bright light. Achromats develop an aversion to bright daylight. To avoid problems, they often learn to work or play at night. Areas where bright lighting and shade come together can also pose many problems. Vision may be significantly impaired and achromats may not see what is in their path in the shaded area.

Visual acuity of a person with complete achromatopsia is typically 20/200. In the incomplete form of achromatopsia, the visual acuity may range from 20/60 to 20/100. This vision loss is stable throughout life, but does vary with exposure to bright lights as stated above. Near vision is better than distant vision.

Nystagmus is an involuntary rhythmic shaking or back and forth movement of the eyes that occurs when children are born with vision loss. Increases in the nystagmus can cause temporary decreases in vision. Stress can cause an increase in the movement and a further decrease in acuity. There may be a certain eye position or head tilt that slows the movement and allows better visual acuity. This unusual position should be encouraged and is called a “null point”.

Diagnosis/Treatment

Diagnosis of achromatopsia will be made by an eye doctor. A child may not be able to perform the screening tests to check for color blindness, but the presence of nystagmus, light sensitivity, and reduced vision will provide clues essential to the diagnosis. Children should also be checked for refractive errors (need for glasses). Prescribing glasses to correct refractive conditions such as far-sightedness (hyperopia), near-sightedness (myopia), and astigmatism can improve the vision somewhat, but will not restore normal levels of vision.

An important new treatment for those with achromatopsia is the use of red central soft contact lenses. These contact lenses have a small red circle that when properly positioned looks like the pupil of the eye. These red contact lenses not only reduce the amount of light entering each eye, but allow primarily red light to enter the eye. Red light allows the remaining rods to function better. The contact lenses may or may not contain the patient's prescription and are often fit under the patient's eyewear. Thus, they can be worn during the day and removed in the evenings without the need for extra eyeglasses. Dark red or plum filters may also be used to control light sensitivity.

Educational Implications

- Sunglasses, shields, visors, tinted lenses for light sensitivity.
- Controlling lighting and glare; closing blinds to decrease glare on the chalkboard and windows.
- Yellow acetate over print to improve contrast.
- Cutout window to expose only one word at a time to improve fixation.

ACHROMATOPSIA (Continued from Page 9)

Educational Implications

- Dark tinted glasses or red glasses to help reduce the sensitivity to light and enhance visual functioning.
- Magnifying devices (low vision aids), as well as the use of Large Print books, may be helpful for reading.
- Black felt pen for marking and writing.
- Front seat placement away from the windows and allowing the student to go to the chalkboard when needed.
- Telescopes can be used for spotting signs and seeing faces in the distance.
- Allow the student to hold the reading material close to their eyes for more magnification and clarity.
- Students should be given extra time when taking tests.
- Closed circuit television systems (CCTV), which use video magnification, enlarge print onto a screen for ease when reading and writing.
- The child with achromatopsia finds the world full of color coding. School work is frequently color coded. For example, a child may be asked to determine how many red circles are present among the 10 on the page. Obviously, the student would be unable to perform this task. Also, coloring pictures and painting may be very difficult tasks to perform. It is crucial that color coding be eliminated from the child's education.
- With adequate help from teachers for the visually impaired, children with achromatopsia are usually able to attend public schools.
- More severely affected individuals may benefit from services available in schools specifically designated for the visually impaired.

Resources

<http://www.achromat.org>

<http://www.aapos.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=60>



Discovery Trails: A Pioneer Adventure Facilitated by the Arts

The haunting song of an Indian flute at dusk...handmade clay beads campfire-baked to be given as gifts...braids of sweetgrass fashioned for a healing ritual...a laughing tangle of teens following the fiddle in a do-si-so...poignant reflections on homesickness entered into an audio journal—these and so many other creative activities are the heart and spirit of the Discovery Trails Program each summer.

Discovery Trails is an outdoor adventure in History and the Arts for teens who are blind or visually impaired. For two weeks each summer, a dozen or more teens follow a pioneer trail across the plains and into the Rocky Mountains. This program is designed fresh each year by Accessible Arts and conducted in partnership with the Kansas State School for the Blind. Artist-educators and trail historians mix imagination and creativity with authentic remnants of trail times to draw the teens into the lives of emigrants wagon-bound for the West in the mid-1800s. Around the campfire and while traveling together, expressive activities like song writing, storytelling, and dramatic play help the teens hone skills to share their trail experiences with family, friends, community, and school. It is a great opportunity for participating teens to strengthen their independence, heighten their self-confidence, give practical service to their communities, and make progress toward becoming a competent, contributing young adult—all while enjoying the adventures of Trail travel.

2008 Discovery Trails Program

The 2008 Discovery Trails Program is accepting 16 teens to participate in this year's trek, which will follow the Santa Fe Trail. The trek takes place June 4-19, 2008, and the deadline for applications is May 15. The cost to families is \$250. To save a seat in the wagon, interested students should register as soon as possible.

For more information, contact Eleanor Craig, Coordinator and Trail Boss, at 913-281-1133.

STRESS REDUCTION TIPS

GO ON A PICNIC
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF
EXERCISE
SCHEDULE SOME PLAY TIME INTO EVERY DAY
CALL AN OLD FRIEND
BUY YOURSELF FLOWERS
DAYDREAM
CHERISH THOSE YOU LOVE
CHERISH YOURSELF

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Outreach Forum

Nashville TN—April 23-26, 2008

AER Dakotas Chapter

Grand Forks SD—May 7-9, 2008

Dare to Dream Conference

Pierre SD—June 8-10, 2008

AER International

Chicago IL—July 22-27, 2008

Focus on Success

Sioux Falls—September 30-October 2, 2008

APH Educational Materials

<http://www.aph.org>

Teaching Touch

Teaching Touch helps parents or teachers encourage young children (ages 4-7) who are blind to become active explorers and readers of tactile graphics. Various skills that contribute to exploration and appreciation of tactile graphics are addressed. These include tracking, searching, verbal description, and the use of symbols. A separate booklet introduces the use of exercise sheets to promote tactile tracking, scanning, and comparison.

Touch and Tell

Touch and Tell is a set of braille reading readiness books. The set consists of three volumes with tactile pages and regular print instructions. Volumes I and II introduce embossed hands and geometric forms; Volume III introduces braille dots. Recommended ages: 5 to 6 years

These products are available from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) for purchase and can also be borrowed from your area Outreach Vision Consultant. For more information on these products or other APH products, please contact your area Outreach Vision Consultant.

North Central

AMY SCEPANI AK
SDSBVI Outreach Vision Consultant
423 17th Avenue SE
Aberdeen, SD 57401-7699
605-626-2580
1-888-275-3814
scepania@sdsbvi.northern.edu

Eastern

JULIE VAN DOVER
SDSBVI Outreach Vision Consultant
423 17th Avenue SE
Aberdeen, SD 57401-7699
605-626-2580
1-888-275-3814
vandovej@sdsbvi.northern.edu

Southeast

INDIRA DILLON
SDSBVI Outreach Vision Consultant
PO Box 1046
Mitchell SD 57301-1046
Phone: 605-995-8191
indira.dillon@sdsbvi.northern.edu

Western

RIKI NITZ
SDSBVI Outreach Vision Consultant
3618 Canyon Lake Drive Suite 104
Rapid City SD 57702-3129
Phone: 605-394-6638
riki.nitz@sdsbvi.northern.edu