



Erin Storhoff: Teacher of the Visually Impaired



Hello, my name is Erin Storhoff and I started this wonderful position at North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind in August 2019. My title at the school is Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI) and I also help during our programming weeks. I graduated from UND in August 2019 with my Master of Visual Impairment. I also have a minor in Early Education from Rasmussen College. I chose to get my master's in Visual Impairment as both my son and I are low vision. I have been a huge advocate for my son throughout his school years and have

always wanted to help other families and children. Being low vision myself has helped me understand the field better. One of my key mentors that pushed me to go back to school is Linda Kraft. Linda was a wonderful advocate for my son and our family for many years. She would continually say that you know the materials to help others and your heart is in this field.

I knew after graduating I wanted to work in a school system to help students. In the back of my mind, the job I really wanted was at NDVS/SB working full time with students that have a vision impairment. When the position at NDVS/SB opened, I knew this was the time for me. NDVS/SB is a wonderful team to work with and our families are our top priority. I serve birth through graduation and currently infants through elementary age students. I plan to visit each of my students every month either in their homes or school/childcare. I assist my students with what will help them most in their daily lives. I also consult family members and teachers on what they can do to help the child/students.

Upcoming Events:

- JANUARY 12-16**
ELEM STP (1ST – 5TH)
- FEBRUARY 2-7**
MS / TEEN STP (7TH – 12TH)
- FEBRUARY 8**
ND VS SD GOALBALL TOURNEY
- MARCH 1-6**
ADULT STP
- MARCH 13-14**
FAMILY WEEKEND (MINOT)
- MARCH 22-27**
TEEN STP/ CAREERS (10TH-12TH)
- MARCH 28**
SD GOALBALL TOURNEY
- APRIL 15-17**
DAKOTAS CHAPTER AER IN SD
- APRIL 26-30**
ELEMENTARY STP (1ST-5TH)
- MAY 10-15**
ADULT STP

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REACHING OUT

I love working with children and watching them grow in all areas. It brings me joy when my students achieve their goals. This is the key motivator for me, seeing the achievement when students and families understand that they can do anything that they put their minds to. I enjoy helping others understand what low vision students can do when they are given the tools they need.

I am excited to see what the future holds for me at NDVS/SB!

Adult Weeks at North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind

Have you heard of the adult weeks at North Dakota Vision Services / School for the Blind? Have you wondered what they are, how they work, what happens at them, etc.? Below is a description of an adult week that occurs at NDVS/SB.

The adult week adults usually arrive on Sunday after 3:00 P.M., they stay on campus at NDVS/SB. We have Suites where the adults get their own bedroom to themselves, they may share a bathroom with another adult. We have a common area outside of the bedrooms with couches, tables, and a large screen television. The evenings are staffed with house parents, who help with evening meals, and evening activities.

The week of programming, the adult who is attending a week of programming will have been in contact with a NDVS/SB Vision Rehabilitation Specialist provider beforehand. They will determine the adults needs and what classes they want. The classes can consist of many different kinds:

- Technology, learning how to use a smartphone and the number of different

apps a person can use. Learn adaptations for one's computer, adaptive software such as screen magnification or screen readers.

- Orientation & Mobility develop skills to travel safely inside and outside independently. Learn about human guide, learn about a cane and how might that be helpful for a person in a variety of different settings.
- Daily Living Skills, Nervous about cooking, this class can take away some of the nerves, from cutting safely, safety at the range top, money skills, identification of clothing, what we all take for granted on a daily basis can be covered in this class.
- Braille, wonder what Braille is? Wonder if it can be used in your life for reading, labeling, everyday communication? Already know braille but need further instruction and an update on the code.
- Recreation and Leisure, this class can teach a variety of different skills that a person can do since they have lost vision. It may be physical from tandem bicycling, board games, how to adapt tasks you have been doing and you enjoy.
- Adjustment, we offer a class with the University of North Dakota in the Clinical Psy-

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chology and have an intern who can help with some of the adjustment and loss a person has due to vision loss.

What does the schedule of the day look like? The day starts out at 8:00AM with breakfast and then classes start at 8:30 with the classes being an hour long. Lunch is at 11:45 and then a group class at 12:30 where a variety of topics can be discussed due to vision loss and coping. The day concludes at 4:00PM. Adults have enjoyed coming to the school and learning new skills and enhancing other skills that they already have.

Does an adult have to come to all five days of training? No, they could come for as little as one day or all five days. We would like the adult to have at least two goals to work on. For a new client they may just be learning and getting information about the variety of classes.

Do you have to be scheduled for all six classes during the day? No, if you need a break during the day, we can schedule this in for you. We are flexible in meeting your needs.

When are the Adult weeks? Our next adult week is March 2nd, May 11th, and then June 1st. There will be adult weeks next fall, but they are not scheduled yet at this time. They will be in September and December.

If you have any questions about the adult programming, please give us a call. (701) 795-2700

VRC Updates: More Than the Sum of Its Bookshelves

Have you visited a library lately? Libraries today are much different than they were 50, 15, or even 5 years ago. Libraries are redefining themselves and become community hubs, instead of “just” book repositories. Public libraries are hosting craft nights, movie nights, art exhibitions, and so much more. Some academic libraries have completely gotten rid of their book collections and gone totally digital. Over the last few years, the VRC has also become more than the sum of its bookshelves. Our staff (VRC staff and other NDVS/SB employees) help students and clients access Bookshare, Learning Ally, and BARD, all of which provide access to books and materials digitally. More and

more digital resources are being added to our collection, which makes it easier to access information. In addition, over the last couple of years, we have weeded the bookshelves and moved some of our resources to the warehouse. After condensing the collection, we were able to move two bookshelves out of the library area. In their place, a projector, SMARTBoard, and tables and chairs have been added. Thanks to this change, the library can now be more readily used for one-on-one instruction, small group instruction, training webinars, and even all staff meetings. Like all libraries, we have had to change to remain relevant.

REACHING OUT

Superintendent's Scoop: Paul Olson

Focused on 2020

I always aspire to write words that are meaningful for students, adult clients, families and literally everyone that takes an interest in our small but impactful agency. Since I am writing this in December I am reflecting on the past year as well as focusing on 2020. I am proud of our accomplishments, but I also recognize where we need to accomplish more as an agency, as a state education system and as a nation. Are we helping every student and adult client reach their potential? I can list many examples of great success. I can wholeheartedly state that we are doing an amazing job with our current resources at NDVS/SB. I am so proud of the work we do. BUT, I also know that we can do better.



So, what am I focusing on going into the new year? Here are a few highlights:

- As President of the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind, I will be putting everything I have into promoting the Cogswell-Macy Act. This landmark legislation aims to enhance special education law to improve services for students that are blind, students that are deaf and students who are deafblind. I will share more about this in the next issue of Reaching Out and let all of you know how you can support this cause.
- I am also very excited about working with the ND Lions Foundation and Lions Clubs in North Dakota to raise money for the purchase of 10 new “Little Rooms.” Little Rooms are multi-sensory, learning environments that are set up for infants and preschool children with multiple learning and physical needs. In honor of our former co-worker, Linda Kraft, the name of this effort is “Linda’s Little Room Project.” The big promotion of this fundraising extravaganza is January 1st with the hope of reaching our \$35,000 goal of September 1st. THIS IS EXCITING!
- Next, on March 2nd, NDVS/SB will meet with Governor Burgum and his staff to do a “Strategic Review.” This is a preliminary step in the budget process and provides a foundation for going forward. Tami Purcell and Cindy Williams will accompany me on this trip to the Capitol to tell our story and set the stage for our future which is supposed to translate into more student success.
- There are numerous projects that are underway already that are exciting. I am working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that will outline our working relationship. DVR is a wonderful partner agency and we look to strengthen this bond of cooperation. We are stronger and more effective together as we help adults reach their personal and vocational goals.

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- A pet project that I am particularly proud of will help small, rural districts support students learning braille. NDVS/SB has developed a program titled “**B.E.S.T.**” which stands for **Braille Education Support Technician**. This program will help paraprofessionals and/or teachers in small districts learn the braille code along with the tools for producing braille locally with support from NDVS/SB regional Coordinators. We simply do not have enough teachers of the visually impaired. It is time to quit talking about the needs and gaps that exist in some communities and fix the problem. Please keep your fingers crossed that this program will be met with enthusiasm.
- Last but not least (in fact probably most important) I hope to support the NDVS/SB staff to the best of my ability. It is my sincere belief that we have some of the most talented and knowledgeable staff in the whole country right here in North Dakota. My job is to help everyone be successful through even more professional development and by creating a safe, friendly and supportive workplace. That really is my priority and if this can be accomplished great things will happen.

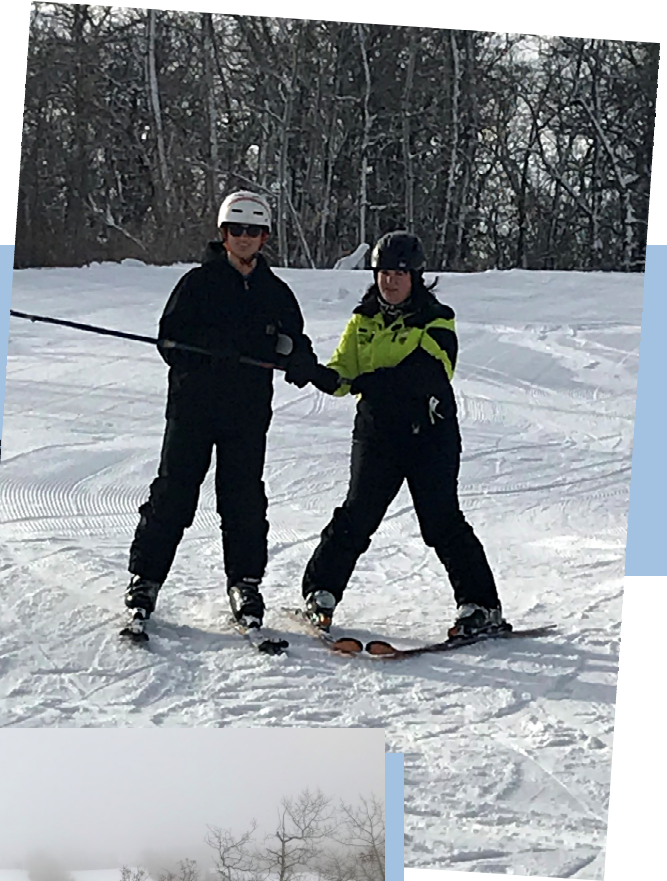
This is going to be a good year. How can the year be anything but perfectly in focus since it is 2020?

VRC Updates: More Than the Sum of Its Bookshelves cont.

We are still acquiring good old-fashioned books, though. The National Library Service (NLS) provides us with new children’s books in twin vision, and the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults sends us new braille chapter books for young readers every month or so. I am really grateful for these two services, as they help keep our children’s collections up-to-date. The books that are chosen to be adapted into Twin Vision or braille by NLS and AAF are always high-quality titles. Teachers, staff, and patrons can also request new materials that they think the library should own. Here are a few of our new additions, added during 2019.

- *Prave: The Adventures of the Blind and the Brittle* by Dave Bahr (Regular Print)
- *Outside Myself* by Kristen Witucki (Regular Print)
- *Partners in O&M: Supporting Orientation and Mobility for Students Who Are Visually Impaired* by Rona Pogrund (Regular Print)
- *Format Your Word Documents with JAWS and NVDA: A Guide for Students and Professionals* by David Kingsbury (on USB Drive)
- *Essential Tools of the Trade: A “How-To” Guide for Completing Functional Vision, Learning Media, and Expanded Core Curriculum Evaluations* from the Texas School for the Blind (Regular Print)
- *Cortical Visual Impairment: Advanced Principles* by Christine Roman-Lantzy (Regular Print)

If you would like to check out any of these items or have questions about the VRC, please contact Emily by emailing estenber@nd.gov or calling 701-795-2709.



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ND Vision Services/
School for the Blind
500 Stanford Road
Grand Forks, ND 58203-2799

Superintendent of Public Instruction: Kirsten Baesler
Superintendent, ND Vision Services/School for the Blind: Paul Olson (polson@nd.gov)
Reaching Out Editor: Ryan Torgerson (rltorg@nd.gov) and Leslie Pederson (lesped@nd.gov)